



19TH ANNUAL GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT
TRIBAL CONSULTATION

November 19-21, 2024 | Santa Fe, New Mexico

ANNUAL REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Disclaimers

This document is a summary of testimony provided at the 19th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation, held in November 2024, pursuant to Section 903 of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2005, as amended. The document itself has no force or effect of law and does not create any legally binding rights or obligations binding on persons or entities.

This document does not reflect the opinion or position of the U.S. Department of Justice; rather, it provides a comprehensive overview of three days of testimony and dialogue at the consultation. The complete transcript for the 2024 Tribal Consultation is available upon request. Please note hard copy requests may incur a charge for printing and shipping.

Table of Contents

Disclaimers	2
Tribal Consultation Event.....	5
Traditional Opening Ceremony.....	5
Welcoming Remarks	6
Tribal Testimony	8
Sovereign Tribal Leaders of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Task Force on Violence Against Women	8
Akiak Native Community	20
Anvik Village	23
Asa'carsarmiut Tribe.....	27
Cahuilla Band of Indians	29
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	33
Curyung Tribal Council	36
Delaware Tribe of Indians.....	37
Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma	41
Emmonak Village	44
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe	46
Kenaitze Indian Tribe	53
Lower Brule Sioux Tribe	59
Lower Elwha Tribal Community	62
Lummi Tribe	64
Mesa Grande Band of Diegueno Mission Indians.....	65
Mescalero Apache Tribe	69
The Muscogee (Creek) Nation	71
Native Village of Kwinhagak	73
Native Village of Nunam Iqua	74
Navajo Nation	76
Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi	80
Organized Village of Kake	82
Orutsarmiut Traditional Native Council	85
Pala Band of Mission Indians	86
Pascua Yaqui Tribe	87

Pauma Band of Luiseño Indians of the Pauma & Yuima Reservation.....	89
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.....	97
Pueblo of Acoma.....	99
Pueblo of Isleta	101
Pueblo of Pojoaque	105
Pueblo of San Felipe	108
Pueblo of Santa Clara.....	109
Pueblo of Taos	111
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe	113
Quinault Indian Nation	115
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	117
Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.....	119
The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma.....	120
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	121
Stockbridge Munsee Community	123
Tanana Chiefs Conference	126
Tonto Apache Tribe of Arizona	127
Village of Bill Moore’s Slough	129
Village of Dot Lake	131
Village of Kotlik	136
Village of Ohogamiut	138
Closing	141
Closing Remarks and Traditional Closing Ceremony	141
Appendix 1: Federal Presentations	142
Department of Justice Tribal Consultation Briefing on Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding ...	142
Working Lunch: U.S. DOJ, OVW, Tribal Affairs Division Team Update	143
USAO NM Tribal Updates	144
Working Lunch: NamUs Update Report, U.S. DOJ OJP, NIJ	145
NIJ Research Presentation: The Scope and Context of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons in New Mexico	146
Working Lunch: U.S. DOJ OJP and COPS Updates.....	148
Appendix 2: Consultation Agenda.....	150
Appendix 3: Consultation Framing Papers	159

Tribal Consultation Event

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) held the 19th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation on November 19-21, 2024, at the Hilton Santa Fe Buffalo Thunder in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Participants included 53 Tribal leaders, 24 authorized designees, 121 federal representatives; and 373 other attendees from the Tribal community, including Tribal organizations and coalitions, for a total of 571 in-person and virtual attendees.

Traditional Opening Ceremony

The OVW Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Sherriann Moore, welcomed Tribal leaders and those providing testimony to come forward and sit at the head table, before calling the Tribal Consultation to order.

The opening ceremony began with the posting of the colors conducted by the Color Guard of Los Alamos High School, appointed by the host Tribe, Pueblo of Pojoaque. Samuel Catanach, also of the host Tribe, then welcomed attendees to the Tribal lands of Pueblo of Pojoaque.

Steve Larance, a member of the Hopi Tribe, explained the hoop dance, which originated in the Pueblos of northern New Mexico, with credit to its birthplace, the Taos Pueblo, located just 30 miles from the consultation site. The hoop dance in its original form was a healing ceremony. It celebrates the beauty of Mother Nature and the circle of life, known as the Sacred Hoop of Life. The hoop dance had died out for a couple of generations due to government policies that restricted American Indian language, culture, and ceremonies.

Fifteen years ago, Mr. Larance and his wife, a member of the Pueblo of Pojoaque, decided to teach the hoop dance to young people and have since started the World Championship of Hoop Dance, held every year in Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Larance then provided drumming as Mateo Ulibarri, 2024 World Hoop Dance Champion (Teen Division) and member of Pueblo of Pojoaque, performed a contemporary hoop dance. In the contemporary hoop dance, the dancer weaves his hoops into many different designs that represent elements of Mother Nature, as well as the ladder of life, representing our journey here on earth. Josiah Enriquez, 2024 World Hoop Dance Champion (Adult Division), also a member of Pueblo of Pojoaque who has been dancing for over 12 years, performed his version of the hoop dance.

A traditional shawl ceremony was performed as part of the opening ceremony. Tiffany Jiron, a member of the Pueblo of Isleta and Executive Director for the Coalition of Stop Violence Against Native Women, sang a ceremony song she created along with her aunt and other members of the cultural committee in Isleta Pueblo as coalition members placed a shawl on each of four chairs displayed for all to see throughout the consultation. Ms. Jiron reminded those assembled that domestic violence and sexual violence are directly correlated to the women and young girls who go missing or murdered and said the highest rates of these crimes are in New Mexico, specifically in Gallup and Albuquerque.

Welcoming Remarks

Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director, Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal Affairs Division

Sherriann Moore opened the consultation by introducing Rosie Hidalgo, Director of OVW, to provide opening remarks.

Rosie Hidalgo, Director, Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Rosie Hidalgo welcomed everyone to the 19th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation. She thanked Governor Roybal and Pueblo of Pojoaque for their hospitality for hosting the event on their sacred Tribal lands and thanked all who were present to participate in consultation.

Ms. Hidalgo then introduced recorded remarks from Attorney General Merrick Garland. The pre-recorded video was played for those in attendance and included expressions of appreciation for the host Tribe and those providing testimony at the consultation, information about DOJ efforts to streamline grants for Tribal public safety, and a description of the Tribal Access Program, or TAP, which gives federally recognized Tribes access to national crime information systems, enables civil courts to enter domestic violence protection orders, and Tribal courts and agencies to conduct record checks. The Attorney General closed by stating that DOJ looked forward to receiving testimony and recommendations provided at the consultation and continuing to strengthen its efforts to protect families and individuals, providing survivors with access to justice, safety, and healing.

Following the video, Ms. Hidalgo recognized DOJ's approach to public safety for Tribal nations, and pointed out the various DOJ components and other federal agencies represented in the room, including the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO), in addition to other federal agencies crucial to coordination such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services (OFVPS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and in response to testimony from last year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Ms. Hidalgo spoke of the importance of the original Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994, but also how each reauthorization has been enhanced with input gathered from those on the front lines about what's working well that can be scaled up or advanced, but also where there are gaps and barriers that need continued dedication. She also highlighted the significant progress in the recognition of inherent Tribal sovereignty through VAWA and the expansion of the ways in which the federal government partners with Tribal governments and organizations. Ms. Hidalgo closed by thanking those present for traveling to share their testimony, and for their voices and leadership. She also thanked virtual attendees who were unable to travel and encouraged those who are not able to give testimony in person to submit written testimony by December 23, 2024.

Introductions of Federal Representatives from DOJ, DOI, HHS, and HUD

Ms. Moore facilitated the introduction of federal participants attending in person, including the following DOJ representatives:

- **Alexander M.M. Uballez**, U.S. Attorney, District of New Mexico
- **Cory Randolph**, Deputy Director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

- **Katherine Darke Schmitt**, Principal Deputy Director, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime
- **Karhlton Moore**, Director, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance
- **Helena Heath**, Director, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART Office)
- **Allison L. Randall**, Principal Deputy Director, Office on Violence Against Women
- **JoAnn Kintz**, Deputy Director, Office of Tribal Justice
- **Eileen M. Garry**, Tribal Affairs Advisor, Office of Justice Programs, Office of the Assistant Attorney General
- **Ruby Qazilbash**, Deputy Director, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance
- **Janine Zweig**, Executive Science Advisor, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice
- **Chuck Heurich M.F.S.**, Senior Scientist, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, Office of Investigative and Forensic Science
- **LeBretia White**, Deputy Director, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime, Tribal Division

As mandated by VAWA, federal partners from HHS and DOI participated in the Tribal Consultation. HHS representatives included:

- **Shawndell Dawson**, Director, Administration for Children and Families
- **Dr. Beverly Cotton**, Acting Deputy Director, Indian Health Service, Field Operations

The representatives from DOI were:

- **Lynn Trujillo**, Senior Counselor to the Secretary, Office of Indian Affairs
- **Louis Poitra**, Assistant Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services
- **Linda Bearcrane Couture**, National Coordinator and Supervisory Victim Specialist, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services
- **Eugenia Tyner-Dawson**, Coordinator, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, Justice Programs Policy and Not Invisible Act Coordinator

HUD also sent the following representative:

- **Karlo Ng**, Office of the Secretary

On the second day of the consultation, after pre-recorded video remarks from Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco, Ms. Moore facilitated the introduction of additional federal participants as they joined the proceedings:

- **Marlys Big Eagle**, National Native Outreach Services Liaison, Department of Justice, Executive Office for United States Attorneys
- **Kristina Rose**, Director, Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime
- **Dr. Leonard Thomas**, Area Director, Department of Health and Human Services, Indian Health Service

At the beginning of the third day of the consultation, pre-recorded video remarks from Principal Deputy Associate Attorney General Benjamin Mizer were played for those assembled.

Tribal Testimony

In total, 45 Tribal leaders and designees representing 39 Tribes shared testimony at the Tribal Consultation. The following sections summarize this testimony, with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Violence Against Women (VAW) Task Force kicking off the testimony, followed alphabetically by Tribe and accompanied by the name and title of each speaker.

Some Tribal representatives who spoke at the Tribal Consultation also provided written comments to underscore or elaborate on their oral testimony. In those cases, the written comments are integrated into the summarized testimony below. Written testimony from seven Tribes and one consortium also has been summarized and included in this report.

Sovereign Tribal Leaders of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Task Force on Violence Against Women

Shannon Holsey, NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women (Oral and Written)

Carmen O’Leary, NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women (Oral and Written)

Tami Truett Jerue, NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women (Oral and Written)

Oral Introduction - Shannon Holsey

It’s a true pleasure to be here and to share this space with each and every one of you today. I serve as the Tribal President of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians. I’m also honored to serve as co-chair of the VAW Task Force for the National Congress of American Indians, alongside Executive Directors Carmen O’Leary and Tami Truett Jerue.

It’s also a true pleasure to have our sister, Dr. Juana Majel Dixon, here with us today. She has made so many contributions to our cause. As we’ve all expressed, thank you for those powerful remarks this morning, especially Rosie, for reminding us that this is not just a time for coming together, but also a time for restoration and reclamation. Before I begin, I think it’s important to acknowledge those names you may never hear in this room, but who strongly support each and every one of our efforts as a task force in the work we do. My apologies if I forget anyone, but I’d like to make special mention of Rick, Tia, Paula, Rachel, and Carrie, who work tirelessly behind the scenes every day. Their names often go unrecognized, and they are very humble about the work they do, but it is incredibly important.

Today is not just about discussing the systemic and ongoing issues we face in Indian Country; it’s also about calling for progress and change. Today serves as a celebration of everyone in this room and highlights our collective tenacity in the Native communities we serve, day in and day out. I want to express my deep appreciation for our sister coalitions, our boots on the ground in grassroots organizations, and of course, you, Sherriann, Rosie, and your entire team. It humbles me deeply to see all of you here, sitting in front of us, so dedicated to the work we’re doing. It’s a reflection of the growth we’ve seen—when Sherriann spoke yesterday, she mentioned starting with a humble team of just a few, and now, look, you all are our foot soldiers, helping us expand and build on that work. And today is really about that—growth and progress.

It’s not just about conversation; it’s about resolution. It’s actionable. It’s about finding ways to move from saying to doing. Today is about not only celebrating and highlighting the significant contributions of everyone

in this room—many of whom have dedicated their life's work and heart work to this cause—but also focusing on how we can honor and amplify our cultures, languages, traditions, and holistic ways of healing. I truly appreciate that you're not just seeing us and hearing us, but you're making it actionable through the work you do.

Oral Introduction - Carmen O'Leary

I am a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, where four bands of Lakota people were relocated to a reservation. I'm the Director of the Native Women's Society of the Great Plains. It's often misspelled, but the full legal name is the Native Women's Society of the Great Plains, Reclaiming Our Sacredness, which was a vision of our founding members.

As a reminder, federal policy in our regions can have unintended consequences. Just to give you an example—two federal policies in particular have deeply impacted my family. The Louisiana Purchase brought my ancestors down the river, and the Dawes Act brought my homesteading ancestors across the land. I share that to remind everyone in positions of federal law and policy how deeply your decisions affect our families, sometimes in ways you may not even realize—right down to how we look and how we live. I want you to understand where I'm coming from when I talk about this. I just want to impress upon you how crucial federal policy is and the ripple effect it has on our communities. Whether it's how programs are rolled out or how funding is allocated, these decisions have real consequences. And sometimes, those consequences are unintended.

Oral Introduction - Tami Truett Jerue

I'm a Tribal citizen of the Anvik Tribe, which is a Lower Yukon Deg Hit'an Athabascan Tribe in Alaska. I also serve as the Executive Director of the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, and I'm one of the three co-chairs of the VAW Task Force. It's truly an honor to be here with all of you.

There is a critical role federal partners and allies play in our work. You come here, time and time again, to hear our difficult stories and experiences, and that alone is meaningful. But the only reason you're able to hear those stories is because there are hearts behind the federal policies that truly matter. And we have those hearts in this room. I want to take a moment to acknowledge people like Rosie, Allison, Sherriann and your team, Katherine and your team, Shawndell and your team—you all are truly listening to us, and doing everything you can to help us work within the parameters set before us. We hear you, we see you, and we understand that, even though we're still suffering in many of the same ways we always have, you are making a difference. I want to express our deep appreciation for all of the hard work you all do.

Testimony (Written and Oral)

The National Congress of American Indians submits written testimony, including what we addressed with our oral testimony last month. We look forward to working with the federal government to continue to fully implement the Violence Against Women Act mandated annual Tribal Consultation. Thank you for rescheduling this year's consultation to avoid conflicting with the NCAI Annual Convention.

The following issues, concerns, and recommendations were identified by Tribal nations and advocates during past consultations since 2006, through NCAI resolutions since 2000, through regional Tribal organization resolutions, and at numerous meetings. Tribal leaders and advocates have tirelessly raised concerns about barriers preventing the protection of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women with the administration, Congress, and federal departments and agencies. Many of these issues are not new and illustrate the complicated legal and policy barriers embedded in the layers of federal Indian law.

To achieve the purposes of Tribal Titles VIII and IX of the Violence Against Women Act reauthorizations of 2022 and 2005, respectively, we recommend that the executive and legislative branches of the federal government consult and coordinate with Tribal nations regarding the implementation of the proposed recommendations.

Topic 1: Limited Jurisdiction over Non-Indian Offenders on Tribal Lands

Limited jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders on Tribal lands continues to be a key reason for the perpetuation of disproportionate violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women. The 2022 reauthorization of VAWA expanded the list of covered crimes over which Tribal nations can exercise jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators. While a pivotal step forward, VAWA 2022 did not address protections for elders nor serious crimes that co-occur with domestic and sexual violence, such as financial crimes and homicide. Perpetrators will continue to slip through the cracks until Congress fully restores every Tribal nation's complete jurisdiction over all crimes committed by non-Indians on Indian land.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. We urge Congress to legislatively pass a full *Oliphant* Fix and for the Department of Justice and Department of Interior to support Tribal nations' jurisdiction over non-Indians for any offense on Tribal lands as outlined in NCAI Resolution SPO-16-037.
2. DOJ and DOI should coordinate and collaborate to implement the provisions of VAWA 2022 and support Tribal nations in implementing their restored jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators, including offering joint training for Tribal and federal law enforcement on implementing VAWA.
3. The U.S. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) should overhaul its Tribal prisoner program to make it easier for Tribal nations to submit inmate placement requests, including having adequate BOP staff for the program.

Topic 2: The Alaska Pilot Program

The Alaska Pilot Project created under VAWA 2022 represents more than just a program. It is the restoration of our inherent sovereign authority to keep our communities safe and hold wrongdoers accountable. For too long, Alaska Tribal nations have been forced to stand by helplessly as crimes occur in our villages with inadequate or delayed response from other jurisdictions. This has created a devastating cycle of violence that has particularly impacted our women and children.

The DOJ must provide full and adequate funding for this pilot program to succeed. Without proper resources for law enforcement training, detention facilities, Tribal court systems, and victim services, the federal government risks setting up our Tribal justice systems to fail. Underfunding this initiative would not only deny us the tools needed to protect our people, it would also continue the federal government's long history of making promises to Tribal nations without following through with meaningful support. We cannot accept symbolic gestures or partial measures. The safety of our communities and the exercise of our sovereign rights require real, sustained investment. Our people deserve nothing less than a fully functional criminal justice system that can respond swiftly and effectively to protect victims and ensure justice. The success or failure of this pilot program will set a precedent for all Tribal nations in Alaska seeking to exercise their inherent rights of self-governance and community protection.

As Tribal leaders, we urge the DOJ to begin public education and outreach immediately regarding the Alaska Pilot Project and criminal jurisdiction over non-Native offenders rather than waiting until after Tribal nations are approved. Restoring our sovereign authority to protect our communities through criminal jurisdiction is a historic shift requiring broad public understanding and awareness. By initiating comprehensive public

education now—through media campaigns, educational materials, and community outreach—we can proactively address misconceptions, reduce potential resistance, and ensure Native and non-Native residents understand these important changes to Tribal authority. Early education helps demonstrate that Tribal jurisdiction enhances public safety for everyone while respecting due process rights. Waiting until after Tribal nations are approved to begin public education creates unnecessary barriers and delays. Many of our communities are remote, and information takes time to disseminate effectively across Alaska. Building public awareness and understanding now will help ensure smoother implementation when Tribal nations begin exercising this restored jurisdiction, ultimately leading to safer communities for all Alaskans.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. We urge OVW to support dedicated funding for infrastructure capital expenses for Tribal nations in Alaska.
2. Of the 229 Tribal Nations in Alaska, fewer than three percent have public safety holding facilities that will support long-term residents. Alaska Tribal nations need dedicated infrastructure facility funding to implement STCJ fully.
3. The current single-agency funding stream doesn't consider the many robust needs of Tribal nations in Alaska to implement VAWA and the Alaska Pilot Program fully. We recommend a multi-agency, multi-year, mini-consolidation grant program approach through different agencies to fund Alaska Tribal nations' implementation of VAWA and the Alaska Pilot Program.
4. We need sustained increased funding that accounts for the unique challenges of providing services in Alaska.
5. We need multi-year funding commitments that will allow us to build and maintain programs rather than perpetually struggling with year-to-year uncertainty.
6. We need funding formulas that recognize the extraordinary cost of serving remote communities and the disproportionate rates of violence against the people, our people, and how and what they face.

Topic 3: U.S. Supreme Court Case *Castro-Huerta v. Oklahoma* Application in Courts Threatens Tribal Jurisdiction and Sovereignty

The application in the courts of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Castro-Huerta v. Oklahoma* (*Castro-Huerta*) threatens to erode Tribal jurisdiction and sovereignty. The decision in *Castro-Huerta* circumvents Congress's exclusive authority over Indian affairs and threatens to upset the balance of powers established in the U.S. Constitution. This threat is manifesting. In a 2023 Oklahoma Supreme Court decision, *In the Matter of S.J.W.*, the Court applied the Supreme Court's decision in *Castro-Huerta* to conclude that Tribal nations no longer have exclusive jurisdiction over adoption cases concerning their citizens within the borders of their reservations under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The Oklahoma Supreme Court reached this decision even though the Supreme Court's decision in *Castro-Huerta* concerned criminal law, not child welfare cases, and Congress was clear in the ICWA that Tribal nations exercise this jurisdiction to the exclusion of states. The fact that courts are applying *Castro-Huerta* to override the plain language of statutes passed by Congress could pose grave consequences for the future of VAWA and require immediate Congressional correction.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. DOJ must communicate to Congress that it supports the proposed legislation encapsulated in NCAI Resolution SAC-22-043.1, *Calling on Congress to Enact the Legislative Proposal to Improve Public Safety in Indian Country*. Without Congressional action, the Court will be emboldened to continue to rewrite and override federal statutes that Congress has passed to affirm Tribal sovereignty and

protect Native women and children. Nothing less than the lives of our women and children are at stake.

Topic 4: Federal Government Must Honor Its Trust Responsibility

Tribal Nations cannot meaningfully exercise restored jurisdiction and make Indian Country safer if the federal government does not live up to its trust responsibility to provide public safety funding and resources to implement the restored jurisdiction. Tribal Nations spend significant time and resources to prepare their justice systems and victim service programs to meet the needs of their communities; however, many Tribal nations are limited by a lack of flexible, consistent, and sustainable funding for their justice systems, leaving many without the ability to implement the VAWA restored criminal jurisdiction. The federal government must live up to its trust responsibility by providing consistent and sustainable upfront funding for Tribal public safety and justice systems. Restoring Tribal criminal jurisdiction must include the necessary resources and funding to exercise that jurisdiction and help to make Tribal communities safer.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. Federal agencies must include annual, consistent, and sustainable noncompetitive funding for Tribal nations for all public safety and victim services needs in their annual budget requests.
2. DOJ should request the total amount of funding authorized for Tribal programs in VAWA, especially for the STCJ grant program and reimbursement.
3. BOP should cover transportation costs for Tribal nations to transport inmates to designated facilities and coordinate with Tribal nations to provide federal transportation to the facility.
4. DOJ and DOI should increase funding for Tribal nations' implementation of STCJ for DOJ, HHS, and BIA.

Topic 5: 2022 *Castro-Huerta* Memorandum from EOUSA

In 2022, Monty Wilkinson, then-Director of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, issued a memorandum to all U.S. Attorneys, Criminal Chiefs, Tribal Liaisons, and Victim Witness Coordinators. The memo stated that the ruling in *Castro-Huerta* "does not alter federal jurisdiction to prosecute crimes in Indian Country pursuant to 18 U.S. Code sections 1152 and 1153. Nor does the decision diminish the federal government's trust responsibility to Tribal Nations." The Director went on to advise U.S. Attorneys to "not alter referral practices without formal consultation with Tribal Nations in their districts, bearing in mind the important principles of Tribal sovereignty, government-to-government relationship, and the importance of partnership and open communication." He stated that, "the Department considers it a priority to address the disproportionately high rates of violence experienced by American Indians and Alaska Natives by promoting public safety in Indian Country. The *Castro-Huerta* decision does not alter this mission, and communication, collaboration, and coordination among federal, Tribal, and state partners will help meet that goal."

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. DOJ must ensure that U.S. Attorneys follow the direction of the EOUSA memorandum and that the FBI director issues a similar statement and direction to stop the FBI retreat from Indian Country.
2. DOI should issue a similar memorandum and provide training to relevant DOI and BIA staff located in Indian Country.
3. DOJ should provide training and education for U.S. Attorneys, FBI personnel, Criminal Chiefs, Victim Witness Coordinators, and any other relevant DOJ staff on the EOUSA directives.

Topic 6: Federally Recognized Tribal Nations Are in P.L. 280 States

Sixty-five percent of federally recognized Tribal nations are in P.L. 280 states. We have low state prosecution rates in P.L. 280 states involving violence against Native women. Yet, Tribal nations located in P.L. 280 states receive little to no support from the BIA for Tribal law enforcement and courts. Consequently, the Tribal nations in P.L. 280 states have two problems: fewer resources to develop their Tribal justice systems, and states with concurrent jurisdiction fail to fulfill their responsibilities under the law.

Since the 1990s, DOJ has financially supported and provided technical assistance to Tribal nations to develop and enhance their Tribal police departments and court systems. However, due to Tribal nations' collective outcry, the DOI has only requested and received funding in the past few years. The federal funding disparities at the BIA for Tribal nations in P.L. 280 states and similarly situated jurisdictions must be addressed more robustly and immediately by the federal government. It is imperative not only to restore Tribal nations' jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators fully but also to provide funding for their justice systems so that they can make their communities safer for everyone who lives there. The cost of inaction is measured not in dollars but in lives lost, crimes unpunished, and communities living in fear. Every day without adequate funding is another day our people are denied the fundamental protections every American citizen deserves.

Oral Comments from Tami Truett Jerue in Regard to Alaska and Tribal Communities

I come to you as part of an incredible group of warrior women, but I also come to you as someone who has held the hands of mothers searching for their missing daughters and mourning the loss of their murdered sons. As a Tribal leader, I've wiped away the tears of grandmothers raising grandchildren because violence has torn their families apart, just like so many others in our communities. I am a mother and a grandmother who lies awake at night, deeply worried about the safety of my children and grandchildren.

Every role I carry—whether as an advocate, a leader, a mother, a grandmother, or a daughter—has been shaped by the weight of generational trauma and a deep, unwavering hope for change. When I speak about violence against Native women, I am not speaking about statistics. I am speaking about the sisters who've been lost, the children who've been orphaned, and the communities that are hurting.

This isn't just about policy. This is about matters of life and death for our people. The issues and recommendations I'm bringing forward today are not just Alaska-specific issues. These are national concerns that Tribes across the country have supported and advocated for, and they deserve national attention and immediate action.

Every day in our Tribal communities, lives are being lost. Our people face criminal victimization at staggering rates, and entire generations are carrying the weight of unaddressed trauma. Our Alaska Native and American Indian communities are being denied their fundamental right to safety and justice. The federal government's persistent and deliberate underfunding of Tribal justice systems is not just a policy failure—it is a direct violation of the trust responsibility to our people, and the devastating cost of that failure is measured in lost lives.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs recently determined that to provide basic, reasonable funding to all federally recognized Tribes, we need \$1 billion for Tribal law enforcement, \$1 billion for Tribal courts, and \$2.8 million for detention facilities. Yet today, Tribal law enforcement officers are receiving only 20% of the funding they need. Tribal detention facilities operate with just 40% of the identified funding needs, and our Tribal courts—the very foundation of our justice systems—function with only 3% of the BIA's identified required resources.

The situation is even more dire in P.L. 280 states like Alaska and Wisconsin. Our Tribes operate with virtually no BIA law enforcement presence. Instead of stable, reliable funding, we are forced to rely on special, annual appropriations that can disappear without warning. The BIA found that Alaska alone needs \$330 million annually to support adequate Tribal justice systems. Yet our Tribes receive mere pennies on the dollar, year after year, to support our justice systems.

The crisis is further compounded by systemic inequities. Tribes in P.L. 280 jurisdictions receive substantially less support—often none at all—compared to Tribes with concurrent federal jurisdiction. This disparity has prevented us from building and maintaining our police departments and court systems. Without these fundamental institutions of justice, our communities remain vulnerable, and our sovereignty is diminished. These aren't just figures. These are real impacts on our communities.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. BIA should continue requesting additional federal funding to provide public safety and justice resources to Tribal nations in P.L. 280 states.
2. DOJ and BIA must take immediate action to address these funding disparities. BIA must secure comprehensive federal funding for public safety and justice in P.L. 280 states—this is fundamental to fulfilling the trust responsibility to protect Tribal communities.
3. BIA must establish direct, sustainable funding streams for Tribal courts and law enforcement, with integrated accountability measures to ensure these resources have the maximum impact on Native people.
4. The current funding disparity between Tribal nations based on P.L. 280 states must end immediately—a Tribal nation's location should never determine its right to safety and justice.
5. Finally, OVW must provide Alaska Tribal programs adequate time for implementation and end discriminatory practices like Alaska-specific probation periods that undermine Tribal sovereignty. These changes are crucial to protecting our communities and honoring the federal government's obligations to all Tribal nations.

Topic 7: Family Violence Prevention and Services Act

During past consultations, Tribal leaders raised concerns about the lack of shelter and supportive services for Tribal nations. The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) is the only dedicated federal funding source for domestic violence shelters across the country. However, FVPSA authorization expired in 2015.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. HHS should support a FVPSA reauthorization that:
 - a. Adjusts the funding distribution to increase the amount that Tribal nations receive from 10% to 12.5%;
 - b. Dedicates formula funding for Tribal coalitions to provide culturally appropriate technical assistance to Tribal nations;
 - c. Provides permanent funding for the National Indian Domestic Violence Hotline
 - d. Provides permanent funding for the Alaska Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce disparities facing Native victims; and
 - e. Provides permanent funding for the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce disparities facing Native Hawaiian victims.

Topic 8: The Federal Government's Response to Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) is a Breach of Federal Trust Responsibility

The federal response to the injustice of the MMIWR crisis is a breach of the federal trust responsibility and a human rights violation. An adequately resourced local Tribal response to prevent murders and women from going missing is essential. In 2018, the DOJ Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions Report to Congress (page 3) noted that “[i]t is the Department’s position that prioritization of initiatives in Indian Country, including the effort to build capacity in Tribal courts, will lead to enhanced public safety for Native Americans.” The federal government’s failure to adequately fund Tribal victim services and Tribal law enforcement and the lack of response from federal law enforcement is a continuation of genocide committed against Indigenous peoples of this country.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. The Not Invisible Act Commission submitted its report, *“Not One More: the Not Invisible Act Commission,”* to DOI and DOJ over a year ago on November 1, 2023. We appreciate the responses earlier this year from DOI, DOJ, and most recently from HHS. **We ask DOJ and DOI to please follow up with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for their response and look forward to at least annual updates from each federal agency.**
2. DHS agencies and staff work within Indian Country and interact with Tribal citizens, yet DHS does not have protocols to respond to MMIWR cases. DHS should require each agency within the department to develop and implement MMIWR protocols in consultation with Tribal nations. This would further the mission established by Executive Order 14053: *Improving Public Safety and Criminal Justice for Native Americans and Addressing the Crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous People*. For example, Customs and Border Protection should better coordinate with Tribal nations on MMIWR cases that occur near U.S. borders, the Transportation Security Agency should train staff on how to identify human trafficking victims, the Cyber Security Infrastructure Security Agency should train Tribal staff and citizens on how to protect against traffickers, the DHS Blue Campaign should offer free culturally-specific information campaigns for Tribal nations, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency should coordinate with Tribal nations to help find MMIWR victims during or after disasters.
3. DHS should establish permanent MMIWR staff positions within the Department. DHS must fully staff its Office of Tribal Affairs in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs with at least six staff members to coordinate Tribal issues within DHS.
4. The 2005 reauthorization of VAWA’s National Institute of Justice research program should be fully implemented and provide Tribal nations information regarding missing or murdered Native women, including unique barriers facing Tribal nations and Native women in P.L. 280 states.
5. DOJ and DOI should review, revise, and create law enforcement and justice protocols appropriate to the disappearance of Native women and girls, including inter-jurisdictional issues as provided by Savanna’s Act and the Not Invisible Act. (P.L. 116-165 and P.L. 116-166)
6. All federal departments should coordinate efforts in consultation with Tribal nations to increase the response of state governments, where appropriate, to cases of the disappearance or murder of Native people.
7. DOJ should investigate state and local agencies, like Montana state and local justice officials, with a pattern or practice of inadequately responding to cases of MMIWR (*Rose Quilt et al., The Failed Response of State Justice Agencies to Investigate and Prosecute MMIWG Cases: A Pattern and Practice in Violation of the U.S. Civil Rights Act, Restoration Magazine, 2022, 34-38.*)
8. DOJ and DOI should support the Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety for Native Communities (BADGES) Act and the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act or similar legislation.

Topic 9: MMIWR and Culturally Appropriate Way to Support Families and Victims

While preventing the occurrence of MMIWR should be the primary goal, steps must be taken to ensure that both families and victims are supported in a culturally appropriate way when crimes occur. In many reported incidents, the pain of losing a loved one was exacerbated by improper or culturally insensitive treatment of the case or remains.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. DOJ, DOI, DHS, and HHS should implement recommendations from the National Congress of American Indians regarding the Tribal set-aside from the Crime Victims Fund to ensure the resources reach victims, survivors, and their families (*NCAI Resolution ABQ-19-034 Calling for Improvements in the Administration of Tribal Crime Victims Funding, 2019*)
2. Crimes that result in MMIWR often occur in the intersection of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking. It is essential that the Office on Violence Against Women, the Office for Victims of Crime, the Office of Family Violence and Prevention Services, DHS, and the Indian Health Service increase Tribally-based victim advocacy services to prevent MMIWR and support the families and community members of missing, murdered, or trafficked Native people.
3. Develop protocols, in consultation with Tribal nations, which recognize the inherent right of Native peoples to exercise their traditional practices to prevent and intervene in response to MMIWR. These protocols must address the current violations of Tribal religious and cultural practices in the handling of human remains.

Topic 10: Extractive Industries

The escalation of sexual and domestic violence, including sex trafficking, due to the presence of extractive industries and military construction projects on or nearby Tribal lands must be addressed by DOJ, DOI, HHS, DHS, and the Department of Defense (DoD) or DoD's Army Corps of Engineers. These industries, including companies and subcontractors, must be held accountable for the resulting violence from itinerant workforces employed within Tribal communities. Native women and their children should not be exposed to violence by those employed by these industries.

Example from Carmen O' Leary: In the Great Plains, we've had our share of challenges, including the famous Standing Rock protests, but Cheyenne River also faced its own pipeline issues. A pipeline that was initially stopped, though it might go forward now. What I want to highlight, though, is that when a man camp was set up in a high-poverty area, we took the opportunity to meet with the people in the community. They told us they would conduct background checks and fire anyone with a DUI or any other serious issues on their record. I believe they had a solid plan in place, and it might be something worth recommending across the board for other projects or initiatives. It's a way to ensure safety and accountability, especially when working in vulnerable communities.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. DOJ, DOI, DoD Army Corps of Engineers, HHS, and DHS should consult with Tribal nations to create standards of protection of Tribal communities for extractive industries' compliance before, during, and post-construction to protect Native women and children. The protections must be included throughout the federal permitting processes.
2. DOJ should assist Tribal nations in safeguarding the lives of Native women from extractive industries that employ a militarized police force. Further protections must be used to ensure that no militarized tactics, usage of excessive force, or violations of civil rights are committed against Tribal citizens.

3. HHS should enhance support for services and training for shelter and related advocacy and medical services by consulting with Tribal nations to develop materials addressing the needs of domestic and sexual violence victims who are victimized by itinerant workers who cannot be held accountable by local Tribal authorities.
4. DOJ, DOI, and DHS should consult with Tribal nations to establish screening guidelines to prevent convicted rapists, domestic violence offenders, stalkers, child predators, sex traffickers, and murderers from employment with extractive industries on or near Tribal lands and from accessing often unprotected populations of Native women and children.

Topic 11: Native Peoples Experience Some of the Highest Crime Victimization Rates in the Country.

Native peoples experience some of the highest crime victimization rates in the country (NIJ, *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings From the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*, May 2016).

The crisis of violence against Alaska Native women and children has reached catastrophic proportions and demands immediate and sustained federal action through comprehensive Tribal victim services funding. Alaska Native women face some of the highest rates of violence in the nation, with studies showing that four out of five women have experienced violence in their lifetime, more than 56% have experienced sexual violence specifically, and nearly half have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner, rates far exceeding the national average. The statistics paint a devastating picture of trauma and systemic vulnerability. Alaska Native women are nearly three times more likely to experience sexual assault compared to non-Native women and children. Some regions of Alaska experience abuse at rates six times higher than the national average.

In rural Alaska Native communities, where law enforcement may be hours or days away, reported rape rates are as much as 12 times higher than the national average. Perhaps most alarming, Alaska Native women in some communities face a murder rate up to 10 times higher than the national average for all women. These numbers represent more than statistics. They represent our mothers and our sisters, our daughters, and our grandchildren. They represent generations of trauma that continue to impact our communities due to the insufficient resources and support services.

Alaska's geography combined with the remote location of many Tribes creates unique challenges in providing victim services that require specific and sustained funding solutions. Many of our communities are off the road system, accessible only by plane or boat or snow machine, making the delivery of services both logistically complex and extraordinarily expensive. The federal government's trust responsibility to protect Tribes must include robust funding for victim services programs that are culturally appropriate and Tribally administered. Currently, Tribes in Alaska are struggling to provide life-saving victim services with limited resources spread across the state more than twice the size of Texas. This geographic reality, combined with disproportionate rates of violence, creates an urgent need for increased sustainable funding streams that acknowledge both the scope of the crisis and the challenges faced by the Alaska Tribes.

Tribal victim services funding is not simply a budget item. It's a crucial lifeline for our communities and a fundamental aspect of Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. It represents our ability to protect our people through culturally appropriate services that honor our traditional ways while addressing modern challenges. The current funding levels fall dramatically short of meeting the needs of Alaska Native Tribes, leaving many survivors without access to essential services and the support systems that could mean the difference between life and death.

Every day we delay addressing the funding crisis for Tribal victim services we put more lives at risk. Violence against women is preventable. In the time I have spent providing this testimony multiple Alaska Native women and children have experienced violence. Some may have sought help only to find their local Tribal program lacking the resources to provide immediate assistance. Others may have chosen to remain in dangerous situations knowing their community lacks funding for safe housing or emergency services. The solutions are clear.

NCAI's Recommendations:

1. We recommend that the DOJ significantly increase Tribal victim services funding for Alaska Tribes and create sustainable long-term funding streams that acknowledge our needs and challenges.
2. We need multi-year funding commitments that will allow us to build and maintain programs rather than perpetually struggling with year-to-year uncertainty.
3. We also recommend that the DOJ work towards amendments in the law that serve Tribal needs, including infrastructure, court services, and law enforcement. Our people cannot afford to wait.
4. We need funding formulas that recognize the extraordinary cost of serving remote communities and the disproportionate rates of violence against the people, our people, and what they face.
5. Support a permanent Tribal set-aside fix to the Victims of Crime Act Tribal funding stream that reflects actual Tribal needs and continues to support the flexible use of funding.
6. The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) should continue conducting government-to-government Tribal consultations to improve the distribution, management, and administration of the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Program and determine how regulations should be tailored to address unique Tribal needs.
7. OVC should appoint a standing working group of Tribal experts to improve the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Program and provide input on programmatic decisions on an ongoing basis. Ongoing consultation and consistent input from Tribal nations are imperative to ensure the program's continued success.

Topic 12: Section 212 of the Tribal Law and Order Act

Section 212 of the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 requires U.S. Attorneys to coordinate with Tribal officials. Tribal officials need to be notified promptly when a U.S. Attorney declines to prosecute sexual assault and domestic violence cases and why they have declined. When the perpetrator is an Indian defendant, a Tribal prosecutor may proceed with the Tribal prosecution of the crime. In cases with non-Indian defendants, it is still essential that the U.S. Attorneys notify Tribal officials. Tribal nations can then notify the victim about the case's status, allowing the victim to take the necessary steps for their protection.

NCAI's Recommendations

1. The U.S. Attorney General should respond to the March 14, 2024, letter sent by U.S. Senators Luján, Cortez Masto, Smith, Gillibrand, Rosen, Klobuchar, Hirono, and Heinrich on the high rates of Tribal prosecutorial declinations (*Luján, Ben Ray. (March 14, 2024). Prosecutorial declinations in Indian country*).

Topic 13: *L.B. v United States*

The NCAI VAW Task Force discussed the Department of Justice's US Attorney's Office statement during oral arguments in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals this past June in the case *L.B. v. United States* at our recent meeting, and we found it most concerning. The following text is from the transcript:

Assistant U.S. Attorney: L.B. stated that they had been neighbors, they'd gone to grade school together, their family members had been friends, and on the night of the assault, L.B. asked Bullcoming quote, "You've always had a crush on me since long, since a long time ago."

Judge: How does that affect the scope of employment?

Assistant U.S. Attorney: Because what that shows is, is that his interest in sexually assaulting her was purely personal. He had this personal relationship, a crush on L.B., and he was not sexually assaulting her to serve some interest of the BIA.

"We are shocked and appalled that (the) Department of Justice, under Attorney General Merrick Garland's leadership, continues to fight L.B. in her pursuit of justice," states Mary Kathryn Nagle, attorney for the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC). "The Biden Administration has made very clear they care about ending violence against Native women. But at the oral argument before the Ninth Circuit, Assistant United States Attorney Randy Tanner argued that the DOI and BIA cannot be held liable for the sexual assault committed by its on-duty law officer because the officer had a 'crush on the victim.' This line of argument is appalling and reflects a deep-seated problem within Attorney General Garland's DOJ. Being physically attracted to someone is not a license to rape, and the reversal of the case before the Ninth Circuit now gives the Biden Administration the opportunity to do the right thing finally and simply agree to compensate L.B. for the horrific trauma she has suffered."

Topic 14: Mandated Annual Reports

Last, the U.S. Attorney General must continue to submit the statutorily mandated annual Tribal consultation reports and Indian Country investigations and prosecutions reports to Congress. Tribal nations' concerns and recommendations regarding violence against AI/AN women are extensive, as documented in past VAWA Annual Tribal Consultation Reports. The legislative and executive branches must coordinate and collaborate to enact changes that will address the disproportionate rates of violence against AI/AN women. The VAWA Annual Tribal Consultation Reports and Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions Reports to Congress are important mechanisms for ensuring that the legislative and executive branches coordinate and collaborate to this end.

NCAI's Recommendation:

1. The U.S. Attorney General and DOJ must consistently and timely submit the VAWA Annual Tribal Consultation Report and the Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions Report to Congress on the DOJ website.

Closing Oral Comment

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of our Tribal communities and the survivors that we serve. What we need now is action, not just thoughtful consideration.



Akiak Native Community

Michael Williams, Tribal Judge - Tribal Leader (Written)

Akiak is a Yup'itt village in Alaska located about 42 miles from the hub community of Bethel. Our village has roughly 400 residents, most of which are Alaska Native. Travel to Akiak is mainly by air and at limited times by river. There is no permanent state law enforcement within our community and the closest Alaska State Troopers Post is stationed in Bethel. Despite the challenges, Akiak continues to build and develop our Tribal justice system.

As a long time member of the National Congress of American Indians, the Akiak Native Community continues to support NCIA's written consultation testimony as we have since 2013. Although we face many challenges, both internally and externally, Yup'itt are a people of great strength and resilience, rich in culture and tradition. Tribes continue to survive and thrive despite ongoing challenges to our self-determination, the theft of our lands and resources, and breaches of federal trust, all reflected in the preventable violence against our women, including missing or murdered Indigenous women (MMIW).

Long-term solutions to violence against women and other crimes lie in our local cultures. Tribes need the federal government to seriously consider how you carry out your trust responsibility to assist Tribes in safeguarding our women's lives. This includes Alaska Native specific technical assistance and training, such as that provided by the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center and the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. We thank Congress, Senator Murkowski, and President Biden for recognizing this fact and enacting VAWA with the Alaska Tribal Safety Empowerment subsection.

Our communities are in a crisis. P.L. 280 is an unfunded mandate that has failed Alaska Tribes miserably and has helped to create the most dangerous situations in the country. Our communities need consistent, non-competitive base funding to build our infrastructure that is reliable from year to year to provide for long range planning. While reforming the Tribal, federal, and state justice systems is crucial, equally important is providing Tribes with robust support to offer Native women culturally appropriate, local assistance for healing, reducing vulnerability, and preventing further victimization. This requires Tribal programming that is Tribally and culturally centered and requires the assistance of our federal and state partners, and their governments.

Topic 1: OVW Annual Consultation Framing Paper Notice and Distribution

Many Tribal leaders are responsible for carrying out numerous tasks and priorities for their Tribes and communities as well as their families. Tribal consultation is very important for Tribal leaders to share priorities and recommendations to make meaningful change in their communities. The DOJ should prioritize the distribution of consultation framing papers as soon as possible to Tribal leaders and further recommend that the federal government's requirements for consultation be updated to no less than 60 days prior to any scheduled consultation of framing paper questions and any other documents. This change will help to encourage more meaningful engagement with Tribal leaders and will provide them with the much-needed time to consider and respond to these important framing paper questions.

Recommendations:

1. The federal government's consultation requirements found in 34 USC Section 20126 should be updated to include specific timelines for consultation framing paper questions, notice, and distribution, which should not be less than 60 days prior to any scheduled consultation.

2. DOJ's 2022 policy regarding adequate notice of Tribal consultations should be updated to require no less than 60 days' notice prior to any scheduled consultation of framing paper questions and related documents.

Topic 2: Implementation of the Alaska Pilot Program and Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction

The available Alaska Pilot Program funding opportunities and the manner that OVW is managing current grant opportunities for Alaska Tribes to support implementation is not working. My people have governed these lands since time immemorial. We know what we need to protect our communities. We need adequate resources and time to build our internal systems – systems that will allow us to exercise both civil and criminal jurisdiction over Alaska Natives and American Indians in our villages, and to hold accountable those non-Native offenders who commit crimes under VAWA against our people.

The single-agency funding approach shows a fundamental misunderstanding of what Alaska Tribes require to fully implement VAWA 2022 and the Alaska Pilot Program. We need a more comprehensive approach – one that brings together multiple federal agencies in a coordinated effort, providing multi-year, mini-consolidation grant programs. This is about creating sustainable systems that work for our communities.

Of our 229 federally recognized Tribes in Alaska, fewer than three percent have facilities that can hold offenders long-term. How can we implement VAWA 2022 and protect our people without the basic infrastructure to hold those who harm our communities? We need dedicated funding for facilities and capital expenses – this is not optional. In 2019, then-Attorney General Barr visited Alaska and declared a public safety emergency in rural Alaska. That declaration acknowledged the crisis we face. Now, the Department of Justice and the Department of the Interior must build on that recognition. Send funding directly to our Alaska Native Tribes – not to the State of Alaska, which has consistently failed to protect our people.

Lastly, we need immediate funding for technical assistance providers to support Alaska Tribes. Our Tribes need an Alaska-based technical assistance provider, like the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, who understands our unique challenges and can guide us through the implementation of VAWA 2022. The current approach from the federal government to support VAWA 2022 implementation in Alaska is not merely ineffective – it threatens the safety and sovereignty of our people. We demand better.

Recommendations:

1. A more comprehensive approach – one that brings together multiple federal agencies in a coordinated effort, providing multi-year, mini-consolidation grant programs.
2. We need dedicated funding for facilities and capital expenses to hold offenders long-term
3. Send funding directly to our Alaska Native Tribes – not to the State of Alaska
4. Immediate funding for technical assistance providers to support Alaska Tribes
5. An Alaska-based technical assistance provider to guide us through the implementation of VAWA 2022

Topic 3: Lack of Funding for Tribal Justice Systems

The underfunding of Tribal justice systems is a direct violation of the federal government's trust responsibility towards Alaska Native and American Indian Tribes. My people have suffered for generations because the federal government has failed to uphold your sacred trust responsibility to our Tribes. The chronic underfunding of our Tribal justice systems has left a legacy of pain – lost lives in our communities, unaddressed crime against our people, and deep trauma that echoes through generations of our families.

Recently, the Bureau of Indian Affairs told Congress that it would take over \$1 billion to provide even basic, minimal Tribal court and justice funding to all federally recognized Tribes. For Alaska alone, where my people live, the BIA says we need \$330 million annually. These are not arbitrary numbers, yet we wait, and our people suffer. Because we are in a P.L. 280 jurisdiction in Alaska, we receive far less support – and sometimes no support at all – compared to Tribes with concurrent federal jurisdiction.

Through your BIA compacting process, you have denied us the same opportunities to build our own police forces and court systems that other Tribes receive. This discriminatory policy must end. Both the Department of Justice and the BIA must seek the funding and authority to eliminate this disparity. The location of jurisdiction should not determine whether our people have equal access to justice.

If you truly want to restore our Tribes' rightful authority to prosecute non-Indian offenders who prey on our people, you must first honor your trust responsibility. We need funding that is flexible, consistent, and sustainable for our Tribal justice systems. The BIA must provide direct funding to Tribal nations in P.L. 280 states for our justice systems and law enforcement and must do so in a way that is both sustainable and accountable. The time for empty words has passed. If you wish to honor your treaties and trust responsibility, then support our right to protect our own people. Give us the resources we need to build strong Tribal justice systems in our communities and villages. Only then can we begin to heal the wounds of generations and create a safe and just future that our children deserve.

Recommendation:

1. The BIA must provide direct funding to Tribal nations in P.L. 280 states for our justice systems and law enforcement and must do so in a way that is both sustainable and accountable.

Topic 4: Victim Services Programs

To address victimization within our Tribal communities, adequate funding to Tribes that respects and recognizes our self-determination and authority in creating culturally appropriate and holistic services is needed. Cultural programs help to both heal victims' trauma and reduce continued violent behavior within our families and communities. Further, Technical Assistance providers for Alaska communities need to be from within the state, such as the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center. Understanding our unique challenges and needs is critical in addressing the issues.

Recommendations:

1. Evaluate past grant victim service programs prior to the Tribal Victim Set-Aside Programs since 2018 and create a comprehensive, increased services formula-based program for victims of violence.
2. Require OVC and DOJ to work toward amendments in the law that serve Tribal needs, including court services, law enforcement, and infrastructure.
3. Permanency of the 10% set-aside crime victim fund for Tribal nations.
4. Ensure that OVC is appropriately staffed and understand the challenges of all Tribes to work toward safe communities and solutions.

Topic 5: Better Coordination Among Federal Agencies

It is the responsibility of the federal government to ensure that programs are accessible to Tribes of all sizes throughout the nation. Year after year we call upon DOJ—OVW and OVC, BIA, HHS, DHS and other agencies for better coordination among federal agencies to meet the President's priority of safety and well-being of all Native Americans.

We call upon each federal agency to maintain consistency and accountability between agencies and individual grant program managers. Understaffed Tribes have to jump through the many hoops of many different departments and requirements to try to meet the needs of their communities. This current maze of funding, requirements, and obstacles is leaving many Tribes unable to access funds that they are entitled to.

Recommendation:

- Maintain consistency and accountability among agencies and individual grant program managers.

Conclusion

We believe in the continuation of building alliances to enhance and promote the voices of American Indian and Alaska Native survivors, advocates, and Tribal leaders at the village, state, federal, and international levels. By working together, we strengthen our advocacy for equal access to justice, shelters, housing, and services, as well as for local, Tribal-based solutions to community issues—solutions designed by and for Native women. The injustices Alaska Tribes have faced is a national issue. By working together, we stand stronger in our advocacy efforts for equal access to justice, shelters, local Tribal-based solutions to local Tribal problems, and access to housing, services, and advocacy designed by and for Native women.



Anvik Village

Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center - Authorized Designee (Written)

My name is Tami Truett Jerue, I am an authorized designee of the Anvik First Chief, Robert Walker. Anvik is a Deg Hit'an Athabascan Tribe with 392 enrolled Tribal members. The Village of Anvik is located on the west bank of the Yukon River in the Interior of Alaska. I am also the Executive Director of Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC).

Topic 1: Lack of Law Enforcement Presence

Access to our community is limited. Aniak is the nearest "hub community" located 77 air miles and one and a half hours away. Many of the communities in Alaska do not have any law enforcement presence at all which is compounded by the unique geographical locations, the harsh weather conditions, and lack of state and federal resources.

The Alaska 911 system, for example, has failed for most of our rural and predominantly Alaska Native communities. When tragedy happens in our rural villages, the response time of state public agencies can take hours at best, or multiple days, if they respond at all. Tribal leaders and community members become responsible for filling the role of law enforcement without proper equipment or training. This deadly combination disproportionately affects our Alaska Native women and children the most. Alaska Native women suffer domestic and sexual violence at drastically higher rates without an equitable amount of resources in order to develop, and implement local, culturally relevant solutions and programs to start to address the issues and injustices within our communities. The assumption that P.L. 280 states provide law enforcement and justice services to Tribal communities leaves many people unprotected and unsafe.

Recommendation:

1. Alaska Native Tribes need an equitable amount of resources to develop and implement local, culturally relevant, solutions and programs.

Topic 2: Lack of Recognition of Tribal Protective Orders

I want to share a domestic violence case that I have been working on for the last twelve years, involving an Anvik Tribal citizen, whom I'll call Mary. Mary has provided permission so I'm protecting her confidentiality while providing the information you need to understand the challenges our Tribes face with the enforcement of Tribal domestic violence protective orders, despite clear federal law requiring enforcement across jurisdictions. This is not a unique story but rather a common experience of Native women. Her reality speaks to a crisis facing Alaska Native women across our state and across our nation. For seven years, she has lived in the shadow of violence, trapped between federal promises and their hollow execution.

For seven years, I tried utilizing my large network of contacts, professionals, and subject matter experts, including AKNWRC, FBI, US Attorneys' Offices, attorneys, advocates, and law enforcement. In my 40+ years of advocacy I have had no success in getting local and county law enforcement officers to do what they are federally mandated to do - many times without recourse, without accountability, or without disciplinary or legal action.

Mary moved down to the lower-48 with her abusive husband in hopes of a better future for her family, but the abuse continued. She eventually divorced him, but he went on to stalk and abuse her, so she got a protective order against him. Even though she followed the advice of survivor groups to protect herself, an intruder, believed to be her ex-husband, broke into her house and sexually assaulted her. Local law enforcement did not provide protection but rather interrogated her instead. Mary then sought protection from our Tribal court, which issued a long-term protective order on behalf of Mary, not guaranteeing support from law enforcement in the lower-48.

Despite the problems of the Tribal domestic violence protective orders, for Mary, even the slightest possibility that a Tribal protective order would offer her and her children some protection made it worth it to her to get. Mary has since remarried, moved, changed jobs repeatedly, yet the stalking and violent behavior of her ex-husband has seemingly increased, without any accountability or consequences. Mary remains fearful for her life.

Our Tribe has heard of many cases like Mary's in recent years where out-of-state law enforcement refused to recognize Tribal protective orders. Tribal orders are still not taken as credible or legitimate by out-of-state law enforcement. Every time local, non-Indigenous, law enforcement agencies choose not to enforce a Tribal protective order our Tribal sovereignty is challenged, survivors are left without life-saving protections and assistance, and the trust in our systems of justice is eroded.

Of those who sought to enforce Tribal protective orders in other states, many encountered resistance or outright refusal from law enforcement. Some experienced further violence after law enforcement refused to enforce their orders, and the vast majority reported feeling forced to return to Tribal lands despite having opportunities elsewhere, solely because their protective orders weren't being honored.

The Violence Against Women Act stands as your commitment to protect our women. Yet today, at this very moment, our Tribal citizen and mother walks in danger of death at the hands of her former husband. Why?

Because state and local law enforcement dismiss our Tribal protective orders as mere paper, despite federal law demanding they be honored.

The gap between federal mandate and local action isn't just a legal inconsistency - it is a matter of life and death. How many more women must we lose before the words "full faith and credit" are given their full weight and protection? How many more years must pass before our Tribal sovereignty is truly respected? Without broad enforcement across jurisdictional lines, and support from non-Tribal systems of justice designed to protect all people, and not just non-Natives, Tribal survivors are effectively left with the decision of staying within our Alaska Native villages where they are Tribally protected or risking their safety moving outside of the Tribe and village.

Many give up educational opportunities, jobs, and proximity to supportive family members because they can't risk traveling to places where their protective orders might not be enforced. This creates a two-tiered system of justice where Tribal court orders, unlike their state counterparts, become somehow less legitimate when they cross state lines. This undermines the government-to-government relationship between Tribes and the federal government and contradicts both the letter and spirit of VAWA's full faith and credit provisions.

Recommendations:

1. Federal action must include mandatory training for all state and local law enforcement on Tribal protective orders, VAWA's full faith and credit provisions, Tribal court jurisdiction and authority, proper enforcement procedures, and cultural competency when working with Native survivors.
2. Integration of Tribal court orders into federal and state databases, with direct access for Tribal courts to enter orders, real-time verification capabilities, and automated notification systems accompanied by stronger federal accountability measures including clear enforcement guidelines, regular compliance audits, and consequences for agencies that systematically fail to enforce Tribal orders.
3. Dedicated funding for interstate enforcement coordination, training programs, database integration, technical assistance, and support services for survivors navigating multiple jurisdictions.
4. Legislative amendments to strengthen VAWA's full faith and credit provisions – establishing clear enforcement protocols, creating a private right of action for survivors when orders aren't enforced, and mandating acceptance of Tribal court orders without additional verification.

Topic 3: Victim Services Programs

OVC and DOJ should be required to work toward amendments in the law that serve Tribes and Tribal needs including infrastructure, court services, and law enforcement. These amendments should include an evaluation of past grant victim service programs prior to the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside programs since 2018 that aid in the creation of a comprehensive, increased services formula-based program for victims of violence and accountability for those who use violence.

Additionally, OVC needs to be appropriately staffed with the understanding of the challenges that Tribes face to work towards solutions to create safe communities and the creation of a permanent 10% set-aside of the Crime Victim Fund for Tribal nations.

During previous consultations, Tribal leaders raised concerns about the lack of shelter and supportive services for Tribal nations. FVPSA is the only dedicated federal funding source for domestic violence shelters across the country. However, FVPSA authorization expired in 2015, leaving Tribal nations without funding for domestic violence shelters.

Recommendations:

1. Better coordination among federal agencies to meet the President's priority of safety and well-being of all Native Americans.
2. HHS should support FVPSA reauthorization, including amendments to increase the Tribal set-aside for Tribal nations and increase funding for Tribal coalitions.
3. HHS should seek authorization of permanent funding for the Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence, the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and the National Indian Domestic Violence Hotline.

Topic 4: Lack of Funding for Tribal Justice Systems

Tribal justice systems focus on holistic justice and restoration of the victim, the offender, the family and the community. The chronic underfunding of Tribal justice systems is a direct violation of the federal government's trust responsibilities toward Alaska Native and American Indian Tribes that results in high rates of criminal victimization, lives lost, and unaddressed trauma for generations of victims.

The need for funding resources provided at a reasonable base level is outlined in a report submitted to congress by the BIA. An annual amount of \$330 million is needed to adequately fund and support Tribal justice in Alaska. Because of the lower amounts of support provided to Tribes in P.L. 280 states, such as Alaska, Tribes have far less opportunity to develop their own police departments or court systems. Public safety funding that supports infrastructure in Alaska is funneled to the state and doesn't reach Tribal communities. Both the federal government and the state of Alaska do not support the development of Tribal law enforcement, Tribal justice systems, or any of the related services.

The DOJ and BIA should request federal funding and authority to add this funding to Tribal compacts to end the disparity in funding between Tribes, regardless if concurrent jurisdiction lies with the federal or state government. To help Tribes succeed and to fully restore Tribal nations' jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders, it is critical that the federal government honor its trust responsibility and fund Tribal public safety in Indian Country through flexible, consistent, and sustainable funding for Tribal justice systems.

We urge OVW to allow Alaska dedicated STCJ funding to be used for infrastructure capital expenses so that Alaska Tribes can fully implement VAWA 2022 and the Alaska Pilot Program. We further demand the DOJ to take a lead role in disseminating information about the Alaska Pilot Program, Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction, and STCJ in Alaska now, and not only when a Tribe is an approved Track 3 Tribe. We further urge the DOJ to conduct multi-jurisdictional training for Tribal, federal, and state stakeholders in Alaska.

The current Alaska Pilot Program funding opportunities and manner in which OVW is managing current grant opportunities for Alaska Tribes to support implementation is not working and needs to be reconsidered. The current, single-agency funding stream doesn't take into consideration the many robust and unique needs that Alaska Tribes have to meet to fully implement VAWA 2022.

Recommendations:

1. For Implementation of the Alaska Pilot Program and the STCJ.
 - a. A multi-agency, multi-year, mini-consolidation grant program approach to provide funding to Alaska Tribes.
 - b. Federal agencies fully implement President Biden's Executive Order 14112, removing barriers to Tribal administration of federal funding and assessing the federal budget for Tribal nations.

- c. The approach to grant funding should be how the Administration will collaborate with Tribal nations and Tribal partners to build safe and healthy Tribal communities and to support comprehensive law enforcement, prevention, intervention, and support services.
2. We also call upon each federal agency to maintain consistency and accountability among agencies and individual grant program managers who often have varied preferences on process.
3. Grant program managers must respond to Tribes in a timely manner.

Conclusion: We appreciate the opportunity to voice our concerns. We believe in continuing to build our alliances to enhance and promote the voices of Indigenous survivors, advocates, and leaders in all levels of government.



Asa'carsarmiut Tribe

Karen Peterson, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Written)

Lorraine Mike, OVW Program Coordinator - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

Our Tribe is located in a remote area of Alaska, with a population of about 850 people, and we are not connected to any road system. Our main forms of transportation are boat, ATV, snow machine, and small air carriers. Travel can be difficult and hindered by severe weather conditions. This makes accessing resources and emergency services very difficult.

Personal Account for Lorraine Mike:

My family, like many others, has experienced immense loss due to these issues. My family is a typical family in a rural remote Alaskan village. My family has lost a brother, two nephews to suicide. My granddaughter has also lost her mother to suicide. We've all lost a niece who was beaten to death by a boyfriend in the village, her first cousin. My son was one of the first responding public safety officers at the time. We've also lost a dear niece to overdose of opiates and alcohol at the age of 19. We carry these heavy burdens, and the lack of mental healthcare has only made things worse. We are a resilient people, and we do our best to follow our traditional cultural teachings, which are there to extend our lives. All this abuse, violence, and substance abuse are not a part of our traditions or culture. Tribes throughout the nation deserve to have their basic needs met.

Personal account for Karen Peterson:

I've lived in an abusive relationship. My son witnessed me with bruises and blackeyes all throughout his life. He started experimenting with alcohol and ended up in juvenile jail at 14 years old. He was 19 years old when he went to maximum security prison for murder in the 2nd degree for killing my brother, his uncle, whom he was very close to and grew up with. After serving 11 years, he came home without transitioning back into society and different street drugs were available. After he was released, he got hooked on opiates and meth. Back in March of 2023, he committed murder again and is right back into maximum security prison awaiting trial. I often blame myself for staying in an abusive relationship. Maybe if I left, my son wouldn't see me with bruises and blackeyes throughout his life. Maybe things could have been different. The things that I and many other Native women and families have survived are reasons why I bring these important recommendations to your attention.

Testimony (Written and Oral)

Substance abuse is a major issue in our community, with high rates of alcohol and drug-related crimes, including the manufacturing and bootlegging of drugs and alcohol. We have seen an increase in opiate substance abuse. These issues lead to violence, mental illness, overdoses, death, and broken families.

We have a lack of law enforcement in our community. We only have local, inexperienced people filling the role of public safety officers. There are no state law enforcement agencies in our village, so we have to wait for the Alaska State Troopers to arrive, which can take a significant amount of time. We are served by only three city government funded village police officers and were only eligible for one position through the DOJ Tribal COPS hiring grant.

Our correctional facilities are inadequate. The regional correctional center in Bethel is over an hour's flight away and is constantly overcrowded. The Mountain Village jail, which only had two holding cells, recently burned down with one inmate fatality. This means we don't have a facility that meets life, health, and safety standards.

Mental health care is at a bare minimum in our community. The Indian Health Service (IHS) provider is located 110 miles away and serves the entire Yukon-Kuskokwim region. People who have been court-ordered to receive services are often unable to receive them in a timely manner due to long waiting lists. People with severe mental health needs are not receiving care in our village.

We also face a lack of funding and staffing. We need additional program funding to hire staff and continue to operate our programs. We need increased grant management capacity to apply for grants to sustain our Tribal needs. We are understaffed and rely on outside help.

Many of our problems stem from unresolved childhood traumas that affect generations of families. There is a lack of resources for recovery, behavioral health, and counseling programs. The lack of resources for Tribal nations is a continuation of genocide against Indigenous peoples.

We also face challenges with evidence collection. We need sexual assault response rape kit tests that can be done locally, especially when severe weather conditions prevent travel, or when the victim chooses not to travel to the regional hospital 110 miles away. Currently, victims must be transported by air to receive a SANE examination. Time-sensitive evidence is vital in charging perpetrators, and when that evidence is no longer available, it is difficult to provide proof for charges.

Many victims don't have the option but to stay in unhealthy relationships because of the limited resources. This creates a vicious cycle of leaving and returning, not only for the women but also for the children involved. Children grow up thinking that this behavior is normal and repeat the cycle instead of trying to break it.

Recommendations:

1. **Increase time for Tribes to respond to Framing Papers:** The DOJ should distribute consultation framing papers no less than 60 days prior to any scheduled consultation. The current 30-day notice is not sufficient for Tribal leaders to consider complex issues and develop meaningful testimony.
2. **Create a permanent 10% set-aside of the Crime Victim Fund for Tribal Nations:** Because of the increase in drug and alcohol use and the coinciding violence, there is a need for a permanent 10% set-aside of the Crime Victim Fund for Tribal nations.

3. **Increase funding for domestic violence shelters:** HHS should support FVPSA reauthorization and amend FVPSA to increase the Tribal set-aside for Tribal nations and increase funding for Tribal coalitions to begin to address the unmet need.
4. **Provide consistent, flexible, and sustainable funding for Tribal justice systems:** The federal government should honor their trust responsibility and fund Tribal public safety in Indian Country through dedicated, non-competitive, flexible, consistent, and sustainable base funding. Fund Alaska Tribes at the identified levels needed to support Tribal justice systems.
5. **Implement resources that include education of state and Tribal leadership to address the needs for public safety:** We need programs to help people with psychological, social, emotional, and substance abuse wellness.
6. **Fund infrastructure and educated staff:** We need funding to build infrastructure, including housing for Tribal justice and public safety staff, as well as educated staff to use traditional teachings as a model to preserve our culture.
7. **Support Alaska technical assistance providers:** Alaska Tribes need Alaska Technical Assistance Providers, so we do not have to continually explain what we are facing, as this creates a barrier to Tribes trying to provide services to their communities.
8. **Amend laws to serve Tribal needs:** OVC and DOJ should be required to work towards amending the laws that serve Tribal needs, including infrastructure, court development and services, and Tribal law enforcement.
9. **Improve coordination among federal agencies:** DOJ—OVW and OVC, BIA, HHS, DHS and other agencies need better coordination to meet the safety and well-being of all Native Americans. The approach should be how the Administration will work with Tribal nations and Tribal partners to build safe and healthy Tribal communities and support comprehensive law enforcement, prevention, intervention, and support services. There should also be consistency and accountability between agencies and individual grant program managers.



Cahuilla Band of Indians

Samantha Thornsberry, Tribal Councilmember - Tribal Leader (Oral)

The Cahuilla Band of Indians' Tribal homeland is in the mountains of Southern California, near Anza in Riverside County. My name is Samantha Thornsberry, and I am an elected Tribal council member for the Cahuilla and the program director for the Cahuilla Consortium Victim Advocacy Program (CCVAP). The CCVAP, which has been in operation since 2010, provides advocacy to those victimized by domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and all other crimes. The rural communities of the four Tribes that comprise the Consortium, and who we serve, includes the Cahuilla Band of Indians as the lead grantee, the Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians, the Las Coyotes Band of Cahuilla Indians and Anzo Indians, and the Torres Martinez Band of Desert Cahuilla Indians. These Tribal lands and communities encompass four vast rural reservations with members residing both within rural reservation boundaries and in the adjacent urban areas in each direction. While the consortium Tribes have some similarities and historical connections, they are each uniquely different in their needs as access to resources, food, shelter, and services can look completely different for each.

The CCVAP was a grassroots effort in its beginnings, and I like to think that we have established roots in our Tribal community in the last 15 years. I started as the one and only staff providing advocacy with one \$350,000 OVW grant in 2009. Since that time, we've grown to a team of four advocates, one victim services manager, one outreach prevention coordinator, one office manager, and I moved into the director position in 2018. Currently our program receives the 2023 OVW Tribal Sexual Assault Service Program (TSASP) grant, multiple OVC Tribal Victims Services Set-Aside (TVSSA) grants, FVPSA funding, and we were recently awarded a California state MMIP grant.

Topic 1: Need for Flexibility in Grant Programming

The current economic issues across the U.S. and the unsure nature of what funding, programming, and leadership will look like under the new administration are concerning. Funding is critical because housing, grocery, fuel, childcare, healthcare, and legal costs have skyrocketed. These are the direct costs that we try to support our survivors with as they get back on track with their healing and recovering from trauma and victimization. You can never know what a survivor may present with in terms of needs, especially in a murdered and missing situation. Every tool must be available to meet the need, as it could mean the difference in finding a relative alive or deceased.

I wanted to mention our victim's compensation in California, CalVCB. Our Tribal program is almost CalVCB for our survivors. We are the ones that support them because there is still such a huge trust issue. We haven't gotten there. There are also logistical issues with CalVCB funding. As stated earlier, often our survivors do not have the financial resources to spend and then wait on reimbursement, and many simply do not want to go through the bureaucratic application process that is not timely.

Recommendations:

1. The impacts and barriers mentioned above must be taken into consideration when program solicitations are being drafted and include flexibility within grant programming opportunities.
2. Prevention education should be incorporated into the TSASP scope.

Topic 2: Grant Management and Reporting

Many times, the dialogue between the grantor and the grantee can feel more like a parent-child relationship, which lacks the understanding and consideration that the Tribe is a unique political entity deserving of the foundational respect. As a sovereign, I understand that management must occur so that grantees follow the Code of Federal Regulations or the scope of their project, but as long as management is being done, there should be no room for any micromanagement and this parental oversight.

I hope that the new Impact tool reduces the time spent on reporting. There are many challenges in using Just Grants. It was initially touted as a tool that would streamline and reduce redundancy, which, unfortunately, is not the case. Access in the creation of user roles, the updating of roles, the changing of roles, the assignment of awards, the length of one's password, even the amount of technicality of the portal has caused, and is causing, continual barriers for our programming especially in light of capacity and turnover in staffing the often rural Tribe's experience. I've used the tool since its introduction, yet I feel that I'm learning how to use it every time I log in. I do appreciate the video tutorials as I use them regularly.

Recommendations:

1. Train grant program managers should know the difference between management and micromanagement and treat grantees with the respect deserving of a sovereign nation.

2. The new Impact tool should be released, and training should be provided before implementation. Training before implementation always yields the best results, and the tool should be utilized for the July-December 2025 semi-annual report.
3. A survey to address barriers to assist with access and other issues with Just Grants would be a great step in getting the portal to make grant management easier and streamlined.

Topic 3: Savanna's Act Implementation

We would like to thank all of those involved in the decision-making process to further work on the implementation of Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act, coordinate efforts, and consult with Tribes. However, there is still more that needs to be done regarding Savanna's Act implementation. For example, in our region of Southern California, especially where I come from Riverside County, we have had no real concrete consultation or discussion. We've had meetings with our federal team, but these meetings have not been substantial in discussing plans to mitigate the crisis or to develop real plans where the law enforcement and justice protocols are appropriate to the disappearance of American Indian, Alaskan Native women and girls. Often, these meetings feel like the purpose is to check the box that there was a meeting with the Tribes and a photo op. Additionally, we have not yet convened or received information from our local law enforcement and other agencies on a local level about updates or development of plans to address victimization, crime, and MMIW/MMIP in Indian Country.

Recommendations:

1. Convene consultations for substantial discussion of concrete protocols to effect the needed changes, especially on the law enforcement side.
2. Deliver updates or development of plans to address victimization, crime, and MMIW/MMIP in Indian Country.

Topic 4: P.L. 280 Challenges with Local Law Enforcement

Last Friday, I attended a newly formed P.L. 280 Tribal Advisory Council meeting, a council convened by the state of California's Attorney General's Office of Native American Affairs to discuss P.L. 280 issues. The key priority of the council is the creation of a P.L. 280 curriculum that would be inserted into basic training for those seeking post certification to become officers. Tribes supported the mandatory addition, but the county sheriffs were full of concerns such as lack of budget for the training, the additional training time. Officers also said that they only needed to know what they could and could not do, and since many would not be working with Tribes, some would not need the training. There was a concern that some would not be able to grasp the complexity of P.L. 280.

I walked away wondering how safety and security for my Tribal citizens and all those Tribal citizens in California can improve if our local law enforcement agencies and sheriffs are so rigid in their thinking. Shouldn't post-trained officers be invested in both financially and educationally speaking from onset? Wouldn't this mitigate costs and liability later throughout their careers?

Tribes are continuing to protect our citizens, developing culturally and trauma-informed healing practices and real support, as well as doing a tremendous amount of work to assist with prevention, education, and addressing risk factors. But despite all of these efforts, a critical piece is absent: protection and prosecution that serve as a deterrent to those who prey on our people. It is the local level that appears to be the missing component.

Recommendations:

1. State law enforcement agencies must be at the table so they can educate themselves on what they are mandated to do to enhance the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking. There is no deterrent without this law enforcement piece.
2. DOJ should offer joint training opportunities for Tribal, state, and federal law enforcement agencies on the implementation of VAWA 2022 and Indian Country and other key legislation.
3. There needs to be more consultation with the Tribes and the state agencies to better educate on the expectations under items like VAWA, Tribal Law and Order Act, Savanna's Act, Not Invisible Act, and all other items like state-issued AG bulletins.

Topic 5: Response to Framing Paper on Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding

The competitive nature of funding is demeaning and illustrates that funding is not at the appropriate level to provide for the public safety and justice programs and their needs for all Tribes. It is always difficult to talk about what I need, as I would never put my need over another's. Often, this is what we're asked to do. When we try so hard to compartmentalize and categorize and push people and issues into neat boxes, we inevitably create more problems.

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive and meaningful response when reading through the three proposals without adequate time and education on the specifics. There was simply too much to read and not enough time to prepare. Formula funding has always been an area of concern for Tribes, especially small rural Tribes that often have greater needs due to lack of capacity, infrastructure, and access to resources. I do appreciate the willingness to try to develop a grant program structure that is less arduous and bureaucratic, but I'm concerned that this will only mean less funding at the end of the day. What if a Tribe is unable to capture all of its needs in a proposal due to capacity issues and then misses out on essential program funding? The main question is how any of these proposals will interrupt or change current funding for the grants to governments, TSASP, Tribal Jurisdiction Program (TJP), STCJ, or even OVC TVSSA.

Recommendations:

1. Provide assurance that any changes will not harm existing grantees and the work that they're doing now and that the funding will not be decreased.
2. Details of Public Law 477 (P.L. 477)-like structure (proposal two) should be provided in a more robust and comprehensive package for review.
3. Provide details as to how proposal three would work for P.L. 280-affected Tribes who do not traditionally receive BIA funding for criminal justice services.

Topic 5: Support for FVPSA Reauthorization

We want to support the NCAI VAW Task Force recommendations and we are particularly concerned about the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act. The authorization expired in 2015, leaving Tribal nations like mine without the needed funding for domestic violence shelters, which we rely heavily on.

Recommendation:

1. HHS should support FVPSA's reauthorization that increases the distribution to Tribes from 10% to 12.5%.



Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

Chairman Ryman LeBeau - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

I'm the chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. I've been on council for the past 15 years, as a councilman, and then I got this position. This is my second time providing testimony. We're happy to come back and advocate for the health and wellness of our women and their children. Cheyenne River is one of the great Sioux Nation Tribes under the 1868 Treaty. We have a huge, beautiful reservation the size of Connecticut. We're the fourth largest reservation, according to Deb Haaland, but having a large land base also provides barriers, which I will discuss.

I want to talk about our traditional Lakota culture. Before the foundation of America, Native people established our own societies, our own nations, the Oceti Sakowin of the Lakota Nation, Dakota, and Nakota Oyate. The Seven Council Fires of the Great Sioux Nation is our original enduring sovereign nation. The Lakota were self-governed by ancient and traditional customs based on natural law. Through many years, traditions were established in the minds of our people. First and foremost, the aim and the duty of each person was to make sure that every Lakota was respected, that all people had equal rights within our society. In Lakota tradition, women are the bringers of life, and our children are the sacred gift of the Creator, Wakanyajea, who come to us through their mothers. The White Buffalo Calf Woman, Wo'ope, brought us the sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe, and she taught us to love one another and honor our women. There is no place for violence in our families, in our sacred circle.

Most violence against Native American women and girls is committed by outsiders, non-Natives. We must protect our Native American women and girls from outsiders, who victimize Native women through sexual assault, trafficking and violent victimization. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe faces numerous challenges in preventing and prosecuting violent crimes against women.

Jurisdictional Limitations: While VAWA 2013 and 2022 have expanded recognition of Tribal jurisdiction, it is still limited to specific crimes such as domestic violence, dating violence, assault of Tribal justice personnel, child violence, obstruction of justice, sexual violence, sex trafficking, and stalking. We are still seeking jurisdiction over non-Indian drug trafficking.

Insufficient Funding: The Tribe faces a critical lack of funding for law enforcement and public safety. In 2021, Indian Tribes received \$450 million, while the BIA Office of Justice Services (OJS) reported that an additional \$3.09 billion was needed. This lack of funding prevents the Tribe from adequately covering their large reservation and providing the necessary safety and healing resources for their people, especially women who have been abused.

Limited Law Enforcement Resources: With only three officers per shift to cover a large reservation the size of Connecticut, the Tribe's law enforcement is stretched thin. The officers are often stationed in Eagle Butte, the main Tribal community, and must travel long distances on dangerous BIA gravel roads to respond to calls in other communities. This results in delayed response times and increased risks for both the officers and the people in need of help

Dangerous Infrastructure: BIA has provided the Tribe with gravel roads that are hazardous, poorly maintained and difficult to navigate, further hindering law enforcement response.

High Rates of Violence: The Tribe experiences a high incidence of violent crime, including homicide and intimate partner violence. American Indians and Alaska Natives suffer homicide at a rate almost four times higher than non-Hispanic whites. Homicide is a leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaskan Native males, and a large percentage of women experience intimate partner violence and rape.

Impact on Community Life: Community violence disrupts daily life, preventing people from engaging in activities like walking, bicycling, and using parks. This violence strains education, justice, and medical systems, and contributes to chronic stress, preventable diseases, and reduced life expectancies.

Need for Healing: The Tribe needs resources for the rehabilitation and healing of those who have experienced abuse, particularly women. There is a need for programs that incorporate traditional ceremonies and practices.

We need the help and support of the federal government because we are sovereign nations, and the state of South Dakota is no friend to us. Our governor was making bad remarks about our children, saying, "Our children on reservations have no hope. Their parents don't do their job. Don't show up." When we confronted her, they said nothing. The media was after her to apologize, to be accountable, but to no avail. We had to ban our own governor from our reservations. The state of South Dakota has no jurisdiction on our reservations. We are not a P.L. 280 state. We have in our constitution authorization for our own Tribal law enforcement, which we have had for thousands of years, our warriors that protected our people, protected our camps, protected our nations.

Recommendations:

1. Increased Funding for Public Safety and Criminal Justice:

- a. DOJ should advocate for the full funding of \$3.59 billion for the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Justice Services to address the significant unmet needs for public safety and criminal justice services in Indian Country.
- b. DOJ should establish major new block grants for Indian Tribes to support public safety and criminal justice services. These grants should be allocated using a formula that considers increased funding for Tribes under federal jurisdiction based on Tribal citizen population and reservation land, rates of violent crime and victimization, and additional funding for Tribes with treaties promising livable "permanent homes" and safety.
- c. The federal government should increase direct funding to Native Nations for BIA law enforcement, public safety, and administration of justice, as outlined in the 2024 Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) Report.
- d. Congress should set aside 10% of funds for Indian Country, including 10% for VAWA. Additionally, existing Tribal funding programs for VAWA, OVW, OVC, and victim services for Indian Country should be fully funded.

2. Funding for Substance Abuse and Mental Health:

- a. There should be full funding for alcohol and drug rehabilitation, including \$400 million for the IHS.
- b. The federal government should dedicate funding to strengthen prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery support services to address the opioid crisis in Indian Country, including direct funding to Native Nations for drug and alcohol diversion programs and work re-entry programs.

3. Restoration of Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction:

- a. The federal government should support legislation to restore Tribal court jurisdiction over drug trafficking and firearms offenses by non-Indians.
- b. The federal government should recognize the expanded STCJ over covered crimes as outlined in VAWA 2022.

4. Enhanced Coordination and Cooperation:

- a. The federal government should establish comprehensive interagency planning and administration of BIA and DOJ funding for law enforcement, public safety, and administration of justice under Indian self-determination contracting and compacting.
- b. COPS funding should be coordinated with BIA OJS Tribal police funding to support Tribal officers without limitations.
- c. A working DOJ-Interior-Tribal Government Indian Country Violent Crime Reduction Commission should be established to coordinate public safety and criminal justice services in Indian Country.
- d. DOJ should improve communication and consultation with Tribes regarding investigations and prosecutions of crimes in Indian Country.

5. Support for Traditional Healing: DOJ should provide grants for traditional healing programs that support women who have experienced abuse, violence, and rape. These programs should incorporate Tribal ceremonies and traditions.

6. Infrastructure Improvements: The federal government must provide a comprehensive solution that addresses the need for infrastructure such as roads and housing.

These actions are necessary to fulfill the United States' treaty and trust obligations to promote public safety and justice services, as well as to prevent violent crime and victimization in Indian Country.

I wish to include NCAI Resolution LV-24-078 as part of my written testimony, which includes the following statements.

1. NCAI calls upon the President and Congress to increase direct funding to Tribal Nations for BIA law enforcement, public safety, and administration of justice in accordance with the needs set forth in the 2024 Tribal Law and Order Act Report and NCAI Resolutions NO-23-066 and NC-24-037 as permanent mandatory funding.
2. NCAI calls upon the President and Congress to establish major new permanent mandatory funding for Tribal Nation block grants for BIA law enforcement, public safety, and administration of justice.
3. NCAI calls upon the President and Congress to establish comprehensive interagency planning and administration of BIA and DOJ funding for law enforcement, public safety, and administration of justice consistent with Indian self-determination contracting and compacting.
4. NCAI calls upon Congress and the President to enact necessary authorizing legislation for these programs for mandatory funding and coordination for BIA and DOJ law enforcement, public safety, and administration of justice, and calls upon the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Interior to support said BIA and DOJ Programs.
5. NCAI, recognizing that it is essential to provide public safety and justice services to prevent violent crime and victimization as well as to provide continuity to protect victims of crimes, calls upon Congress and the President to act in furtherance of the United States' treaty and trust obligations, and to fully fund and continue to fund DOJ's existing Tribal funding programs, including VAWA, OVW, OVC, and victims services for Indian Country, separately and distinctly from the block grants referenced in NCAI Resolutions NO-23-066 and NC-24-037.

6. NCAI calls upon Congress and the President to provide diversion programs and work re-entry programs, including alcohol and substance abuse programs, through direct funding to Tribal Nations.



Curyung Tribal Council

Chief Tiffany Webb - Tribal Leader (Oral)

I was going to introduce myself in Yup'ik because my great-grandma was punished for speaking Yup'ik. I've been a Tribal Chief for about a year. It's not as cool as I thought it was going to be.

The history of colonization has deeply impacted our community. We have had to live without our languages, ceremonies, and families. Even though we still live on our traditional lands, we are still displaced in many ways. Our traditional roles as women in the community have been diminished. Violence, abuse, and sexual assault were not part of our traditional way of life. Furthermore, the trauma of boarding schools and persistent violence against our communities are directly linked to the ongoing crisis.

Topic 1: Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons

One of the biggest issues the Curyung Tribal Council faces is the ongoing crisis of MMIP. There are 3,202 Curyung Tribal members. From 1990 to today, 39 people have been murdered or gone missing. These are not just numbers; they are our relatives, and their cases often go uninvestigated due to systemic failures. The impact affects our entire community. Several factors contribute to this:

- Jurisdictional complications allow perpetrators to escape justice.
- Severe underfunding of Tribal law enforcement and victim services hinders our ability to respond effectively. We have very limited resources at our wellness center.
- There's a lack of coordination among federal, state, and Tribal agencies, causing delays and confusion.
- Insufficient data collection and sharing systems, combined with limited access to modern investigative resources, put our law enforcement at a disadvantage.
- The fishing and tourism industries in the Bristol Bay region correlate with increased rates of MMIP and human trafficking.
- We also need to track MMIP cases that aren't recognized by law enforcement due to lack of evidence.

Topic 2: Grant Funding Process

The way funding is provided for us is also a problem. There needs to be more of a balance of power in government-to-government consultation. We have to ask for money from the federal government and jump through hoops to get it, but we aren't able to spend it in the way that we need to. Also, the requirements for how we spend our funding often echo the same power imbalances that cause violence in our community.

I might not be able to write the whole budget narrative in the exactly correct way, but in the moment, when I'm sitting with somebody who's experienced harm, any kind of harm, I know what to do. The other people in the community know what to do, but they can't always do it, or they burn themselves out jumping through the hoops for funding. There are only two of us that run the wellness center. We are both parents and we

sweep the floor, clean the toilet, and do the dishes. We also apply for funding, and it really limits our ability to do the work we need to do. We would like to hire someone, but we can't with the funding that we have.

Recommendations:

1. Increase funding for Tribal law enforcement personnel and training, modern investigative equipment, victim services, and data management systems.
2. Implement legislative reform to clarify and strengthen Tribal jurisdiction, mandate cross-jurisdictional cooperation, and establish dedicated MMIP task forces with clear protocols for reporting and response.
3. The federal government's trust responsibility must include protecting the lives of our people.
4. There should be enhanced data sharing between agencies, culturally appropriate victim services, and preventive education programs.
5. There should be regular congressional oversight of MMIP cases to ensure accountability.
6. Fund research to be completed by Indigenous people.
7. We need to track cases of MMIP which are not recognized by law enforcement as no evidence of a crime has been collected but the impact on the community is significant.
8. The connection between fishing and tourism in the Bristol Bay region and Human Trafficking and MMIP needs to be public knowledge.
9. Allow us to testify to the Congressional Appropriations Committee and any other group of people who can make decisions about funding as a more equitable government-to-government consultation.

Finally, I would like to invite everyone to come to Dillingham and see the challenges we face firsthand. I want you to remember me and the Curyung Tribal members, and I want you to know that there is no reason for us to live without homes, food, or safety. We need to rebuild our ability to live in partnership with women and understanding how colonialism has impacted our community will help us return to our ancestral kinship systems. We need interventions based in our Yuqtun culture. We know how to help our people, we just need the resources.



Delaware Tribe of Indians

Chief Brad Killscrow - Tribal Leader (Written)

The Delaware Tribe of Indians has Tribal headquarters in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Our domestic violence program is housed under the Family and Children services department serving five counties in Oklahoma and six counties in Kansas regardless of ethnicity. Our domestic violence program currently receives funding from three OVW grant programs, four OVC grants and three from FVPSA. Our current OVW funding includes FY 23 Grants to Indian Tribal governments, FY 21 Transitional Housing Assistance Grants, and FY 21 Rural Grant.

Our program is completely grant funded and due to our location within the Cherokee boundaries our Tribe is limited in the type of revenue stream allowed. Federal funding provides services for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, elder abuse, and stalking.

Topic 1: Administering Tribal Funds and Programs

The Delaware Tribe of Indians Domestic Violence program first applied for grant funding in 2017 and has been awarded multiple grants since then. Without OVW funding we would not be able to operate a domestic violence program. Currently our program has a director, a domestic violence coordinator, a transitional housing coordinator, an outreach coordinator, and five victim advocates. We can employ staff, travel to training opportunities, and offer these programs to Native and non-Native individuals because of both competitive and formula-based funding.

Survivors of domestic violence in our community have benefited from the programs we provide with OVW funding. With this funding we provide hotel assistance due to the limited number of domestic violence shelters. Many shelters are minimally an hour to two hours away making it difficult to maintain employment and proximity to support systems. We also assist survivors with gift cards for fuel, food, or groceries, bus passes, and clothing in addition to other basic needs a victim may require when leaving a violent relationship/situation and rebuilding their life. We also aid survivors with attorney fees and legal costs for divorces or child custody by contracting with an attorney familiar with Indian Country. This is in addition to advocates providing advocacy and assistance with protective orders.

We currently serve 32 survivors in our transitional housing program. In this program we are able to provide relocation services, deposits and monthly rental assistance for up to 24 months using various grants. Rural areas within our agency's service boundaries have multiple layers of housing barriers to work through as they transition to safer housing. Many survivors would prefer to find safe housing in larger communities where they can be more anonymous and there may be more access to services and employment, but lack of transportation and resources prevent such action.

We rely on grant funding through OVW, OVC, and FVPSA to sustain our program, but unfortunately once a grant ends there are no assurances our program will be awarded funding for the next award period. There have been times this has happened to our program and has resulted in serving fewer survivors. Inconsistency can result in distrust in services and reduces the chance a survivor will seek help.

Recommendations:

1. Increase the dollar amount of awards and extend the award periods to allow more consistency in programs.
2. Restructure grant awards to reflect the ongoing needs of Tribes without having Tribes compete against each other, while being mindful that population-based formula funding doesn't always reflect the community served.
3. Create a solicitation for a combined award to meet the needs of domestic violence survivors also involved in the child welfare system because of the abuse suffered.
4. Create a solicitation that allows Tribes to open a domestic violence shelter that includes the ability to purchase land.

Topic 2: Enhancing the Safety of Indian Women from Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Homicide, Stalking, and Sex Trafficking

We serve very rural areas in Oklahoma and Kansas. This presents additional challenges by limiting access to basic needs; law enforcement, court systems, transportation, hospitals/medical offices, and domestic violence shelters can be hours away. There are limited options or no options for public transportation. This prevents survivors from obtaining services or making scheduled appointments with advocates, resource services, and court hearings.

Remote areas create safety risks for advocates as well as survivors because of the time it will take law enforcement or EMT services to reach them. Other barriers for both advocates and survivors are quality and reliable internet and cell phone connections. The lack of cell phone service creates safety concerns for our advocates that are out in the community. This lack of safety provides a barrier to victims calling 911 services, obtaining resources, or services. It can be difficult for survivors to seek out resources without internet or cell phone services.

One of the biggest barriers a victim faces is a lack of domestic violence shelters in our service area. The few shelters in both our Kansas and Oklahoma service areas are at least 1-2 hours away. We try to remove that barrier by utilizing grant funds to place victims in hotels, but this is a very short-term solution, typically only 2-3 days. This can also create an additional barrier because if the reason we place a victim in a hotel is due to shelters being at capacity, the victim then won't qualify for shelter services once there is space because they are deemed to no longer be fleeing a domestic violence situation. More importantly, there is a lack of available services due to funding and a lack of experienced providers in rural areas.

An additional barrier faced is shelters may not serve men and/or there is a lack of education on assisting male victims. It is known that occurrences of violence suffered by male victims are grossly underreported. There is also a lack of education regarding culturally appropriate responses for members of the LGBTQIA +/ 2 Spirits seeking services through shelters that typically only serve victims that identify as female. Another barrier is when shelters don't allow pets, many victims will not leave a violent relationship if they must abandon their pet.

There are not enough Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE). In our service area there are currently only SANE nurses in the Bartlesville area, causing most sexual assault victims in our service area to have to travel two or more hours to receive a sexual assault forensic exam. This means they can't shower or even change clothes prior to the exam which creates additional trauma in addition to the sexual assault and the exam.

Enhancing the safety of Native American women would be less challenging if law enforcement and court personnel were better educated and trained on signs of domestic violence, domestic violence cycles, and Native American culture. Many state courts are hesitant to hear and/or make rulings on court cases involving Native Americans due to misinformation regarding Supreme Court case *McGirt v. Oklahoma (McGirt)*.

To focus on the safety of women, Tribes need to be allowed to focus on prevention. Prevention services can provide an awareness about physical, emotional, and sexual forms of violence. Many have grown up with intergenerational trauma and believe violence is a normal way to show love. They don't know this is violence and is not right. By teaching the power and control wheel, the signs, and how to seek services, individuals will learn about boundaries, how to advocate for themselves, and what a healthy relationship is. OVW grants do not allow us to provide preventive services such as domestic violence education. Our program provides limited preventive services through our FVPSA grants but would be able to expand with increased flexibility through OVW funding.

Recommendations:

1. Allow more flexibility for construction of domestic violence shelters, including the ability to purchase land to build the shelter on.
2. A more flexible definition of those who need services, such as removing the word fleeing. As stated above, once we help a victim with even a day in a hotel, they are no longer considered to be fleeing a

domestic violence situation and won't qualify for services at a shelter should space open at one or they decide to go to one.

3. Solicitations and funding language should be revised so that it is not gender specific. This helps reduce the basis and stereotypes that male survivors encounter.
4. Allowable costs should be set by Tribal leaders not the federal government.
5. More flexibility in allowable services to provide preventive services to raise awareness about violence against women, teach healthy relationships, and empower individuals to become their own advocate.
6. The federal government should continue investing in rural infrastructures that include roads, broadband internet, and cellular services.
7. Increase funding for health care, law enforcement, emergency services, economic services, housing, and childcare services to expand into rural areas.

Topic 3: Shaping the Federal Response to Violent Crimes

The Delaware Tribe of Indians Family and Children Services encompasses not only a domestic violence program but Indian Child Welfare and Child Support Services, all three programs have a combined 14 grants to oversee. Our director spends most of their time completing grant reporting, grant applications, and grant modifications to fix budget changes to reflect the needs of the programs in accordance with what is allowed and required on each individual grant. These many grants require a lot of communication with multiple grant managers over multiple funding sources which can lead to inefficiency, loss of communication, and confusion. We have three OVW grants with three different grant managers and three different reporting forms that often have the same information.

Recommendations:

1. Restructuring to have one grant manager for each grantee versus a separate grant manager for each award. This would allow for more streamlined effective and efficient communication.
2. Reducing the barriers resulting in the late release of funds.
3. Offering free grant-writing training to Tribes as many can't afford to hire a professional grant writer.
4. One master reporting form that would allow for subsections of each grant program to allow for one report to be completed versus multiple reports.

Topic 4: Jurisdictional Challenges

Many state courts are hesitant to hear and/or make rulings on court cases involving Native Americans due to misinformation regarding *McGirt*. This also leads to law enforcement being unclear over jurisdiction when a Native American woman is involved. It is common for Native victims to be told by law enforcement that there is nothing they can do for the victim.

Our domestic violence program finds it more difficult to have domestic violence cases heard in Tribal courts. Our Tribal court is small and is not centrally located to our service areas. The Delaware Tribe must rely on local law enforcement to enforce protective orders issued in Tribal court; we also pay local law enforcement to provide bailiff/security for our court on docket days. Our Tribal court lacks the ability to access the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). Our Tribal court also does not utilize the Oklahoma Court Docket Search or Oklahoma District Court Records. In Kansas we don't have access to any sort of state, county, or city court records so this creates a barrier when a protective order is violated or if new incidents/charges occur as there is no communication between the Tribe and the states, resulting in insufficient and inadequate sentencing and creating increased safety risks for survivors and advocates.

Recommendations:

1. Expanding investments into TAP so all Tribes have access to local, regional, state, and federal crime information databases and criminal justice information systems to ensure open communication and collaboration between the Tribe and state.
2. Congress needs to hold states accountable to treaties and the fact that Congress has plenary authority over Tribes while states do not.

**Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma**

Cathleen Osborne-Gowey, Eastern Shawnee Haven Program Administrator and Advocate - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

The Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma has an advocacy program that began in 2008, which provides services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in their Tribal and local community. The program has been able to open an office, staff advocates, and provide both emergency and long-term transitional housing due to OVW grants. The program also provides education for victims on the cycle of violence, safety, and self-sufficiency. The Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma's Tribal community is just over 3,500 individuals; however, the program provides services for all Tribal members as well as all of Ottawa County Oklahoma, which has a population of just over 30,000 people.

I am a Tribal member of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. I am also the Tribal designee, speaking on behalf of our Tribal Chief Glenna Wallace. I have worked as an advocate and program administrator for our advocacy program since its humble beginning in 2008. I was that little girl who dreamed, and my mother was that little girl who dreamed. My grandfather was the little boy who dreamed. I'm here because we all dreamed. Our dreams didn't come true, and I'm hoping it does for my kids. I've been inspired by the vulnerability of the Tribal members willing to come and tell you of their pain.

I am surprised at how lengthy the framing papers were for the time frame we were given. To be able to give productive, thoughtful, and reflective feedback, we need more than two and a half weeks to research, meet together, and coordinate an appropriate response that is beneficial for OVW and for our Tribe.

Topic 1: Competitive Grant Funding

As a Tribal member, I have witnessed how competitive grants pit Tribes against each other for funding to assist victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. We have been sharing at each consultation that it's time for OVW and DOJ to listen and no longer ask us to fight and compete for essential funding. The current model does not take into account that our program provides services for all Tribal members, as well as the 30,000 people in Ottawa County, Oklahoma. If our grant was based solely on our Tribal population of 3,500, we would only get a small percentage of the funds needed to serve all of the community members in our service area.

Recommendations:

1. OVW should use the model created and used by the Office for Victims of Crime Tribal set-aside grant, which is noncompetitive and formulated based on self-defined service area size.

2. OVW Grants to Indian Tribal Governments Program should allow Tribes to apply for funding based on their declared population and service area size.

Topic 2: Inappropriate Standards for Transitional Housing Programs

Our transitional housing programs should not be held to the same "cookie cutter" standards as larger, non-Native residential transitional housing facilities. We are required to document and inventory any furniture purchased, which would make sense in a larger facility, but our Tribal transitional housing programs are often individual rented units. It's inefficient and unsafe for our programs to try and go back into homes after clients have left our transitional housing programs to "inventory" their furniture or ask for it back to ensure grant compliance. When a victim leaves violence, they often only have the clothes on their bodies, and when we help them secure housing, we cannot purchase the necessary basic furniture supplies they need.

Recommendation:

1. OVW must remove the restrictions placed on Tribal transitional housing programs that don't allow us to purchase the furniture needed for clients to begin their lives again.

Topic 3: Restrictive "Fleeing" Requirement for Services

Requiring that a victim be currently fleeing from abuse forces our program to narrowly define the victims we can assist. When a victim comes into our office whose abuser has been forced from the home and the victim needs assistance to stay in their own home, such as with rent, utilities, or food, we are unable to use funds to assist, since they are not fleeing from the abuse. If a victim can stay in their own home without their abuser instead of going to a shelter, it is beneficial for the victim to do so. The shelter model does not work for all victims, and requiring a victim to be fleeing abuse to qualify for services punishes those who are able to stay in their own home.

Recommendation:

1. The word "fleeing" must be removed from the grant language.

Topic 4: Lack of Funding for Shelter Construction

Shelter is essential for victims to begin the process of healing and working towards self-sufficiency. There are not enough Tribal domestic violence shelters in Oklahoma or Indian Country in general. Local shelters are often located in areas that make it difficult for clients to access and maintain employment or seek additional services. The existing OVW grant funding isn't large enough to cover the cost of building, maintaining, and staffing necessary Tribal shelters. Currently, funds can only be used to furnish and run a shelter, and we as a Tribe have to fund the largest expense: the construction.

Recommendation:

1. OVW needs to create a separate grant specific to the construction of domestic violence shelters.

Topic 5: Insufficient Funding for Education of Tribal Leaders

Tribal advocates do not have the authority to create laws, Tribal-wide government policies, or prosecute domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking crimes. They often find themselves struggling to find solutions without much needed support. We need OVW grant funding to emphasize, in the solicitations, that grant funding can and should be used to provide specific education for Tribal governments and leadership, and that funds should be used to research how to specifically create and update Tribal policy and legislation to address violence against Native women so that Tribal leadership can provide support for Tribal advocates.

Recommendations:

1. OVW grant funding should emphasize that grant funding can and should be used to provide specific education for Tribal governments and leadership.
2. OVW grant funding should be allowed to be used to research, create, and update Tribal policy and legislation to address violence against Native women.

Topic 6: Insufficient Funding for Education of Tribal and Local Law Enforcement

In Oklahoma, domestic assault and battery is not considered a violent crime, only when strangulation is added to the charge, does it become a violent crime. We need grant funding to include a focus on educating law enforcement on strangulation, signs of strangulation, and what to look for in the danger assessment required in the state of Oklahoma when responding to domestic violence calls. OVW grants need to include an emphasis on the education of Tribal and local law enforcement regarding danger assessments and strangulation and allow funds for programs to research the specifics of laws for their state regarding danger assessments, strangulation, and how to most effectively teach law enforcement.

Recommendations:

1. OVW grants need to include an emphasis on the education of Tribal and local law enforcement regarding danger assessments and strangulation.
2. OVW grants need to allow funds for programs to research the specifics of laws for their state regarding danger assessments, strangulation, and how to most effectively teach law enforcement.

Topic 7: Lack of Flexibility of Funding and Restoration of Tribal Jurisdiction

Much of our state falls under the *McGirt* ruling and subsequent *Castro-Huerta* ruling. *Castro-Huerta* gives concurrent jurisdiction to the state and federal government when non-Natives commit crimes against Natives in those areas of Oklahoma that fall under *McGirt*. This means that we need more federal investigators working on crimes in Indian Country, and U.S. Attorneys' Offices need more prosecutors and administrative support staff to prosecute those crimes and to work with Native victims in a meaningful way.

In the last forty-four years, we have had three court cases that have affected the criminal jurisdiction of Indian Country in Oklahoma. Tribes lost their jurisdiction over non-Natives. Many Eastern Oklahoma Tribes have had their reservations confirmed only to have the Supreme Court grant jurisdiction to the State of Oklahoma. Congress must take explicit action to restore Tribal jurisdiction and not allow the courts to circumvent Congress's exclusive authority over Indian affairs.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ and OVW must advocate to Congress for flexibility of funding and restoration of Tribal jurisdiction.
2. Congress must take explicit action to restore Tribal jurisdiction and not allow the courts to circumvent Congress's exclusive authority over Indian affairs.

Topic 8: Lack of Central Streamlined Access to Crime Information

Improving access to local, regional, state, and federal crime information databases and criminal justice information systems is important for the safety of the victim and to ensure proper charges are brought against a perpetrator. Even though there are 38 federally recognized Tribes in the State of Oklahoma, only a handful have their charges appear on OSCN (Oklahoma State Courts Network). Tribes could enter into an agreement with the state to have their cases appear on that site along with all charges from counties.

While some Tribes have now started their own court sites, this means that advocates, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors must look on multiple sites to get a full picture of what they are dealing with. Advocates need this information in order for them to better address the issue and to be able to adequately safety plan and provide the much needed legal advocacy; officers need it to assess the danger and look for outstanding warrants or prior convictions; prosecutors need it to properly charge and make appropriate recommendations to the court; and courts need it so that violent offenders are not given early release back into Tribal communities because judges don't have all the necessary information.

Furthermore, advocates need access to federal crime information systems along with Tribal law enforcement, Tribal prosecutors, and Tribal courts. Reviewing a full criminal history of a perpetrator is critically important when safety planning with a victim. It is also vitally important to be able to obtain a good address so that the perpetrator can be served with things like protective orders and divorce papers.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ and OVW must advocate to Congress for central streamlined access to crime information.
2. Advocates need access to federal crime information systems, along with Tribal law enforcement, Tribal prosecutors, and Tribal courts.

In closing, we believe that OVW grant funding is essential for Tribal communities to combat domestic violence and sexual assault for Native communities. However, a common thread throughout all of these points is sovereignty. Now more than ever we need the federal government, DOJ and OVW to stand for Tribal sovereignty and truly work to help Tribal communities combat violence on our Tribal lands.



Emmonak Village

Janice Agwiak, Tribal Administrator - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Lenora Hootch, Tribal Council Member, and Executive Director, Yup'ik Women's Coalition - Tribal Leader (Written)

Emmonak is a resilient Yup'ik village of 1,300 Tribal citizens, situated where the river meets the Bering Sea. We live 490 air miles from Anchorage, with no roads connecting us to the outside world. Our people navigate rivers by boat in summer and travel frozen rivers and landscapes by snow machine in winter. When winter storms rage, we can be cut off from the outside world for weeks. Yet, it is not the isolation that threatens us most. Today, what threatens us the most is the continued epidemic of violence against our women, and the federal government's failure to fulfill its sacred trust responsibilities to our people.

Personal Account of Janice Agwiak:

I was molested as a little girl under the same roof where my mom and my aunt were. When I realized that what was happening I did not feel right. I tried to scream for my mom, but this man covered my mouth, and he whispered to me, "If you ever tell, I will find you and I will hurt you." As a little girl, up to my early adulthood, I had to cope with what happened to me on my own. I was scared to tell anyone, even my own parents. That experience has affected me and caused me to have nightmares.

In 2008, while I was attending one of my counseling sessions, I finally had the courage to report what had happened, and when we spoke to law enforcement about what happened to me as a child, I was told that it happened too long ago that nothing could be done to this man. Can you imagine my outrage? When the statute of limitations was created, was time factored for the child to grow up? Was it enough time for the child to get over feeling shameful? Was it time for the child to work up the courage to speak about it?

In 2020, my younger brother's life was repeatedly threatened by members of our extended family. So, he went to different places and people to try to get help, but his cry for help was not heard or believed. He was beaten in his own home. He was beaten until he was unconscious, and even then, they continued to beat him and urinate on him. On New Year's Eve of 2021, my mom and dad found him. I know what it's like to not be heard. I know what it's like to tell someone what happened to us, and when I think about my younger brother, knowing that his cry for help was not heard, it hurts to my core, knowing that he told someone, but did anyone believe him? No. And he died.

I have witnessed how this crime affected my mom and my dad in all aspects of their life. My mom passed away the following year. My father passed away five months after my mom passed away. And to experience loss three consecutive years in a row. I am telling you, and in all of my losses, I was so angry and asking God, why? Why did you allow this to happen to me, to my younger brother? And as painful as it is, my life choices have led me here to speak to all of you who are in a position to make changes. If all I can do to find some kind of healing is to come here before all of you, that will be good enough. Our stories are being told.

While we greatly appreciate Congress, Senator Murkowski, and President Biden's recognition of Tribal authority through VAWA's Alaska Tribal Safety Empowerment provisions, three critical issues continue to plague our community. The solutions to these problems lie within our traditional governance and culture. As a sovereign nation, Emmonak has both the right and responsibility to protect our citizens. But we need the federal government to honor its commitments and work with us as true partners in this effort.

Topic 1: Climate Change Impacts

Climate change and natural disasters have significant impacts on our community and survival systems. Emergency services are already strained, and extreme weather exacerbates existing issues. When storm surges flood our communities, women cannot reach our safe houses. When permafrost melts beneath our buildings, we lose precious shelter space. When extreme weather isolates our village for weeks, women cannot access emergency services, and when traditional hunting patterns are disrupted, our ability to feed families in crisis is threatened.

Recommendations:

1. Climate-resilient funding for victim services must include infrastructure support to fortify shelters against extreme weather and emergency response systems that function during climate disasters.
2. Funding must include resources for climate-aware evacuation planning that prioritizes domestic violence survivors and support for traditional food security programs.

Topic 2: Inadequate Law Enforcement and Justice Response in Alaska

There is a pattern of inadequate law enforcement response, including a lack of comprehensive, systematic infrastructure to address safety and accountability for violence against women. State law enforcement agencies do not provide adequate services to Native villages, and the state has failed to protect Indigenous rural communities. Despite having a small clinic and an Alaska State Troopers post in our village, there is a lack of consistent law enforcement presence. The officers rotate every two weeks, and a permanent law

enforcement presence is needed in each community. When help is requested, it can take days for law enforcement to arrive, if they come at all, which compromises crime scenes and leads to injustice for victims and their families.

Recommendations:

1. We need consistent and reliable funding from OVW and other federal agencies to support infrastructure building of local Tribal police and Tribal justice systems. As a P.L. 280 state, Alaska is responsible for providing law enforcement, but they do not value our communities or protect our Indigenous rural communities in the same way they protect large urban areas that are predominantly non-Native in populations.
2. The BIA must continue to request appropriate additional federal funding to provide public safety and justice resources to Tribal nations located in P.L. 280 states.

Topic 3: Systematic Underfunding for Alaska Tribes

The justice system in Alaska is systematically undermining Tribal justice and public safety. There is a need for direct funding to Tribal justice systems. Current funding mechanisms do not meet the needs of our communities. There are funding gaps that leave missing persons cases uninvestigated, domestic violence survivors without protection, and generational trauma left unaddressed. The BIA has not provided the necessary funding to maintain basic safety and justice. The amount of money needed is over \$1 billion to provide basic, minimal Tribal court and justice funding, but only \$330 million is received annually. The federal government has a trust responsibility to provide resources to protect our communities and deliver justice.

Recommendations:

1. The BIA must provide direct funding to Tribal nations for justice systems and law enforcement, and this funding must be sustainable, equitable, and ensure accountability.
2. The federal government must provide direct, sustainable funding for Tribal courts and law enforcement and support the sovereign right of Tribal governments to protect their people.

In closing, we urge that issues in our testimony, including future issues, be appropriately recognized and elevated as national issues. The public safety issues in Alaska and the law and policy at the root of those problems beg to be addressed. These are no longer Alaska's issues. They are national issues.



Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

Vice Chair Loni Greninger - Tribal Leader (Written)

On behalf of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, I submit these comments and recommendations to the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women.

Topic 1: Funding Challenges and Expanding Resources for Tribal Public Safety, Justice, and Support Services

Ensuring Tribal governments have the tools and resources needed to fully exercise their inherent sovereign authority is critical to improving public safety and justice in Indian Country. I urge you to continue exploring ways to overcome funding barriers that undermine Tribal sovereignty and Self-Governance, and harm crime

survivors and Tribal communities, including jurisdictional complexities between federal, Tribal, and state governments, outdated policies from the termination era, chronic underfunding, recruitment challenges due to lower salaries and benefits, unequal access to justice, biased perceptions of Tribal public safety policies, socioeconomic disadvantages, and limited access to resources.

Inadequate resources, as well as funding mechanisms that do not align with Self-Governance and Self-Determination (i.e., grants) impede Tribal governments' ability to fully exercise their restored jurisdictional authority under VAWA. The restoration of measured Tribal inherent criminal jurisdictional authority within the parameters established by VAWA is commensurate with the obligation of the federal government to provide additional resources to Tribes through funding mechanisms such as Self-Governance compacts and Self-Determination contracts so that they can properly execute these additional responsibilities and properly address the needs of victims of crimes and their families.

Following the *Castro-Huerta* decision, the federal government has reduced vital justice resources for Tribal governments. The Supreme Court's recognition of Oklahoma's concurrent jurisdiction to prosecute non-Natives for crimes against Native people on Tribal lands mirrors the harmful 1950s termination-era policies aimed at assimilating Tribes. This decision expands P.L. 280, allowing states to enforce laws on Native lands without Tribal consent, despite its proven harm and calls for revocation. Instead of dismantling this ineffective law, the ruling extends it beyond Oklahoma, opening the door for state intrusion in criminal and civil matters nationwide. While Tribal jurisdiction remains intact, the ruling highlights the need for additional resources to protect Tribal citizens and communities.

StrongHearts advocates have a strong understanding of Native cultures, sovereignty, and law and provide peer support through one-on-one counseling and referrals to available local resources for Natives in need of a safe and healing environment. The Helpline has been a lifeline to many Natives in need of emergency services and assistance with navigating difficult barriers to justice and safety. It is essential to authorize permanent funding and to create a separate line item/set-aside for Native people who are two to three times more likely to experience violence, stalking, or sexual assault than any other race according to DOJ.

FVPSA is the only dedicated funding source that addresses the need for immediate shelter and supportive services to Native victims and survivors of domestic violence. Although FVPSA mandates a 10% set-aside for Tribal governments, the imminent basic needs of survivors continue to outpace the available funding. A modest increase from 10 to 12.5% would account for inflationary cost adjustments and the cost-of-living increases. The Family Violence and Services Improvement Act includes four essential Tribal provisions: 1. Increases the Tribal set-aside from 10% to 12.5% which would strengthen the ability of Tribes to respond to domestic violence in their communities; 2. Authorizes permanent and separate funding for a national Native domestic violence hotline; 3. Authorizes funding for an Alaskan and Native Hawaiian domestic violence resource center; and 4. Authorizes formula funding for Tribal domestic violence coalitions.

The reauthorization of VAWA in 2022 recognized the inherent authority of Tribes in the state of Alaska to exercise criminal and civil jurisdiction over all Indians present in the village. It also enables Alaska Tribes that are designated by the Attorney General to exercise STCJ over non-Indian perpetrators of certain crimes within their jurisdictional territory. Critical infrastructure is needed to support Tribal justice systems in Alaska to demonstrate success with the pilot program. A dedicated permanent funding source also needs to be created for Alaska, Hawaii and Urban Centers that serve AI/AN.

Tribes struggle with staff shortages and recruitment challenges, worsened by the pandemic and added administrative burdens from recovery resources. Their capacity to manage daily financial practices is already stretched due to the volume of grants and reporting requirements, and additional grant-related administrative demands only further strain Tribal financial systems. Furthermore, grants force Tribes to compete for limited resources, with less-resourced Tribes facing even greater challenges. Many Tribes lack the staff or capacity to manage grants, often relying on one person to cover multiple roles. As a result, those in greatest need are often unable to access the funding.

Recommendations:

1. Continue exploring ways to overcome funding barriers that undermine Tribal sovereignty and self-governance.
2. Provide additional resources to execute restored jurisdictional authority under VAWA.
3. Authorize permanent funding of the StrongHearts Native Helpline to serve as the national Indian domestic violence helpline for Native communities.
4. Increase funding for the FVPSA from 10% to 12.5%
5. Provide a dedicated funding stream for Alaska that includes infrastructure for capital projects.
6. A permanent funding source needs to be created for Alaska, Hawaii and urban centers that serve AI/AN.

Topic 2: Formula Funding

Base funding through Self-Government compacts and Self-Determination contracts is essential for improving public safety and justice in Indian Country. Grants, however, restrict Tribal sovereignty, create administrative burdens, and offer short-term solutions without guaranteed long-term support. The reliance on grants hinders planning, staffing, and service delivery, especially in remote communities. Tribes need stable, recurring funding to effectively address public safety and justice needs.

Every state and US territory receives a base amount of formula funding, and the remaining funds are allocated to each state based on their state population. Tribes, however, are subjected to more restrictive measures that treat Tribes as inferior sovereigns. Lack of sufficient funding is never a valid reason for inequitable treatment amongst sovereigns. Tribes should not be subjected to paternalistic grant measures when similar conditions are not being imposed on states. DOJ should utilize a funding formula to provide base funding to Tribes as opposed to the current competitive grant or formula grant funding mechanisms that are being imposed on Tribal governments.

Formula Funding is more reflective of the government-to-government relationship and should be utilized as the chosen mechanism for the distribution of funding to Tribes. Formula funding does not come with the same restrictions, administrative burdens, and planning hurdles that are associated with grant funding. Our Tribe would be supportive of every Tribe receiving base funding dollars before a proportional share of the remaining funding is distributed amongst all Tribes.

Although OVW came to the conclusion that there were too many hurdles to implement formula funding with just OVW funding back in 2014, we still remain steadfast in our position that stable base formula funding is more congruent with Tribal sovereignty and self-governance and the equitable application of funding mechanisms and should be explored further. We urge DOJ to continue to explore this solution by re-engaging with Tribes to strategize on how to overcome the obstacles to formula funding.

DOJ should expand self-governance to all public safety and justice programs across the federal government to allow for greater flexibility in combining and using funding from all sources which will lead to improved public safety in Tribal communities. As an initial step, DOJ could create a P.L. 477-like funding mechanism that allows Tribes to combine all public safety and justice funding from numerous sources and agencies into a single plan with minimal reporting requirements as an initial policy step that could increase the amount of funding that is available for public safety and justice purposes. If the decision not to use formula funding is predicated on insufficient resources, there are a few avenues the workgroup could explore to increase the funding levels. The administration's budget proposal could advocate for an additional percentage of the money set-aside for Tribes to increase the funding allocation.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ should utilize a funding formula to provide base funding to Tribes as opposed to the current competitive grant or formula grant funding mechanisms that are being imposed on Tribal governments.
2. Re-engage with Tribes to strategize on how to overcome the obstacles to formula funding.
3. Expand Tribal self-governance authority to DOJ.
4. The administration's budget request should advocate for mandatory as opposed to discretionary funding for Tribal public safety and justice programs and services to align with trust and treaty obligations.
5. Advocate for substantial increases in base funding for Tribal public safety and justice programs and services.
6. Provide direct funding to Tribal nations rather than allowing states to administer funding that is intended for Tribes.
7. Provide stable base budgets for public safety and justice with recurring funding amounts that are predictable and consistent.
8. Enhance coordination and cooperation between departments and agencies across the federal government to promote safer communities and better outcomes for Tribal citizens, their families, and communities
9. Take steps to support the collection of accurate data and develop community profiles that better reflect the public safety and justice conditions and funding needs across Indian Country.

Topic 3: Enhancing the Safety of Indian Women from Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Homicide, Stalking, and Sex Trafficking

Indian Country continues to experience the highest crime victimization rates in the United States because they are the only sovereign government in America who are restricted by federal law from fully exercising their inherent jurisdictional authority over non-Indian perpetrators of crime against their citizens and within their communities. VAWA 2013 restored Tribal authority over non-Indians who violate protection orders or commit certain crimes of domestic violence against Indians in Indian Country, but it was limited and left many gaps that prevented Tribes from being able to properly protect their people. VAWA 2022 addressed a handful of these jurisdictional gaps by restoring Tribal jurisdictional authority over non-Indian perpetrators of sexual assault/violence, child abuse, stalking, trafficking, and assaults against law enforcement officers. However, more needs to be done to ensure Tribal governments have the authority to prosecute and punish those who commit crimes against their citizens and within their communities.

For decades, the federal government has restricted Tribal nations' jurisdictional authority but has also failed to exercise the jurisdictional authority they re-assumed from Tribes, contributing to the mounting rates of

injustices that have been committed against our people and communities. The people experiencing the highest victimization rates, American Indians and Alaska Natives, have been the people with the least financial support. The federal government's role as trustee is to empower Tribes to fully exercise their governmental authority so that meaningful measures can be implemented at the local level to address public safety and justice concerns. However, instead of empowering Tribal governments, we've had to fight to be a part of conversations about public safety and justice in Indian Country. The enactment of laws and policies that prohibit us from fully exercising our jurisdictional authority has devastated our communities. It is incumbent upon the federal government to ensure we are equipped with the capacity and resources needed to properly execute our jurisdictional authority. We want to continue to work in partnership with national, regional, and local governmental authorities to promote the safety and well-being of our citizens and communities as well as our neighboring communities.

The response to MMIP has been inadequate for a number of reasons, to include lack of sufficient resources, jurisdictional challenges, structural barriers to justice for Native people that are sanctified in federal laws and policies, a lack of awareness, and the absence of data. To continue to work towards addressing the crisis of MMIP, we must develop solutions rooted in Tribal sovereignty.

The hundreds of thousands of workers who are brought in to work on an oil, mining, or gas project, or extractive industry man camps, have caused immediate and enduring harm to Tribal communities. The areas where these camps are created do not have adequate infrastructure in place to guarantee the public safety and justice of local rural communities including Tribal communities that are often within proximity of these camps. The influx of people and insufficient infrastructure often result in an increase of physical and sexual violence and violent crime being perpetrated against Native people who already experience higher rates of violence and inequitable access to justice. We also urge the DoD to do more to prevent and respond to violence against Indigenous women perpetrated by active-duty military.

Over 60% of Tribes in the nation reside in P.L. 280 states. These Tribes suffer the consequences of insufficient funding to address public safety and justice within their communities that are exacerbated by the jurisdictional challenges and the complete failure of P.L. 280 states to fulfill their justice obligations to these Tribes. P.L. 280 is a termination era policy that diminished Tribal sovereignty and abrogated Tribal treaty rights without their consent. Congress ignored Tribal rights in favor of state power, expanding state jurisdictional authority to enforce their laws on Tribal lands and eliminating federal criminal jurisdiction. Although Tribes still have concurrent jurisdictional authority in most areas, the absence of funding to be able to exercise this authority leaves their citizens and communities without equitable access to justice.

The federal government should not be establishing priorities or setting stringent parameters regarding program implementation but should instead defer to the authority of Tribal governments to determine their own victim service needs and public safety and justice solutions within their communities. Tribal victims of crime have a wide spectrum of needs that range from the need for financial support, medical, dental, physical, and mental health assistance, housing, transportation, workforce development and training, childcare assistance, legal assistance, and other assistance that is unique to their Tribal cultural practices and beliefs. The conversation needs to be reframed from, "here are the federal government's funding priorities and goals that Tribes need to design their programs around" to "how can we best support Tribes to address their priorities and achieve their goals?"

Recommendations:

1. Support the restoration of Tribal inherent jurisdictional authority.

2. Ensure we are equipped with the capacity and resources needed to properly execute our jurisdictional authority.
3. Restore full criminal jurisdiction to Tribes so they can effectively address crimes of violence against their communities and citizens.
4. Provide adequate resources for victim and survivor services to ensure support in a culturally appropriate way throughout all stages of the investigation.
5. DoD must do more to prevent and respond to violence against Indigenous women perpetrated by active-duty military.
6. P.L. 280 must be rescinded and Tribes who reside in these states must be provided with funding to address their public safety and justice concerns.
7. Defer to Tribal governments to allow them to determine their own victim service needs and public safety and justice solutions, rather than establishing priorities or setting stringent parameters for program implementation.
8. Remove systemic barriers, improve access to data systems, and enhance data sharing across all government entities. Implement protocols to respond to MMIP through the enactment of Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act.

Topic 4: Strengthening the Federal Response to Violent Crimes

Antiquated federal laws and policies created the current jurisdictional quagmire that fosters a system of structural racism in government operations, inequality, and injustice in Indian Country that has led to a victimization rate that far exceeds the national average. This warrants immediate attention and an influx of funding that is commensurate with the degree of resources required to address the victimization rate and overwhelming needs of survivors, their families, and Tribal communities. The public safety challenges that have been created by these laws and policies should be identified and steps should be taken to amend any legal and regulatory impediments that continue to harm Tribal citizens and communities.

Section 12 of the TLOA of 2010 requires notification of Tribal officials in a timely manner – notification is required when the U.S. Attorney decides not to prosecute and when BOP releases an offender.

It is critical that federal agencies that administer public safety and justice services coordinate and collaborate amongst themselves and Tribal governments to generate the best results for survivors of crime and their families. In general, agencies function within their individual silos adhering to policies and practices that are outdated and far too rigid to fully address the needs of Indian Country. Adopting a holistic approach, expanding allowable services, and granting Tribes more flexibility with funds will strengthen their ability to support survivors and their families.

Expand self-governance to all public safety and justice programs across the federal government and allow funds to be distributed through self-governance compacts and Public Law 638 (P.L. 638) contracts. The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act authorized Tribal administration of programs, services, functions, and activities in the DOI and HHS through P.L. 638 contracts or self-governance compacts. Congress has acknowledged the success of self-governance and P.L. 638 contracting by expanding this authority to other agencies, including, the Department of Transportation, HUD, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Agriculture.

Systematic issues are often the root cause of most crimes. To produce more promising results, a holistic approach to addressing crime in Indian Country is needed. Law enforcement needs to be combined with behavioral health and prevention programs to address underlying issues of alcohol and substance abuse,

domestic violence, intergenerational trauma, post-traumatic stress, anger management, and other complex issues. Programs also need to be structured to work with both victims and perpetrators of crime and culturally appropriate solutions need to be employed. Coordination and cooperation, as well as broad flexibility to design and implement programs and services that align with Tribal communities' needs are essential to realize success and deter future criminal behavior.

Permanently reauthorize Tribal coalitions that provide culturally appropriate services to AI/AN victims, survivors, and their families. State coalitions have been funded for years and there should be equitable treatment for Tribal coalitions and funding parity. Furthermore, OVW should broaden the scope of allowable activities and allow for greater flexibility for Tribal coalitions to address the needs of Native victims and survivors of domestic violence and their families, to include the addition of prevention and awareness programs, sexual assault nurse examiner programs, and sexual response teams.

Recommendations:

1. Amend any legal and regulatory impediments that continue to harm Tribal citizens and communities.
2. Enhance coordination and cooperation amongst federal agencies that administer public safety and justice services.
3. Expand self-governance to all public safety and justice programs across the federal government and allow funds to be distributed through self-governance compacts and P.L. 638 contracts.
4. Combine law enforcement with behavioral health and prevention programs to address underlying issues of alcohol/substance abuse, domestic violence, intergenerational trauma, post-traumatic stress, anger management, etc.
5. Structure programs to work with both victims and perpetrators of crime and culturally appropriate solutions need to be employed.
6. Adopt a holistic approach to address crime in Indian Country.
7. Permanently reauthorize Tribal coalitions that provide culturally appropriate services to AI/AN victims, survivors, and their families.
8. OVW should broaden the scope of allowable activities under grant funding.

Topic 5: Improving Access to Local, Regional, State, and Federal Crime Information Databases and Criminal Justice Information Systems

Continue to invest in TAP for national crime information so that Tribal governments have access to the critical data that is needed to protect our citizens and communities effectively and efficiently. These databases allow law enforcement to share critical data including orders of protection, registered sex offenders and illegal gun purchase information. The collection and sharing of data across jurisdictional boundaries make it more difficult for perpetrators of crime to fall off the radar and avoid accountability for their actions and/or inaction. Training and technical assistance should continue to be deployed throughout Indian Country to strengthen Tribal capacity to use the system.

Some Tribal communities continue to experience challenges with broadband/spectrum access which could prevent them from being able to utilize the TAP system. This is an example of how inter-agency coordination and cooperation and flexibility in the use of funding is vital to ensure that Tribes are equipped with the tools and resources needed to properly execute public safety and justice measures.

Recommendation:

1. Continue to invest in the TAP for national crime information so that Tribal governments have access to the critical data that is needed to protect our citizens and communities effectively and efficiently.



Kenaitze Indian Tribe

Bernadine Atchison, Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

Mary Ann Mills, Council Member - Tribal Leader (Written)

Maria Guerra, Na'ini Family and Social Services Director - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe has 2,094 Tribal citizens and provides services to 4,740 Alaskan Natives, American Indians, and other people who reside in the central and upper Kenai Peninsula. The Kenaitze people live across from three volcanoes – Mount Iliamna, Mount Redoubt, and Mount Spur – which are significant landmarks that guide them in harvesting traditional foods and show them the way home. The Kenaitze Indian Tribe's Domestic Violence Sexual Assault (DV/SA) Advocacy Program provides advocacy and resources to those who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence or sexual assault in their service area.

Alaska is considered the deadliest state for women, where 59% of women have experienced violence. Governor Mike Dunleavy recognized on the state's missing or murdered women website that: "Alaska Native Women are overrepresented in the domestic violence victim population by 250% and even though Alaska Natives make up 19% of Alaska's population they represent 47% of the reported rape victims in the state." The actual rate of sexual violence estimated by professionals serving Alaska Native sexual assault survivors is frequently cited as 90% or greater for Alaska Native women and over 50% for men, yet according to the National Crime Information Center, in 2016, there were 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls through the U.S. Department of Justice's federal missing persons database, but the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System only logged 116 of those cases. Moreover, reports indicate that there is no reliable count of how many Native women go missing or are killed every year, and research shows that Native women are often misclassified as Hispanic or Asian or other racial categories on missing persons forms.

Personal Account of Mary Ann Mills:

To understand violence against women in Alaska is to understand the uncomfortable truths regarding the history of Alaska and the United States. In recent years, President-elect Donald Trump claims the government has weaponized the Department of Justice and law enforcement against the American people. However, the Alaska Natives and American Indians understand well that the weaponizing of DOJ and law enforcement began in America among our Indigenous Peoples at the inception of the United States of America. The late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. also observed and proclaimed: "Our nation was born in genocide...We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its Indigenous populations."

Personal Account of Bernadine Atchison:

I'm sharing my historic timeline to give context to my remarks. In the late 1800s, my great-grandmother, Eva, a Dena'ina, was one of two survivors of her village after a flu epidemic. In the 1940s, her son, my grandfather, was murdered, and his body was left in a burning building. His wife, my grandmother, had four children and had to give up her youngest son for adoption because she could not care for him. In the 1950s, my mother was raped at 16 and sent away to give birth and give her baby up for adoption.

In the 1970s, when I was in middle school, I was sexually assaulted by a family member. There were three more sexual assaults before I was 16, by men known to my parents. My parents were alcoholics and most of their friends were too. This is when the boarding school started on the Kenai Peninsula. That is when I learned what prejudice meant. I saw a Native boy attacked with a knife, and the non-Native girls accused the Native girls of having head lice. Only the Native girls' heads were inspected, and no lice was found.

In 1978, my sister got pregnant at 15. My parents forced her to give her baby up for adoption, and because they were embarrassed, told everyone she was raped. In the 1980s my sister was given an experimental vaccine that was being tested on Indigenous people of Alaska without them fully understanding the consequences. She received the first two doses and had two of the potential adverse reactions, Guillain Barre Syndrome, which paralyzed half of her body and led to depression. She committed suicide in 1987.

In June of 2014 my grandchildren were taken into custody because my grandson's wife was doing drugs while the kids were in her care and he was at work. My four grandchildren were placed in Alaska's Office of Children's Services (OCS) system, and we went through many nearly impossible hoops to get them back and keep them in our custody, eventually forcing my son to divorce his wife. He ended up with a \$26,000 bill from the state for foster care, but she has not been held accountable for her own actions. Seven years ago, my son was a healthy human being; now he is homeless. The kids' mother is homeless. The OCS system and our police department created a chain reaction of events that destroyed two adult lives. The system failed them.

In 2018, my 11-year-old great niece died by suicide due to bullying. In 2024, my 10-year-old granddaughter was also bullied at school and talked about not wanting to be alive.

All of these traumas and violence are mine. I am one woman in a Tribe of 2,000 and all of these actions of violence against women and girls are not through what has happened to me through my trauma but from this world and the system we live in.

Personal Account of Maria Guerra:

I'll be sharing about two current DV/SA program experiences through the lens of field work advocates, those with boots on the ground with a caseload of 200 + un'ina (those who come to us).

The first un'ina is a mother of three and a victim of domestic violence and sexual assault. Our department has been working with this individual since 2021. Since 2021 there have been so many struggles from relapsing, battling her perpetrator for custody of her children, required supervised visits with her children at the Tribe, losing her driver's license, to her stabilizing by getting a job and attaining overnight visits with her children. With the support from the DV/SA program, she has worked so hard on her sobriety and healing from the extensive abuse and trauma. She has received a variety of supports which range from different types of financial assistance to court accompaniment, advocacy and assistance through a variance process and much more. She worked through so many things in order to get her job and to get where she is. Very recently, she got her driver's license back and she managed to save money to be able to purchase a vehicle. Now she is able to get a promotion at her job as a manager. Her journey stands out to her advocate and is a reminder, "What you plant today you harvest tomorrow."

The second un'ina is a mother of three children and continues to live in fear as her perpetrator has evaded law enforcement and continues to terrorize her. Unfortunately, in the past, law enforcement was not able to locate her perpetrator, at this point this individual will not be held accountable for multiple reasons. This un'ina doesn't know where her perpetrator is, making her live in fear that he will find her. She has

implemented extensive safety plans, she has relocated to a new address, got a different car, and has a new job in hopes that he cannot locate her. The following is the redacted email from the DA's office which was sent to her in November of 2024 following the fourth DVPO violation on this case:

Subject: Case declined: XPD report number XXXXXXXX For Defendant XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Good morning Ms. XXXXXXX

Our office recently received a report from the XXXXX Police of a potential violation of a protective order from October of this year. After reviewing the report, the attorney has concluded that while there is enough information to show that Mr. XXXXXXX violated the protective order, but not enough evidence to prove that violation to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt. However, this information can still be used in his current case to show a pattern of behavior. So, while we will not be going forward with prosecution of this matter as its own independent case, we will be adding it to the existing case.

I'd like to thank you for your diligence in reporting this violation to law enforcement and encourage you to continue to report any future violations. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to reach out to me at your convenience.

This communication is another example of failing systems where a perpetrator can reach a 4th Protective Order violation without consequence and lack of protection for the victim. The un'ina relied heavily on her advocate to process this news.

Topic 1: History of Violence and Systemic Injustices

To understand violence against women in Alaska, it is necessary to acknowledge the history of violence and systemic injustices faced by Indigenous peoples. Alaska Natives and Alaska Tribal governments have had little say in addressing crime and justice in their communities. This history has led to discriminatory attitudes, unequal treatment, and a cycle of violence that continues to impact our communities.

Other impacts include the boarding school era, which forced Indigenous youth to leave their homes, often separating siblings, and punished parents who resisted, as well as medical experimentation on Indigenous people and the ways that the justice system has created a chain of events that has led to negative outcomes for families.

Recommendations:

1. The federal government must hold its agents and the State of Alaska accountable.
2. Departments need to have hard conversations about what has created these grave issues and collaborate on how to correct them. Funding for Tribes to accomplish these tasks is needed.
3. Native peoples and Tribal governments need to be included in these conversations, and their ideas must be considered and incorporated.
4. The federal government should audit the legal system in Alaska, including prosecutors, district attorneys, court judges, and law enforcement, and include interviews with victims.
5. Federal programs should move forward toward healing, including learning what healing means for each Tribe.

Topic 2: Lack of Law Enforcement and Public Safety

There are 229 federally recognized Tribes and 200 Native villages in Alaska. There is a severe shortage of law enforcement in remote villages. Thirty-nine percent of Alaska Native villages are served by state trained law enforcement and 61% of the villages do not have law enforcement and must wait, sometimes days, for law enforcement to arrive. The current system in Alaska is unfair and reinforces discriminatory attitudes towards Alaska Natives, according to the Indian Law and Order Commission.

Recommendations:

1. The federal government should provide funding for Tribes and Native communities to hire their own police officers.
2. The federal government should discontinue giving federal Indian pass-through funds to the State of Alaska and instead, send the funds to Tribal governments.
3. The federal government must restore and enhance authority to Tribal governments and local Native communities.
4. The federal government must recognize and promote Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, along with international agreements the United States has made on behalf of the Indigenous Alaskans.

Topic 3: Trauma and the Need for Trauma-Informed Care

Rape and violence against women and children have lifelong and intergenerational effects. Trauma-based care is essential for survival and may require a lifelong support system. There is a need for cultural competence and trauma-informed training for staff, agencies, law enforcement, and the judicial system, and the judicial system must normalize and validate the ways people survive violence, including substance use, mental health issues, and other behaviors.

Recommendations:

1. Federal funding to Tribes is needed to assist in the healing of their people through trauma-based care.
2. Training in a trauma-informed approach is critical when dealing with the violence created at the hands of others, as well as Indigenous people who have and continue to suffer from the effects of colonization.
3. The judicial system should provide special, cultural, and trauma-informed approach training for judges, attorneys, law enforcement, and advocates working with Indigenous people.

Topic 4: Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons

A service gap exists in the community response to MMIP, particularly a lack of dedicated investigators who specialize in searching for missing people in Alaska. A missing person devastates an entire community, not just a household.

Recommendations:

1. The government should assist with more dedicated investigators/detectives who specialize in the search for those who are missing in Alaska.
2. These specialized investigators should search for missing people regardless of their background, age, ethnicity, runaway history, mental health history, self-medicating history, criminal history, etc.

Topic 5: Inadequate Funding for Data Systems

When Tribes shop for data systems to collect data and meet federal reporting requirements, they encounter multiple barriers. The costs for higher-quality systems are very high, and some vendors sell products they cannot deliver.

Recommendations:

1. The government should provide lists of adequate (screened) compatible software developers and systems along with funding to cover the costs.
2. The government should provide increased funding for software development and help with reduced or alternate reporting requirements.

Topic 6: Need for Consistent Funding and Support for Advocacy Programs

The road to healing is long, and advocacy programs need consistent funding to support survivors until they no longer need assistance. Grant funding should be for at least five years to help retain and recruit staff.

Recommendations:

1. Grant funding should be at a minimum of five-year awards to help retain and recruit staff.
2. There should be consistency in staff who provide advocacy to avoid the need for survivors to retell their stories.
3. Consistent and adequate funding for resources in order for Tribal communities to heal and thrive.

Topic 7: Need to Address Issues in the Education System

We are concerned about bullying in schools, the lack of accountability for perpetrators of violence, and the lack of truthful education about different cultures. The lack of accountability and the lack of factual history feeds prejudice and violence.

Recommendations:

1. The education system should address bullying and hold young men accountable for their actions.
2. Schools should not make innocent children pay for the consequences of a bully's actions.
3. Public schools should teach respect and the factual history of different cultures in the U.S. to reduce prejudice and violence.

Topic 8: Police Practices and the State Child Welfare System

There is a need for police policies that support family reunification, and women and mothers should not be used as pawns that set them up for failure or keep them in addiction. Work must be done at the federal level to change policies, regulations, or laws that have been destructive to families involved in the child welfare system.

Recommendations:

1. Police policies need to be aligned with family reunification, especially when children are involved.
2. The state and family service programs need to be reformed at the federal level to change policies, regulations, or laws that have been destructive to families who end up in the child welfare system.

Topic 9: Tribal Sovereignty and Self-Determination

Funding for sovereign Tribal nations needs to be long-term and at the same level as other sovereign states. Programs need to be administered at the Tribal level and designed to the uniqueness of each Tribe and their

culture. It is unnatural to be forced to compete with other Tribes for grants in order to help those they serve, and all Tribal citizens deserve quality and culturally appropriate advocacy services.

Recommendations:

1. Funding for sovereign Tribal nations needs to be long-term, permanent, and non-competitive.
2. Programs should be administered at the Tribal level and designed to the uniqueness of each Tribe and their culture.
3. The federal government must remove P.L. 280 and honor all treaties made with Indian Tribes.

Response to Framing Paper Funding Proposals:

Proposal #1 – Seek Congressional Authorization for a New DOJ Formula Grant Program for Public Safety

Benefits:

- Supports Tribal sovereignty and self-determination by strengthening Tribal control over our justice system priorities.
- Reduces reliance on competitive grant cycles.
- Streamlines reporting requirements and allows us to focus on program implantation rather than grant writing.
- Allows flexibility to adjust funding to changing needs.
- Allows for stronger connections between prevention and intervention.

Challenges:

- Potential complications with formula design and how it will impact smaller Tribes.
- Fixed formulas may not respond to emerging needs.
- Increased competition with inter-Tribal partnerships over the same funding.

Recommendations:

Congress should appropriate additional funding to support this proposal and not take away from existing funding opportunities. We would request more information from DOJ on this process, and program requirements to be provided with additional testifying and consultation. There are several questions that need to be answered before we can support this proposal.

Proposal #2 – Seek New Statutory Authority Allowing for Integration of DOJ Grants (Similar to P.L. 477)

Benefits:

- Additional funding streams to support Tribal public safety and justice systems.
- Enhances Tribal self-determination and allows Tribes to design integrated justice systems.
- Flexible program integration by combining multiple funding streams under one plan.
- Administrative streamlining and decreasing paperwork burden.
- Proven model success with the P.L. 477 framework.

Challenges:

- Implementation challenges and complex transitions. (We are in the process of having some of our programs under P.L. 477 so this may not be an issue for us, but for other Tribes it may be.)
- Tribal capacity concerns include that some Tribes may lack current necessary infrastructure (we have this as a concern on behalf of those smaller Tribes in Alaska where this may be a challenge). We

consider ourselves a small to medium sized Tribe but would have limited challenges with our infrastructure. We do not want to leave any Tribe without the services they need to provide protection for their families. Whichever proposal is focused on it needs to work for all Tribes.

Recommendations:

1. Congress should appropriate additional funding to support this proposal and not take away from existing funding opportunities.
2. We would request that more information is provided to us on what a pilot program would look like, and which programs would fall under P.L. 477.
3. Additional testifying and consultation are needed.

Proposal #3 – Advocate for Increased Base Funding for Public Safety Through BIA

Benefits:

- It is an additional funding stream to support Tribal public safety and justice systems, including providing Alaska with base funding.
- Supports long-term planning.
- Enables culturally appropriate solution and recognizes Tribal authority and jurisdictional issues.
- Supports community safety enhancements.

Challenges:

- Funding distribution challenges are complex in Alaska especially if based on population or land size. Risk of inadequate base amounts for smaller Tribes and of funding imbalances for consortia versus individual Tribes.
- Political considerations with state/Tribal relationship impacts and legislative understanding of the needs of Alaska Tribes.
- Non-inclusion of Tribal police officers due to Alaska's mandatory designation as a P.L. 280 state and BIA internal policies.

Recommendation:

1. We would request that more information is provided to address the challenges.



Lower Brule Sioux Tribe

Stephanie Langdeau, Advocate, Restoring Hope, and Director, Native Women's Society - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe is a large group of extended families within the Lakota Nation, who identify as Sicangu, or "burnt thigh." The Tribe's ancestors were divided into the Khúl Wičháša Oyáte, or lower people, and the Ĥeyáta Wičháša Oyáte, or uplands people. Our Khúl Wičháša ancestors favored lands where the White River empties into the Missouri River, while the Ĥeyáta Wičháša lived higher up towards the Black Hills. In the 18th century, French traders translated the Tribe's Sicangu name into French and called them Brules, which is how they became known as the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe.

The Lower Brule Reservation is located along the Missouri River and covers 400 square miles in Lyman and Stanley counties in Central South Dakota. It is bounded by the Missouri River, which was closed by the Big Bend Dam in 1963, and by the Lake Sharp reservoir, which borders the Crow Creek reservation. The construction of dams in the mid-20th century flooded most of the Tribe's forests, hunting, fishing, and gathering grounds, along with their agricultural lands and settlements. This took away the bottom land of the Missouri River Valley, which was the social, cultural, and economic base of the Tribe. The Lower Brule reservation has 226,661 acres, with approximately 61,000 acres non-Indian owned, across two counties.

The Lower Brule reservation has a population of 1,664 with a membership of 3,410. The Tribe has an average age of 25 years and an average income of \$29,375, though nearly half of the community lives month to month on an annual income of \$5,000 to \$6,000. The poverty rate is 52%, and only 15% of the community have a bachelor's degree or higher.

I am Stephanie Langdeau, an enrolled member of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, the mother of nine, and grandmother of 30. I'm a sister, a cousin, an aunt, and a survivor. Of my 30 takoja (grandchildren), I am currently raising eight of them. I am currently the single advocate for Restoring Hope and soon to be the director of Onaphe Inc., a nonprofit developed with a board of Lower Brule Tribal members. I am providing victim services to two reservations. As an advocate, not only are we involved in sweeping, cleaning, doing the reports, and managing the data for these reports, but we also must familiarize ourselves with our Tribal laws and codes and the county, state, and federal practices and procedures concerning domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, sex trafficking, and dating violence.

One in two Native females that I have encountered—there may even be more—have been assaulted in one form or another, most over and over throughout their life. I want to share a quote with you from Oprah Winfrey's character in the 1985 movie *The Color Purple*. "All my life, I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy; I had to fight my uncles. I had to fight with my brothers. A girl child isn't safe in a family of men, but I ain't never thought I had to fight in my own house." This quote has stayed with me throughout the years because it's me. But thankfully, I was blessed with good brothers.

Recently, I attended a sexual assault survivor healing retreat for teens, young women, for three days. Culturally specific teachings geared towards our Lakota women were carried out. I can't begin to tell you what these teachings and sharings did for all of us in attendance. It was followed by Inipi, a sweat, and then a ceremony. It was conducted by a respected elder, and it was to strengthen our spirit. It was so powerful. I am 54 years old. I carry 54 years of trauma, but on that day, something happened. My body even responded physically. And I think this should be federally funded so more traditions can be carried out. I believe for our healing, we need to go back to our ways—not living in teepees, but our ancestral way of thinking and believing.

Topic 1: Lack of Tribal Jurisdiction and Law Enforcement Resources

The FBI is primarily responsible for major crimes on the reservation, which spans over 200 acres. The Lower Brule Tribe has only five police officers to cover the reservation. There is a need for Tribal jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders and special Tribal jurisdiction to address protection for elders and serious crimes that co-occur with domestic and sexual violence, such as financial crimes and homicide.

Recommendations:

1. Tribal jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders and special Tribal jurisdiction to address protection for elders and serious crimes should be granted.

2. Funding for Tribal law enforcement needs to be increased.

Topic 2: Inadequate Response to Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR)

There have been six families in the past three years left with questions, not answers, in the deaths of their loved ones. Some deaths have been ruled suicide or drug overdose when circumstances suggest otherwise, and some families' inquiries are met with responses that there is no further investigation or that the case is closed. There is a lack of support for families and the missing or murdered relatives in a culturally appropriate way, and there is a lack of funding for victim services.

Recommendations:

1. MMIWR should be the primary goal, and steps must be taken to ensure that families and missing or murdered relatives are supported in a culturally appropriate way.
2. I stand with NCAL's report. DOJ should review, revise, and create law enforcement and justice protocols appropriate to the disappearance of Native relatives, including inter-jurisdictional issues, as provided by the Savanna's Act and Not Invisible Act.
3. DOJ should investigate state and local agencies with a pattern or practice of inadequately responding to cases of missing or murdered Indigenous relatives.
4. U.S. Attorneys should notify Tribal officials promptly when they decline to prosecute sexual assault and domestic violence.
5. Funding for victim services needs to be increased.

Topic 3: Systemic Issues and Generational Trauma

The Lower Brule community has suffered many atrocities since colonization, including the introduction of alcohol, the boarding school era, and the stripping of their women of their sacredness. Generational trauma from these historical events is a root cause of why men abuse women and children. Institutions and counselors to date have not worked for them.

Recommendations:

1. Refocus and revise the approach to addressing the effects of generational trauma and prioritize culturally specific healing practices.
2. Increase funding for culturally specific programs, including traditional arts and ceremonies.

Topic 4: Lack of Adequate Funding and Resources

There is a lack of adequate funding for victim services, Tribal law enforcement, and Tribal courts, which is a failure by the federal government and a human rights violation. Basic human needs are not met on the reservation, and the community experiences high rates of homelessness, hunger, addiction, crime, and victimization. Native women have the highest mortality rates in childbirth and poor outcomes for newborns. FVPSA authorization expired in 2015, but is the only dedicated federal funding source for domestic violence shelters across the country. A Tribal funding stream that reflects actual Tribal needs and continues to support the flexible use of funding is needed.

Recommendations:

1. FVPSA should be reauthorized.
2. There needs to be a Tribal funding stream that reflects actual Tribal needs and supports the flexible use of funding.
3. Victim services need to be a separate, distinct funding stream from block grants.

4. The United States must act on treaty and trust obligations to promote public safety and justice services and fully fund the DOJ's existing Tribal funding programs.
5. OVC should continue conducting government-to-government Tribal consultations to improve the distribution of the Tribal Victims Services Set-Aside program and determine how regulations ought to be tailored to address unique Tribal needs.
6. A standing working group of Tribal experts should provide input on programmatic decisions on an ongoing basis to ensure the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside program's continued success.



Lower Elwha Tribal Community

Beatriz Arakawa, DV/SA Advocate, LEFA Program - Authorized Designee (Oral)

Cheryl Neskahi Coan, DV/SA Training Coordinator - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, also known as the "strong people," is a sovereign, federally recognized Tribe with its own constitution and government. The Tribe is located in the Lower Elwha River Valley and adjacent bluffs on the north coast of the Olympic Peninsula, near Port Angeles, Washington. The Tribe's current land base was initially acquired by the United States and held in trust for the Tribe in 1935 and 1936 and proclaimed as the Lower Elwha reservation in 1968. Today, the Tribal lands include about 1,014 acres and the area near the Elwha River. The Tribe has a population of approximately 882 enrolled members. The Tribe governs itself and has many Tribal administrative departments that oversee the everyday functions of the reservation and provide for Tribal members. The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe practices a traditional way of life, including hunting, fishing, and gathering medicines, while also incorporating modern ways of life.

Personal Account of Beatriz Arakawa:

I am indigenous from Cordillera in the northern part of the Philippines. I am a mother, grandmother, sister, and relative to many, and I am an advocate for my children, grandchildren, and our Lower Elwha Tribal Community members. My children and grandchildren are Lower Elwha Tribe enrolled members. I work and reside in the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribal Reservation. I have been an advocate for over 24 years with the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. I also manage the majority of the Lower Elwha Family Advocacy Program, including a 24/7 crisis hotline. I am a newly elected board member of the WomenSpirit Coalition, the Washington State Native Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. I am here today to talk about the effectiveness and importance of federal government funds, especially OVW grant funds, to the Lower Elwha Tribe and all Tribes, including Alaskan Tribes. I have personally witnessed how important this funding is to provide services to victims and survivors, as the Lower Elwha Family Advocacy Program would not exist without it. I have heard survivors say that I am their eyes, ears, and feet, and I want to thank everyone for providing resources to sustain our critical work.

Personal Account of Dee Rhodes-Koester (read by Cheryl Neskahi Coan):

My name is Dee Koester. I am an enrolled member of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, a direct descendant of the 13 founding families of our Tribe. I have many cousins and relatives who live on the reservation located in and near the Lower Elwha River, near Port Angeles, Washington. I love our Tribe. I love that our Tribe recognizes descendants and the many gifts they bring to the culture of our Tribe, not to mention the sustainability of the Tribe for future generations.

I am the Founder and Executive Director of the Washington State Native Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, also known as WomenSpirit Coalition. I am a survivor of domestic violence and sexual assault. We have been supporting the Tribes in Washington state in the development of domestic violence and sexual assault programs for over 22 years. It has been a lifelong honor to do this work. We have been funded by OVW since 2006.

In 2002, when I founded WomenSpirit Coalition and began work of organizing Tribes in the long road ahead to listening, hearing the voices of victims and survivors, providing for safety of victims, and holding offenders accountable, the words domestic violence and sexual assault were not spoken aloud in our communities. The community education that was required on day one is still needed some 8,030 days later. Statistics do not show the true number of Native women assaulted, raped, and having all other forms of violence perpetrated against them. The toll on family and community is devastating. I honor our sisters in the work like Beatriz Arakawa and Cheryl Neskahi Coan who have persevered for decades.

Topic 1: Inadequate and Inconsistent Funding for Tribal Programs

It is critically important for there to be consistent and adequate funding for Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault programs. The Lower Elwha Tribe Family Advocacy Program relies on OVW grant funds to provide services to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking. Without this funding, the program would not be able to provide services such as emergency shelter assistance, obtaining protection orders, housing, and transportation. The WomenSpirit Coalition has been funded by OVW since 2006, and they need to be eligible for all forms of federal funding. Additionally, social service programs also need sustainable funding to provide holistic care.

Recommendations:

1. Provide consistent and adequate funding for all domestic violence and sexual assault programs, and related services.
2. Ensure Tribal coalitions are eligible for all forms of federal funding.
3. Continue providing financial support to maintain programs.

Topic 2: Lack of Resources for Rural Areas

Victims and survivors in rural areas like the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe Reservation face unique challenges. Without financial support, there would be a lack of resources to support families in the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe service area. The Lower Elwha Klallam Family Advocacy Program serves only the Tribe and its jurisdiction service areas.

Recommendation:

1. Prioritize funding for programs serving rural and remote Tribal communities.

Topic 3: Need for Support Services

In addition to funding for domestic violence and sexual assault programs, there is also a need for stable and adequate funding for support services. The WomenSpirit Coalition provides direct support services that supplement what Tribes cannot provide. These services also include civil legal services, a multidisciplinary response for victims, and a family justice center model of the WomenSpirit's Sayu'x X Wey Family Safety Center, which provides services to more than 29 Tribes in Washington State.

Recommendations:

1. Provide funding for services that address a range of needs.

2. Support direct services that fill gaps in Tribal programs.

Topic 4: Historical and Ongoing Threats to Tribal Communities

Tribes face threats of extinction by elected officials and blood quantum policies. The words domestic violence and sexual assault were not spoken aloud in their communities in 2002, and community education is still required. Furthermore, statistics do not show the true number of Native women assaulted, raped, and experiencing other forms of violence, which has a devastating toll on families and communities.

Recommendations:

1. Acknowledge and address the historical trauma and systemic injustices that contribute to violence against women in Tribal communities.
2. Increase community education and awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault.
3. Collect and analyze accurate data on violence against Native women.



Lummi Tribe

Rosalee Revey-Jacobs, Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral)

I am a newly appointed treasurer of the Lummi Indian Business Council. Lummi Nation is a federally recognized Tribe located in the upper left-hand corner of Washington State. We have approximately 5,500 Lummi Tribal members.

Topic 1: Gaps in Victim Support and Law Enforcement Coordination for Diverse Communities

We have approximately 250 community members that utilize our victims of crime services. We currently have a women's domestic violence shelter, but we also open it up to men who have been abused or the LGBTQ community as well. The shelter has 14 rooms and is currently at capacity. When we say honoring Tribal sovereignty and jurisdiction, this means collaboration and communication among law enforcement jurisdictions. Outlying jurisdictions need training to understand what their role is in coordination with our role. The outlying jurisdictions are not familiar with their responsibility, and it creates loopholes for perpetrators.

Recommendations:

1. Expand the capacity of the shelter to accommodate the growing demand for services, ensuring that all individuals have access to safe and supportive housing.
2. Educate jurisdictions on their responsibilities to close loopholes for perpetrators

Topic 2: Housing Gaps and Streamlining Grant Reporting

We need to have more accessible resources for our DV/SA victims and their families after they utilize our women's shelter. A majority of the DV/SA families are either not eligible for our HUD housing or cannot wait the three to five years currently required to receive housing through our extended housing options within Whatcom and Skagit Counties. Our victims of crime department utilizes a significant amount of various grants. We are grant heavy. Eighty-five percent of the budget comes from grants, and that creates a burden on our grant reporting. It would be helpful to streamline the process to free up the time of our staff to focus on providing services to our DV/SA clients.

Recommendations:

1. More accessible resources for our DV/SA victims and their families after they utilize our women's shelter.
2. Streamline the grant process to free up staffing and resources for victims of DV/SA.

Topic 3: Justice for Vulnerable Victims

All too often our cases do not move forward at the federal level. We have three cases in particular within the last few years in which infants or children have passed away from fentanyl exposure, two of which have yet to be addressed. These are our most vulnerable population, and they are victims of crime. We are trusting you to protect our most precious resource. Please prosecute all cases.

Recommendation:

1. Prosecute all cases where children are fatal victims of fentanyl exposure.

**Mesa Grande Band of Diegueno Mission Indians**

Keely Linton, Executive Director, Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition, Inc. - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

The Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians (Mesa Grande) is located in the northeastern part of San Diego County in California, in a rural mountain area. It is a small land-based Tribe working on reclaiming some of its territory. The Tribe is part of a small-town community. The Tribal leadership and committees are all volunteer-based, and many members have full-time jobs but still volunteer for Tribal functions. The Tribe has very little economic development to support its Tribal infrastructure. Mesa Grande is part of the Inter-Tribal Court of Southern California, a consortium of twelve Tribes that supports court infrastructure. The court currently only handles civil issues.

I have a full-time job, but I sit on our business development corporation board as a volunteer. I sit on our judicial council as a volunteer. Our current chairman is an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), and he volunteers as our chairman, even though he is an elected official. We don't take our roles as a side gig. This is our livelihood. And this is the continuation of our people and the struggle of keeping our cultures alive and sustainable for our children and our grandchildren. We don't take that lightly. When we ask for funding, we've done the best that we can with the little bit of funding that we do get.

The BIA has left a bad taste in relation to Tribes in California, particularly our Tribe. When we applied for funding through the BIA to do our startup and to begin developing our Tribe, it changed from year to year. And this last year we sat with BIA officers or grant analysts to develop those budgets. And then we were told, no, that's not right. We had to do it a different way. And we did that. And then we were cut. Our request was \$100,000 dollars; we got \$25,000 for our Tribe. It's enough to pay partly for development of a civil code, maybe. When you're talking about working with the BIA, I have concerns that the equity of disbursement of funding is going to be an ongoing issue.

The following are challenges faced by Mesa Grande and other Tribes in protecting their communities.

Topic 1: Underfunded Tribal Governments and Justice Systems

Tribal justice systems and social service departments are chronically underfunded, leaving Tribes without the essential resources and infrastructure to ensure the safety and well-being of their people. Many Tribes are not properly supported to build the capacity needed to sustain their government, support staff, and the lack of an economic foundation hinders the development of social service departments. The funding for Tribal justice systems is allocated at the discretion of grant staff, with no uniform or transparent guidelines governing its distribution. Additionally, Tribes in P.L. 280 states, like California, face unique challenges due to a lack of law enforcement authority and resources compared to other jurisdictions. These Tribes have less opportunity to develop their own law enforcement and court systems.

The perception that casino Tribes have sufficient funds to support their needs is also a challenge. To run a government, you need support staff, attorneys, emergency personnel, environmental personnel, and law enforcement, and you are dealing with the community, ceremony, families, and more. For state and federal governments this is all paid with tax dollars. It takes millions of dollars to support city governments and small towns. It is the same for Tribes who are not able to rely on tax dollars.

Recommendations:

1. Tribes must receive full and consistent funding to meet the basic needs of their communities, with guaranteed, mandatory funding within the federal budget to address critical gaps.
2. A comprehensive funding strategy is needed to support Tribal justice, social services, and community development, enabling Tribes to achieve economic stability and create opportunities for individuals.
3. Funding should extend to civil courts, not just criminal jurisdiction, so that Tribes can maintain a robust, multi-faceted justice system.
4. Continuous, non-competitive funding is needed to support Tribal justice systems in every aspect.
5. Funds should be distributed equitably based on the needs of the Tribal justice system itself, not merely on population size or caseload numbers.
6. Tribal funds must be sufficient to ensure the sustained employment of essential justice system staff.
7. DOJ and BIA should address the significant disparities faced by Tribes, particularly those in P.L. 280 states.
8. Increase base funding available through BIA to meet public safety and criminal justice needs of Tribes, ensuring that opportunities are available to all Tribes, regardless of whether or not they currently receive base funding.
9. When switching to a formula funding model, it needs to include a healthy base amount so that smaller Tribes are able to sustain their programs and staff.
10. DOJ should authorize a new Tribal formula grant program that would fund Tribal public safety and justice systems through a single grant award.

Topic 2: Lack of Cultural Awareness and Coordination

There is a lack of cultural awareness among federal department staff, evident in the way they interact with Tribal communities. There is also a lack of coordination and collaboration between local law enforcement and Tribal communities. Many local agencies speak at Tribal governments, rather than working with them to develop effective solutions.

The BIA's MMIP unit is non-existent in California, and the state is served by a single BIA officer responsible for coordinating with all 109 Tribes. This limited staffing hinders the BIA's capacity to respond to the needs of Tribal communities. Also, the BIA lacks the authority to intervene unless a request for assistance is made by

local agencies, forcing Tribes to rely on state agencies that lack cultural competence. There is also a lack of understanding of the continuum of violence related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking among law enforcement.

Recommendations:

1. Provide cultural awareness training to all federal department staff that is specific to the Tribal communities they serve.
2. Federal employees working in Indian Country must undergo comprehensive cultural awareness training developed in collaboration with the Tribal communities they serve.
3. Federal agencies should prioritize the inclusion of Tribal people in key positions.
4. Local collaboration should be supported to address a coordinated response for MMIW.
5. Mandated training should include at least 20 hours of Tribal cultural training with P.L. 280 jurisdiction.
6. There needs to be better coordination among federal departments such as DOJ, DOI, HHS, BIA, DHS, and DoD to properly address domestic violence, sex assault, and sex trafficking.
7. There needs to be a Tribal person chosen by Tribal leadership as an MMIP Coordinator, solely dedicated to supporting Tribes within California. This person should coordinate with the BIA, U.S. Attorney, local law enforcement and other relevant agencies.
8. MMIP funds should be directly allocated to Tribal governments to support Tribally driven responses to the crisis.
9. Cultural competency training within the BIA MMIP unit must be specific to the Tribal communities they serve.

Topic 3: Law Enforcement Training Deficiencies

There is a lack of standardized requirements for the amount of domestic violence training officers receive in their basic training. Domestic violence calls are among the most dangerous situations law enforcement officers face, yet they receive inadequate training. The current training for officers can range from just a few hours to a few days, leaving officers inadequately prepared for such situations, whereas domestic violence advocates are required to complete a minimum of 40 hours of training.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a statute mandating a minimum of 40 hours of specialized training for all peace officers, focused on domestic violence and sexual assault, integrating trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity, and de-escalation techniques.
2. Law enforcement should be at the table in discussions to provide input and receive further education.

Topic 4: Need for Comprehensive Support for Victims

There is a need for a Tribal resource center to provide tailored services for Native survivors, offering a range of services from shelter and crisis intervention to legal advocacy and long-term recovery support, all within a culturally competent framework. Many clients in Tribal communities have strong ties to their land and families and want to stay on the reservation or in their family homes. It is more cost-effective to provide funding to help clients stay in their current homes by covering essential costs like utilities, furniture, and household supplies. Additionally, there is a need for proper program technical assistance to address the critical needs for traditional healing practices. There is a lack of accountability in child welfare systems for foster children who go missing out of care.

Recommendations:

1. Reauthorize and expand FVPSA to more effectively support the unique needs of the Tribal population within California and across other states, creating a Tribal resource center. Provide dedicated funding for a national Indian domestic violence hotline, Alaska Tribal resource center, and a Native Hawaiian resource center on domestic violence. Increase formula funding distribution to Tribes from 10% to 12.5%.
2. Prioritize funding for Tribal coalitions and provide dedicated funding to provide culturally appropriate technical assistance to Tribes and Tribal victim services providers.
3. Establish a permanent 10% Tribal set-aside in the Crime Victims Fund and regular government-to-government consultation.
4. Support NCAI's recommendation of a standing working group of Tribal experts to improve the Tribal Victims Services Set-Aside Program.
5. Include traditional healing methods in funding as a fundamental part of holistic care.
6. Provide accountability of child welfare systems and workers for foster children who go missing out of care.
7. Provide continuous funding to support Tribal justice systems in all aspects, and this funding should be non-competitive and sustainable.

Topic 5: Issues Related to Prosecution of Tribal Victim Cases

It is crucial to investigate the reasons why certain Tribal victims' cases are not prosecuted.

Recommendations:

1. Assess whether the lack of prosecution is due to insufficient evidence and provide additional training for law enforcement to collect appropriate evidence in domestic violence and sexual assault cases.
2. Determine whether the inability of the District Attorney's Office or other prosecutorial entities to pursue cases contributes to low prosecution rates and identify any barriers they face.
3. Explore the reasons behind case dismissals by judges and the factors influencing these decisions.
4. Understand the concerns of victims who may be hesitant to proceed with prosecution, which can include fears for their safety, the demands of the legal process, financial considerations, and impact on employment.

Topic 6: Response to DOJ Tribal Justice Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding Framing Paper

There are several concerns about the framing paper, including the short amount of time given to Tribes to review the proposals. The paper is insufficient and raises more questions than it answers. Tribes need clear, actionable guidance in order to effectively participate in the consultation process and provide constructive feedback. We have provided responses to each of the three proposals.

Proposal 1: Seek Congressional Authorization for a New DOJ Formula Grant Program for Public Safety

- Formula models are outdated and do not work for all Tribes, especially Tribes with smaller populations. Switching to a formula model needs to include a healthy base amount so that smaller Tribes are able to sustain their program and staff.
- This should not be considered unless we are talking about new appropriations, so we do not deplete current funds that work well, nor affect current appropriations.
- Victim safety and programs are a concern. Any new provisions suggested should not affect the Tribal provisions under VAWA unless they are carried over, such as the programs under OVW Tribal Affairs Division or OVC Tribal Victims Services Set-Aside.

- How would this affect reporting and collection of data? Less cumbersome reporting is good; however we use data to secure ongoing appropriations and to address funding gaps.

Proposal 2: Seek New Statutory Authority Allowing for Integration of DOJ Grants (similar to P.L. 477)

- It is unclear what “P.L. 477-like” means. Again, timing of the release of this proposal is insufficient for Tribes to fully consider.
- Blending funds may eliminate needed funds for victims. What protections will be in place to safeguard VAWA?
- How will this method be a benefit to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault? How will this safeguard their current rights such as confidentiality?
- How do we ensure ongoing technical assistance for Tribal programs?

Proposal 3: Advocate for Increased Base Funding for Public Safety Through BIA

- Historically the BIA has a prolonged timeline for disbursement of funds to Tribes and has experienced extensive periods for allocated funds. This would be a concern for needed victim services. Additionally, many small Tribes are not able to front costs waiting for reimbursement.
- For P.L. 280 Tribes, the BIA has minimized the amount of funds and has had unfair distribution practices characterized by administrative personal bias.
- There is potential for a portion of the increased funding to be absorbed by BIA administrative costs, reducing the amount that is directly allocated to Tribal programs and services.

Additional Concerns:

- Funding Allocation: If increased funding is approved, how will it be allocated through the BIA? Will the full amount reach the Tribes, or will a portion be retained for administrative expenses or pass-through activities?
- Transparency in Distribution: What measures will be put in place to ensure transparency regarding the funding distribution process, so Tribes are clearly informed about how much is allocated and for what purposes?
- Monitoring and Accountability: What systems will be established to monitor the effectiveness of the increased funding, and how will accountability be enforced to ensure that funds are utilized appropriately by the BIA?



Mescalero Apache Tribe

Secretary Gabe Aguilar, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral)

The Mescalero Apache Tribe is located near the border of El Paso, Texas. The Tribe's leadership includes a Tribal council, and it is comprised of the Awa, Mescalero, and Lapan people. The Tribe has a history of violence, once being one of the most violent reservations in the country.

As former president and current councilman of the Mescalero Apache Tribe, I want to share some of my experiences and perspectives on violence against women in Indian Country. I'm speaking today with the support of fellow council members Alfred LaPaz and Robert Rice, as well as our Tribal victims' programs

director, Starlin Big Rope. I want to emphasize that the Mescalero are no different than any other Tribe when it comes to violence, and we need to return to our traditional ways of respecting women, as violence was never a part of our culture. I served in the U.S. Marines in Iraq and in the U.S. Army in Afghanistan, and the military taught me to protect everyone, whether or not they are related to you. I came back to my reservation and found it was not the place I remembered, where we protected and cared about our people.

As a leader, I've seen the devastating effects of domestic violence. I've also seen how abuse rolls down to the children and how some of the people committing these acts are our own relatives. Some of the most troubling cases include those involving an uncle raping his niece and burying her in the woods. I've seen too many young people take their own lives because of things that happened to them as children. During COVID, I attended 128 funerals, some of which were suicides. I want to be part of the generation that ends this violence against women, as it is not right to hurt our wives and children. We, as Apaches, respect women because they fought alongside us in war, they are the backbone of our Tribe, and they often lead their homes. We have to learn to love and respect our family members, not hurt them. I'm here today to say, "enough is enough", and I am asking for help because without proper mental health counseling for individuals, there is no hope. As a former president, my door is open to anyone who needs help, including men who are being abused by their partners.

Topic 1: Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a significant problem on our reservation and across Indian Country. It is difficult to know how to counsel individuals who beat their wives or girlfriends. There are also challenges in dealing with people who are released from prison after committing sexual assault or rape, and how to help them when they have to live in our communities. During the COVID lockdowns, domestic violence "went through the roof" as people were drinking more and becoming irritated with one another. It is a sad reality that the women who are abused often take their frustrations out on their children.

Some of the people committing violence against women are our own relatives and Tribal members. I've witnessed good men that I thought worked for me, arrested for doing things to children. I have seen too many young people take their own lives because of something that happened to them when they were children. As a leader, I feel that we must address this head-on and bring these things to light in order to heal.

It can be difficult to address these issues when family members are hurting family members. I once had a woman come to my office to tell me that her brother had molested her daughter. She said "I don't know if it's wrong, because it happened to me as a young girl. I don't know if it's wrong, but I called the police." The family became angry with the woman for turning in her brother. The victim was left alone in the courtroom. I spoke to the family of the woman and told them "That's wrong. You don't hurt kids." Eventually, some of the family members apologized, but it took somebody to stand up and say what is wrong.

Topic 2: Lack of Resources

There is a lack of proper counseling and support for individuals who commit these acts of violence. It is difficult to help people that have committed these violent acts because it is not known what to do with them. We're trying to figure out a new way of life, to help everyone, including men in same-sex relationships who are getting beaten up. It is not known how to provide support to men who are being abused.

Mental health is an important factor that must be addressed. We don't know if the violence stems from historical trauma that happened to our people. We also have challenges with alcohol, drugs, and fentanyl use, particularly since we are located near the border with El Paso, Texas.

Let's all put our heads together and try to save some of these lives.



The Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Geri Wisner, Attorney General - Authorized Designee (Oral)

I want to start by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Pojoaque people and to the lands for allowing me the opportunity to speak here today. There are a few points I will touch on that I discussed yesterday, and while I apologize for any repetition, I believe they are important and worth emphasizing.

As many of you know, Muscogee (Creek) Nation was the Tribe mentioned in the U.S. Supreme Court case *McGirt v. Oklahoma* decision. We prefer to refer to this decision as our "restored reservation" case. Since that historic ruling, we've seen a significant shift in how we handle cases. In our Attorney General's office, criminal cases have surged from roughly 40 to over 6,000 projected cases for 2024. This represents a huge increase in the workload and responsibility we are carrying.

Our Light Horse Tribal Police Department has expanded as well, growing from just 19 officers before the *McGirt* decision to over 120 officers today. While we're proud of this growth and our ability to better serve our people, it also brings new challenges, particularly in terms of funding. In 2024, we're facing the unfortunate reality of having to pay over \$7 million to counties for jail services, as they hold our incarcerated individuals.

At the same time, we are responding to misinformation being spread by state leaders and other critics who claim that the Muscogee (Creek) Nation is unable to handle criminal jurisdiction over a restored reservation. As a nation, we now oversee an area that spans 11 counties and is more than 3.3 million acres. We are more than capable of managing this responsibility, and we continue to move forward in the face of these challenges. Under the leadership of Principal Chief David Hill, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation has worked tirelessly to recruit highly educated and dedicated Tribal justice personnel who are committed to addressing these challenges head-on. They are dedicated to changing "they can't handle it," to "*they are doing it*".

Topic 1: Juvenile Justice

We recognize that many areas still need immediate and extensive attention. Juvenile justice is a critical issue that hasn't received the attention it deserves. The juvenile justice system is a pivotal point in a young person's life. It's our last chance to offer resources and programs specifically designed for our youth, especially those facing significant challenges. This is a critical safety net before they reach adulthood and potentially end up in the adult justice system—what we often refer to as "big boy or big girl jail." While it may sound like a lighthearted way of putting it, the reality is far more serious.

Unfortunately, when it comes to major crimes or general offenses committed by Tribal youth, our federal partners have been largely silent. The fact remains that many of the cases we deal with in our Tribal juvenile systems are remarkably similar to those seen in adult dockets. Our juvenile programs deal with the same issues—intimate partner violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and even homicide. This is not just a problem of youth misbehavior; these are deeply troubling, complex issues that demand immediate action and

support. It's imperative that we are given the tools and resources to provide the interventions necessary to help these young people turn their lives around.

While many of these perpetrators are juveniles, the reality is the victims in most of these cases are juveniles as well. If we cannot provide justice to juveniles and give special attention needed to juvenile offenders, we are forced to recycle them with non-responsive federal partners until they reach adulthood. We must respond to the issues of historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, and the lack of our prevention programs instead of just putting people in jail.

Recommendation:

1. We need desperate and immediate attention given to our juvenile services to focus on preventive measures.

Topic 2: MMIP

I also want to address the critical issues of MMIP and human trafficking, which are deeply intertwined with the broader issues of domestic violence, child abuse, and child sexual assault that continue to plague our communities and Tribal lands. The statistics speak for themselves—these crimes are not isolated but are interconnected, with the roots often tied to the trauma that pervades our communities.

The solution begins with a back-to-basics approach. There's a troubling lack of understanding about jurisdictional basics—specifically the full faith and credit that should be given to Tribal jurisdiction. The lack of communication and cooperation across different levels of law enforcement only exacerbates the problem. The importance of jurisdictional clarity cannot be overstated. There's a pressing need for basic, foundational training for both our law enforcement and justice personnel. This isn't just critical for Tribal communities, but also for the state partners we are often forced to work with. It's essential that everyone understands the unique legal framework within Indian Country and the specific challenges that we face.

When it comes to collaboration, Indian Country is frequently at a disadvantage. Even with formal agreements in place—like MOUs or cross-deputization with state and local law enforcement—these measures often fall short of addressing the deep-rooted barriers we face. For these partnerships to be truly effective, they must go beyond just being paperwork; they need to be impactful, well-supported, and accompanied by the necessary resources and training to make a real difference in addressing issues like MMIP, human trafficking, and other crimes plaguing our communities.

When Indian Country is treated as unequal, it sends the message that our justice systems are second-tier. Tribes aren't viewed as equal partners in the justice process. For instance, why aren't Tribal convictions for domestic violence counted by federal prosecutors when assessing habitual offender status? State convictions are counted for enhanced sentencing, yet Tribal convictions are not. This inconsistency undermines the validity of our justice systems. We believe our convictions, investigations, and prosecutions are on par with, if not more robust than, those of our state counterparts, yet we continue to be treated as second-rate under the law. For example, under 18 USC 2518, the Stored Communications Act, only federal, state, or maritime courts are authorized to issue subpoenas for online data from platforms like Snapchat, Facebook, and others. This data can be crucial in investigations related to human trafficking or MMIP. However, unless a federal case is involved, or there is some other connection, our subpoenas often go unacknowledged or are disregarded. Addressing these challenges, alongside a full withdrawal of limitations imposed by the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court case *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe (Oliphant)* and the Indian Civil Rights Act on our sentencing authority, is essential for Indian Country to gain true justice equality.

We've demonstrated through our Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) registries that we have civil regulatory authority over sex offenders. In 2013, many of us took the critical step of expanding our criminal jurisdiction to address crimes committed by non-Natives against our women. In 2022, we further broadened that jurisdiction to include additional violent crimes committed by non-Natives against our children, justice personnel, or in cases of obstruction. Time and again, we have proven that we are capable of responding to the call for justice. In fact, we've shown more commitment than anyone to the safety and well-being of our people and our lands. What we need is authority and resources to act. We are not a second-rate justice system, and we will continue to fight for recognition and respect our sovereignty and authority deserve.

Recommendations:

1. Funding is needed for jurisdictional training for all levels of law enforcement (Tribal, local, state, and federal).
 - a. By prioritizing the fundamentals—clear communication, a shared understanding of jurisdiction, and collaborative training—we can begin to address the root causes of these challenges and pave the way for meaningful, lasting change in our communities.

In conclusion, I've been a Tribal prosecutor for over 20 years, and during that time, I've had the privilege of crossing paths with many professionals in Indian law. Together, we've worked with countless Native professionals and personnel who truly understand the unique challenges we face. To all of you in this room, I've had the honor of joining forces with you to support Native families and victims, sharing in both the heartbreak and the victories. Through these trainings and efforts, we continue to push for meaningful change in Indian Country. I want to take this moment to thank you. We hear you. We see you. And we will continue to fight for justice alongside you.



Native Village of Kwinhagak

President Mary Matthew - Tribal Leader (Oral)

I'd like to share the challenges my community faces and our needs. I am a Yup'ik from the Native Eskimo Tribe Kwinhagak, and Yup'ik is my first language. Our community is a remote southwestern village in Alaska with a subsistence lifestyle and a population of about 800 people. I'm still new to my role as Tribal president, only one month in, and our work with OVC is also quite new.

One of the biggest issues we face is a housing shortage and overcrowded homes. This, combined with rising problems of alcohol and drug abuse, including pills and home-brewed alcohol, creates much hardship for families. We have no women's shelter, leaving women with no place to go for peace and safety. We also have a shortage of Tribal police officers, with only three due to lack of funds. We desperately need public safety officers stationed in our village, but with the Alaska Village Public Safety Officer program, they can only send a float upon request and only if one is available.

We are also working to revive our Tribal court, but it is in its early stages, just like our work with OVC. In the past, we have faced various deaths that were never investigated. There was a family that lost both parents

and a brother and a boat that disappeared in our bay with about five people on board. These events had a huge impact on our community, especially the families, and we lacked resources to help. We've also experienced the death of a young person from Fentanyl, which has reached our area. These incidents highlight the need for crisis resources.

In addition to these challenges, there are no activities for the youth other than school-sponsored events. I grew up with no traditional Yup'ik dances, but I learned that it was in our history. Our young people are interested in revitalizing this cultural activity, but there is no place for them to practice. This lack of cultural engagement impacts our community's cohesiveness. There have also been suicides in the community. There is job scarcity with a low economy and rising costs. For example, gas is almost \$9 a gallon in our village, and a round-trip plane ticket to travel to the hub costs nearly \$500. We also need to find solid land to relocate due to eroding and sinking lands.

Lastly, I want to thank OVV for the opportunity to attend this Tribal Consultation where we get to meet many more who are facing similar struggles. This being our first attendance, we are eager to learn and get more funding opportunities.



Native Village of Nunam Iqua

Darlene Pete, Tribal Administrator - Authorized Designee (Oral)

Nunam Iqua, formerly known as Selden Point, is a small Yup'ik Eskimo community located at the mouth of the lower Yukon River in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in Alaska. In the Yup'ik language, Nunam Iqua means "end of the land." The Native Village of Nunam Traditional Council was recognized as a Tribal government in 1992. Nunam Iqua is a resilient village of 330 Tribal citizens in southwestern Alaska, approximately 182 air miles northwest of Bethel and 500 air miles northwest of Anchorage. The river is the primary means of transportation, with boats used in the summer and snowmobiles in the winter. Travel in and out of the village can be severely restricted for days or weeks due to weather conditions. The villages are geographically isolated, accessible only by air, water, and the frozen river.

Among my many roles within my family, I am a Tribal member, community member, and the Tribal administrator for my Tribe. Not only is it my responsibility to make sure that my family is safe and healthy, but as a Tribal leader, I am responsible for the community as well. I have been designated by my Nunam Iqua Tribal Council to provide testimony and also to speak on behalf of those who cannot afford to be here with us. My husband, Stanley Pete, is with me in his role as our respected Tribal Council Vice President.

Topic 1: Domestic Violence and Lack of Resources

Domestic violence is a pressing concern in Nunam Iqua, exaggerated by insufficient funding and resources. In previous years and consultations, Tribal leaders voiced concerns about the lack of shelters and supportive services in Tribal communities. With the expiration of the FVPSA authorization in 2015, the Tribal nations risk going without funding for domestic violence shelters. Women and children are often left vulnerable with limited resources and support systems. The lack of volunteers willing to house victims, coupled with

inadequacies in public safety, creates a dire situation. Many victims feel hopeless as they have nowhere to turn, and the fear of retaliation further complicates the situation.

OVC grant program managers must be accountable to the Tribes they manage, and the differences in preferences and guidance from one grant manager to the next create a burden of relearning new preferences and processes that the Tribe must bear.

Recommendations:

1. Secure funding for public safety initiatives.
2. Establish secure and supportive housing options.
3. OVC and DOJ should be adequately staffed and required to work toward amendments in the law that service Tribal needs in small communities.
4. Evaluate past Tribal Victim Services Set-aside Programs and create a permanent set-aside of 10% for Tribal crime victims.
5. Each federal agency should maintain consistency and accountability between agencies and individual grant program managers.

Topic 2: Inadequate Public Safety

The inadequacy of public safety in Nunam Iqua exacerbates the problem. Insufficient funding and resources hinder law enforcement's ability to respond effectively to incidents of domestic violence or conduct necessary safety checks. This lack of support leaves victims feeling isolated and unprotected, compromising community safety and allowing domestic violence to persist unchecked.

Recommendations:

1. Secure funding for public safety initiatives to attract and retain qualified personnel who can provide the necessary support and protection for victims of domestic violence.
2. Advocate for better resources and training to make the village safer and more resilient.
3. The federal government needs to fund the Tribal justice systems, law enforcement, and public safety efforts at all levels identified in the BIA report to Congress for implementation of the Alaska Pilot Project and Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction.

Topic 3: Geographical Isolation and Lack of Timely Assistance

The geographical isolation of Nunam Iqua, situated 18 miles from the nearest trooper post, exaggerates the difficulties in receiving timely assistance. The Alaska State Troopers prioritize larger villages due to higher demands, leaving smaller villages like ours vulnerable and often neglected. Crimes can go unaddressed for days or weeks, creating an environment of fear and uncertainty.

Recommendations:

1. The DOJ should conduct multi-jurisdictional training for Tribal, federal, and state stakeholders in Alaska.
2. Alaska should be given the time and resources to develop internal infrastructure to fully support civil and criminal jurisdiction over all Native individuals, but also non-Native offenders in our communities.
3. Federal agencies including DOJ, OVW, OVC, BIA, HHS, and DHS need to coordinate better internally to meet the federal government's priority of safety and wellbeing of all Native Americans.

Topic 4: Framing Paper Notice and Distribution

I'm a Tribal leader with many responsibilities in my small community. It takes time to develop testimony. When we face many complex challenges, Tribal leaders wear many hats, and there are many tasks that we must accomplish just to keep our communities running from day to day. Thirty days' notice is not enough and does not respect the time of Tribal leaders.

Recommendation:

1. DOJ should prioritize distributing consultation framing papers and questions as soon as possible to give busy Tribal leaders the time they need to adequately consider priorities and to provide meaningful recommendations for positive change in each community.

In conclusion, I want to thank our federal partners for listening to our concerns today for the Native brothers and sisters across the nation and for standing in unity with Alaska Tribes. Even if there are issues that we continue to face, I think that by working together, we are stronger in advocacy for equal access to justice and funding. I look forward to the change that our voices can make in solidarity with one another.



Navajo Nation

Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Delegate - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Vangie Randall-Shorty, Advocate, Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Coalition - Authorized Designee (Oral)

Introduction by Amber Kanazbah Crotty

I come from a mix of backgrounds, including my Kia Viking and Irish heritage. My family hails from the community of Sheep Springs, located on the eastern side of Ishka Mountain, within what you might call Northeast New Mexico, part of the Navajo Nation. With me today is our team member, Reycita Billie, who serves as the Missing and Murdered Unit Coordinator for the Navajo Nation Police Department, and Vangie Randall-Shorty, advocate with the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Coalition (MMDRC).

Personal Account of Vangie Randall-Shorty

My name is Vangie Randall-Shorty. I am the mother of Zachariah Juwaun Shorty. Zachariah went missing from Farmington and was found four days later, but tragically, he had been murdered. Four years later, we are still waiting for justice, and that is why I'm here today.

Testimony (Amber Kanazbah Crotty)

I want to thank our federal partners for this opportunity. But I also want to emphasize the federal trust responsibility. As a delegate for the Navajo Nation for the past nine years, I believe it's essential that we come together and engage in shared governance to address not only the violence faced by our women, children, and men but also to explore how we can approach this issue holistically. As a mother, auntie, and community member, I believe there must be a comprehensive approach to violence in our communities.

What markers will we use to envision the future we want to create? Every child growing up today is held in the prayers of our grandparents. They are like little seeds—kernels that, every spring, our elders would harvest

and offer prayers for. They would gently place those kernels in the earth, tending to them with love and care. They would water the corn and watch it grow, nurturing it with their prayers, hoping it would bring forth beauty and abundance. That's why we're here today—to restore that hope, to revive that legacy, and to ensure a brighter future for our children. We see small but meaningful glimmers of hope in our communities, but we are also faced with a long history of intergenerational violence and lateral oppression, some of which has been carried on by our own people. Sadly, sometimes the most oppressive voices we encounter are from within our own communities—individuals who have not been able to heal from the trauma and shame of the boarding school experience.

For some, they view our language and culture as barriers rather than pathways to progress. That's why we're here today—to reclaim those values, to say that through our prayers and teachings, we are working to restore what has been lost. I am grateful for all of you who are here with us. We brought our stirring sticks and Navajo women's tools with us, as hunger is one of our greatest challenges. These tools are not just for cooking; they are symbols of nourishment, of tending to the fire, and of providing strength to continue on. A rug made by one of my grandmothers is also with me today. It holds her essence, her spirit woven into every thread, and it connects us—not just here within the Navajo Nation, but with our relatives across Indian Country and Alaska. It's a reminder that we are all part of a larger, shared community. We hope that you, as our federal partners, not only learn about our challenges but walk with us through the struggles and triumphs. Together, we are building a path to vibrancy and resilience, one that will carry us forward, from one generation to the next.

Topic 1: MMIW and Data Collection

I stand before you today to speak about what is happening on the Navajo Nation. Right now, there are 23 Navajo women and 53 Navajo men who are missing. Historically, it's been difficult to talk about our relatives who have passed, especially in a cultural context, but we have always offered protection prayers for them. We approach this work in a warrior way, with the intent to honor and protect those we've lost. As of now, we know that eight of the missing women have been found deceased, and 36 of the missing men have also been found deceased. There are still 34 cases that remain unresolved—five women and 29 men.

We include both genders in this discussion because every man has a mother, an aunt, a grandmother—someone who is praying for their return. These women endure the silent pain of not only losing a loved one, but also the historic victim-blaming and shaming that often accompanies such tragedies. The federal and criminal justice systems, at times, fail to acknowledge the reality that someone who has no connection to their family is considered missing. This is not seen as a crime, and because of that, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers have no access to resources. It's only recently that the federal government has started providing any support for our missing and murdered Diné relatives and their families.

What we do know is that when our relatives are found, there is immense pain and trauma that families must face. The burden on our investigators is even greater because they not only have to carry out criminal investigations, but they also act as our medical examiners. This compounds the challenges they face in fully investigating these cases and determining the cause of death. We've requested that our federal partners provide funding for a dedicated medical examiner for the Navajo Nation to help address this issue.

The type of violence we're witnessing in our communities makes it clear that there is an urgent need for action. If we only rely on IHS data, we're missing the full picture, as it only reflects cases where a relative passes away within a facility. Our federal partners need to understand what is truly happening on the ground. There are thirty-three homicide cases in the state of New Mexico, eight of those were from the Navajo Nation.

Across New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, Navajo Nation accounts for about 30% of the homicide rate in Indian Country. This is a critical data point that needs to be fully understood and addressed.

I'm asking you, as our federal partners, and as members of the Not Invisible Act Commission, to break down the silos and find a way to act. Whether through executive orders, congressional intent, or addressing budget restrictions, we need you to use your authority as our trustee to do better.

We need to approach our partners to gather comprehensive data on the well-being of our women, the children they give birth to, our sons, and the men within the Navajo Nation. We must understand what's happening to them and take action to stop future injustices from occurring. Now is the time for us to recognize the inherent value of our lives. With that recognition, we demand that our federal partners collaborate with the Navajo Nation to establish formal agreements for data sharing. In addition, I want to highlight that due to limited funding, we will discuss ways to secure more resources for data collection. The Navajo Nation itself must also fund the creation of a data institute, using our own critical Navajo dollars to do a job that could and should be supported by the federal government.

Unfortunately, we've applied for several grants over the years, but each time we've been told we didn't meet the threshold, especially for the grants that we believed held potential for us to explore what data could look like for the Navajo Nation. This data is essential for telling the stories of our relatives—stories that often aren't captured by traditional data points. Most importantly, we need to understand what we need to prevent future tragedies, and what the intersections are that could give us insights. For example, when the FBI analyst presented his report to our Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Task Force, he shared that for each missing person case he's analyzing, there are, on average, six points of contact where that individual has interacted with various programs—whether it's a social program like The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or General Aid, receiving medical care from IHS, or engaging with the court system, potentially on probation. These six touchpoints represent opportunities to prevent that person from going missing.

Recommendations:

1. We request that our federal partners provide funding for a dedicated medical examiner for the Navajo Nation to help address the need once a missing relative is found dead.
2. Federal partners must break down the silos and find a way to act collaboratively with Tribes. Whether through executive orders, congressional intent, or addressing budget restrictions, use your authority as our trustee to do better.
3. We demand that our federal partners collaborate with the Navajo Nation to establish formal agreements for data sharing. In addition, the cost of creation of a data institute should be supported by the federal government.

Topic 2: Framing Papers

Giving us just 14 days to have a comprehensive discussion about NamUs, baseline data, and research is not enough time. It's not just Tribal leadership involved in these conversations; there's much more at stake here. We need to have conversations with our families and the survivors of violence, and we need to engage with our Navajo Nation programs, which face both opportunities and challenges with the grants they manage. For a nation like ours, at the very least, we would need 60 days to gather input and respond, which would show us that our federal partners are taking this consultation seriously, reviewing last year's report, developing key questions, and providing updates on what has been done with the Tribal testimony from the past year. We are documenting not just what's been captured, but also identifying areas for enhancement, especially when it comes to federal funding.

NamUs Baseline Framing Paper: Grant funding is not guaranteed or mandated, which makes it difficult to plan for long-term research or to evaluate our successes and challenges. Without that certainty, it's hard to know how to approach our congressional leadership to ensure that you and your programs get the right appropriations to meet the needs, not just of Navajo Nation, but of all Tribal leaders who have been able to testify. And for those smaller communities or those who couldn't make it here today, or who lack the administrative support to submit written testimony by the end of the month, it's crucial that we also account for them.

Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Framing Paper: I also want to touch on the issue of the P.L. 477 program. From what I understand, there is a restriction when it comes to the Tribal designee for the P.L. 477 program, and I'd like to discuss that further. Right now, on Navajo Nation, we do have a Tribal designee, and we collaborate with the P.L. 638 Utah Navajo Health Service, which provides victim advocacy services not just in our Utah territories, but also in Navajo. They've partnered with Northern Arizona Victim Witness Services to support our victims of violence in Arizona. If the P.L. 477 program comes into play, my concern is how the Tribal designee fits into that.

We really need to think strategically about victim services because it has taken years to get us to where we are now. We not only want victims of violence to receive support, but we also want family members of missing persons—who are often not seen as victims themselves and may not qualify for victim funding due to legal or bureaucratic reasons—to be able to access services. Based on the Navajo Supreme Court, our highest court, we follow a kinship responsibility. These kinship ties are sacred, and our duties and obligations, handed down from our holy ones, are part of our identity as five-fingered people.

Our Supreme Court has affirmed that there is an inherent tie and responsibility among us all, regardless of age, to our clan and community. They've made it clear that if a member of the clan society goes missing, it's not just one individual who bears the responsibility—it's all of us. Every relative within that clan has a duty to not only search for and find that missing person, but also to be involved in their recovery. I think this is crucial because, as we speak as sovereign nations with opportunities to shape our futures, we need to question why the federal government doesn't recognize a missing person as a crime in the same way we do. Why do they continue to tell us there won't be resources available when a community member goes missing? We have to return to our cultural ways and the way we connect with one another, because that's where the true understanding of responsibility lies. It's about seeing the missing person not as just an individual, but as part of a broader, sacred bond that we all share. We have to go back to our prayers, our testimonies, and the wisdom of our elders—those who not only survived the long walk, but also endured the trauma of boarding schools, the sheep reduction, the wage economy, and forced migration to urban areas. And despite all of that, we're still here, on our land. Our people deserve more, our children deserve better, and we're committed to creating a better community.

We want to work together on that data, so we can not only address these challenges, but also celebrate our progress together. I want to urge our federal leaders to focus on victim services—not just from a programmatic perspective, but as a survivor-led, trauma-informed process. This isn't just about having contact with your program; it's about offering a warm hand to families as they navigate a system that wasn't built with us in mind. It's a bureaucratic maze that wasn't created by us, for us. So, we're here today to say: we need to do better, and we're here to be part of that work.

Recommendations:

1. The federal government must give Tribes at the very least 60 days to gather input and respond to have a comprehensive discussion.
2. Focus on victim services as a survivor-led, trauma informed process, not just from a programmatic perspective.

Response to Sherriann Moore's Request for Clarification of P.L. 477 Concerns

We still don't have enough clarity on how the P.L. 477 program will affect our collective grants, particularly with OVW and other sister organizations. Given the investment we've made in victim services, we want to be reassured that there will still be an opportunity for the Tribal designee to be involved as we move forward in this conversation.

We're also concerned about the 10-year baseline of federal funding. If we move to the P.L. 477 structure, what indication do we have that we'll receive additional federal funding if the aim is to reduce administrative costs? If we could look at data, especially from workforce development, which has been under P.L. 477 for a number of years, that would help us make informed decisions. We want to make sure we're not making emotional decisions but are basing everything on solid data, because navigating these grants is no easy task—we can all agree on that.

If we are going to go down this P.L. 477 route, we need to approach it like a medicine person looking into a crystal, considering every angle to make a holistic decision. Giving us only 14 days with limited information isn't enough. As a Tribal leader, I can't give you a response on behalf of Navajo Nation without all of those critical pieces in place. Our goal is simple: we do not want our families to suffer any longer. Thank you for understanding.

**Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi**

Dorie Rios, Chairperson - Tribal Leader (Written)

Hon. Melissa Pope, Tribal Judge - Tribal Leader (Oral)

The Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (NHBP) is a Tribal nation that prioritizes traditional Potawatomi values in its operations, emphasizing the care of children, elders, Tribal citizens, and all members of their community. The NHBP constitution guides our commitment to community, which is considered a sacred duty. The NHBP has a Victim Services Department (VSD) within the Tribal court that offers assistance to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, and other crimes. The VSD provides services regardless of whether a court case is involved, whether law enforcement was contacted, or how recently the crime occurred.

Personal Account of Hon. Melissa Pope:

As the chief judge of the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi Tribal Court, I have seen firsthand how Tribal constitutions can offer greater protections than the U.S. Constitution. In my role, I work to develop policies, ensure financial accountability, manage grants, support VSD staff, and advocate for Tribal self-determination and sovereignty. I collaborate with various Tribal and non-Tribal partners to support victims. I

am proud to say that we do not turn anyone away, even those outside of our immediate community, and will assist them until they receive services. We are committed to a victim and survivor-centered approach that is trauma-informed and includes not only the direct victims of violence, but their families and children as well.

Topic 1: Lack of Criminal Jurisdiction

As a Tribal nation, we have been stripped of our inherent criminal jurisdiction, which limits our ability to protect our people. The Supreme Court has made decisions that encroach on our civil jurisdiction and block our access to critical information. We are particularly concerned about our inability to prosecute non-Native individuals who commit crimes against Tribal citizens. For example, a non-Native individual has been stalking a Tribal member and her family by posting threats on social media, but we do not have the jurisdiction to prosecute him. This lack of jurisdiction hinders our ability to fulfill our sacred duty to protect our community.

Recommendations:

1. Congress must fully restore the inherent jurisdiction of Tribes.
2. DOJ must fulfill its trust responsibilities to Tribes and prosecute those who terrorize individual survivors, their families, Tribal governments, and Tribal communities.
3. DOJ should communicate to Congress that it supports the proposed legislation encapsulated in NCAI Resolution SAC-22-043.
4. DOJ and DOI should coordinate and collaborate to implement the provisions of VAWA 2022 and support Tribal nations in implementing their restored jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators.
5. DOJ and DOI should offer joint training opportunities for Tribal and federal law enforcement on the implementation of VAWA 2022 in Indian Country.

Topic 2: Stalking and the Misuse of Social Media

Stalking is a serious crime that is often disregarded. We have seen how social media makes it easier for perpetrators to harass and intimidate survivors and their families through online threats. Perpetrators are often vague to avoid prosecution, and law enforcement may even advise them to do this. In one case, the online harassment of a survivor and her family resulted in the death of a family member who felt helpless to protect them. The constant threats and intimidation made it impossible for him to endure the pain of not being able to protect his loved ones.

Recommendations:

1. Stalking must be recognized as a serious crime that can cause a loss of life.
2. Perpetrators must be held accountable for their crimes.
3. DOJ must not disregard or minimize stalking, especially when it involves the use of social media.
4. DOJ must ensure that U.S. Attorneys follow the direction of Director Wilkinson, and that a similar statement and direction is issued by FBI Director Christopher Wray to stop the FBI retreat from Indian Country.
5. DOI should issue a similar memorandum to relevant DOI and BIA staff located in Indian Country and provide training to those individuals.
6. DOJ should provide training to and education for U.S. Attorneys, FBI personnel, Criminal Chiefs, Victim Witness Coordinators, and any additional relevant DOJ staff on the directives from Director Wilkinson.

Topic 3: Need for Resources

We require ongoing, non-competitive funding to provide culturally relevant support and services to survivors and their families. There is also a critical need for shelters. In Michigan, which has more Tribes than any other

state east of the Mississippi, there is only one Tribal shelter. We need resources, like sacred medicines, to share with those receiving services. Additionally, Tribes need funding for MMIP prevention costs.

Recommendations:

1. Federal agencies must provide ongoing, non-competitive funding for culturally honoring support and services to survivors and their families.
2. Funding must be provided for shelters.
3. The VAWA Tribal reimbursement program should be expanded so that funding may be provided up front.
4. Tribes should be authorized to use funding for MMIP prevention costs, such as search parties and hotel rooms for families.
5. DOJ, DOI, and all other federal agencies should include annual, consistent, and sustainable noncompetitive funding for Tribal nations for all public safety and victim services needs in their annual budget requests.
6. The President's budget should request the full amount of funding authorized for Tribal programs in VAWA 2022.
7. DOJ and DOI should increase funding for Tribal nation implementation of STCJ for DOJ, HHS, and BIA.
8. OVW should support a permanent set-aside of Victims of Crimes Act funds for Tribes and permanent funding for the Strong Hearts Native Helpline.
9. OVW should support an increase in funds for FVPSA.
10. OVC should allow historical trauma and intergenerational trauma to become named victim services.



Organized Village of Kake

President Joel Jackson - Tribal Leader (Written)

Rick Haskins-Garcia, Director of Law & Policy, Alaskan Native Women's Resource Center - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Organized Village of Kake is a federally recognized Tribe of Tlingit people who have lived in their ancestral lands since time immemorial. The village, known as Kéex' Kwáan in the traditional language, is located on the northwest coast of Kupreanof Island in Southeast Alaska. The community consists of approximately 500 people who maintain their traditional ways while facing modern challenges that threaten our people's safety and well-being. Alaska Native peoples have been stewards of our lands and waters since time immemorial; for more than 10,000 years prior to contact with Europeans, we have called this place home. Despite centuries of colonization, our Alaska Native cultures and ways of life remain one of strength evolving still today, as we adapt to new ways of survival in our changing environment. We find each other and become united in our fight to overcome the multiple attempts and ways to dismantle our ways of life through the generations of colonization.

The people of Kake rely heavily on traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering practices for survival. Like many of our Citra Tribes in Alaska, Kake is accessible only by air or water. We are located roughly 95 miles southwest of Juneau, making access to basic services, including emergency response and victim services, a constant challenge. Our Tribal values run deep and guide everything we do. We are dedicated to enhancing our Tribal

citizens' quality of life through both economic enterprises and social programs that are fiercely protecting our cultural traditions. Central to our identity is the protection and preservation of our customary and traditional gathering areas, places that sustain not just our bodies, but our spirits through subsistence activities. Our annual culture camp brings together youth and adults and exemplifies our commitment to passing down these sacred traditions.

Personal Account of Joel Jackson:

As a Tribal leader and a father, my perspective is shaped by the deep-rooted values of our people. We are committed to a justice system that seeks to bring people together, not drive them apart. Our Circle Peacemaking Court is an indigenous approach to justice that predates the Western legal system. It views wrongdoing not as an isolated incident to be punished, but as a tear in the community's fabric that must be mended. Our court serves everyone in our community, both Tribal citizens and non-citizens because we understand that true justice knows no boundaries.

Topic 1: Inadequate Funding for Tribal Justice Systems

The funding provided to support Tribal justice systems in Alaska is disproportionate, leaving our community members unable to access the justice and accountability they deserve. This underfunding is a direct violation of the federal government's trust responsibility to Alaska Native and American Indian Tribes, resulting in lost lives, high rates of criminal victimization, and unaddressed trauma. In P.L. 280 states like Alaska, Tribes have virtually no BIA law enforcement presence or funding for courts and law enforcement.

The BIA has reported that providing basic justice systems for all federally recognized Tribes would require \$1 billion for law enforcement, another \$1 billion for Tribal courts, and \$222.8 million for detention facilities. However, Tribal police receive only 20 cents of every dollar they need, Tribal jails receive 40 cents of every dollar, and Tribal courts operate on just 3 cents of every dollar they need. In Alaska, Tribes need \$330 million each year just to run basic Tribal justice programs.

Recommendations:

1. The Department of Justice and the BIA should request funding and authority to eliminate jurisdictional disparities.
2. The federal government should provide equal support to Tribes, regardless of jurisdictional frameworks.
3. The federal government should provide dedicated annual funding of \$330 million each year to Alaska Tribes to run basic Tribal justice programs.

Topic 2: Federal Red Tape and Bureaucracy

The current federal bureaucracy actively harms our ability to protect women and children in crisis. When a woman runs to us for help, she needs immediate assistance, not paperwork. When a Tribal citizen needs resources and programming, they need immediate help, not an 8-month wait for budget modifications. Our most recent budget approval took 8 months to process, causing uncertainty and delays. The current system values process over protection, resulting in endless rounds of revisions that show little understanding of our realities.

Recommendations:

1. The federal government must streamline budget approval processes immediately.
2. The federal government must create emergency pathways for urgent modifications.

3. The federal government must reduce revision cycles and establish clear, reasonable timelines for all approvals.
4. The federal government must recognize Tribal expertise in serving their own people.

Topic 3: Lack of Law Enforcement and Public Safety

There is a devastating public safety crisis in Alaska Native villages due to the state's systematic failure to provide adequate law enforcement protection. This neglect has created dangerous voids in public safety infrastructure, leaving communities vulnerable to violence and unable to ensure justice for their citizens. The state's approach reveals a two-tiered system of justice where Native communities receive dramatically reduced protection compared to urban areas. While urban areas receive full police services, rural Native villages rely on the severely limited VPSO program. Despite similar training, VPSOs lack real arrest powers and cannot fully respond to serious crimes, creating gaps in coverage during off-hours and shift changes. Village leaders are forced to step into roles they were never meant to fill. In one recent incident, a community member experiencing a mental health crisis was released when the VPSO went off-duty due to lack of 24-hour coverage. In another recent incident, Alaska State Wildlife Troopers with full arrest authority provided no assistance during a severe domestic violence incident. Even when federal authorities responded, pleas for ongoing support and resources were ignored.

Recommendations:

1. The federal government must establish dedicated, direct funding streams to Alaska Native Tribes for law enforcement.
2. These funding mechanisms should be multi-year commitments that enable Tribes to develop sustainable public safety programs.
3. Infrastructure and equipment needs must be prioritized in federal funding allocations.
4. DOJ and BIA should collaborate with the Alaska congressional delegation to build genuine capacity for Tribal law enforcement and courts.
5. The federal government must provide the resources for modern law enforcement equipment, including vehicles, body cameras, evidence collection equipment, and emergency response systems.

Topic 3: Barriers to Implementation of Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction

The current Alaska Pilot Project funding opportunities and the manner in which OVW is managing grant opportunities for Alaska Tribes are not working and need to be reconsidered. Alaska Tribes should be given adequate resources and time to develop internal infrastructure to support both civil and criminal jurisdiction over all Alaska Natives and American Indians present in their villages.

Recommendations:

1. OVW should allow Alaska dedicated STCJ Funding to be utilized for infrastructure capital expenses.
2. OVW should reconsider how it is managing current grant opportunities for Alaska Tribes to support VAWA 2022 implementation.
3. A multi-agency, multi-year, mini-consolidation grant programs approach should be used to provide funding to Alaska Tribes to fully implement VAWA 2022 and the Alaska Pilot Program.

Topic 4: Lack of Support and Resources for Victims

Tribal leaders have raised concerns about the lack of shelter and supportive services for Tribal nations. FVPSA, the only dedicated federal funding source for domestic violence shelters, expired in 2015, leaving Tribal nations without predictable funding for domestic violence shelters.

Recommendations:

1. HHS should support FVPSA reauthorization and amend FVPSA to increase the Tribal set-aside for Tribal nations and increase funding for Tribal coalitions.
2. There should be a permanent 10% set-aside of the Crime Victim Fund for Tribal nations.
3. HHS should authorize permanent funding for the Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence, the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and the National Indian Domestic Violence Hotline.
4. OVW should be appropriately staffed and understand the challenges of all Tribes.
5. Alaska Tribes need TA providers who are from Alaska, such as the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center.
6. OVC and DOJ should be required to work toward making amendments in the law that serve Tribal needs including for infrastructure, court services, and law enforcement.

**Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council**

Sophie Swope, Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral)

The Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council is based in Bethel, Alaska, which is the hub community of 56 communities across 55,000 square miles. Growing up in Bethel, I know my community and the people I went to kindergarten with. As a council member for the Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council, I started my journey into working on Tribal issues in 2020. It's been one of the biggest blessings, but it's also permanently altered my life path for the better. It has reoriented my perspective from the Western ways of seeing me and myself against the world to the traditional and cultural perspective of me and us and all of our ancestors against society, collectively fighting for our future generations.

When I started my journey of understanding Tribal governance as a 22-year-old, I started amidst the pandemic. Little did I know on my first day I would be working on an obituary for a 19-year-old girl, one of our Tribal members, freshly graduated, with a whole life ahead of her. Her death was ruled as no foul play, self-inflicted and use of alcohol. No investigation as far as we're aware, but what breaks my heart and sets my soul to a bitter and raging fire is that she was found in the tundra on the outskirts of town, not outside her home or even her residential subdivision. She was found in the tundra, frozen, near a man camp. Her death is not the only thing that flags me about these man camps.

This summer, Bethel has seen young women being roofied by transient government workers, the ones that had come in to work for the summer to help build a hospital, our own Indian Health Services employees, or their contracted employees doing this to our women. The first incident I was made aware of, the girl who is my age, was med-evacuated on a Lear jet into Anchorage. She had to go an hour's plane ride away just to get care because they had drugged her so much that she could not function, and they didn't know how to address it at our own IHS facility. Our small town only has two places that serve beer or wine. The city had to implement these businesses carrying drug testing kits, so people know whether or not they're getting drugs while having a beer or a wine in our small community.

Scarcity is our issue and is again why we need bold and permanent investments in our communities, our Tribal nations. Economic scarcity comes in many forms and is the very thing we're fighting on a scale grander than poor living or lack of running water in some of our communities. It's a deeply rooted aspect of our Alaskan Tribes. In Alaska, where we have no reservations, the Tribes have no lands. We have for-profit Alaska Native corporations that own land titles.

Thanks to the 1971 Act of Congress, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act permanently abolished our Aboriginal land rights. Now our lands exist under a for-profit corporation we call Alaska Native Corporations or ANCs. In 1971, our elders and ancestors claimed lands of sacred value spawning grounds for our wild Alaska salmon, beautiful rivers, and divinely constructed mountains. But as they were created as a for-profit entity, this is exactly their pursuit. Unfortunately, this has created an even larger scarcity in our communities. While we have our own top 1% within these corporations, our CEO making just under a million dollars last year, the shareholders of these corporations are classified as economically depressed. The shareholders are also Tribal members. How are we to create laws and then enforce them when we have a municipality? They earn all the taxes.

So, we're walking this fine balance of being a sovereign Tribal nation, but also having a vested interest in the development of a corporation's profits. This has led to the exploitation of our communities growing the narrative that we need higher-paying jobs, but we have high-paying jobs, just no education or professional development pathways to fill them.

The pursuit of money has led to what we see as environmental injustice exploiting Alaska Natives and low-income populations as a justification for environmental degradation, which is from my understanding, a basic federal responsibility of the trust doctrine to Tribes. These injustices have been proven time and time again in the exploitation of our lands, of our mother Earth. We all know the deadly history of our nation's pursuit of economic development. I think what we're meant to realize and implement is that, in order to heal our women, we need to heal our lands. Our cultural ties to the land and our traditional practices allowed by the proper stewardship of our lands is one of the most healing things that we could have as people. And as we see all of these economic pursuits, the trawling in the oceans, and the mining of the spawning lands, we're seeing drastic cultural degradation.

And that, I think, is the core of our problem. That we're experiencing violence perpetrated by men has an underlying issue. And our loss of culture due to our lands being exploited, I think, is the primary reason that we're seeing these issues. And if we're to make any change, we have to change that underlying factor and put that value back into being a community, being men and women of our lands.



Pala Band of Mission Indians

Claudia Chavez, Director of Pala Social Services - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

The Pala Band of Mission Indians is located in California and is part of a nine-Tribe consortium, closely associated with the Mesa Grande, Pauma, and Rincon Tribes. The Pala Band is governed by a six-member executive committee, which includes the re-elected Tribal Chairman, Robert Smith, and Tribal Secretary, Mrs.

Theresa Villa, who also serves as a board member of the Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition. They asked me to speak to you today.

This week, I participated in a meeting with the California Health and Human Services Agency's 988 Crisis State Advisory Committee. I was also in close contact with Rochelle Hamilton, the founder of Native Strong, a crisis and suicide prevention line. The Pala Band has taken a lead role in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 988 initiative, becoming one of the first recipients and establishing a mobile crisis response team. Later, I attended a Tribal court hearing involving a young couple facing intimate partner violence, where I was able to support the young mother in securing a restraining order. While this was a small victory, much work remains as both she and her baby face an uncertain future.

Reflecting on the past two days of testimony, I've been deeply moved by the strength and resilience of the voices I've heard, from Tribal leaders to community members. Each story represents a unique journey, and these voices are why I chose to speak and why the Pala Band will submit written testimony. The Pala Social Services Department is working hard to secure funding through various grants, including programs from the U.S. Department of Justice, the California Department of Health Care Services, and SAMHSA. We've also collaborated with the Pala Housing Department for additional funding through initiatives such as VAWA and MMIP.

While these partnerships have seen some success, the funding process is arduous. Grant applications are often complex, requiring significant time and expertise, and it's frustrating when these "competitive" grants should be available to all Sovereign Nations. We have applied for DOJ Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS) funds at least four times without success, despite the significant need. I echo Dr. Dixon's sentiment, "We have no business in doing grants," and "It is not enough." However, we continue because these programs are vital to our community and ensure we can continue advocating for our people. I want to express my deepest gratitude for the time, dedication, and commitment of those supporting Tribal communities.



Pascua Yaqui Tribe

Andrea Gonzales, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral)

The Pascua Yaqui Tribe (PYT) has a collaborative working relationship with the United States Attorney's office and has an experienced police department, prosecutor's office, public defender's office, and a robust Tribal court system. As a council member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, a teacher, community advocate, and most importantly a daughter, sister, auntie, mother, and foster mother, I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of my Tribe, our chairman, vice chairman, and all of the Tribal Council. This is my first time attending the OVW Government-to-Government Consultation, and I plan to attend future consultations. I concur with other testimony provided, and I pray for those who are still coping with the traumas of abuse and violence. I speak to those survivors brave enough to speak up, and those survivors who are still suffering in silence. I have been doing this work for over 10 years because I've lost a missing loved one and a best friend, and to this day, we've never seen any kind of justice.

Topic 1: Reporting of Pascua Yaqui Tribe Reservation-Specific Crimes

We need improvements in the way we report crimes that happen on our reservation, including when cases are declined or still under investigation. We also need better reporting of sentences for crimes related to our Tribe, not just press releases.

Recommendations:

- Improve the reporting of Pascua Yaqui Tribe reservation-specific crimes, declinations, and those which are designated ongoing pending further investigation.
- Improve the reporting of sentences for PYT-related crimes, not just report crimes via press releases.

Topic 2: FBI Collaboration with Local Law Enforcement

There needs to be better collaboration between the FBI and our local law enforcement, especially on high-priority cases such as officer-involved shootings and drug offenses. It's also important that the FBI includes Tribal prosecution investigations, as we share concurrent criminal jurisdiction.

Recommendations:

- Improve FBI collaboration with local law enforcement on high-priority cases.
- Improve the FBI's inclusion of Tribal prosecution investigations.

Topic 3: Training Opportunities

It is important to provide in-house training opportunities for our Tribal members. I believe this would make the Tribal Special Assistant U.S. Attorney (SAUSA) program much more robust.

Recommendation:

- Provide in-house continuing legal education (CLE) training opportunities.

Topic 4: Prosecution of Low-Level Drug Crimes

It's important that we get a commitment to prosecute low-level drug crimes, even if they fall under felony threshold levels.

Recommendation:

- Request a commitment to prosecuting low-level drug crimes that fall under felony threshold levels and request an exception to historical drug offense charging policy.

Topic 5: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women is close to my heart, and we need increased coordination between our Tribal communities.

Recommendation:

- Commit to addressing the missing and murdered Indigenous women issue and coordinate the response across the multiple locations of our off-reservation communities.

Topic 6: Victim Services

I am requesting increased coordination between Tribal victim services and federal victim services for both pre- and post-conviction status updates. I'd also like to see increased funding for housing or shelters for victim families and youth services that are flexible to include Yaqui culture and traditions.

Recommendations:

- Increase coordination between Tribal victim services and federal victim services for both pre- and post-conviction status updates.
- Increase funding opportunities for housing and/or shelter for victim families and youth services that are flexible to include Yaqui culture and traditions.

Topic 7: Jurisdictional Provisions

We need the department's support for improved jurisdictional provisions. These are important to the Tribes and are much overdue.

Recommendation:

- Support improved jurisdictional provisions.

Topic 8: Detention Services

We need support in providing detention services or easier access to the Bureau of Prisons Tribal Prisoner Program. It has come to our attention that many Tribes in the BIA District Three service area were advised that the Office of Justice Services was seizing detention service contracts, and Tribes are now struggling to find detention services. We also need training and information sharing with Tribal courts and Tribal probation officers.

Recommendations:

- Support in providing detention services and/or easier access to the Bureau of Prisons Tribal Prisoner Program.
- Provide training and information sharing with Tribal courts and Tribal probation officers to create pre-sentence reports so that Tribal inmates have greater access and successful entry into the Bureau of Prisons Tribal Prisoner Program.

**Pauma Band of Luiseño Indians of the Pauma & Yuima Reservation**

Dr. Juana Majel-Dixon, Traditional Councilwoman - Tribal Leader (Oral)

You've done extraordinary work, and there's still so much more to do. When I reflect on what's been accomplished, it's clear how far we've come. How many of you here were part of that first group that helped build VAWA and have stuck with it all these years? Raise your hand if you are in that group. It's been many years, and it's remarkable to see how far we've come. I just want to take a moment to acknowledge all my sisters who've been with me through this journey. It's moments like these that remind me of how far we've come and how much we've done—and how much we'll continue to do. The world we live in as Tribal people isn't always what people think it is, but it is incredibly connected. Our relatives are everything to us. We know you all want to see changes, and I've chosen to present this today from a traditional perspective—because, in our world, you can't do this work without understanding the enormity of what it feels like.

Now, I know Allison has a deep understanding of the Not Invisible Act and everything we went through together as commissioners. But what we witnessed—what we saw in our communities—was just as horrific.

Those years we spent doing this work weren't just a moment in time; they stretched over several years. And to know that there's still so much more to do. That's what brings us back here, time and time again, alongside OVW and everyone in this room. Every time there's a transition or a shift in what America calls the "power of parties," we still have this important work to do—together.

You know, as Tribes, we've had to learn how to come together, even though we are separate sovereigns. But one thing this journey has taught us is that we have to heal ourselves, and in doing so, we've also had to face the painful history that continues to affect us—boarding schools, relocation, and the lasting trauma from those eras.

In California alone, we have over 750,000 federally recognized Tribal members who are not from the area, but were relocated here, which means that they're dealing with both the effects of relocation and the trauma from those times. And when you add that to the number of Tribes, we're talking about over a million federally recognized Native people in California alone. Then, there's the Maquiladora (factory) region along the Mexico border, where we're located. It's a 100-mile stretch, and we're right in the middle of it, living in this corridor that is so heavily impacted by trafficking and other issues. We also have 27 military installations in this area, all of which have a direct impact on our communities.

You also need to think about the 11 northern states, where Tribal nations are so heavily interconnected, and the Gulf region, as well as the East Coast. The issue of trafficking is rampant, and Homeland Security is not always our partner in addressing it. All federal agencies need to be held accountable for their involvement, because Indian Country is impacted by every department, division, and system. Every single one of them plays a role in either exacerbating the problem or offering potential solutions.

This is where your responsibility comes in. You're key components in this fight. Whether it's the programs like OVW or initiatives like the P.L. 477 Program, we have to ensure that they work in favor of Tribal nations and their unique needs. OVW has really stepped up in ways we didn't expect, especially when it comes to engaging and finding real solutions for the challenges we face. For example, we've seen the impact of P.L. 477 program and its value to our Alaska Native relatives. You've got Tribal nations with nothing—no real control over the systems affecting them—and no one seems to be stepping up. That includes the state and the government, which have neglected the needs of Native peoples in Alaska. These people, whose lives are shaped by subsistence living, are being systematically ignored, and their needs are not being addressed. We need a unified effort here, and we need all hands-on deck. The government, Tribes, and every single federal partner need to understand the complexity of these issues and how deeply they're tied to our sovereignty and our very survival.

You've made great progress, and I want to acknowledge the strides you've made. However, it's important to remember that access to funding remains a critical issue. If that access were addressed, it could have a much greater impact. The resources we've been working with have not been enough. Once we started sharing our knowledge and coming together, we began to see the strength in our collective voice, but the response from those in charge hasn't kept pace.

Now, I'll be direct—it's personal. You sit in these positions of responsibility and have the power to effect change. But if you want to ensure that things improve, that real change happens, it requires action. If you're truly invested in our communities, you need to make those changes. Just as in our traditions—if you want to see the results, you have to put in the work. We need the full commitment of everyone here to truly respond to the issues we face as Tribal peoples.

We are sovereign nations, with our own governments, citizens, and land. We're not some distant foreign countries like France or Germany—we are right here, on our own land, living our reality every single day. Some of you have heard these truths and spoken about them in powerful, meaningful conversations, and I appreciate that. But the issue lies in the follow-up: we see great ideas and discussions, but when it comes to measurable, lasting action, it's not always there. If we're not consistent, if we don't keep moving forward, it becomes diluted by the politics of this country, which are not our politics. We have to navigate through every single member of Congress, and those representatives don't represent us—they represent the politics of the nation.

Imagine what it's like to deal with a body of lawmakers that doesn't fully understand what's going on in Indian Country. It's not about political parties—it's about the consistent challenge we face to get our voices heard in a way that leads to real, sustainable change. Many of you don't recognize that for us, our communities are often treated like third-world countries within this nation. The poverty, the systemic issues, the lack of resources—it all points to a greater, ongoing injustice. We share this experience with other marginalized groups, like those in Appalachia, who also face similar neglect. But when you have three third-world countries here in America, and we are one of them, it's vital to acknowledge it.

The steps that have been taken are appreciated and celebrated, but they are not enough. I've said this before: it's like the "we" of Indian Country is looking at the "we" of the government, and the gap is still too wide. We know that trillions of dollars are locked up in industries, investments, and other developments on behalf of the Tribes—but we have no access to it. We shouldn't be constantly fighting for grants as sovereign nations. We should be able to access those funds and resources that have been set aside for us to empower and sustain our communities. It's time for real, structural change that recognizes the inherent sovereignty we hold and the urgent need for true, equitable support.

I understand the process and the value of making things work. I recognize the importance of being a tool for progress. But when you think about the immense skill set these individuals have—especially in terms of healing, wellness, and taking care of the many people suffering in conditions that reflect a third-world country—it's clear that the resources and support we're talking about are not enough. The conditions in which our people are living, the trauma they are enduring from domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and other forms of abuse—it's staggering. The expansion of your focus to include those issues is appreciated, but can you truly imagine what it's like living in those circumstances?

In places like where I'm from, we're doing everything we can to figure out how our community gardens can provide food for our people come winter. Our people need food, and we don't have adequate resources from outside. This is the reality we face. And it's not just about meeting the immediate needs—it's about breaking the cycles of violence and trauma that have been imposed on our communities for generations. I never want any of you to experience what our people have gone through. We exist in a world where some of us live in matriarchal societies, while others are in patriarchal systems. Our Tribes span the four directions, and each one has its own way of governing. Take, for example, California Indian women—we challenge the governors because we come from a matriarchal society, while they come from a patriarchal one. And you know what? That challenge is a good thing. It's a healthy exchange of ideas and power that reflects our worldview.

When I think about the children taken away to boarding schools, and the children who are still suffering from that legacy, I feel the weight of what they've endured and continue to endure. Many of them have died from the violence inflicted upon them, not just from cartels, but from man camps—those camps set up by industries that exploit our people. These camps, which are so harmful, are intentionally set up in our

communities, and they target our women. It's no secret that they hunt our women to bed them, to rape them, to harm them. This has been going on in the history of America—it's not one we like to acknowledge, but it's real. How can we make real change when we're faced with this ongoing violence? When you look at the funding—or lack thereof—when you see the story I'm about to share with you, remember this: our relatives, our people, will go home and continue to live this reality. We're not there right now, but we feel every call, every message, every concern. Some of us will go home with hope, but many will return to sorrow, facing these struggles every day.

When we come together as a collective, as "we of us," we don't just see each other—we *feel* each other. And when we speak, when we share our truths, they no longer belong to the individual. They belong to the people. So, when you come to speak to us, be mindful of how you phrase your words. Because once you say something, we take it as truth. And as you share your plans or your policies, remember that we will learn how those words go through the layers of bureaucracy, how they get filtered and adapted.

During the Carter administration when we uncovered that one-third of this nation's natural resources are located on Tribal lands, we didn't know that would open the door for the man camps to flood our communities. We didn't know it would escalate the violence we now face. The presence of these camps brought not only destruction but also an unprotected livelihood for our people—men, women, and children alike. It's not just the workers who are impacted; it's their families, too. These man camps have forced us to take care of our people and even those around us who are harmed. You might drive down a road and not pay attention to the behind-the-scenes realities, but if you look carefully, you'll see there are hotels behind stores now, catering to the men. There are quick-stop stores where goods used to be sold, but now they're feeding the needs of those coming through these camps. These are places where trafficking happens, where we found our nieces. This is the grim reality. If it weren't for the work done by people who pushed for programs like the ones at Gila River, which were activated by the federal government through P.L. 280 in states like California, we wouldn't have found those girls. We wouldn't have been able to track them down and rescue them.

There's a feeling of helplessness when it seems like nothing can make a difference. But we also understand that we weren't created to be angry or mean people—we were created with good hearts, to think well of each other, even in the face of pain. And while it's not your fault that these systems exist the way they do, you all at OVW have made strides in creating a framework to address these problems. Think about the role of the BIA and OJS. Both have been involved in this work, but their response, though meaningful, sometimes falls short when it comes to addressing the full scope of the issues we face. Take the Not Invisible Act Commission, for instance. We sat with those agencies, but even as we pushed forward, we still faced issues. The reality is, we don't have the same protections or resources that many other citizens in this country take for granted.

I see the government as my second citizenship, but I don't prioritize it, because I was born with my Tribal citizenship—it's who I am. However, when you look at the steps taken to trigger federal response for missing children or individuals who've been trafficked or sexually assaulted, what kind of authority do we have to stop this? We never see ourselves as powerless in these situations. We deal with it because we have to. No one else will. The government doesn't have the resources, the manpower, or the capacity to address this issue adequately. I know OVC has become a champion for us on the criminal side of things, and while it's difficult to tackle on the OVW side, I've seen progress. The blend of effort is a good example of how things are starting to shift. But even with all these efforts, the problems haven't stopped.

When I think about the work we're doing and how we can bring about change, I reflect on the examples I want to share with you, and the framing paper. We appreciate the current funding system. But if we're being

honest, we could use ten times the amount of funding we're getting right now. And that's something I'll continue to fight for. I ask that you also advocate for us when you go out and speak on behalf of the work you do. We gave up 80% of this country—whether it was stolen from us or Tribes were wiped out. Why would we celebrate Thanksgiving when the people who celebrated it wiped out entire Tribes? There's a different history in our world.

You know, I admire the work you've done with the trilateral agreements. We can't speak about it as *Not Invisible Act* commissioners, but none of us were prepared for how deeply personal and painful that process was. We had to sit with the grief silently, but our Tribal people came forward and shared their stories, but we're also teaching people, especially governors, about the sacred aspects of our journey—things like smudging. It's all part of our healing process, and that's something we need to hold on to as we continue the work.

We need a representative in our government who can do this work with equal footing—just like you've brought Tribal people into OVW, and just like OVC has done the same. It makes a difference. We need that same kind of representation and commitment. When you think about the work this commission has done, we know that the report we created must continue to live and breathe—it's not enough to just write it down. There's more to be done. But it's also important to recognize all of you Tribal members who are here doing this work. All of you who have worked with us on the *Not Invisible Act* have gone through a transformation. We've changed—measurably—and we now see the world through each other's eyes.

When I think about improving the work we've done, one thing is clear: the level of funding we receive is nowhere near where it needs to be. We know that the money is there—trillions of dollars that are sitting in the bank on behalf of Tribes—but we still have to fight for access to it. And that fight becomes harder when we continue to be labeled as "Native American." That term doesn't apply to us, and it wasn't even a term that was created by us—it was a label that Congress applied for their convenience. It's not in the Constitution. We're Tribes. Using that term "Native Americans," diminishes who we are and our sovereignty. Everyone born in America could technically be called Native American.

Take, for example, the emergency center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which our relatives helped fund but couldn't use. Many Tribes have contributed to health facilities, but they can't access them, or they're placed at the bottom of the priority list. Yet, side by side with us, we have partners like HHS and NCAI, who work collaboratively to ensure that laws are passed. But when it comes to SAMHSA the situation is different. SAMHSA has been the primary responder to help our Tribal members who are suffering, yet they're not always working as closely with us as they should. How can we make them better partners? Let us be the bridge. Let us, as Tribes, bring these different federal departments together to strengthen the work they're doing. A lot of this work falls under the leadership of the Tribal Nations Leadership Council (TNLC), and while the Tribal Budget Council (TBC) deals with aspects of the Interior, the Attorney General's office is critical too.

One of the things we're deeply concerned about is what will happen when the next administration comes into power. We have to have the mechanisms in place in order for P.L. 477 to be successful. Right now, there's a potential benefit for Alaska under P.L. 477, but it's still unclear how that formula will work. They have over \$91 million available, but no clear plans on how to distribute it or use it. My greatest fear is that the new Administration could take that funding away or make it more difficult to access. If the Tribes under FVPSA can meet their goals and make this work, it's a collective effort on all of us, and especially on your part.

There's a lot of conversation happening today, including from TNLC and TBC, and they're calling me to speak on behalf of the P.L. 477 Tribes. But we also know that overall funding is still insufficient. We've seen firsthand that funding from DOJ and DOI has been inadequate, and it's imposing a huge administrative burden on Tribal governments who are already stretched thin. The burden of dealing with these layers of bureaucracy is a challenge. The grant system itself is a prime example—trying to navigate it is incredibly frustrating. The process is complicated and inefficient, and even as efforts are made to streamline it, it seems to only get more complex. There are multiple numbers you need to keep track of just to get things done—grant numbers, passcodes, and access to different portals like JustGrants and Grants.gov. It's like you have to learn to talk “federal” just to spend a dollar. It becomes a system we get locked into. These systems keep changing, and every time they do, it adds another layer of confusion.

Another example is the TLOA, which was supposed to bring together DOJ, DOI, and Health to work together. The funding for this is tiny—up to \$7 million—and it was supposed to cover not just the victims, but also the children and perpetrators. But even with the purpose of bringing these departments together, the funding is insufficient, and it's just not enough to make a real impact. This is where what OVW and OVC have done together has been so valuable. You've stepped outside the usual framework and looked at how to make things work for us. And it's been effective.

It's similar to working on the research side of things with Tribes. The numbers we have on paper don't always reflect the reality of what's happening on the ground. I've shared some of the data I've collected from our region with the leadership in this room, and I want the Tribes here to know that I'm willing to help them gather similar data, but that support has never been offered before. This is a broader issue, though. There's a new national program where Tribal leaders are getting involved, but when I read the resolution, it's clear that they're giving up some of their authority in exchange for funding. I'm curious where that money is coming from, because it feels similar to the extra funds that were allocated to OVW programs or FVPSA initiatives.

In California, for example, once the Tribes took that funding, it led to some interesting consequences. Out of five Tribes, three of them sent the money to nonprofits or churches. The other two took a more cautious approach, taking only \$100,000 to see how it would go. But eventually, when the funding was up to \$238 million, those Tribes realized that accepting it would effectively pull them out of the Tribal system and make them nonprofit organizations with state status. They chose to return the money, refusing to let it undermine their sovereignty. That's why we've made the conscious decision to separate nonprofits from Tribal governments. Since then, we've grown stronger and have been able to flourish outside that system. At the same time, we've seen that those who align with the government and harm our people need to be held accountable—and that's something we have to take responsibility for.

When it comes to Tribal self-determination, I think it's important to acknowledge that many of the conditions and limitations tied to grants and federal funding hinder us more than help. These systems often feel like a breach of trust because of the way the funding system is set up. We've been working on tax issues for some time, and I want to ensure that no Tribes or coalitions are harmed by these systems. We need to make these systems as strong and robust as possible. I know there are many good things on the table. But I want to make it clear that I don't want the accountability of how much money we have to be the primary metric by which we measure success. Instead, I'd rather advocate as a Tribal leader to ensure that we can make these things work for our people.

As sovereign leaders, we're often competing against ourselves as Tribes for the funding and that is not okay. Tribes did not give up their land in order to have to compete with other Tribes to get needed funding. This is a

breach of the federal trust responsibility. There is an incident where several federal departments signed off on a MOU that affects Tribes, but they didn't talk to the Tribes about it. It is a model the Tribes don't need and because it is a signed MOU it will have an impact on us. When I look at the framing papers that have come from DOJ alone, it is clear that DOJ, DOI and all the relevant federal agencies need to work together on public safety. DOI, DOJ, DHS and all that alphabet, you have to come together jointly. I'm asking you and your leadership to make that happen. You're a key ally for us, and it's important that we understand each other—because if things aren't handled right, it's going to hurt Tribes across the board.

When it comes to DOJ and Native American issues, I've always had a problem with how it's framed, and I think we need a dedicated subcommittee to address our concerns. Just like the TNLC works with the Attorney General's office, we need something similar for issues at DOJ. There's no Tribal representative in the Deputy Attorney General's office or Associate Attorney General's office. A Tribal-focused position at that level would help carry the load and ensure that sovereign-to-sovereign relationships are respected.

It's crucial that the leaders at DOJ, OVW, and other agencies work together and form a dedicated commission to support Tribal nations. This isn't just about paperwork—it's about real healing, and we need a decade of healing, not quick fixes. I want all of you in that room, sitting at the table, collectively asking for a decade of healing for our Tribal peoples. For the harm that's been done to us—not by you personally, but by the system that has overlooked our needs. The damage is beyond measure. You're in a position to help us change that. We need a commission, and we need that decade of healing. If there's going to be a real trust relationship, we can't keep being called "Native Americans." I challenge Congress on this every chance I get. It was easy for them to label us that way, but the law is clear. It's right there in the Constitution: "We the People." You don't get to reinterpret that. It doesn't say "Native American" anywhere, so I'm asking, with all the respect I can muster as a sovereign leader: stop calling us that. I don't expect you to learn the names of every Tribe, but we shouldn't be reduced to a generic label. And quite frankly, this country is still in its "terrible twos," figuring out who it really is. I hope we can help educate you into a better version of understanding, because if our history isn't taught in your schools, your children won't see us, and that cycle will continue indefinitely.

Response to DOJ Tribal Justice Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding Framing Paper

We're disappointed in the framing paper. It reflects a lack of a real, collective effort to bring DOJ, DOI, and all relevant federal agencies together to address public safety and funding issues for Tribes. We need immediate real collaboration and action. What was presented doesn't include proposals that DOJ can implement without new legislation. That's unacceptable. You've already proven your value—everyone sitting at this table has shown that change can happen without having to create new laws. Yes, we recognize Congress must act, but passing legislation can take years, and we can't afford to wait. We need improvements now, based on the authorities we already have. I'm asking you, as a sovereign leader, to make a request to this administration that we start making these changes now, so that when the next administration comes in, it's already in the works. We need to protect the gains we've made, and we need to do it together - Tribal leaders, advocates, and the people on the ground—they know what needs to be done, and they've been telling us. Maybe a formula program could work without a change in legislation - we need to work together to figure this out. We can't wait for new legislation to make the changes we need. We need to act with the resources and authorities we already have.

The BIA most recently estimated that \$3.5 billion is needed. If that report is based on current law, use it, leverage it to get the support we need. A \$3.5 billion gap is a lot different from asking for \$1 million or \$100 million. This funding is out there and it's being requested; it's already part of the conversation, and you are

serving us through these programs. That's where we can find common ground. When I look at the access to funds, it's striking that BIA and DOJ funding levels are still at \$780 million, while the need is in the billions. This isn't a vague estimate—it's documented, and there's a clear unmet gap of more than 80%. Every year, the President submits a budget. It's time to make that budget reflect the reality of what's needed. Let's start pushing for change.

One of the hardest things to understand is the history and the legislation that has impacted our people. But we need to move forward, and I want you to see something that's incredibly important. The Cedar Woman Healing—this is something deeply rooted in our spiritual traditions. The knowledge we hold and how we center life through these practices is essential. As sovereign Tribal leaders we take advice and lead via a spiritual center throughout the world. Women and men are responsible for the wellbeing of a society. There is an equal number of women and men who shared the leadership equally of matrilineal and patrilineal. When you look at the world, we all come from the mountains, foothills, valleys, deserts, rivers, lakes, and oceans. These are the seven jewels of the world, and they shape who we are. This connection to the land is something we all share. Our kinship, song, utensils, our shelter, our clothing, our food, and our ways of hunting and gathering—these are the things that bind us together. And when we think about women, their sacred space is the moon time, childbirth, coming of age—all life is sacred. This is the way we live, and it's important to understand that. The womb of Mother Earth is a powerful place. In our teachings, the boy child and the men are taught the story of creation by the women. While the non-Indigenous world often teaches this through the perspective of a man, for us, all space is sacred, and Mother Earth is honored as a goddess. Both the male and female are co-creators. This balance is critical to the wellness of our villages and Tribes.

To us, Creation itself is the mystery. Bloodlines in non-Indigenous societies often trace through the male line, but in our cultures, they come from both the male and female. That's what's real in our Tribal communities. But there's also the painful reality of what has happened to our people because of war —rape, violence, trafficking, missing women, and the erosion of Tribal leadership, especially women's leadership. These are all symptoms of the systemic issues we face. The colonization of our people was not just about taking land—it was about dismantling the ways we live and thrive, especially the role of women in our societies. You have to understand that the impact of these histories is still with us. The idea of "fight or flight" was real for our ancestors. The elders would often walk away to ensure they didn't slow down the Tribe as they ran from harm. The men would stake themselves to the ground, fighting until their last breath, shooting arrows to ensure the rest of the people got away safely. This was a sacrifice. This was survival. And it continues to echo through our generations.

When you think about these things, the reality is very real for us. And when I reflect on the time of the first woman, I want my relatives to take a moment and really understand this. The struggles we face every day are heavy. The healing we've learned from each other is what we must hold onto. One of the teachings we carry is about the cedar. If you go to the bogs where the cedar grows, there's a root you can pull up, clean a little, shave it down, and then place it in water to make an amber tea. This tea holds healing power. For those who have experienced harm—whether it's been through rape, beatings, violence, loss, or any trauma—the weight they carry affects every part of their world. But we've learned a way to help. When you drink that cedar tea, you don't do it alone. You have another woman, or man, sitting with you and supporting you through this journey. This gift of tea helps you sleep. I know many of you haven't had a peaceful sleep for a long time. But in that sleep, you go on a journey. You travel back to the first generation that was harmed—whether it's your grandmother, great-grandmother, or someone further back in your bloodline. While you sleep, you heal the trauma of that first generation. The person sitting with you ensures you are protected, that you're safe during

this journey. As you heal one generation, you move forward in time, healing each generation that came after it. You return from that journey healed, and when you do, the living memory of your people, your ancestors and your descendants, is healed. I believe we come from a place where each of us, as Tribal people, holds a powerful gift—one that Cedar Woman can share. Regardless of ethnicity, I want my sisters and all my relatives to know that we can heal ourselves and the generations before us who were harmed. I leave you with that thought, because the gift of healing is incredibly powerful.

Recommendations:

- Programs like OVW or initiatives like P.L. 477 have to ensure that they work in favor of Tribal nations' unique needs.
- We need the full commitment of the federal government to truly respond to the issues we face as Tribal peoples.
- The federal government must stop labeling us as Native Americans. We are Tribes. We were never consulted on whether or not we should be called Native Americans.
- Our federal partners must collaborate with Tribal nations and Tribal partners to build safe and healthy Tribal communities and to support comprehensive law enforcement, prevention, intervention, and support services. DOI, DOJ, DHS, etc., must come together jointly as these agencies are our key allies. It's important that we understand each other—because if things aren't handled right, it's going to hurt Tribes across the board.
- Federal agencies, including DOJ, OVW, OVC, BIA, HHS and DHS, should improve internal coordination so that Tribes don't have to jump through multiple hoops, with multiple departments, who have many different policies to adhere to.
- Alaska Tribes need to be funded at a reasonable base level such as the levels identified in the report to congress by the BIA. The federal government and President of the United States need to increase the level of funding Tribes receive.
- Let us, as Tribes, bring these different federal departments together to strengthen the work they're doing. A lot of this work falls under the leadership of the TNLC and TBC.
- DOI, DOJ, DHS and other federal government agencies must find ways to diminish the many layers of bureaucracy.
- Federal agencies should maintain consistency and accountability among each agency, grant program, and grant manager.



Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians

Matthew Wesaw, Tribal Council Chairman - Tribal Leader (Written)

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi is a federally recognized Indian Tribe that was reaffirmed in 1994. The Tribe's traditional homeland is located in the St. Joseph River Valley in southwest Michigan and northern Indiana. The Pokagon Band has approximately 3,407 acres of trust land spread across three counties in Michigan and one county in Indiana, and our citizenship consists of about 6,300 people. The Pokagon Band currently exercises criminal jurisdiction over all Indians within its Indian Country. The Tribe is working to implement the STCJ restored to Indian Tribes under the VAWA.

Topic 1: Administering Tribal Funds and Programs

The Pokagon Band is grateful for the existence of federal funding to implement and administer appropriate responses to crimes of violence against Indian women in Indian Country. However, the funding is insufficient. Victims often need financial assistance for basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter. Victims should not have to choose between remaining with the offender and safety solely for economic reasons. Offenders are also in need of programming, to include trauma informed counseling and drug and alcohol counseling. Tribal courts need funding to ensure that they are appropriately staffed and equipped to provide probation officers, services to victims and offenders, legal counsel for indigent defendants, and to pay for juries, incarceration, and medical care of those incarcerated. These costs are a significant concern to Indian Tribes fully implementing VAWA.

Finally, adequate and timely training and support for grantees is necessary and should be a component of all federal grant programs. Orientation and post award training should be provided not later than the start of the grant. Inadequate or delayed training weakens the Tribal programmatic response to the violence.

Recommendations:

- Funding for prevention of violence against women must be sufficient, secure, noncompetitive, maintained, and allocated to all Indian Tribes appropriately.
- The uses of the funding should be identified broadly to permit Tribes to address violence against Indian women as needed.
- Adequate and timely training and support for grantees should be a component of all federal grant programs. Training and support should be provided no later than the start of the grant.
- Federal staffing for the administration of funding is needed to avoid delays in assisting grantees and answering questions.

Topic 2: Restoration of Complete Inherent Sovereign Authority

Indian women in Indian Country suffer violence at epidemic rates and such violence is often committed by non-Indians. STCJ under VAWA is limited and Indian women in Indian Country are victimized by non-Indians outside of the VAWA covered crimes. Under those circumstances, Indian Tribes are unable to fully exercise their sovereign authority to protect Indian women.

Recommendation:

- The complete inherent sovereign authority of Indian Tribes over all crime in Indian Country should be restored. This would allow prosecution of crimes beyond VAWA covered crimes. As it has with prior consultations, the Pokagon Band again requests that DOJ work with Indian Tribes to advocate for the restoration of the complete inherent sovereignty of Indian Tribes over all Indian Country crime. The Pokagon Band would like to work with DOJ to develop a federal response that results in the restoration of this sovereignty.

Topic 3: Strengthening the Federal Response to the Crimes of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Homicide, Stalking, and Sex Trafficking

The Pokagon Band has trust land in both Michigan and Indiana and, therefore, exercises its retained sovereign authority over its ancestral homelands within the borders of both states. The Pokagon Band must depend on the federal government to ensure there are no gaps in the exercise of criminal jurisdiction within its Indian Country.

The Pokagon Band has developed and maintains positive working relationships with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Michigan and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Indiana. This includes regular coordination and communication with these offices. Additionally, on an annual basis, the Pokagon Band Tribal Council meets separately with these USAOs. These positive working relationships are critical because when the Pokagon Band encounters situations where it lacks criminal jurisdiction, it depends on the assistance of the USAO to exercise criminal jurisdiction.

Unfortunately, not all Indian Tribes in the United States have a similar positive working relationship with their respective USAO. It is not uncommon in Indian Country to hear reports of difficult relationships with a USAO, including slow or no response regarding case status or case declination.

Recommendations:

- The federal government should ensure there are no gaps in the exercise of criminal jurisdiction within Indian Country.
- Positive working relationships between Indian Tribes and the U.S. Attorneys' Offices should be maintained with regular communication and coordination.
- Improved coordination and communication are needed when there are challenges in these relationships.
- All federal partners must reaffirm their trust responsibilities and commitment to Indian Country.



Pueblo of Acoma

Governor Randall Vincente - Tribal Leader (Oral)

As Governor of the Pueblo of Acoma, I'd like to share the challenges we face and the recommendations we have for the Department of Justice. Our community, one of the oldest continuously inhabited in North America, is spread across a vast territory of 534,664 acres, which is about seven-tenths the size of Rhode Island.

We have significant public safety challenges. We currently have many vacancies in our police department, our detention facility, and our fire department. These staffing shortages occur while we manage many incidents across our vast reservation. A major issue is our inability to match New Mexico's salary scales, which leads to certified officers leaving for better-paying positions. This creates a constant cycle of recruitment and training, straining our resources.

Violence against women and children is a devastating reality that affects our entire community. Each case involving a member of our community leaves a lasting scar that never fully heals. Our women, youth, and children are the heart of our future, and when they go missing or are harmed, it threatens our way of life. This is compounded by our geographic isolation and limited resources.

Recommendations:

- Create a new DOJ formula grant program. This program must consider land size, service population, current staffing levels versus needed levels, geographic isolation, and jurisdictional complexity. It

should not reduce existing funding and should include minimum baseline funding with multi-year commitments. It should also be flexible to address emerging needs with dedicated funding for competitive salary support, equipment, training, and traditional justice programs.

- Integrate DOJ grants using a Public Law 477-like mechanism. This should include all federal public safety funding sources while maintaining existing levels and streamlining reporting. A pilot program should be implemented with a minimum of a three-year period to evaluate effectiveness. This should feature a single reporting structure, a simplified application process, multi-year funding commitments, and protection of cultural practices.
- Increase BIA funding as a complement to DOJ funding. This funding should supplement, not replace, existing DOJ support, and include operational support, account for geographic and jurisdictional factors, and support competitive salary scales. There must be clear coordination between DOJ and BIA, maintaining Tribal choice in funding mechanisms, supporting traditional justice systems, and including infrastructure support for long-term sustainability.
- Improve the NamUs database by including detailed cultural identifiers and Tribal affiliation information, such as territorial clan, family affiliations, primary language, tattoo documentation, and known family connections.
- Ensure that law enforcement coordination includes direct contact information for agencies and a chain of command for information sharing.
- Develop notification protocols where primary notification goes to Tribal leadership and law enforcement when Tribal citizens are identified in NamUs, with a Tribal liaison to assist in communications.
- Ensure critical services for resolving cases, such as investigative support that incorporates traditional knowledge, DNA analysis and anthropological services conducted with cultural sensitivity, and family support services that respect traditional grieving practices.
- Address cultural considerations regarding DNA collection by developing protocols in consultation with traditional leaders, providing clear documentation of privacy protections, and creating educational materials.
- Offer effective outreach to Tribal communities with combined in-person and virtual training options, regular updates, and a database of training materials developed in consultation with Tribes.
- Implement changes while maintaining strong privacy protections and respecting Tribal sovereignty.
- Implement a multi-layer review process for archival Tribal data requests, starting with notification to the Governor's office and the Department of Public Safety, with a formal presentation explaining the data's use and potential benefits before access is granted.
- Establish a formal notification protocol for data requests with primary notification through official letter and electronic notification to the Governor's office, a follow-up confirmation and a minimum 30-day review period before any decision is made.
- When reviewing data requests, the NIJ Tribal scientist should require detailed research protocols, clear documentation of benefit to the Tribal community, commitment to Tribal review of findings before publication, and Tribal involvement throughout the research process.
- Ensure data sharing agreements include clear definitions of data ownership and Tribal sovereignty, protections for sensitive information, security protocols for data storage, requirements for Tribal review, provisions for data return, and publication requirements.
- Recognize data sovereignty by returning all identified data to Tribes, support the development of Tribal data management capacity, fund Tribal data management infrastructure, and provide training for Tribal staff.

By implementing these recommendations, we can better protect our community and ensure justice is served.



Pueblo of Isleta

Lt. Governor Juan Rey Abieta - Tribal Leader (Oral)

We come from the Pueblo of Isleta. Long before we were known by that name, we have always referred to ourselves as Shiewhibak. About 500 years ago, when the Spanish arrived, they discovered a small island in the middle of the Rio Grande, where the river widens and flows around it on both sides. It was then that the Spanish gave us the name "Isleta," meaning "little island," a name that has stuck with us ever since. It's deeply symbolic, as we continue to be a little island in many ways today.

We were established long before 1492, long before anyone crossed the sea. We had our own systems of governance, our own ways of addressing issues, and a strong foundation for taking care of ourselves. These traditions have faced many challenges over the past 500 years. I'm speaking to you in English now, and I do so well, but I wish I could express myself in my Native language, as that would better convey how it really feels. For the last five centuries, we've been navigating a great deal. And to me, this struggle is at the heart of what we need to discuss today, which is the violence against our women. After the Spanish came, we faced the Mexican government, and later the United States government. Over this time, we've lived under three different foreign powers, but we have always held on to our identity and strength.

What sets the Pueblos in New Mexico apart is the recognition of their sovereignty through the gifting of canes. These canes, given by the Spanish, the Mexican government, and even Abraham Lincoln, symbolize the acknowledgment of the Pueblo as sovereign nations, much like how Egyptian pharaohs are depicted holding canes in their temple murals. This recognition goes back over 500 years, solidifying their authority. However, with these canes came colonization, and with colonization came historical trauma. The Pueblo people have been fighting for basic human rights—especially the right to protect their women, children, elders, and community. Along the way, they've faced many losses. This trauma is where much of the negative, learned behavior has originated, and it's something that continues to affect the community today. This is at the core of many of the challenges they face, including violence against women.

The loss of our language, culture, and traditions has been profound. It wasn't until 1978 that the United States Congress finally allowed Tribes to practice their traditional ceremonies, and for us, that's where our healing lies. Our ceremonies are what sustain us, what feed our souls, and what our people deeply yearn for. But before we can fully heal, we need to understand the history that brought us here, to this point of suffering. A lot of our pain in recent years stems from U.S. Supreme Court legal decisions like *Oliphant*, which stripped us of the ability to protect our own people on our own land. *Oliphant* is a significant case, but it's part of a broader history of decisions that undermine our sovereignty. Imagine being told by the federal government—your supposed protector—that you can't defend your own family, your own community. If a non-Native perpetrator commits a crime on your reservation, you can't take action. Instead, you have to rely on the FBI or BIA to intervene, and even then, your community is left vulnerable. This erodes our confidence in our ability to protect ourselves and undermines our authority. We've also seen recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, like

McGirt, which seemed like a victory for Tribal sovereignty, until the decision in *Castro-Huerta* walked back that progress. It's an ongoing struggle, and the setbacks continue to have real, harmful impacts on our people.

Now, returning to Isleta Pueblo, there has been some development, but it's important to remember that we were here long before Albuquerque, long before Launa. When you pass through Isleta Pueblo today, you'll see that it's very comparable to Central Park in New York, in terms of its historical significance and its central place in the landscape. Our community has deep roots here, and that history is reflected in the land itself.

The city of Albuquerque is growing around us, and it's essential that the Tribes are included in that economic development. But as Tribal leaders, we face the important responsibility of balancing our customs, traditions, and language with the pressures of Western ideals, policies, and the pull of a more capitalistic way of life. We have to walk this delicate line because we want our traditions, language, and culture to remain strong for generations to come—never fading away.

This is a struggle we're actively facing now. During our break, we discussed the loss of language and the steps we need to take to preserve it. Our language is one of our greatest protective factors, and while we have many protective factors as a community, we also have programs in Isleta dedicated to keeping our language and culture alive. It's part of the ongoing effort to ensure that we don't lose what makes us who we are.

Isleta Pueblo has one of the most robust programs in the region when it comes to justice and addressing criminal justice issues. Our police department, with about 40 officers, is cross-commissioned with Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and state police. We're located at a major crossroads, with five major highways running through our reservation, placing us between two rapidly growing metropolises. This brings a lot of traffic through our lands, including visitors to our casino, which adds to the flow of people.

In addition to law enforcement, we've developed a wide range of programs to support the well-being of our community. We have a Tribal court system, a probation program, and a healing-to-wellness program, which focuses on healing rather than punitive measures. We believe that healing-to-wellness is a more effective way to address issues within our community. We also have a truancy program, behavioral health services, social services, a health clinic, a prosecutor, and a public defender. Many of these programs were established between 2013 and 2015, just before we adopted VAWA. Prior to VAWA, we first had to adopt the Tribal Law and Order Act to strengthen our ability to protect our people.

It's a bit of a double-edged sword, that we had to adopt the Tribal Law and Order Act in order to eventually get VAWA. The law was necessary to allow us to charge non-Native perpetrators for violent acts against women on our reservation. The Tribal Law and Order Act gave us the ability to increase penalties and fines, and it allowed us to stack charges, which can be effective in holding offenders accountable. However, this also feeds into the broader criminal justice industry, which is a massive economic system. Running courts, supporting staff, and paying attorneys and public defenders—it's expensive. It's a well-paid industry, and sometimes I feel that it can get in the way of addressing the real issue, which is finding a true resolution. Sometimes it feels like a job or just checking a box rather than truly solving the problem. We like to think that our Tribal courts go beyond that. They're not just about checking boxes; they're about addressing the root of the issue and figuring out what will help the person involved. Does the perpetrator need to be incarcerated, or would they benefit more from probation, social services, or behavioral health support? We try to focus on solutions that help heal the individual and the community, rather than just punitive measures. That's the approach we take to these difficult issues within our community. We're a community-based system, and we're working to find real solutions.

To me, the word "community" is made up of two important elements: communication and unity. If you combine them, you get community, and that's what makes a strong one—clear communication that leads to unity. So, we've had to take a hard look at our own community and think about how we can prevent issues before they arise. How do we support our youth to keep them from going down risky paths? How do we support adults who may be struggling with their own challenges? And how do we help adolescents who are dealing with family issues beyond their control?

To strengthen our community, we host events to bring us together and reconnect. One example is our memorial walk, which typically happens around Christmas time. It's an event that helps honor those we've lost and bring the community together in a shared moment of reflection and healing. These kinds of activities remind us that we're stronger when we come together, support each other, and communicate openly. In the past, our Domestic Violence Prevention Grant helped fund events like the memorial walk, which brings the community together, especially during a time when many should be with their families. For some of our Tribal members, however, that family connection is lost, and so we try to create a space for community healing. It's about offering a sense of togetherness and support during difficult times.

In 2022, our former governor, Vernon Abeta, issued a proclamation recognizing April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This was an important step in bringing the issue to light and acknowledging that it's not something we can hide away or ignore. Speaking on these sensitive issues, especially in a public space, is hard—it's hard because these topics are deeply personal for many individuals, and they are living through these challenges every day. It's tough to fully capture the depth of these conversations in short discussions, but they are necessary. We also have prevention groups and a variety of programs aimed at addressing the root causes and supporting our community. The key to how we structure our programs is simple: we listen to the community. We try to adapt our approach based on their input, so that what we're offering truly helps the people it's meant to serve.

At the Pueblo of Isleta, we have many protective factors built into our community. Our customs, traditions, and ceremonies are at the heart of that. For us, our language is a critical protective factor, as is engaging in traditional activities like sewing, making our garments, and cooking traditional foods that are served during important times. Feast days, where we come together, are another key protective factor. These events give us the chance to reconnect with our sister Tribes, strengthening communication and creating a sense of community. When we come together and through our ceremonies, customs, and traditions, we build that mutual support and care. Ceremonies, especially when everyone returns to the reservation, are opportunities to see one another, acknowledge one another, and, ultimately, watch over and protect each other. These gatherings are vital in maintaining that communal bond and reinforcing our protective framework.

Topic 1: Reporting Challenges

One of the challenges we face is around reporting. As I mentioned, our traditions, culture, and language are all part of how we heal and protect our community, but when it comes to reporting sensitive matters, it becomes difficult to navigate. Often, we don't know how to frame these issues in a way that fits into the reporting structure, or we are met with questions or refusals. We've faced situations where it's hard to know whether to disclose certain information because, in our view, what happens in ceremony should remain within the ceremony. We feel that this sacred space must be respected, and that's one of the sensitivities we ask for understanding on as we move forward in addressing these complex issues.

We see our traditions and ceremonies much like a confession to a priest or a counseling session—something sacred and private. We believe that the healing that occurs in our ceremonies should stay within that space.

When someone goes into a traditional ceremony, they are not only healing as an individual, but the whole community is healing together. It's not just about addressing the specific issues at hand; it's about reconnecting with the things that give us strength—our identity, culture, and our role within the community. This process helps Tribal members feel seen, valued, and acknowledged. That's incredibly important for ownership of their healing journey. The same applies to the victims we support. We believe this type of healing is integral to the wellbeing of our people.

Recommendations:

- Federal Leaders need to broaden our ability to provide community-focused healing to our community and lower the reporting requirements to provide the services. The funding needs a greater level of flexibility so we can appropriately support our community.
 - The support we ask for is simple for federal leaders: respect the boundaries of our customs, traditions, and language, and allow us the space to heal in the way that works for us. We ask that there be sensitivity to the fact that these processes are sacred and integral to how we recover as individuals and as a community.

Topic 3: Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women

Isleta Pueblo has been working hard to develop a coordinated response plan for MMIW cases. Our director of social services is collaborating with our police department to ensure that, if a case arises, we can respond quickly and effectively. MMIW is a major issue across New Mexico and in Tribal nations nationwide, and it's a serious concern for us. But I also acknowledge that, compared to some other Tribes and communities, Isleta has managed to avoid the worst of this issue. I'm encouraged by this fact, but I know that other communities are struggling. They face challenges getting the resources they need or building systems to protect their people.

Prevention is key. We truly believe that prevention is the most effective tool, and it must be prioritized. It's about setting up the right systems, creating strong community ties, and making sure that people feel safe, heard, and supported. While we've made progress, there's still work to be done. There's intervention which we see a lot going through, and comes with the big price tag, whether that's locking somebody away or sending them to treatment or doing whatever they may need to do. And then the piece that has been missing is the aftercare. Sometimes the hardest part is the aftercare and people going back to their old habits. So, we are focusing on helping people find support after treatment and merging that with our customs and traditions to help them heal.

We also have to take a look with a trauma-informed lens. We've been dealing with trauma for about 500 years. To me, that's at the heart of many of the problems we're facing today. When the Europeans/Spanish came, our Native women were raped. These are the facts about what happened. These events have deep roots, and I believe they are connected to some of the struggles we're dealing with now. This is why we need to approach the issues we're facing with an understanding of that history. It's about recognizing the trauma that's been passed down through generations, so we can respond appropriately. If we're not looking at situations through a trauma-informed lens, that can lead to worsening the situation, especially if those responding—like our police officers—don't have that perspective either. If they aren't trained to recognize the impact of trauma, their actions can unintentionally escalate things. So, we're working to communicate and discuss these issues within our community, to make sure we approach them in ways that won't make things worse. This is why we're pushing to move away from some of the Western practices and instead focus on our cultural traditions, or what we refer to as "traditional healing."

Recommendation:

- Federal Leaders need to broaden our ability to provide community-focused healing to our community and lower the reporting requirements to provide the services. The funding needs a greater level of flexibility so we can appropriately support our community.

Topic 4: Shelters

One of the ongoing challenges we're facing is providing safe spaces for victims of crime. As I mentioned, we're a close-knit community, which can actually make it harder to find a safe shelter. If there's a shelter within the community, people generally know where it is, and that can compromise the safety of those who need protection. So, we sometimes have to get creative in how we locate resources or find safe, discreet places to protect those who've been affected. Housing itself is a big issue, as is finding shelters that are more secluded, where victims can truly feel safe.

Conclusion

Thank you to the federal officials and everyone here today. I've been getting comfortable coming to consultations and divulging information, but we've been products of the past where information was used against us. So, it's something that we just always have a concern about. We are heavily reliant upon the USA to help us prosecute these major crimes. These are concerns and these are things that we want to address because we don't know how things are going to happen in the near future.



Pueblo of Pojoaque

Governor Jenelle Roybal - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

Before being elected as Governor, I served as Lieutenant Governor for six years. This year marks my tenth year in office, with four of those years as Governor, proudly serving my Tribe. I've been an active council member for 30 years, and I am currently the only female Pueblo Governor in New Mexico. In addition, I serve as the Co-Chair for the MMIP Advisory Council for the state. As a woman in leadership, one of my key missions is to advocate for the women of our communities and for Tribes across New Mexico and the U.S. in the fight to end domestic violence.

The Pueblo of Pojoaque is located in Northern New Mexico, surrounded by the cities of Espanola and Santa Fe. New Mexico is home to 19 Pueblos, along with the Navajo, Jicarilla, and Mescalero Nations. Our community has 601 enrolled Tribal members, with approximately 300 living within our boundaries. The reservation spans about 20 miles and encompasses roughly 13,000 acres. The area is checkerboarded, and in addition to our Tribal population, there are over 13,000 non-Native residents. Each day, we see anywhere from 60,000 to 80,000 vehicles pass through our Pueblo.

Topic 1: Tribal Court Systems

I would like to share the strengths of our people. Our Tewa name is PoSuwaeGeh Owingeh which translates to water gathering place. We still speak our Tewa language and practice our Tribal culture and traditions. Our ancient ways of being are still very much alive, but our harmony is out of balance. Our communities struggle with high rates of domestic violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking, drug overdoses, and mental health issues.

I am proud to say we have our own Tribal court system that has fully implemented the special jurisdiction and fully exercises criminal jurisdiction possible under Tribal, state, and federal laws.

The pueblo adopted the provisions of the Indian Civil Rights Act pertaining to expanded criminal jurisdiction over non-Tribal Indians, non-Natives who commit a covered crime in the Pueblo of Pojoaque. Native Americans and non-Native Americans can now be charged with the crimes in the sub section, which means our courts can now prosecute crimes committed on our reservation. We have our own law enforcement agency, and the Pojoaque Tribal Police now have full jurisdiction to make arrests. Our officers are authorized to enforce the law in nine key areas: assault on Tribal justice personnel, child abuse, dating violence, domestic violence, obstruction of justice, sexual violence, sex trafficking, stalking, and violations of protection orders.

Recommendation:

- DOJ and DOI should support our legislation that fully restores Tribal nations' jurisdiction over non-Natives for any offense on Tribal land.

Topic 2: VAWA and Expanding Behavioral Health Services

Domestic violence affects everyone in the household, and you don't have to be physically harmed to experience its impact. The 2022 reauthorization of VAWA has been a pivotal step for both law enforcement and Tribes, opening up the opportunity for us to be more self-sufficient in addressing these issues. For as long as I can remember, non-Native perpetrators often went unprosecuted, a result of jurisdictional challenges that many Tribes, including Pojoaque, faced. VAWA was fully enacted by Tribal resolution and adoption of the updated Tribal code in October of 2022. Our offices and Tribal court were ready that day to enforce and prosecute along with executing this expanded jurisdiction. Our VAWA team consists of an on-staff prosecutor, defense attorney and a bar certified attorney sitting as chief judge for the Pueblo of Pojoaque Tribal court. By abiding by the criteria set forth by VAWA we have an extra layer of protection that has never existed before.

Within months of enacting the updated VAWA, we were able to bring our first case to court under its provisions, specifically for dating violence and domestic violence—two of the covered crimes. The alleged defendant had a history of similar offenses in other areas, including another Pueblo, but those cases had gone unprosecuted due to jurisdictional challenges. Thanks to the expanded jurisdiction, our police department and prosecutor were able to secure a guilty plea, and the defendant, a non-Native individual, is now serving a prison sentence. This conviction marked a monumental moment as it was the first time a non-Native individual had been prosecuted under Tribal jurisdiction in New Mexico, with Pojoaque being the first Tribe to do so.

Our ability to protect and serve our members is now fortified beyond belief and allows me as Governor to know our members are protected. However, the community is still in need of more support from the federal government with continuation of funding to our Tribal courts and law enforcement agencies. As a Tribal leader, I also know we must take the next step to protect our Native women by focusing on prevention and support by expanding services within our Behavioral Health Department. We need more programs like supervised visits, battered intervention, and counseling services. Education is key to prevention and awareness, but in our communities, there's a critical shortage of counselors, especially those who are culturally competent and can work effectively with our children. So, why isn't there dedicated funding to expand these services for our most vulnerable populations?

These services are vital, but the funding barriers prevent us from building the infrastructure needed for healing and care. Native people are capable of creating sacred spaces for healing, but we need the resources

to do so. One example of the importance of our newly expanded jurisdiction is a life-saving situation that unfolded when a Tribal member and her child were kidnapped and driven off our land. As soon as a protection order was filed, we entered the perpetrator's information into our license plate readers. Thanks to our police department's swift response, they were able to intercept the vehicle and bring the mother and child to safety. I hate to think what might have happened if we hadn't had the jurisdictional power or the tools to protect them in that moment. This is why continued funding and support for our law enforcement and court systems are essential—because the safety and lives of our people depend on it.

While the current list of VAWA covered crimes doesn't specifically mention elder abuse, our elders are vital to our culture and traditions. They carry the wisdom, language, and leadership that shape our Tribal communities. They deserve protection and justice, especially in cases of elder abuse, whether it occurs within their homes or outside of them. Moving forward, we must ensure that our elders are included in the framework of laws that safeguard our people.

Recommendations:

- The federal government should remove funding barriers for culturally appropriate education services within the Behavioral Health Department.
- Expand the language of VAWA to include elders.

I also want to take a moment to reflect on how much we've grown since I was a child. Back then, our Governor had to step in not just as a leader, but as a child protection advocate and even as a police officer. He would physically put himself in danger, responding to domestic violence calls because we couldn't afford to wait for the response time of the BIA. Our community had to rely on our own leaders to keep us safe. This was the reality that led us to where we are today—no longer having to depend on outside agencies. We now have our own police department, Tribal court system, social services department, and behavioral health division.

But while we've made significant strides, the fact that we had to get to this point shouldn't have been necessary. Every community deserves to have round-the-clock protection, just as anyone within city limits does. Unfortunately, this still isn't the case for many Tribes across the country. My police department has been approached by several other Tribes seeking guidance and support to establish their own law enforcement agencies. We always make time for these requests and consider them a priority because we believe that every Tribe should feel safe and secure, knowing they have the protection they need on their land. No Tribe should have to endure the same struggles we did. Every community deserves to have someone to rely on in emergency situations, and it's essential that we continue to support and uplift one another to make sure all Tribes are equipped to protect their people.

I want to close by thanking everyone that is joining today, all that have survived, praying for those who have not, and praying for those who are still victims trying to find the strength and courage to break away - I know how hard it is to report domestic abuse and the manipulation by the perpetrators. It is important for us to stand together to advocate, monitor and do our part in protecting those women suffering from violence.



Pueblo of San Felipe

Governor Anthony Ortiz - Tribal Leader (Written)

The Pueblo of San Felipe is a rural and isolated community that utilizes OVW funded programs to address violence against their Katishya women and children. Without your support, we would not have the positive outcomes we are currently experiencing.

Topic 1: Issues with OVW Portal Infrastructure

Too often the focus is on the grant programs themselves, not the infrastructure that makes them possible and successful. Therefore, we are using this opportunity to speak to the infrastructure that supports OVW programs. When OVW changes their portal infrastructure to better fit the needs of OVW, it poses serious issues for us in the field. It requires our staff to learn a completely different software program from the one we have become adept at using for some time.

Currently the portal is limited to specific persons whose roles are outlined in the portal infrastructure. This can consolidate power to a very few individuals, but for our Pueblo, it is often limited to our Tribal officials who are not part of the everyday implementation of the programs you have funded, making it inconvenient for those who implement the programs to access the portal to receive or provide information. We also believe that Tribal administrator oversight combined with programmatic staff oversight will protect the budgetary integrity of all grants and make budget reporting much easier.

Recommendations:

- When changes to the portal infrastructure are made, they should be made in collaboration to better meet the needs of those implementing OVW programs on the ground. This would give IT staff the ability to assess whether we have the bandwidth to use the new system.
- The access to the portal could be expanded so that it includes programmatic staff, which would ease reporting on implementation. This would not exclude those who oversee it but would allow those that implement an opportunity to easily share the successes, the challenges, and the difference the funding makes for our people.

Topic 2: Budget and Grant Administration

Budgets drive our programs, and your funding is the heartbeat of those budgets. We are incredibly grateful for the awards we have received from OVW funding opportunities; however, the budgeting process is often problematic. As the recipient of funding, we have timelines to meet. Yet, you as the funder often withhold or take additional time to reach budget approval on our application without adjusting the timelines we have to meet our programmatic obligations. It is impossible to condense our programmatic responsibilities into a shortened timeline when your administrative process is elongated.

Recommendations:

- OVW should clarify the roles of all parties involved in administering grant money, specifying that grants, once signed, are legal documents, and including language that explains budgets are to be used by all Departments, including the Finance Department of any awardee.
- OVW should work together with our Pueblo staff to adjust the original timeline of the budget approval process. This type of collaboration would allow us to efficiently review and approve our budget and then work with you to adjust your timeline to fit our budget approval process if it is time consuming.

- The funder should not withhold or take additional time to reach budget approval without adjusting the timelines the Pueblo has to meet programmatic obligations.

Topic 3: Grant Program Implementation

We view our programs as having two major components, one is programmatic and the other administrative. Administrative success is directly related to the infrastructure that you as the funder have created. For example, if you want a family to be safe and to report that there is domestic violence happening in their home, anonymity is a key issue to their comfort to report. We do not have the luxury of disappearing outside of our community. Anonymity is almost impossible to ensure. Therefore, construction monies to provide a structure that is protected from the larger community would be a great help to increase reporting and ensure the safety of our at-risk community members.

Also, our awards are programmatically timed to meet immediate needs of survivors. Infrastructure delays have a direct impact on the safety of our survivors and their families. Infrastructure delays, such as budget approval, often result in that very risk. This risk was exacerbated during COVID when our Pueblo went into lockdown and the number of incidents of domestic violence went from 3 the year before lockdown to 22 the year of lockdown. Your funding was critical to help our Pueblo meet this increase, yet there was a multi-year delay in finalizing our Capacity Building grant to address the increased risk to our community members.

Recommendations:

- Funding for construction should be included in OVW grants to build transitional housing that will always be available, safe, and secure.
- Address infrastructure delays that have a direct impact on the safety of survivors, such as budget approval.
- OVW should shift some resources to explore with Pueblos like ours how we can address the culture of violence that appears to have found its way into our communities, such as the Navajo Peace Keeping program.
- Address how to work with key Tribal officials who have themselves become perpetrators of violence or victims of it. This is an evolving issue and one in which we would welcome input from OVW and TAD staff to address.



Pueblo of Santa Clara

Governor J. Michael Chavarria - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Santa Clara Pueblo is located in New Mexico, and it is one of eight pueblos of the Northern Indian Pueblos Council that are north of Santa Fe. The people of Santa Clara Pueblo maintain our traditional cultural and religious ways of life. We continue to speak our Tribal language, Tewa, which is considered the glue that holds our culture, traditions, and religious ways of life together. As Governor of Santa Clara Pueblo, I want to share the challenges our community faces in protecting our people, particularly women, from violence. We live these situations daily and understand our unique public safety challenges.

Topic 1: Lack of Resources and Protection

For too long, Native women, men, and children living in Pueblo and Indian Country have faced daily challenges to their physical safety and mental well-being. The threats begin in the womb with restricted access to maternal healthcare services, safe housing, and inadequate nutrition, and continue into adolescence and adulthood with high rates of physical, emotional, mental, and sexual violence, human trafficking, substance abuse, and suicide. The federal government has an exclusive jurisdiction over cases of murder, sexual abuse, kidnapping, serious body assault, and certain other crimes committed in Indian Country. The lack of resources and protection from the federal government contributes to the difficulties faced by the Santa Clara Pueblo.

Recommendations:

- Increase resources for public safety and victim services on Tribal lands.
- Provide targeted political actions to address the high rates of violence and other challenges.
- The federal government needs to fulfill their trust responsibilities to Tribal nations.

Topic 2: Jurisdictional Issues

Jurisdictional issues complicate the delivery of limited public safety and victim services on Tribal lands, particularly in regard to the VAWA. VAWA authorized Tribal courts to exercise criminal jurisdiction over non-Native offenders who commit domestic and dating violence against Native Americans on their lands, which have been historically under-prosecuted in the United States. While VAWA has helped to close dangerous jurisdictional gaps by allowing Tribal law enforcement to exercise jurisdiction over non-Native offenders who commit domestic-related crimes on Tribal lands, the reauthorization of VAWA in 2022 did not address protections for elders or serious crimes that co-occur with domestic and sexual violence, such as financial crimes or homicide. In Santa Clara, we have many multi-generational households, and our elders are often victims of domestic violence. It's vital that we advocate to include the protection of elders in the next reauthorization.

Recommendations:

- The federal government needs to ensure that VAWA is permanently reauthorized.
- The next reauthorization should include protection for elders and address serious crimes that co-occur with domestic and sexual violence, such as financial crimes or homicide.
- Increase support for Tribal justice systems to ensure they have the resources they need to hold offenders accountable.

Topic 3: Need for Meaningful Consultation

The federal government serves as a trustee of the federal trust responsibility to Tribal nations. This relationship is based upon the political status of Tribes as sovereign governments, not race. It is the federal government's solemn duty to ensure Tribal interests are protected in any action, program, or policy, but the only way to do this is to involve Tribes long before decisions are made that could affect those interests. Meaningful consultation requires an interactive dialogue leading to joint decision-making, and it should not be merely checking off a box.

Recommendations:

- The federal government should engage in meaningful government-to-government consultation with Tribal nations with the goal of reaching consensus.
- Federal agencies should keep the lines of communication open and continuous with Tribal nations.
- The federal government needs to seek agreement on key issues with Tribal nations.

Topic 4: Inadequate Funding and Resources

While there are many funding opportunities, they are often competitive, and some come with a cost match obligation. This poses a financial hardship on us, and we must determine the feasibility of applying for funding. We do not support formula-based funding, and would rather support a need-based budget, since small Tribes have the same public safety and judicial challenges as large Tribes.

Recommendations:

- Mandatory funding for Tribal nations should be provided on a recurring basis, not just one-time funding.
- The federal government should adopt a need-based budget for Tribal nations.
- The federal government should eliminate cost-match requirements for Tribal funding.

Topic 5: Lack of Local Resources

Tribal communities like ours lack the local resources needed to adequately support people in crisis, including rehab systems, facilities, qualified specialists, medical services, wraparound service centers, and safe recovery housing. In particular, locally accessible, long-term residential treatment for substance abuse disorders has the best rate of success for our people. These programs must include culturally-based care models that provide for both traditional and Western healing practices. Unfortunately, such facilities do not exist in our area.

Recommendations:

- The federal government needs to provide funding for Tribal communities to develop local resources for people in crisis.
- The federal government should prioritize the development of culturally-based care models that include both traditional and Western healing practices.

These challenges underscore the need for more robust and sustained support from the federal government, not only in terms of funding, but also in terms of respecting our sovereignty, understanding our unique needs, and consulting with us as equal partners.



Pueblo of Taos

Governor Fred L. Romero - Tribal Leader (Written)

Gary Lujan, Councilman - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Holly Summer-Berries, Victims of Crime Coordinator - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Pueblo of Taos is the only living Native American community designated as a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and a National Historic Landmark. The Pueblo's multi-story adobe buildings have been continuously inhabited for over a thousand years, making it the oldest continuously inhabited community in the United States. Taos Pueblo has a detailed oral history, which contributes to its reputation as one of the most traditional and conservative of the Native American Pueblo Tribes. The Pueblo covers 174 square miles north of the modern town of Taos, with approximately 1,400 of their 2,600 members living on Pueblo lands. Despite the continuous connection to their lands for over a millennium, the community has struggled to maintain their land base, which has been reduced over time. In

1970, the Taos Pueblo Wilderness Act returned 48,000 acres of the sacred Blue Lake wilderness to the Taos Pueblo people, marking the first time the U.S. government repatriated lands to a Tribal nation.

Personal Account of Gary Lujan:

As I sat here this morning, I reflected upon how my day began at 5:00 AM this morning when I opened the text from my eldest son who lives in Arizona, suffering from depression. Each day as I communicate with him and the challenges that he faces, he reaches out to me, and he unloads that burden on my shoulder. He puts that in my lap as a plea for help as a father to help him navigate through his day. And this morning at 5:00 AM it was another burden placed on my shoulders, even before I could get my day started. As I came down from Taos, the 60-minute drive, I pondered why he was dealing with the things that he does. But I got here and listened to the stories of our community. Our songs are the same. Our stories are the same. Our challenges are the same. And as you sit here as a panel listening to these hardships coming from our Tribal communities, that burden is put on each and every one of you. That difficulty is put on your shoulders. That challenge is put on your laps. As I sat here and watched you, some were diligently taking notes. I saw tears being wiped. And I respect that you are listening to us, and that in prayer, we ask as you depart this facility that these burdens will get lightened from your shoulders, but that they will not be forgotten as you go back to advocate on behalf of our Tribal community.

Topic 1: Underfunding of Tribal Law Enforcement

Tribal law enforcement agencies face significant funding disparities, being underfunded by 40 to 50% by the Office of Justice Services in the BIA. This underfunding hinders their ability to effectively serve their communities, leading to a shortage of qualified officers, inadequate equipment and training, and a lack of resources for critical services. The current funding methodology is criticized for not adequately addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by different Tribal communities. The allocation of funds, which is decided at the central office level of the Office of Justice Services, is diminished to one-time funding by the time it reaches the Tribal level, which does not support the overall capacity building that Tribal law enforcement operations desperately need. Smaller Tribes like Taos Pueblo are especially burdened by this grant funding process.

Recommendations:

- Direct funding to Tribal justice systems.
- Reevaluation of the federal funding process and allocation areas.
- Expand opportunities for Tribal governments to develop and implement their own justice plans and support the implementation of those plans.
- Implement direct funding options for Tribes that have developed comprehensive justice plans.

Topic 2: Implementation of VAWA

While Tribal courts can now prosecute non-Tribal offenders under VAWA, it is unclear how Tribal communities should implement this law. The Taos Pueblo needs technical assistance in updating their Tribal legal code and establishing the policies and procedures needed to implement the law properly. They need support in ensuring that they have the capacity to properly exercise this law.

Recommendations:

- Provide technical assistance to Tribal communities in implementing VAWA.
- Support updating Tribal legal codes, establishing policies and procedures, and building the capacity to exercise VAWA properly.

Topic 3: Emergency Services

The Taos Pueblo struggles with emergency needs in violent situations, particularly due to the lack of a Tribally operated shelter. We are limited in our ability to provide emergency services in areas such as infrastructure, land clearing, architectural and engineering planning, and utilities. We need funds to better facilitate our ability to complete construction projects.

Recommendations:

- Provide funds that can cover multi-years of use in all areas of infrastructure to better facilitate construction projects.
- Support the development of Tribally-operated shelters.

Topic 4: Violence Against Women

Violence against women stems from historical trauma, drugs, alcohol, and enabling. There is a need for more female officers and on-call social workers to respond during domestic violence situations to ensure victims are taken care of while officers investigate. There is also a need for more compassionate officers. We struggle to prosecute non-Native offenders and exclude them as a way to handle the situation, removing them from our community.

Recommendations:

- Increase the number of female officers and on-call social workers available for domestic violence situations.
- Provide training for officers on how to be more compassionate.
- Offer support to Tribes to resolve loopholes and develop methods for prosecuting non-Native offenders.



Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe

Harriet Brady, Councilmember - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

I am a member of the Pyramid Lake Tribal Council. Our reservation is approximately 742 square miles, a total of 475,000 acres. We rely on selling recreational fishing permits and fireworks which pay for our police force because we're not a casino Tribe. Currently, we have 11 full-time officers and three rangers. We are one of 28 reservations in the state of Nevada on the I-80 corridor, and we have seen an increase of human trafficking that has affected our reservation.

Topic 1: Law Enforcement/Policy Making

There is a significant time lag from the assault to the forensic interview for federal charges, often taking weeks. This delay can hinder the investigation and prosecution of cases. Additionally, there needs to be realistic funding to address secondary offenses with a strong drug court and probation follow-up. There is a lack of substantial support from the Assistant US Attorney. Furthermore, there is no juvenile penalty for sexual assault or abuse at the federal level, and Pyramid Lake has nowhere to send juveniles for meaningful mental health support. Even before cutbacks, the Tribe only had one bed for youth needing mental health services,

and if that was taken, there was no place for the youth to go. There is also the issue of early release of offenders due to the lack of adequate funding for incarceration.

Recommendations:

- Reduce the time lag between an assault and a forensic interview for federal charges.
- Provide realistic funding for secondary offenses with strong drug court and probation follow-up.
- Increase support from the Assistant US Attorney.
- Establish a federal juvenile penalty for sexual assault/abuse.
- Provide funding for mental health support systems for juveniles, including aftercare services.
- Stop early release of offenders due to lack of funding for incarceration.

Topic 2: Funding

The BIA P.L. 638 grants need to be fully funded to reflect real-life costs and inflation to accommodate overtime. The majority of the dollars need to reach the Tribes rather than going to top-heavy administrations. There is a need for transparency regarding the budget and how funds are being passed through to Tribes.

Recommendations:

- Fully fund the BIA P.L. 638 grants to reflect real-life costs and inflation.
- Ensure that the majority of the funding reaches the Tribes rather than going to administrative costs.
- Provide transparency and release information on budgets and findings for the DOI, DOJ, and BIA to see the difference in funds from the top to when they reach the Tribes.

Topic 3: Tribal Courts

Tribal courts need funding for construction and remodeling to safeguard victims from being re-victimized. Currently, victims are often exposed to the opposing family members and the perpetrator while waiting in the general court lobby. Tribal courts also need funding to become fully automated and to connect to the NCIC. There is a lack of consistent use of full faith and credit. Additional training funds are needed for judges and law enforcement to be more sensitive to the victim's situation.

Recommendations:

- Provide funding for Tribal courts to construct and remodel facilities to safeguard victims.
- Provide funding for Tribal courts to become fully automated and connected to NCIC.
- Emphasize and ensure full faith and credit is exercised consistently.
- Provide additional training funds for judges and law enforcement to become more sensitive to the victim's situation.

Topic 4: Healthcare

There is a need for IHS to make sexual assault nurse exams more accessible to reservations, or to establish contracts with counties for easier access. Because of small reservation communities, off-reservation counseling options are needed due to conflicts of interest or fear of breach of confidentiality.

Recommendations:

- Increase the availability of IHS sexual assault nurse examiners closer to reservations.
- Establish contracts with counties for easier access to sexual assault nurse exams.
- Provide off-reservation counseling options to ensure victim confidentiality.

Topic 5: Prevention and Shelter Funding

Meaningful funding is needed for prevention education for youth about healthy relationships. Additionally, shelter funds are needed to provide adequate shelters for both females and males, as currently there is only a shelter for women on the Pyramid Lake Reservation. Transitional housing is also needed, and it must be affordable and safe for single parents with children.

Recommendations:

- Provide meaningful funding for prevention education for youth about healthy relationships.
- Provide shelter funds to provide adequate shelter for both females and males.
- Increase the availability of transitional housing that is safe and affordable for single parents and children.



Quinault Indian Nation

Kristine Mowitch, Tribal Council - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Stephanie Terrell, Advocate/Outreach Specialist - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Quinault Indian Nation has many struggles we face in protecting our Indigenous women from domestic violence and sexual assault. Our primary struggles involve enhancing the safety of our Indigenous women from domestic violence and sexual assault and strengthening the federal response to these crimes. Our nation is located along the coast in the northwestern part of Washington state, with around 206,000 acres of land that split into three Tribal communities. Here are some of the key issues that we are currently dealing with.

Topic 1: High Rates of Violence

Since January, there have been seven sexual assault cases, 19 domestic violence calls, and three active missing person cases. This is a considerable number of incidents for our community, and these numbers don't represent all of the missing and murdered Indigenous people within our community. These high rates of violence underscore the need for a more robust and immediate response to these crimes within our community.

Recommendations:

- Increase resources for victim services.
- Provide additional training for law enforcement.
- Improve coordination and collaboration between Tribal, local, state, and federal law enforcement.

Topic 2: Lack of Timely Justice

In one case, we have been waiting nine months for DNA evidence to be processed. This delay is unacceptable and can cause further trauma to the victim and jeopardize the entire case. This lack of timely justice is a critical problem that affects a woman's sense of safety and her ability to start the healing process. These delays can be attributed to staffing shortages or excessive workloads, but whatever the reason, the lack of prompt attention to these cases contributes to a cycle of violence and injustice.

Recommendations:

- Allocate more funding for Tribal justice systems.
- Increase staffing for forensic labs to ensure timely processing of evidence.
- Create systems that streamline case processing to ensure justice is served promptly.

Topic 3: Need for Culturally Competent and Responsive Services

The need for consistency and timeliness of case resolution is vital for providing a sense of safety and security to women. This includes considering the unique cultural and traditional needs of our community when creating programs and services.

Recommendations:

- Support culturally specific programs that address the root causes of violence in the community.
- Provide technical assistance to help Tribes develop these programs and services.
- Encourage community involvement in creating solutions to these challenges.

Topic 4: Lack of Resources and Funding

Our program, Sacred Healing Journey, began in 2017 with only one employee who acted as the advocate, outreach specialist, court liaison, and grant writer. While the program has grown to eight employees, including a four-bedroom healing house for women and families of domestic violence, and two offices (one of which is a satellite forensic interview office), we serve almost double the amount of clients than in 2017. The lack of resources is a significant barrier to providing comprehensive support to victims of violence, and it is a struggle to meet the needs of our community with the limited funding we receive. An evaluation of past grants that existed before the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Program needs to be conducted to create a comprehensive formula-based program for increased services to victims of violence.

Recommendations:

- Increase funding for Tribal victim services programs.
- Provide sustainable, long-term funding streams.
- Streamline grant application processes and reduce administrative burdens.
- Conduct an evaluation of past grants to create a comprehensive formula-based program for increased services to victims of violence.

Topic 5: Re-traumatization of Victims

When seeking technical assistance, Tribes in Alaska are often served by providers that are not from Alaska. Re-telling the stories of our victims only adds fuel to an already raging fire and using providers who don't understand our challenges only serves to re-traumatize victims.

Recommendations:

- Ensure any technical assistance providers that serve Alaska are from Alaska.
- Provide training for technical assistance providers on cultural competency.

Topic 6: The Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People

The federal response to the missing and murdered crisis we face is a breach and direct violation of the federal trust responsibilities and a violation of human rights. The lack of resources from the federal government and the lack of response from law enforcement is a continuation of the genocide committed against a Native people of this country.

Recommendations:

- Increase the resources dedicated to addressing the MMIP crisis.
- Improve coordination among Tribal, state, local and federal law enforcement.
- Provide training for law enforcement on how to properly respond to MMIP cases.
- Support and empower Tribal communities to lead the efforts to address MMIP.

**Rosebud Sioux Tribe***Lila Kills In Sight, Tribal Council Representative - Tribal Leader (Oral)*

I am very humbled and honored to be amongst all of you. And before I begin my testimony, I would like to acknowledge the spirits of those who have not made it through their battle. We speak about them today, and I know their spirit is here, giving encouragement and wanting justice. And in honor of that, I see four chairs here, which represent the spirits of those who didn't make it home.

The Rosebud Sioux Tribe, also known as the Sicangu Lakota, is a sovereign nation located in south-central South Dakota. The Tribe is part of the Great Sioux Nation, and the Rosebud Reservation was established in 1889 after the partitioning of the Great Sioux Nation. The reservation spans approximately 882,416 acres, including all of Todd County, South Dakota, and portions of four adjacent counties. The Tribal headquarters is in the community of Rosebud, South Dakota, and the reservation is home to about 22,000 enrolled members. The Sicangu Lakota maintain a deep connection to their history, land, and cultural heritage. They strive to address contemporary challenges while honoring their identity and sovereignty. The Tribe is committed to preserving the Lakota language, practicing Lakota traditions and ceremonies, and upholding strong family and community values.

Topic 1: Disruption of Traditional Values

Violence against our women stems from a disruption in traditional values, teachings, and practices that once ensured balance, respect, and accountability within our communities. The erosion of ceremonies and practices that once nurtured self-awareness, respect, and kinship roles has contributed to the problem. For example, our coming-of-age ceremonies taught young people about their responsibilities, respect for others, and their places within the larger community, but these rites are no longer widely practiced. Historical trauma, including the impact of colonization and boarding schools, has left generations with unresolved grief and a disconnection from their identity, fueling cycles of violence.

Recommendation:

- The Department of Justice should support the reintroduction and integration of ancient teachings into modern practices to help heal the wounds of historical trauma.

Topic 2: Poverty

The high poverty rate in our community further compounds the issue. Being identified as one of the poorest counties in the nation means that basic human needs often go unmet, leading to heightened stress, substance abuse, and domestic violence. With limited resources and services to address these challenges, many individuals struggle to break free of this cycle, perpetuating harm within families and the community.

Recommendations:

- Provide funding for programs that provide basic human needs and long-term transitional housing communities for victims of domestic violence, with transitional housing programs that provide safe structured environments where individuals can develop life skills, receive peer support and personal healing opportunities, and prepare for independent living.
- Enhance youth-specific services and shelters and transitional programs. We can develop youth-specific services within shelters, and transitional housing can provide age-appropriate trauma, support, education, and life skills development as well.

Topic 3: Inadequate Justice System

The declination rate of our federal prosecutors is high, and due to the lack of capacity, many times our Tribal courts do not successfully hold our perpetrators accountable. We also need to do more to rehabilitate the men who commit these acts of violence. Although warrior societies no longer exist in their traditional form, we can establish correctional-style programs rooted in cultural accountability and personal transformation.

Recommendations:

- Increase the capacity of Tribal court systems with funding to better hold perpetrators of violence accountable at the Tribal level.
- Establish correctional-style programs rooted in cultural accountability and personal transformation for perpetrators of violence.
- Provide structured reintegration programs to create space for behavior changes and accountability for violent actions for perpetrators.
- Provide funding for infrastructure that includes traditional housing, educational opportunities, and trade skills training.

Topic 4: Funding and Programs

The current funding processes and allocations under VAWA are essential, yet there is a critical missing element that hinders meaningful change for our community. For over 20,000 enrolled members living in one of the poorest counties in America, stress and violence remain pervasive issues. Adverse childhood experiences, often a direct consequence of domestic violence, perpetuate cycles of generational trauma.

Recommendations:

- Allocate additional funding to develop infrastructure for permanent programs rooted in Lakota traditions, adapted for a modern context.
- Ensure that the funding of programs such as the Office on Violence Against Women and the Office for Victims of Crime remains separate from DOJ Public Safety and Criminal Justice Block Grants.
- Increase the amount Tribes receive from the FVPSA from 10% to 12.5%.

Topic 5: Access to Crime Information Databases

Efforts to improve access to local, regional, state, and federal crime information databases and criminal justice information systems are critical for enhancing public safety within Tribal communities. We also need to invest in our technology infrastructure, enhance training manpower, allocate resources for training Tribal law enforcement and administrative personnel on how to effectively utilize and manage these systems, and increase staffing to ensure proper monitoring and enforcement of protective orders and criminal records.

Recommendations:

- Improve access to crime information databases and criminal justice systems.

- Invest in technology infrastructure, enhance training, and increase staffing to ensure proper monitoring and enforcement of protective orders and criminal records.
- Implement community awareness programs to educate Tribal communities on the importance of databases and monitoring systems.

Topic 6: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples

The Rosebud Sioux Tribe is not exempt from the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples, and we are currently supporting a number of families searching for their loved ones.

Recommendation:

- The Department of Justice should improve the response and resources to combat the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous people.



Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Kimberly Lee, Director - Tribal Leader (Oral)

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians are a federally recognized Tribe of Anishinaabe people who have lived in the Great Lakes area for millennia. The Tribe's service area spans seven counties in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and they have over 50,000 Tribal members nationwide, with nearly 15,000 living within their service area.

I testified at this very consultation last year and outlined many detailed recommendations to urge your federal agencies to pursue. I once again lift up our recommendations from last year in addition to the others I will share today. And I ask for commitment from each of your agencies and you as individuals joining us today to ensure all the stories about our relatives and the concrete data, we have traveled a long way to share with you, get carried forward during this important transition in the administration.

Topic 1: Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Framing Paper

As a Tribal leader, I am concerned about the proposed consolidation of funding sources. Specifically, I worry that the OVW TGP, OVW TSASP, and the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) for TVSSA could be combined into Tribal public safety and criminal justice funding. These three grants are incredibly important for Tribal community-based victim services programs, like our own Sault Tribe Advocacy Resource Center. If these funding sources are combined with other public safety funds, they may be diluted, which would be detrimental to the services we provide.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the TGP, TSASP, and CVF TVSSA are not consolidated into the Tribal public safety and criminal justice funding.
- The Department of Justice should immediately discontinue the competitive application process for both the TSASP and TGP grants, and implement an annual formula allocation methodology, similar to the TVSSA formula.

Topic 2: Tribal Victims Services Set-Aside Grant Administration

I have some specific recommendations to reduce administrative burdens and strengthen the sovereignty of Tribal grantees in choosing how best to use the TVSSA grant funding to serve their community. As it stands, there are several administrative requirements associated with the grant that cause unnecessary hurdles.

Recommendations:

- Eliminate the requirement for Tribal grantees to complete and submit annual budget modifications to reflect updated indirect rates when a new indirect rate agreement is received.
- Eliminate the Just Grants online budget entry requirements for Tribal grantees continuing to implement 2021 awards.
- Allow grantees to use funds to send any Tribal staff and Tribal justice systems partners to allowable OVC training events, even if they are not necessarily program staff funded by TVSSA.
- Allow grantees to request performance period extensions regardless of justifications, up to the maximum allowable five-year grant award period.

Topic 3: Bureau of Indian Affairs Public Safety Funding

We believe it's incredibly important for the federal government to increase the base funding for BIA public safety efforts, and that the BIA should receive this additional support.

Recommendation:

- The Department of Justice should advocate for increased base funding for BIA public safety efforts.

Topic 4: Framing Paper NamUs System Improvements

I am concerned that the current NamUs system may not adequately serve Tribal communities and would like to offer some suggestions for improvement. Given that many of the missing Tribal people in the database are under the age of 18, it would be helpful to have information on the number of missing Tribal persons who were in foster care at some point in their lives. Additionally, our Tribe would like to be notified when a Tribal citizen is identified in the NamUs database.

Recommendations:

- Add measures to the NamUs database and reporting analysis that provide Tribal leaders information about how many of the missing Tribal persons were in foster care at some point in their lives.
- Ensure that the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe is notified if a Tribal citizen is identified in the NamUs database.



The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

Brian T. Palmer, Assistant Chief - Tribal Leader (Oral)

As a member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges we face in protecting our communities from violence against women. One of the most significant problems is the lack of adequate legal support and resources for victims. When one Tribal member who was a victim of sexual assault went to the county Sheriff's office, she was arrested instead of receiving medical attention or justice. This exemplifies the reality in Indian Country, where victims often face additional roadblocks in their pursuit of

justice. The issues we face include recanted evidence-based investigations, incomplete reporting by law enforcement, and a lack of evidence other than the victim's testimony. This makes it very difficult for the legal system to work effectively, and it creates a vicious cycle that is difficult to break.

Another challenge is the lack of sufficient behavioral health services. It's clear that there is a mental health crisis in Indian Country, and the U.S. has a trust obligation and responsibility to address it. Behavioral health services are necessary for victims, perpetrators, and their families. However, the current capacity of IHS cannot meet the needs of our community members. Additionally, there is a stigma around seeking mental health services, and privacy concerns can prevent people from accessing care, especially for those in prominent positions. The lack of services for children is also a major concern, as statistics show a strong connection between domestic violence and child abuse, and that witnessing violence can have significant negative impact on children's development.

The limitations on incarceration imposed by the Indian Civil Rights Act make it difficult to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. Tribes are limited to one or three years of incarceration, with a maximum of nine years total, which is far less than the potential sentences in state courts. The USAO should pick up more of these cases, but their internal standards for taking cases hinder justice. In addition, access to juvenile justice is practically non-existent, because the USAO will not take cases unless juveniles can be certified as an adult. This leaves Tribes with limited options and a lack of resources for juvenile delinquency matters.

To address these challenges, the Department of Justice should prioritize the following:

- **Collaboration:** Formal agreements among local law enforcement, state and federal agencies, and Indian Health Services should be respected and prioritized.
- **Funding:** Congress should amend incarceration limitations and increase funding to address the mental health crisis in Indian Country, for both the victims, the perpetrators and the families, as well as expand the capacity of Indian Health Services to provide these needed services.
- **U.S. Attorney's Office:** The USAO needs to take up more cases and have less stringent requirements when deciding which cases to accept. If not, Congress must expand the incarceration limits for Tribal courts.
- **Juvenile Justice:** Increase access to juvenile justice services.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** Funding formulas for Tribal programs need to consider not only population and landmass but also the Tribal services provided and the funding needed for continued operations.
- **Prevention:** Prevention of domestic violence and violence against women should be prioritized over reacting to its aftermath.



Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

Vice Chair Donna Thompson - Tribal Leader (Oral)

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes are one of the treaty Tribes located in southeast Idaho, covering about 570,000 acres across four counties, with approximately 6,000 members.

Topic 1: Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes are one of the Tribal nations that have historically avoided participating in these programs because they often create more financial and administrative burdens than they relieve. For example, pass-through grants from the state of Idaho come with multiple levels of reporting requirements, which exceed the initial federal funding requirements. This process effectively makes it impossible for us to benefit from the funds. If the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes were to accept money from Idaho, we would actually incur more costs in personnel and administration just to meet the requirements of the grant than the grant would provide in services.

In the past, the CTAS packaging of grants unintentionally fell into that category. Since removing OVC from CTAS reporting, the reporting has become more streamlined. Even the mandatory financial responsibility training certification had to be sent separately to each grantor, when ideally it should be stored in a centralized database. Creating multiple reports from the same data is time-consuming, and having the ability to generate a single report that could automatically be forwarded to each program would be much more efficient. As many of you know, Idaho is a P.L. 280 state, which sometimes places limitations on us.

One of the other topics discussed was the five-year award period under a single award with annual supplemental funding. One of the key benefits of this approach is that it accelerates the process for Tribes, which often face delays due to multiple levels of oversight, allowing for more efficient management and high-level supervision of federal grants. A five-year award period would also allow for larger projects to span several years, which would free up personnel time to focus more on victim services. Furthermore, additional training specifically related to victim services would be very beneficial.

Another issue raised was increasing access to crime victim compensation funds for Native Americans in Idaho. The state of Idaho has historically struggled with building strong relationships with Tribal nations, and the pass-through funds from federal sources are not always fully disbursed or distributed fairly. Idaho has funding regulations in place that put an undue burden on grantees. These funds should be provided directly to Indian Tribes and not through the states. The states do not have a trust responsibility to the Tribe; the federal government does.

The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes often find that the time spent meeting reporting requirements exceeds the benefits the grants provide in terms of assistance. Ideally, these funds should be sent directly to the Tribes for distribution under the Victims of Crime Act.

Topic 2: Reliance on FBI

Another issue is that the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' experience with the state in addressing crime victims is limited, largely because we have resources through FBI consultations. Since most of our land is Tribally owned, we rely heavily on the FBI for handling major crimes. The state's involvement primarily comes when other crimes occur. The challenge, however, is that the FBI may choose not to prosecute some of these crimes. Given that our reservation spans a large area and we only have six officers to cover roughly two per shift—our investigators and other law enforcement personnel often spend more time patrolling than investigating crimes. This leaves us very dependent on the FBI to process these cases, but at times, that doesn't happen. These are areas where the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes continue to work closely with the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Ongoing discussions with both parties over the past year have led to some improvements, but there's still work to be done.

Topic 3: OVC

One additional area of concern for us is how OVC can improve its outreach to Tribes about the availability of crime victim compensation. It would be much more effective to streamline the process so that victim service programs can directly compensate victims and then be reimbursed. The current system, where victims are reimbursed later, puts them in a difficult position, as they often don't have the immediate cash needed to access help. Additionally, many of our victims are afraid of the police and struggle to obtain a police report, which makes it harder for them to access services. A possible solution could be to allow victim services to accept notarized affidavits in place of police reports, which could help ensure victims get the support they need more quickly.

Recommendations:

- The federal government should reduce reporting requirements for funding.
- We support a five-year award period under a single award with annual supplemental funding.
- The federal government should increase access to crime victim compensation funds for Native Americans in Idaho.
- The federal government should streamline the process so that victim service programs can directly compensate victims and then be reimbursed.
 - A possible solution could be to allow victim services to accept notarized affidavits in place of police reports, which could help ensure victims get the support they need more quickly.



Stockbridge Munsee Community

President Shannon Holsey - Tribal Leader (Oral)

As a Tribal leader, I have a platform which I can use to effectuate change. Today, we voice our commitment to future generations, honor our ancestors, and stand with strength to defend and heal our relatives. I stand before you today and refuse to be silent or to be a victim of a circumstance. I am no exception to the spectrum of violence as an Indian child and as an adult Indian woman. As Tribal leaders, my colleagues and I will change what we cannot accept, advocate for the disadvantaged, the invisible, and the voiceless. This work is your war cry, be loud, be everything, and make them proud.

I want to start by acknowledging the efforts of everybody in this room who played a critical part in the 2022 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. However, laws do not exist in a vacuum and additional mechanisms as well as wise implementation efforts are necessary to enhance the safety of Indian women and relatives from violence. Similarly, instances of violence whether it be domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, homicide, stalking, harassment, and sex trafficking do not exist in a vacuum. There are more significant societal and public safety issues that lend themselves to creating an atmosphere and situational circumstances for violence.

Topic 1: Interconnectedness of Law Enforcement, Advocacy, and Treatment programs

To address these issues of violence against women, we need to recognize the interconnectedness and the intricacies to both the problem and the effectiveness of solutions. When I refer to interconnectedness related to the problems of violence, the problem of violence against women can often be worsened by factors that

disproportionately impact Native American populations. Women who live at or below the poverty line are less likely to have secure living arrangements, financial independence, or a personal vehicle which can also place them in situations where they're more likely to be impacted by violence. Women who live in their Tribal homelands are more likely to be in a rural area with less law enforcement. Law enforcement statistically presents a lower response time, as well as fewer opportunities for shelter, sexual assault services, and other lifesaving support systems. Native American populations also face substance abuse issues at a disproportionate rate, with little or sometimes no services locally, that impact decision making and impulse control, increasing the risk of violence against our relatives.

This interconnectedness means that addressing violence requires integrated programs and solutions. For example, women need to secure housing to have a safe zone for daily living, programs to provide safe alternative housing that allows women to leave an abuser or otherwise dangerous situation. Support for mental health and substance abuse treatment is required to give women and our relatives the tools they need to break the cycle of violence. On a personnel level, funding for law enforcement, advocacy, and sexual assault services is essential to hold abusers accountable and provide a safety net for women, children, and relatives rebuilding their lives.

To foster this interconnectedness, programs need to recognize the global scope of the problem and have everyone present at the table to find these solutions. I recognize that existing grants and other efforts through the Office of Violence Against Women have taken this approach and commend that, but the approach needs to be expanded. If we are going to find comprehensive solutions, we recommend continuing to hold these types of consultation sessions to discuss an inclusive, global problem and resolution-based approach that is more targeted on the impact of specific proposed resolutions.

Recommendations:

- Programs are needed to provide safe alternative housing that allows women to leave an abuser or otherwise dangerous situation.
- Support funding for law enforcement, advocacy, sexual assault services, mental health, and substance abuse treatment.
- Recognize the global scope of the problem and have everyone present at the table to find solutions.
- Continue to hold these types of consultation sessions to discuss an inclusive, global problem and resolution-based approach that is more targeted on the impact of specific proposed resolutions.

Topic 2: Urban Dislocation and Tribal Communities

According to the US Census, and the United Indian Health Services, approximately 70% of our American Indians and Alaskan Natives currently live in urban areas. This means that a majority of our Native American citizens reside in cities not on reservations, although in my opinion, it is all Native land. Since the 1950s, the U.S. government has relocated Native people from reservations to cities for assimilation, a program that remains unaddressed and unhealed. I appreciate the discussion on the challenges and needs of urban environments in these pilot programs. In spite of that, we're still here and thriving even in those inter-Tribal communities all over the United States. There are cities across the United States that come together and look at central values, do not pan Indian ideas of taking care of our youth, our elders, and future generations. We come together to support each other to ensure that we get those services and resources we need, both in our urban sprawls and our Tribal communities.

Topic 3: New Funding Over Reallocation

Addressing violence against women comprehensively requires new and increased funding, not just reallocating existing funds. While important, this issue shouldn't require Tribes to sacrifice other vital programs to reallocate funding. To address the issue of violence against our relatives, Tribes need funding to maintain existing and support building more capacity. While many Tribes have law enforcement and Tribal courts, these institutions need support consistent with the federal trust responsibility for greater use, opportunities to enforce Tribal laws and protection and exclusion orders. Tribal police departments that only have a few officers have limited ability to enforce such orders.

Furthermore, Tribes with P.L. 280 states, such as mine, can be shut out of the current limited options for public safety funding mechanisms. While state and local enforcement does not have concurrent criminal jurisdiction, that does not mean there's no role for Tribal law enforcement. Tribal departments play a significant role in local policing to ensure critical response in critical times while state and local law enforcement are at the precipice of this. This does not mean this has not been at the forefront of a legal issue. The issue of prosecution functions, especially around sexual assault on Tribal land, is a complex jurisdictional maze, even extending all the way up to the Supreme Court. Growing up in deep trauma while being embedded in remarkable communities shapes how we understand and use the words "trauma" and "experience" in relation to our nation's history, the status of our Indigenous communities, and, most importantly, our sovereignty as Tribal nations.

The issue of violence against women and our relatives, along with the implementation of related programs, is interconnected with the underlying issues these programs aim to address. We must look at these matters globally and consultations should include all parties and all agencies. Finally, I ask that the funding for Tribal sexual assault and domestic violence programs, Tribal law enforcement, Tribal courts, Tribal housing programs, be considered as the central part of federal government's trust and treaty responsibilities to our Tribal nations. These are not issues that can be funded by reallocating current limited dollars for other funding priorities.

Recommendations:

- Include all parties and agencies in program development.
- Consider funding for Tribal sexual assault/domestic violence programs, Tribal law enforcement, Tribal courts, and Tribal housing programs at the central part of federal government's trust and treaty responsibilities to our Tribal nations.

Conclusion

With sovereignty as our guide, we can unite our cultural and political identities for empowerment, educate others as knowledge keepers, and shape our relationships with local, state, and federal governments. Let us all continue to build healthy communities and collectively do the work that will not only heal our children and women and relatives but also let our ancestors thank us for our work.



Tanana Chiefs Conference

Betty Ross, Deputy Director, Tribal Government & Client Services (Written)

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) is a nonprofit Tribal consortium made up of 42 Tribes – this includes 39 villages and 37 federally recognized Tribes. The region covers an area of 235,000 square miles in interior Alaska, which is equal to about 37 percent of the entire state, and just slightly smaller than the state of Texas. TCC's mission is to provide a unified voice in advancing sovereign Tribal governments through the promotion of physical and mental wellness, education, socio-economic development, and culture. TCC provides a wide range of social, health, workforce development, learning support, and services. TCC's current priorities are to advance Tribal sovereignty, strengthen Tribal community wellness, and build, retain, and support capacity.

It is important for the DOJ to increase and enhance services for funding to better meet the public safety and criminal justice needs of our Tribes. This includes MMIP program services and support for both the Tribal search and rescue and the family of those missing. Part of public safety includes Tribal Protective Services.

TCC's Public Safety Program was involved in several search and rescues in 2024. The costs associated with search and rescue in Alaska are demographically difficult and at times involve travel via boat, charter flights, or snowmobile. Throughout 2024, there were 14 people TCC was searching for; TCC successfully recovered 13 of the 14 (2 were deceased and 11 were alive). The one that we did not recover is presumed deceased.

Tribal Protective Services (TPS) supports families throughout the region; in 2024 Tanana Chiefs Conference held a healing gathering that over 200 Tribal members attended. The TPS Program visited six remote Villages to help with wellness events and outreach. An average charter flight costs approximately \$5,000. Because of the cost of travel and delivery of much-needed services, the TPS program partnered with 15 organizations outside of TCC to support them and to help with Tribal clients. TPS provided direct services for 77 new clients in 2024, a significant increase from previous years.

Recommendations:

- TCC supports seeking Congressional Authorization for a New DOJ Formula Grant Program that would fund Tribal public safety and justice systems through a single grant award to each Tribe that applies for funding, to be funded either by a new appropriation or a set-aside from existing appropriations.
- TCC advocates for Congress to enact a P.L. 477-like statute that authorizes a program where Tribes receiving public safety and criminal justice funding can choose to integrate funding into one DOJ-approved plan. Suggestions on the scope of such a program have included integration of (1) all Tribal public safety and criminal justice funding sources across the federal government, (2) DOJ-grant awards only (both formula and discretionary, whether Tribal-specific or not), or (3) victim-services only funding sources. One option to consider is structuring such a program as a pilot program that could provide the opportunity to assess results and report to Congress whether to continue and/or expand the pilot.
- TCC supports a DOJ partnership with DOI to advocate for an increase in base funding available through BIA to meet the public safety and criminal justice needs of Tribes. Some Tribes have suggested that increased appropriations and funding opportunities need to be made available to Tribes for these purposes. It was further suggested that these opportunities be made available to all Tribes, whether or not they currently receive base funding.

All of the above changes would bring much-needed services to Tribal members, whereas in many instances we have had limited funding or lack funding. The proposed changes would bring further self-sufficiency and sovereignty to the TCC region's Tribes.



Tonto Apache Tribe of Arizona

Hilario Tanakeyowma, Chief of Police - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Tonto Apache Tribe is located on a reservation adjacent to Payson, Arizona, which is 96 miles north of Phoenix. The reservation spans approximately 13 square miles, making it the smallest land-based reservation in Arizona. Despite its size, the Tribe has established essential services, including a K-8 school, a health clinic, and the Mazatzal Hotel and Casino, which helps generate revenue for the Tribe. The Tribe is also developing the Apache Corners Project, which will introduce new businesses, and is prioritizing housing development to encourage Tribal members to return to the community. The Tonto Apache Tribe established its own police department in 2003, moving away from reliance on the BIA for law enforcement services. The police department is seeking accreditation and has invested in training and equipment.

I'm a member of the Hopi Tribe Bamboo Clan, in the village of Moenkopi. I'm currently the chief of police for the Tonto Apache Tribe. I have been doing this job for 30 years and worked for three different Tribal communities. I am one who stands on the front line watching our sisters and our children be victimized. I am a victim as well. I was molested, and I didn't know what to do or who to report it to. In my 30 years of law enforcement, I have had to listen to victims explain that the law does not allow the crime against them to be prosecuted. My daughter is a victim, and I could not do anything because it's not in my jurisdiction.

I watch the failures of the system that we have adopted by the federal government. The federal government asked us to adopt constitutions, and we did that. They asked us to create laws, and we did that, but your federal laws do not accommodate Tribal crimes. I had to tell a young lady that I couldn't prosecute her father and brother for raping her, even though she was mentally challenged. I have watched 14-year-olds bang their heads on the ground because I can't prosecute the people who hurt them. The BIA office is two hours away in Phoenix, and it can take days to get a response by phone or email. The last time I called them, I was audited.

My department is 100% non-Native except for me. I have to scrutinize and check to make sure these are the best warriors for our community to protect our people. I will continually give my people the help they need because I was a victim, my daughter was a victim, and my relatives are victims. I have to handle every table as a household at a gathering, but I only have three police officers. They don't trust me, because the system has failed them. The lack of funding and the red tape that we go through have got to stop.

Topic 1: Inadequate Funding and Understaffing

The BIA is underfunding Tribal police departments, making it difficult to retain officers due to competition with higher-paying agencies. The Tonto Apache Tribe has made strides in establishing its own police department, but it still struggles with funding and staffing. The lack of adequate funding and staff hinders the effectiveness of the Tribal law enforcement and justice systems. The BIA has cut funding for jails, which further

compromises public safety. The Tribe is barely surviving, and its law enforcement agency is nowhere near functioning.

Recommendations:

- Provide ongoing support and flexible funding for law enforcement and criminal justice programs.
- Increase funding for Tribal public safety and justice programs, particularly for smaller Tribes.
- Increase funding and support from federal programs to ensure Tribal law enforcement and justice systems can operate effectively and retain personnel.

Topic 2: Complex Legal Frameworks and Jurisdictional Issues

Tribal law enforcement and courts navigate complex legal frameworks, cultural differences, and unique community relationships, creating distinct challenges compared to municipal or county law enforcement. Federal laws do not accommodate Tribal crimes, making it difficult to prosecute offenders.

Recommendations:

- Advocate for resources that support community engagement and culturally appropriate policy and practices.
- Ensure that federal laws accommodate Tribal crimes.

Topic 3: Cultural Barriers and Underreporting of Crimes

Cultural norms within Tribes can contribute to the underreporting of crimes and missing persons. There is also a lack of awareness and education about how law enforcement works, and state agencies do not understand the cultural needs of the Tribes. Community members are being told not to say anything and not to report crimes. The community does not trust the system because it has failed them in the past.

Recommendations:

- Increase community engagement with law enforcement to build trust.
- Increase education and awareness about the importance of reporting crimes.

Topic 4: Negative Impacts of Outside Influences and Increased Violence

As Tribes pursue economic and community development opportunities, they may attract more people to the reservation, potentially increasing the risk of violence against women. Some Tribal members who have left the reservation return with non-Native spouses, which can bring outside influences that complicate the justice system.

Recommendations:

- Expand funding to address the potential increased risk of violence against women.
- Ensure that funding is provided without overly burdensome restrictions that prevent Tribes from applying.

Topic 5: Inadequate Support from Federal Agencies

BIA funding comes with excessive red tape. The BIA is not providing the support that the police department needs, and they often have to wait days for a response. The BIA office is two hours away in Phoenix, and it can take days to get a response by phone or email.

Recommendations:

- Change the cumbersome ways of applying for funding.

- Federal agencies should provide more immediate and direct support to Tribes.

Topic 6: Lack of Recognition and Respect for Tribal Sovereignty

Tribal communities are not being recognized as people and are treated like statistics or projects. Tribal leaders have to plead for funding and have to sit and listen to victims who aren't able to get justice.

Recommendations:

- Recognize Tribes as people, not statistics or projects.
- Recognize and respect Tribal sovereignty.



Village of Bill Moore's Slough

Stella Fancyboy, Board Member - Tribal Leader (Written)

The Native Village of Bill Moore's Slough is located near the mouth of the Yukon River in the community of Kotlik, Alaska. The village of Kotlik is a Yup'ik Eskimo village with a population of 577. Our community is rich in Yup'ik tradition and most of our community continues to live a subsistence lifestyle. Villages are not connected by any road system in the region in which our community is located; the river is our highway. The primary mode of transportation during the summer months is by boat and by snow machine or ATV during the winter months. Entry into our community is accessible by air or water and with the geographically isolated villages in our area, entry can be severely restricted for days or weeks depending on the weather.

On behalf of the Native Village of Bill Moore's Slough, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am a mother, a daughter, a sister, an aunty, and a member of the community that I live and serve in. Our community is a traditional village where most community members practice a traditional subsistence lifestyle. For much of my life I have lived in my small community and witnessed the many different problems our people encounter. Some of these problems aren't addressed and then are passed on to the younger generation.

Alcohol and alcoholism continue to affect the growing villages, and a lot of children face home and school problems because of the adults in their lives abusing alcohol. They are traumatized by witnessing repeated domestic violence situations between loved ones and there are no village police to report to. The nearest Alaska State Troopers (AST) Station is located 35.6 miles away with rotating two weeks on/two weeks off officers. The lack of regular permanent law enforcement continues to create unsafe conditions in the village and is compounded with no safe housing or safe place to go. Murderers, abusers, and people who commit crime are free to walk the roads in our small villages with no accountability and families and victims are left scared with nowhere and no one to turn to.

Topic 1: Victim Services

OVC and the DOJ should work towards amendments in the law that support Tribes fully, including infrastructure, Tribal court services, and public safety and law enforcement. Funding for the Tribes never reaches the small communities because of the way funding is designated in P.L. 280 states. There are many reasons the funding doesn't reach the communities and for this reason, OVC needs to make sure they

are fully staffed to understand the challenges of Tribes throughout the country to work towards creating safe communities. Further, an evaluation of past victim services grant programs needs to be conducted to move towards increased services under a formula-based program for those that we serve as well as creation of a permanent 10% set-aside of the Crime Victims Fund for Tribal communities and nations. Like many communities, our community does not have a shelter or safe homes or housing. Victims have no safe place to go and are worried about creating problems by staying with friends or family. By the time the victim gets help it is too late, but the person who committed the crime walks the village as if nothing happened. Leaving Tribes and Tribal communities without funding and resources only exacerbates this problem, and HHS should authorize permanent funding for the Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence, the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence, and the National Indian Domestic Violence Hotline to help with addressing this issue.

Recommendations:

- OVC and DOJ should work towards amendments in the law that support Tribes fully, including infrastructure, Tribal court services, and public safety and law enforcement.
- An evaluation of past victim services grant programs needs to be conducted to move towards increased services under a formula-based program for those that we serve as well as creation of a permanent 10% set-aside of the Crime Victims Fund for Tribal communities and nations.

Topic 2: Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women

The federal response to the crisis that is MMIW is a complete breach of the federal trust responsibility of the federal government. The lack of resources to Tribes and Tribal communities fuels the genocide committed against Native people, and Native women are going missing or murdered with no response from law enforcement. Perpetrators of violence are proud to get away with their crimes, and the lack of response from the federal government to provide funding for Tribal justice systems and public safety in rural communities exacerbates the on-going problem.

Topic 3: Lack of Funding for Tribal Justice in Tribal Nations

Another issue regarding federal trust responsibility and funding is the underfunding of Tribal justice systems. This results in high rates of criminal victimization, unaddressed trauma through multiple generations, and preventable lives lost.

Recommendations:

- Alaska Tribes NEED to be funded at a reasonable base level, such as the levels identified in the report to Congress by the BIA.
- Non-competitive, flexible, and sustainable base funding should be provided directly to federally recognized Tribes, especially those located in P.L. 280 states.

Topic 4: Consultation Paper Notice and Distribution

All of the information and recommendations that Tribes provide to the federal government are very important and by these means, we are able to make change in all of our communities, even those in rural Alaska, such as ours. In these smaller rural communities, many Tribal leaders are tasked with many responsibilities and wear many different hats, meaning we are already spread thin. DOJ should make getting information to Tribes regarding consultation a priority and include respect for the various subsistence activities of our Indigenous people. There are only certain times people can go out to gather or hunt and we want to make sure that changes are made so that Tribal leaders have time to consider and respond appropriately to any framing paper or questions.

Recommendation:

- DOJ should prioritize getting framing papers to Tribes regarding consultation, including respect for the timing of subsistence activities for Alaska Native villages.

Topic 5: Coordination amongst Federal Agencies

Tribes bear the burden of learning how each agency, grant program, and grant manager prefers that grant related tasks be completed, which often is highly varied.

Recommendation:

- Federal agencies including DOJ, OVW, OVC, BIA, HHS and DHS need to work together to maintain consistency and accountability among each agency, grant program, and grant manager.

It breaks me to know that families in my community go through crisis after crisis and receive no help. No cops, no shelter or safe place to go, and help only shows up when something really bad happens. My hope is that by raising these concerns to the federal government, that we can provide positivity in the continuation of building alliances to enhance and promote the voices of even the smallest community. By working together, we stand stronger in advocating for equal access to justice, local village-based solutions to local problems, and access to services and advocacy designed by and for Native women and communities.

**Village of Dot Lake**

President Tracy Charles-Smith - Tribal Leader (Oral & Written)

Council Member Cary Fremin - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Sadie Rose Warbelow, Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Manager - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Native Village of Dot Lake is a small, resilient Alaska Native community located along the Alaska Highway, between the Alaska Range and the Tanana River Valley. The village has 160 to 180 Tribal members. The ancestral lands of the Tribe encompass a diverse landscape of black spruce forests, pristine lakes, and rolling hills. The community maintains strong cultural ties to their traditional ways of life, with many members still practicing subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering. The Tribe takes pride in teaching their young people their Native language, traditional crafts, and sacred stories.

Personal Account of Tracy Charles-Smith:

Today I speak to you as a mother, a grandmother, and a leader of my people. I carry with me the voices of our Tribal citizens who have entrusted me to speak on their behalf. In my own family, I stand alone as the only woman of my generation who hasn't experienced sexual assault or rape. This is not for sympathy, but to emphasize the very real dangers our community faces.

The most pressing concern for our community is the severe lack of public safety infrastructure. We have no permanent law enforcement presence, and we do not have a good relationship with the Alaska State Troopers. When emergencies occur, especially during our harsh winter months with treacherous road conditions, we are often left to fend for ourselves through collaborative efforts. With DOJ, OVW and OVC,

we've created and sustained a behavioral health program to help heal trauma, help victims. And we don't just help our Tribal members; we help anyone who asks us.

Excerpt from letter read by Tracy Charles-Smith:

"I am from the northern part of Alaska. I only say this for non-Native folks. I have my people in my heart...I'm here to speak on the level of care our Native people are getting. I lost six close people in my life since March 2024: three to natural deaths and three to suicide. I felt myself getting sad and dark. Where I'm from, we bury our people with our own hands no matter if it's 40 below or 50 below, we make sure our people get a proper burial. It's not the burial that made me sad, as all of us must go one day. It's the amount of people I had to bury with my own hands. That made me sad. Some of them were so young...So I had a really good friend...He said you need to go get help...I tried to make an appointment, using the normal systems. I live in an urban area, and I was told that I could be scheduled within four to six months. What can happen in four to six months? People can kill themselves. People can lose their children. Somebody could start doing drugs. Somebody can go to jail...So a friend said, to contact Dot Lake. I got an appointment within 48 hours, and they expanded. 'Do you need anything else? Do you need housing? Do you have issues with medical care? Do you need help with employment? Do you need help with public assistance?' So, I want to end this by saying that there's always a risk to say something, but I wouldn't be my grandma's grandson if I didn't say something and challenge everyone to do better."

Personal Account of Sadie Rose Warbelow:

I am an Upper Tanina from the Village of Tetlin. I currently work as the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Manager for Dot Lake and a Victim's Advocate for the Village of Anvik. I am also a domestic violence survivor. My experience with how my domestic violence case was handled led me to join law enforcement, hoping to make a difference, especially for others in similar situations. I was hired as the only female VPSO in Alaska, a title I was very proud of. I attended the Public Safety Training Academy in Sitka, Alaska, completing 1006 hours of training in 15 weeks. I became proficient in firearms and Brazilian jiu jitsu because I wanted to make a difference in the villages.

Despite my qualifications and commitment, I experienced disparate treatment and unfulfilled commitments during my career. I was promised career advancement opportunities, such as training as a tactical flight officer and serving as an armed VPSO, but these opportunities never materialized for me, even though they were regularly given to my male counterparts. I believe that these experiences reflect systematic barriers that have historically limited advancement opportunities for female officers. I remember being asked if I was willing to die in the line of duty, and I concluded that I was willing to lay down my life for my Native people.

My first duty station was in Toke, Alaska, where I covered seven villages with two troopers. I experienced segregation and was not allowed to have backup because I was the only female officer in the area. I learned that the VPSO program is not as independent as it appears. Although it's housed under Tribal regional non-profit organizations, it is actually governed and funded by the state. The professional oversight and credentialing of VPSOs remains a function of the state government. After a year and a half, I was transferred to Glennallen, where I experienced sexual harassment from my direct supervisor, which created a hostile work environment for me.

The VPSO program was established in the late 1970s to provide first responder services to remote Alaskan villages that lack access to law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services. Despite receiving the same training as state troopers, my authority, and that of other VPSOs, was often undermined,

especially in the Glennallen area. I also noticed that since my academy, the state has cut back training for PSOs to only four to six weeks. As the only female VPSO, I felt that male troopers and male VPSOs viewed me as a liability and less than my male counterparts simply because I am an Athabascan female.

I experienced a miscarriage while working in Glennallen and was met with an insensitive and misogynistic comment from my superior officer, which caused me to leave work. During my recovery, I witnessed a man jump off a bridge into a river. When I reported the incident, the wildlife trooper who responded complained and did not take my report seriously. My report and concerns were dismissed by the troopers and my sergeant, who both claimed I was hallucinating. I believe that my experiences demonstrate the systematic failures and discrimination in Alaska's Department of Public Safety, which is why female victims of crime, especially Alaskan Native women, often choose not to report victimization.

Topic 1: Impact of Extractive Industries

The arrival of extractive industries brings the promise of prosperity, jobs, and economic development, but it also brings a shadow of violence and trauma. The influx of temporary workers, predominantly men from outside of Alaska, has compromised the safety of women and children. The establishment of "man camps" near Tribal communities leads to dramatic increases in sexual assault, domestic violence, and trafficking. Women can no longer walk freely in areas where they once gathered traditional medicines or berries, and teenage girls can't safely travel to school or the store without escorts. These traumatic experiences ripple through families and across generations, adding to the historical traumas the people have already endured. There is also an increase in substance abuse, strain on limited health services, and breakdown of traditional social supports.

The companies' environmental impact statements fail to account for social impacts. A man camp is planned to be built 47 miles from the village, near their primary shopping area, which is a great concern to the community because we've seen the impacts similar developments have had on other Tribal communities. The current federal regulations fail to account for the true human cost of these projects. Environmental impact statements examine air quality, water resources, and wildlife patterns, but ignore the profound social and cultural disruptions that follow.

Recommendations:

- New frameworks are needed that explicitly evaluate safety risks to Tribal communities, particularly women and youth, that incorporate Tribal knowledge and experience.
- Tribal governments must have real authority in permitting and oversight processes, not just advisory roles.
- Guaranteed funding is needed for Tribal public safety programs that match the scale of industrial development.
- Federal recognition is needed that protecting people's safety is as vital as protecting the land and water.

Topic 2: Lack of Public Safety Infrastructure

Our village lacks a permanent law enforcement presence, with the nearest Alaska State Trooper post located hours away. Emergency medical services are equally distant, forcing the community to rely on volunteer first responders. When emergencies occur, especially during the harsh winter months, people are often left to fend for themselves.

Many villages lack local law enforcement, and response times can stretch into days. Victims often do not report crimes because they know help won't arrive in time or because they fear retaliation in their small community. The state points to the remote location as a reason for the lack of adequate protection, rather than their failed policies. The state maintains expensive infrastructure in urban centers while expecting rural communities to accept delayed justice.

Recommendations:

- The federal government must intervene and provide direct funding for Tribal law enforcement, bypassing state systems.
- Resources are needed to build Tribes' own emergency response capacity, including infrastructure for 911 services that work in rural areas.
- Federal oversight is needed to ensure that state agencies fulfill their basic obligations to all citizens, not just those in urban centers.
- The federal government should honor its trust responsibility and fund Tribal public safety in Indian Country through dedicated, non-competitive, flexible, consistent, and sustainable base funding for Tribal justice systems.
- The BIA should continue to request additional federal funding to provide public safety and justice resources to Tribal nations located in P.L. 280 states.
- The BIA should provide funding to Tribal nations in P.L. 280 states for their Tribal court systems and law enforcement agencies, administered in a sustainable and equitable manner.
- DOJ and DOI should work together to provide comprehensive justice and public safety funding directly to Alaska Native Villages, rather than to the state of Alaska.

Topic 3: Inadequacies of Law Enforcement and Justice Response

When violent crimes occur in the community, we often wait days or weeks for state troopers to arrive. During this time, community members secure crime scenes, shelter victims, and watch helplessly as evidence disappears. Tribal members document injuries, photograph damage, and gather statements, tasks that require professional training they do not have access to. The core issue is not just resources, but priorities.

The underfunding of Tribal justice systems in Tribal nations and Alaska Native villages is a direct violation of the federal government's trust responsibility, which results in lost lives, high rates of criminal victimization, and unaddressed trauma. The state is responsible for providing law enforcement, but they do not value the communities and do not protect Indigenous rural communities in the same way they protect large, urban areas.

The systematic failures and discrimination that Ms. Warbelow faced as a trained law enforcement officer, and the failure of her supervisors to act to protect her, indicate a complete failure within the state's Department of Public Safety (DPS) that continues to this day. This is not a problem of the past, and these failures are why female victims of crime in Alaska, and particularly Alaskan Native women, choose not to report victimization to those sworn to protect them.

Recommendations:

- Consistent and reliable funding from OVW and other federal agencies is needed to support the infrastructure building of local Tribal police and Tribal justice systems.
- Sustained, reliable funding streams are needed to maintain and strengthen essential services.

- DOJ, DOI, and all other federal agencies should include annual, consistent, and sustainable noncompetitive funding for Tribal nations for all public safety and victim services needs in their annual budget requests.
- The BIA must end its discriminatory policy of not funding Tribal law enforcement in P.L. 280 states. Federal funding should go directly to Tribes, bypassing state bureaucracies.
- There is a need for the development of Tribally led sexual assault response teams.
- There should be recognition for Tribal police officers by both the state and federal agencies.
- The US Attorney General should come to Alaska, and discuss the Alaska Pilot Project and VAWA, as there continues to be a severe lack of understanding and education by state legislators and district attorney's offices.

Topic 4: Need for Tribal-Led Systems

Tribal public safety officers know the geography, families, and customs of the community. They know that true justice often requires healing, not just punishment. Tribally developed public safety programs flow from a deep connection to community needs. Tribal courts integrate traditional knowledge with contemporary justice practices, creating accountability that strengthens the community. When cases are handled locally, they achieve true restoration and lasting peace between families.

State systems fail to meet the community's needs. When Tribal members are employed in public safety roles, response times drop from days to minutes. When domestic violence cases are handled through Tribal courts, there are higher rates of compliance with protective orders because the process reflects community values. Victim services programs succeed because they operate from a place of cultural understanding.

Alaskan Tribes have very strong friendship ties within the state. Our Tribe partners with other Tribes not only to provide law enforcement but also to work within Tribal court systems, including advocacy, not just in the justice system, but in healthcare and behavioral health services. We have government-to-government agreements between Tribes to fill gaps left by the state. We are stronger when we stand together. We would love to see an Alaskan Tribal Police Commission.

Recommendations:

- Direct federal investment is needed in Tribal-led approaches, bypassing state bureaucracies.
- Federal funding directly to the Tribes allows them to build response systems that work within their cultural frameworks, addressing problems in ways that outside agencies never could.
- An Alaskan Tribal Police Commission should be established.

Topic 5: Distribution of DOJ Framing Papers

Tribal leaders balance multiple urgent responsibilities, and meaningful review of complex policy documents requires time for thorough analysis and discussion. The practice of releasing consultation framing papers with short deadlines particularly disadvantages Alaska Tribes. Leaders often travel between remote villages with limited internet connectivity, also dealing with the demands of subsistence activities. The current timing of framing paper releases and deadlines make it nearly impossible to provide thoughtful feedback.

Recommendations:

- DOJ should provide a minimum of 60 days for review and response to framing papers.
- DOJ must prioritize framing paper distribution that respects Tribal sovereignty and allows Tribal leaders the opportunity to meaningfully consider each framing paper question.



Village of Kotlik

Pauline Okitkun, Tribal Administrator - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

The Kotlik Traditional Council is located in Kotlik, Alaska, on both sides of the Kotlik River, which is 450 miles from Anchorage in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. The village of Kotlik is less than six miles from the ocean, on the Bering Sea, and is located on the bear braid of the Yukon River. Two other Tribes reside in Kotlik, the Native Village of Bill Moore's Slough and the Native Village of Hamilton. These Tribes were forcibly relocated to Kotlik in the 1950s because of the presence of a BIA school. No roads connect Kotlik to other villages, so all travel is by small plane. Weather is often unpredictable, and travel can be limited and costly. However, the remote location has helped the community maintain its traditional culture. The Yup'ik language is often spoken first, and traditional dance and art are part of everyday life.

I am a Yup'ik Eskimo and have been living in Kotlik since 1987. I am a mother of four and have 13 wonderful grandkids. I am also a survivor of domestic violence. October 28th, 2008, was supposed to be my death anniversary. Every year, it triggers bad memories. Since then, I've been fighting spiritually and praying because we did report this to the troopers and nothing happened. On October 28th, 2015, God blessed me with the best. My daughter gave birth to a beautiful boy. I have been victimized. I was in a fight that was not a good fight. I did not ask for the fight; I lost. There is no saying in losing such fights, I have reached the stage of survivor, and I am no longer a slave of victim status. I look back, I look back with sadness rather than hate. I look forward with hope rather than despair. I may never forget. But I need to. I need to not constantly remember I was a victim. I am a survivor.

Topic 1: Spiraling Crime

I've seen how spiraling crime is affecting our village. We have about 20 incidents reported to law enforcement each week, and many go unreported, especially domestic violence, sexual assault, and dating violence. This is causing a lot of stress, and there is a lot of unhealed trauma that our people face. Many turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with the changes that are hard to deal with. Our community is isolated and only accessible by plane or boat, making it difficult to access services outside the community. The only services available are the direct services funded under the Tribe's existing OVW and OVC grants. We refer our clients to Emmonak, which is thirty-five air miles away and has a women's shelter. There are no services for violent crime, non-violent crime, drug-related crime, elder abuse, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, human trafficking, or identity theft in our village. Some services are located 167 miles away in Bethel, where the Tundra Women's Coalition is located.

Recommendation:

- The Department of Justice should support local Tribes to apply for grants that will allow for more resources to be available to victims and survivors.

Topic 2: Lack of Law Enforcement

Our biggest issue is the lack of law enforcement. We are facing an increase in domestic violence and gun violence within our community, and our youth are also involved in gun violence. We have no troopers in our community. We usually have to wait for them to come to the village, and that can take up to one or two days,

depending on the weather. While waiting for the troopers, we urge an immediate lockdown within our community to keep everyone safe. We have to turn to the Tribal Council for help, but they are not trained to respond to any type of violence. We need certified Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs) or troopers in our village, not just for when there is an urgent report. We have experienced discrimination from the troopers as well, with a lack of quick response.

Recommendations:

- The Department of Justice should provide training for Tribal Council members to prepare them to respond to community violence.
- The State of Alaska should assign certified VPSOs or troopers to the village.

Topic 3: Lack of Shelter

We don't have a shelter for victims to be housed to keep away from the abuser. Victims usually hide away from the abuser with no safety until they can get a flight out. Many victims also choose not to go to family or relatives for safety. We are very limited in resources. We keep applying for grants to help victims and survivors. I know what it's like to not have a place to go, to hide under a house, or in the smokehouse, or the steam house, and to be kicked out naked in the cold winter months.

Recommendations:

- Provide funding for a shelter for victims of violence to be housed and kept away from their abusers.
- Provide support to local Tribes to apply for grants that will allow for more resources to be available to victims and survivors.

Topic 4: Communication with Law Enforcement

Our people and organizations need better communication with law enforcement. We often depend on our city and Tribal Council for help, but they are not trained to respond to any type of violence. We need local law enforcement to be more responsive.

Recommendation:

- DOJ should improve communication between Tribal communities and law enforcement.

Topic 5: Youth Gun Violence

We also are having problems with youth gun violence. In the past two years, we've experienced gun violence with our youth, three of those times were with three siblings. In one instance one of the siblings walked into a local store with a gun and pointed the gun at himself. A Tribal member had to step in to take the gun and keep everyone safe.

Recommendations:

- Provide funding for a program to reduce gun violence in Tribal communities.
- Provide resources to help juveniles and youth who are involved in violence.



Village of Ohogamiut

Darlene Isaac, Chairperson - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

On behalf of the Ohogamiut Traditional Council, thank you for the opportunity to submit written and oral comments for the 2024 Government-to-Government OVW Annual Consultation. I am the President of the Ohogamiut Traditional Council located in Marshall, Alaska. I am also a mother, a daughter, a sister, an auntie, and play many important roles within my community. Marshall is a remote Alaska Native village that sits along the Lower Yukon River in Southwest Alaska with a population of just under 500, most of whom are Alaska Native. Two federally recognized Tribes call Marshall home, the Marshall Traditional Council and the Ohogamiut Traditional Council. Like many other small communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, entry into and out of our village is limited by the weather. Small air carrier planes provide transportation to the hub community of Bethel 75 air miles away and local transportation is by ATV, snow machine, and boat. Our people have always relied on subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering, and we still continue to do so.

Topic 1: Alaska's High Crime Rate and Lack of Resources

Alaska is plagued with the highest rates in domestic violence, elder and child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, rape, property crime, and gun violence. Regardless, we continue to have slow response times within our communities when we call upon the Alaska State Troopers. When we do get prompt assistance it is for the least of our worries such as when an individual goes out hunting or fishing during closed seasons. Then that individual has all their belongings confiscated, fishing nets cut, guns taken away, big fines for the family who is already struggling, and then our community members are left unable to support their families throughout the year. This is not public safety or any solution to our issues.

The challenges that we continue to face include lack of behavioral and mental healthcare and services and lack of local law enforcement. The trauma that is passed from generation to generation often leads to alcohol and drug abuse; and sadly, it can lead to suicide. As hard and difficult as it is, my family endured such a tragic loss. It has been four years since, and some days, it feels like it was just yesterday. We are grateful for all the prayers and support from family and friends.

Remote communities throughout Alaska face similar challenges and issues, and for these reasons Tribal justice systems should be the obvious answer. But because Tribal justice systems are so grossly underfunded, especially those in P.L. 280 states, Tribes are left with their hands tied. The underfunding of Tribal justice systems is a direct violation of the federal government's trust responsibility towards Alaska Native and American Indian Tribes that results in lost lives, high rates of criminal victimization, and perpetuates the unaddressed trauma for generations of victims.

Recently there was a report submitted to Congress addressing the unmet need regarding base funds for all federally recognized Tribes. This report estimated that \$1 billion is needed for Tribal law enforcement, \$1 billion is needed for Tribal courts, and \$222.8 million is needed for detention. In that report, the BIA estimated that it would need annual funding of \$330 million to support Tribal justice in Alaska.

Recommendations:

- To help Tribes succeed and to fully restore Tribal nations' jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders, it is critical that the federal government honor its trust responsibility and fully fund Tribal public safety in Indian Country at the identified levels through dedicated, non-competitive, flexible, consistent, and sustainable base funding for Tribal justice systems.

Topic 2: Missing and Murdered Indigenous People

With heavy hearts and our deepest sympathy for the following: Elizabeth Pap, Russell Lake, Anna Rossman, Patrick Coffee, Kimberly Fitka-O'Domin, and Michael Isaac. On behalf of our Tribal organization, we would like to ask that you join us for a moment of silence for all those who have gone missing and murdered. Two of these six individuals were our own Tribal members. Today, November 21st would have been our nephew Michael Isaac's 22nd birthday. It's been over a year since he went missing. With the help and support of the search and rescue volunteers his body was recovered on November 29 of last year, so it's almost been a year since his body was recovered. My nephew went missing under suspicious circumstances and there have still not been any arrests made and no justice.

The federal response to the MMIW crisis is a breach of the federal trust responsibility and a human rights violation, as reflected in the statistical disparities documented by the National Institute of Justice. The lack of resources for Tribal nations is a continuation of genocide committed against Indigenous peoples of this country. AI/AN women are missing and/or murdered with little to no response from law enforcement. The lack of response is exacerbated by the federal government's failure to adequately fund Tribal services and Tribal law enforcement.

Although we are grateful for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, IHS, ICWA, BIA, and Alaska State Troopers for their services that they provide, it is simply not enough for the many robust and unique needs of the two hundred and twenty-nine federally recognized Tribes in Alaska. We request further funding from DOJ, DOI, MMIW, DHS, HHS, VA WA and OVW for the safety of our families, our communities, and our Tribes. Strong Tribal programs and services require strong federal, state, and Tribal partnerships, including robust, direct, and flexible funding from our federal partners. For the safety of victims and survivors throughout the state and the nation, OVC and DOJ should be required to work toward amendments in the law that serve Tribal communities including infrastructure, court services, and law enforcement.

All these services require the federal government and federal agencies to coordinate more efficiently amongst themselves. Tribes, who are often understaffed, have to jump through the hoops of all the different departments, their programs and requirements. Far too often we have different electronic grant platforms for administration, different finance requirements, different special conditions, etc.

Too often, grant program managers change in assigned grant awards to Tribes. When this occurs, Tribes bear the burden of relearning how each new grant manager prefers that grant related tasks be completed which often is highly varied from previous grant program managers. In addition to differences in preferences, oftentimes, guidance from one grant program manager to another seems based on individual preference, and not on any legitimate grant requirement. Some grant program managers take months to respond to Tribes, leaving Tribes in the position of not being able to spend down awarded funds and fully implement programs in a timely manner. Tribes have little recourse when their assigned grant program manager refuses to respond or move forward.

Recommendations:

- For the safety of victims and survivors throughout the state and the nation, OVC and DOJ should be required to work toward amendments in the law that serve Tribal communities including infrastructure, court services, and law enforcement.
- An evaluation needs to be conducted on past victim service programs prior to the Tribal set-aside programs since 2018 to create a comprehensive, increased services formula-based program for victims of violence and accountability for those who use violence. We further recommend that this

evaluation inform the creation of a permanent 10% set-aside from the Crime Victims Fund for Tribal nations.

- We demand that all Federal agencies fully implement Executive Order 14112, removing barriers to Tribal administration of federal funding and assessing the federal budget for Tribal nations. We call upon DOJ---OVW and OVC, BIA, HHS, DHS and other agencies for better coordination among federal agencies to meet the priority of safety and well-being of all Native Americans.
- The federal government should work hand in hand with Tribal nations and Tribal partners to build safe and healthy Tribal communities and to support comprehensive law enforcement, prevention, intervention, and support services.
- We also call upon each federal agency to maintain consistency and accountability between agencies and individual grant program managers. Grant program managers must be accountable to the Tribes they manage.

In closing, I would like to thank you for considering my comments and for addressing the issues that we raise. The Ohogamiut Traditional Council looks forward to working cooperatively with partners and allies at all levels for the betterment of our people. By working together, we stand unified in advocacy efforts for the betterment of each and every individual in our country.



Closing

Closing Remarks and Traditional Closing Ceremony

Ms. Sherriann Moore called OVW Director Rosie Hidalgo to the podium to provide closing remarks.

Rosie Hidalgo reflected on the 19th Annual Violence Against Women Government-to-Government Tribal Consultation, emphasizing the shared journey and collaborative spirit of the participants. She noted that the Tribal Consultation itself was like a center point where different journeys and commitments came together to increase access to justice, safety, healing, and well-being. She stressed the importance of honoring Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, while also acknowledging the federal trust responsibility to support Tribal initiatives. She acknowledged the burden of educating federal partners and appreciated the willingness of Tribal leaders and advocates to share their knowledge and experiences. Ms. Hidalgo expressed gratitude to all those who participated, especially those from Alaska, for their commitment to sharing their knowledge, despite the difficulties. She acknowledged the importance of federal partnerships with DOJ, HHS, HUD, and the Department of the Interior in this work and concluded with a commitment to walk in partnership with Tribal nations.

Governor Jenelle Roybal of the Pueblo of Pojoaque provided a closing prayer as the shawls were retired. Ms. Moore then concluded the consultation.

Appendix 1: Federal Presentations

Department of Justice Tribal Consultation Briefing on Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding

Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

JoAnn Kintz, Deputy Director, Department of Justice, Office of Tribal Justice

Jennifer Kaplan, General Counsel, Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

JoAnn Kintz and Jennifer Kaplan were introduced by Sherriann Moore, who said they would take questions after the updates.

Ms. Kintz explained that one of the functions of the Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ) is to coordinate within DOJ on various initiatives and priorities. She said the framing paper on Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding came out of a working group with OTJ, OVW, the COPS Office, and OJP.

Ms. Kaplan listed some of the existing grant programs administered by DOJ, which are described in more detail in the appendix of the framing paper. She said that DOJ has been hearing requests for years to fund public safety through formula grant funding but has not been able to do so within the statutory structure of existing programs.

Ms. Kintz went on to explain that the working group was given the task of looking at two priorities that have been requested by Tribes over the years, which are (1) to increase funding opportunities for Tribes in public safety and criminal justice and (2) to improve flexibilities in the use of funding. She said the working group came up with the following three possible legislative proposals, which are described in the framing paper:

1. Seek Congressional Authorization for a New DOJ Formula Grant Program
2. Seek New Statutory Authority Allowing for Integration of DOJ Grants
3. Advocate for Increased Base Funding for Public Safety Through BIA

Ms. Kintz pointed out that the intent of the framing paper was not to pick one of the three options as it is possible they could coexist. She said DOJ would like to know if Tribes support the proposals and would appreciate feedback on the mechanics and additional considerations that should be taken into account. Ms. Kintz said that four consultation sessions have been held so far, and testimony from this consultation will be added to those.

Ms. Kaplan announced that additional written testimony on the framing paper would be accepted through November 25, 2024.

Ms. Kintz opened up the floor to questions.

Dr. Juana Majel Dixon from the Pauma Yuima Band of Luiseño Indians voiced her concern that sovereign leaders be represented in working through these proposals and making all decisions related to Tribes, as this is the truest interpretation of the government-to-government trust relationship.

Ms. Kintz thanked Dr. Dixon for raising her concern and noted that, speaking to these particular proposals, the Tribes' feedback is being considered. She then thanked everyone for their time, encouraged the submission of

additional written testimony, and said she and partners from OVW, the COPS Office, and OJP would be available for discussion throughout the consultation.

Working Lunch: U.S. DOJ, OVW, Tribal Affairs Division Team Update

Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 12:15 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Tia Farmer, Assistant Director

Rebekah Jones, Assistant Director

Jennifer Marsh, Grants Management Specialist

Tammy Ashley, Grants Management Specialist

Jordana Cunningham, Grants Management Specialist

Renee Stapp, Grants Management Specialist

Jenny Mills, Grants Management Specialist

Tia Farmer and Rebekah Jones presented an update on OVW's Tribal Affairs Division with the help of the grant management specialists listed above. They presented an overview and some highlights of the key aspects of the division's work.

Ms. Jones began by announcing that OVW has awarded over \$11 billion since its creation in 1995, and in FY 23, TAD announced 121 awards totaling over \$86 million dedicated to supporting Tribal communities in their efforts to combat violence against women and provide services to victims.

Ms. Farmer reported on the Tribal Coalitions Program, supporting 20 Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions in 17 states, which were awarded over \$8 million in FY 2024. She went on to describe the multitude of trainings, resources, and support for Tribal leaders and program staff the coalitions were able to provide with these funds. She also shared that the Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program awarded over \$11 million in response to the FY 24 solicitation, which saw a record number of 22 applications compared to seven the previous year, with 17 awards made.

Ms. Jones reported that the OVW Grants to Tribal Governments Program (TGP) had a significant increase in applicants in the past year, and 57 awards were made totaling \$52.7 million. The average award amount increased by 11.15% over prior years, reaching \$925,000. Nearly every grantee provides community-based advocacy, with a third offering legal assistance, and over half funding shelter and transitional housing.

Ms. Marsh then addressed the Tribes' feedback that the grant application process is too long and complicated with news that TGP is one of two programs testing out a simplified process for FY 2025. She also announced that OVW would introduce a new web-based reporting system in March 2025 called the Impact Tool, which would dramatically ease the reporting burden on OVW grantees, as specifically requested by Tribes at these annual consultations.

Ms. Ashley presented statistics on the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Program's FY 24 awards, which totaled \$5.1 million, including an award of \$1.5 million to an Alaska Tribe. She said the application process was simplified by removing budget caps, extending project periods from 36 to 60 months, and allowing a consortium of Tribes to apply. She noted that OVW funds two TA providers to assist Tribes in exercising or

planning to exercise the jurisdiction, and one is located in Alaska. In addition, Ms. Cunningham reported that 17 Tribes have joined the VAWA 2022 Alaska Pilot Program.

Ms. Stapp gave an update regarding the Tribal Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys Program, which was created in 2012 to fund Tribal prosecutors to assist with prosecution of crimes of violence against women in Tribal and federal court. Awards were extended to 60 months in FY 23, and the amount increased to \$1.2 million per award in FY 24. In addition, Ms. Stapp announced that OVW has partnered with the Executive Office of United States Attorney's National Advocacy Center (NAC) to host two important training events in 2025, Indian Country Criminal Tribal Advocacy Course, March 24-28, and the Prosecution of Domestic Violence in Indian Country, which is August 18-22.

Ms. Mills announced the launch of the Healing and Response Team Special Initiative which is Tribally led and developed by Tribes for Tribes. The project is spearheaded by the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) and will have multiple opportunities for input from Tribal governments, urban Indian organizations, Tribal coalitions, and Tribal nonprofits. Pilot sites will be selected in Spring 2025. Ms. Mills also highlighted the OVW-funded National Tribal Clearinghouse on Sexual Assault, also led by MIWSAC which includes a resource library, a podcast, a learning center, and a speakers bureau. A 40-hour sexual assault advocate training from MIWSAC, along with a version for Alaska put together by the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, were planned for 2025.

Ms. Moore closed the presentation by thanking the TAD team for all their work and directed attendees to an article that appeared in Restoration Magazine highlighting the TAD team members.

USAO NM Tribal Updates

Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 3:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Alexander M.M. Uballez, U.S. Attorney, Department of Justice, District of New Mexico

Elisa Dimas, Indian Country Crimes Supervisor, Department of Justice, District of New Mexico

U.S. Attorney Uballez began the presentation by describing the USAO of New Mexico's comprehensive response to the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people, a multi-pronged strategy that includes a public database tracking MMIP cases, participation in a nationwide MMIP initiative, and a significant increase in staffing and resources dedicated to Tribal communities. He suggested the key elements as being the establishment of Tribal liaisons, federal prosecutors serving as points of contact for pueblos and Tribes, and addressing issues beyond prosecution, encompassing prevention, intervention, and reentry support. He emphasized the USAO's holistic, community-focused approach, prioritizing collaboration and transparency to achieve justice and support for affected communities.

Ms. Dimas outlined the work of the USAO for the District of New Mexico's Indian Country Crime Section. She said a key focus is their innovative Tribal liaison program, which assigns dedicated prosecutors to individual Tribes to foster strong relationships and address unique community needs beyond simple prosecution. Ms. Dimas highlighted their commitment to victim-centered and culturally sensitive approaches, emphasizing extensive victim outreach, and collaborative efforts with Tribal governments and law enforcement to combat crimes, particularly those involving substance abuse and violence. The presentation also showcased their efforts in addressing MMIP cases and expanding narcotics investigations, using a holistic strategy aiming for justice and community support.

At the end of the presentation, Dr. Juana Majel Dixon of the Pauma Yuima Band of Luiseno Indians inquired about replicating this successful model in other states, highlighting past difficulties in intertribal cooperation. U.S. Attorney Uballez explained the federal efforts to disseminate their methods through various channels, including direct communication with local leadership and other U.S. Attorneys, national training programs, and sharing their successes with the Attorney General's Advisory Committee, of which he is a member. Finally, Dr. Dixon expressed concern about the potential negative impact of Supreme Court decisions on Tribal sovereignty and urged the U.S. Attorney to continue advocating for Tribal interests, highlighting the positive impact of their current collaboration as a model for future success.

Governor J. Michael Chavarria of Santa Clara Pueblo emphasized the crucial need for a strong government-to-government relationship built on trust and mutual understanding, highlighting the unique challenges faced by Tribal nations and the insufficient commitment from some federal agencies. He thanked U.S. Attorney Uballez for accepting his invitation to visit the Santa Clara Pueblo to discuss the Tribe's needs. Governor Chavarria lauded the USAO's work as a successful model for other states as it demonstrates how proactive engagement and addressing Tribal needs directly can lead to positive outcomes. The discussion concluded with calls for expanding this successful partnership and using it as a template for improving relationships between other USAOs and Tribal governments nationwide.

Working Lunch: NamUs Update Report, U.S. DOJ OJP, NIJ

Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 12:15 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Chuck Heurich, M.F.S, Senior Scientist, Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, Office of Investigative and Forensic Science

Cornelia Perry, Tribal Case Liaison, NamUs

Mr. Heurich began by highlighting the significant increase in active cases since 2009 (800%) compared to the minimal increase in staff (10%), emphasizing that while resources are limited, NamUs is dedicated to its work. He clarified that NamUs is not just a database, but a program that assists with field challenges, including a lack of missing persons reports, by acting as a liaison to law enforcement. He also noted the importance of open conversations about DNA collection due to cultural and historical mistrust, acknowledging DNA's crucial role in identifying loved ones.

Ms. Perry shared her background as a retired criminal investigator for the Navajo Nation, emphasizing her hands-on experience with the system. She explained that NamUs was created in 2007 in response to law enforcement stakeholders' need for a centralized database to manage these cases. Ms. Perry detailed that NamUs provides not only a database but also forensic services, training, outreach, research, technology, and investigative support, all of which are free to Tribal and state law enforcement. She explained that 16 states now mandate the use of NamUs by law enforcement, and her main focus is to register and train Tribal law enforcement on the use of NamUs.

Ms. Perry provided statistics on NamUs usage and case types, noting that there are over 20,000 professional users and over 40,000 public users. She outlined the criteria for entering cases into the system and noted the additional data fields added to the system in 2016 that include Tribal enrollment, affiliation, and missing from Tribal lands. She stressed the importance of getting Tribal law enforcement to enter their missing persons

cases and for medical and forensic investigators to enter their unidentified persons cases. She detailed the free services NamUs provides, including fingerprinting, odontology, anthropology, DNA samples, and analytical services, and provided examples of how forensic genealogy has helped resolve cases. Ms. Perry emphasized that anyone can use the advanced search features in NamUs and encouraged everyone to explore the system. She highlighted the value of public users who can contribute tips and leads, and she concluded by restating that the NamUs system and its services are free and available to all.

Dr. Juana Majel Dixon of the Pauma Yuima Band of Luiseño Indians reminded the federal leaders of a question she posed during the NamUs presentation at last year's consultation and said she never received a satisfactory answer. She explained that as citizens of sovereign nations, Tribes made it clear years ago that the federal government was not to collect or use DNA of American Indians. She said she understands the positive impact that NamUs provides in the MMIP crisis but objected on the grounds the families should not have been approached without the full agreement of all the sovereign nations.

Mr. Heurich expressed his regret that he misunderstood the desired outcome of last year's conversation as a need to obtain consent from the individuals providing the DNA. He and Dr. Majel Dixon discussed ways that Tribal leadership agreement could be ascertained and agreed to work further toward that goal.

NIJ Research Presentation: The Scope and Context of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons in New Mexico

Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

Don Metzmeier, Intelligence Analyst, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Albuquerque Field Office

Dr. Tara Richards, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Dr. Emily Wright, Ph.D. (Cherokee Nation), Senior Research Fellow, Justice Policy Center, Urban Institute

Dr. Janine Zweig, Ph.D., Executive Science Advisor, Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice

Dr. Janine Zweig introduced Don Metzmeier, Dr. Emily Wright, and Dr. Tara Richards to present NIJ-funded research taking place in New Mexico.

Don Metzmeier discussed the importance of accurate data in addressing the issue of MMIP. He emphasized that good data was accurate, up-to-date, and relevant and that it was essential for effective decision-making, resource allocation, and understanding the complexities of MMIP. He noted that while there were numerous sources of data, many were not well-organized, easily accessible, or transparent. Mr. Metzmeier explained that his team created a public list of missing Indigenous persons in the NCIC, and they worked with the public and families to improve the accuracy of this list and correct misclassifications of Tribal members. He noted that the public had been an important data source in this project.

Mr. Metzmeier detailed how the data had been used to challenge common misconceptions and biases surrounding MMIP. For example, data showed that families in New Mexico reported missing persons quickly

and that most Indigenous people did not live on reservations. He also noted that MMIP was an indicator of larger, complex issues. The data had also been used to identify trends, such as the disproportionately low number of juveniles reported missing in the Navajo Nation and New Mexico compared to the rest of the United States. He stressed the importance of collaboration among agencies, as well as with the public and the media to ensure data accuracy and transparency. He concluded by highlighting the challenges of data paralysis, triaging cases with limited resources, and the need for ongoing efforts to address this issue.

Dr. Juana Majel Dixon of the Pauma Yuima Band of Luiseño Indians commended the work being done but noted that while she understood the scientific process being used, the language was not transparent to many Tribes. She then asked how the information and resources could best be used, given that the speaker's work was not tied to NamUs. Mr. Metzmeier responded by focusing on the importance of maintaining a personal connection to the data and the cases, as well as the importance of transparency, citing an instance where a law enforcement officer did not realize his family member was not listed in the NCIC database because he wasn't able to see the data outside his own state. Dr. Dixon acknowledged that the mention of NCIC changes the paradigm and said she looked forward to further discussion.

Dr. Emily Wright began by discussing the challenges of accurately identifying the number of missing persons, noting that adults have the right to go missing, and it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a person went missing due to criminal or non-criminal behavior. She stated that there is a lack of policies that mandate when an officer may enter a missing person's case into a database and that there is a lack of standardized definitions of what constitutes a missing person. She noted that these challenges exist regardless of Tribal affiliation but that there are additional challenges when specifically looking at Native American missing persons. These include complex jurisdictional issues and a lack of coordination and relationships between Tribal and non-Tribal law enforcement. Dr. Wright also highlighted the issue of racial misclassification when entering missing persons cases into databases and Tribal data sovereignty, which means some Tribes may not report or share data. She emphasized the need to understand the impact of historical trauma on Native communities and to focus on resiliency factors like ties to culture and language. She noted that all of this makes it difficult to measure hidden populations like missing persons.

Dr. Wright then described a model that she and her team developed in Nebraska to track and collect data on missing persons cases, using four different data sources. The Nebraska model involved cross-checking data from the state clearinghouse, NCIC, NamUs, and National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, as well as with Tribal partners, pulling data at four different times throughout one year to identify patterns. This model was presented at Tribal consultations and training institutes. Dr. Richards then detailed how they replicated this model in New Mexico and learned about additional data sources, such as the Navajo Nation list and open source data, e.g., social media platforms.

Dr. Richards presented figures showing the missing persons rate in New Mexico and the disproportionality of MMIP. When they added the three additional data sources, the rate of MMIP was double that of all missing persons in New Mexico. Researchers also found that the New Mexico clearinghouse was not a good data source for MMIP, with only about 30% of cases listed there, compared to 60-70% for the state overall. The FBI list and open source data were much better sources, with the FBI list covering around 90% and open source data covering over 60% of cases. They found that families are using open source data but also reporting to official data sources. They also noted that most missing persons are adults, though more girls than boys were missing among juveniles. Finally, they observed a slightly lower case resolution rate for MMIP, who were also missing for longer periods of time. In conclusion, Dr. Richards stressed the importance of looking at multiple

data sources, knowing the data, and understanding the local Tribal context. She also noted the limitations of point-in-time counts, the existence of a hidden figure of unreported missing persons, and the issue of racial misclassification.

Tiffany Jiron, the Executive Director for the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women in New Mexico, spoke about the work her organization does to serve the 23 Tribes, pueblos, the two Apache Nations, and the Navajo Nation. She acknowledged her team, noting that they quickly secured funding to conduct qualitative research with impacted family members when contacted by Dr. Richards and Dr. Wright. Ms. Jiron emphasized the importance of supporting the impacted family members of New Mexico and said that her team completed their research project on November 15th.

Working Lunch: U.S. DOJ OJP and COPS Updates

Thursday, November 21, 2024, 12:15 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Eileen M. Garry, Director, Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Cory Randolph, Deputy Director, Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)

Kristina Rose, Director, Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime

Cory Randolph began by emphasizing his office's commitment to assisting Tribal nations and reframed the concept of public safety as the "protection of loved ones," suggesting this perspective creates a sense of urgency and a more universal understanding. He also spoke about the emotional atmosphere he felt in the room, connected to an "undeterred spirit of justice," which he believes to be essential in their collective efforts to safeguard families.

Mr. Randolph discussed the Tribal Resource Grant program, which is administered through the Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation or CTAS. In 2024, the program awarded over \$31 million to 49 Tribal nations for training and equipment and to support 20 new officers. He noted that the COPS Office also offers online P.L. 280 courses and resources and highlighted the Tribal Access Program for National Crime Information or TAP, which provides Tribes with access to national crime information systems. In addition to Tribal grants, the COPS Office offers a variety of other grant programs that Tribes are eligible for, including the Hiring Program, the School Violence Prevention program, and the Officer Safety and Wellness programs.

Mr. Randolph noted the availability of various technical resources and assistance offered by the COPS Office, including an online training portal, a newsletter, a podcast series, and a video series. He emphasized the importance of continued dialogue and collaboration and encouraged everyone to keep sharing their voices. He also mentioned that there would be a new funding opportunity under CTAS soon. He concluded by reassuring everyone that they are not alone in their journey and that the "undeterred spirit of justice" is among them.

Eileen Garry began by acknowledging her experience and roles in various justice-related capacities. She provided an overview of OJP which comprises six program offices led by presidentially appointed directors. She described the current activities of five of the six program offices:

- **Bureau of Justice Assistance** has 327 open and active Tribal grant awards totaling over \$239 million and offers training and technical assistance. Upcoming events include a National Forum on Overdose Fatality Review, a meeting on responding to violence in Tribal communities, and the annual American Indian Justice Conference.
- **Bureau of Justice Statistics** focuses on research and data collection and is working on enhancing the survey of jails in Indian Country, adding new items on crimes against vulnerable persons, and implementing the 2024 census of Tribal law enforcement agencies and court systems.
- **National Institute of Justice** has three framing papers for this consultation, seeking feedback on improving NamUs, data archiving policy, and an updated strategy for the National Baseline Study under VAWA.
- **Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART)** is facilitating webinars for Tribes, states, and territories on sex offender registration and notification and has made awards to 20 Tribes under the Adam Walsh Act Implementation Grant Program.
- **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)** is launching a Tribal Youth Fellowship Program and a Tribal Youth Leadership and Partnership Initiative. In response to the Not Invisible Act Commission recommendation, OJJDP will convene a listening session to discuss children and youth who voluntarily go missing or are trafficked.

Additionally, Ms. Garry mentioned the development of a Tribal directory of all programs funded by OJP, the COPS Office, and OVW, and where to find it online (<https://www.justice.gov/tribal>). This directory is downloadable and includes a description of the initiative, links to previous solicitations, FAQs, and relevant websites.

Kristina Rose spoke to the activities of OVC, mentioning that OVC has hosted two consultations on the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Program or TVSSA, and they plan to continue to hold listening sessions with stakeholders in different locations. Ms. Rose explained that TVSSA is a population-based formula program, Tribes do not have to compete for funding, and the funds can be used for culturally-based victim services, construction projects, and to address the needs of missing persons and their relatives.

Appendix 2: Consultation Agenda



AGENDA

Monday, November 18th

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance Consultation
3:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Registration and Information Desk
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Federal Staff Meeting
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	NCAI Tribal Caucus

Tuesday, November 19th

7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Registration and Information Desk
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Open Meeting Space Available
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Resource Marketplace

General Session

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Call to Order and Traditional Opening Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal Affairs Division Posting of the Colors: Los Almos High School Color Guard Opening Prayer: Samuel Catanach, Pueblo of Pojoaque Welcome to Pueblo of Pojoaque Tribal Land: Governor Jenelle Roybal Hoop Dance Performance Josiah Enriquez: Current, 2024 World Hoop Dance Champion (Adult Division), Pueblo of Pojoaque Tribal Member Mateo Ulibarri: Current, 2024 World Hoop Dance Champion (Teen Division), Pueblo of Pojoaque Tribal Member Steve Larance: Singer/Drummer, Nambe Pueblo Tribal Member Traditional Shawl Ceremony: Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women
9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Opening Remarks and Introductions

Merrick B. Garland, Attorney General (recorded video)

Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General

Rosie Hidalgo, Director

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal Affairs Division

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Department of Justice Tribal Consultation Briefing on Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding

Jennifer Kaplan, General Counsel

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Joann Kintz, Deputy Director

Department of Justice, Office of Tribal Justice

10:30 a.m. - 11:00a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony

Governor Jenelle Roybal

Pueblo of Pojoaque

Lt. Governor Juan Rey Abieta

Pueblo of Isleta

Vice-Chair Donna Thompson

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. Working Lunch: U.S. DOJ, OVW, Tribal Affairs Division Team Update

Tia Farmer, Assistant Director

Rebekah Jones, Assistant Director

Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director

1:15 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony

Chairman Ryman LeBeau

Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

President Tracy Charles Smith

Village of Dot Lake

Council Cary Fremin

Village of Dot Lake

President Shannon Holsey

Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians

Rosalee Revey-Jacobs, Council Member

Lummi Tribe

Geri Wisner, Attorney General

Muscogee (Creek) Nation

3:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.

USAO NM Tribal Updates

Elisa Dimas, Indian Country Crimes Supervisor

Department of Justice, District of New Mexico

Alexander M.M. Uballez, U.S. Attorney

Department of Justice, District of New Mexico

3:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Break

3:45p.m. - 5:15 p.m.

Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal
Leader Testimony

Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Delegate

Navajo Nation

Lorraine Mike, OVW Program Coordinator

Asa'carsarmiut Tribe

Darlene Pete, Tribal Administrator

Native Village of Nunam Iqua

Samantha Thornsberry, Tribal Councilmember

Cahuilla Band of Indians

5:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Allison L. Randall, Principal Deputy Director

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director

Wednesday, November 20th

7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Registration and Information Desk
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Open Meeting Space Available
9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Resource Marketplace

General Session

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Call to Order and Daily Remarks
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Lisa O. Monaco, Deputy Attorney General (recorded video)

Department of Justice, Office of the Deputy Attorney General

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown-Indigenous
Relations and Northern Affairs (recorded video)**

Canada

Rosie Hidalgo, Director

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal
Affairs Division

9:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.	Sovereign Tribal Leaders of the NCAI VAW Task Force
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President Shannon Holsey

Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians

Carmen O'Leary, Director

Native Women's Society of the Plains, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director

Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, Native Village of Anvik

9:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony
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Chief Tiffany Webb, Member Chief

Curyung Tribal Council

10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Break
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- 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony
- Janice Agwiak, Tribal Administrator**
Native Village of Emmonak
- Governor J. Michael Chavarria**
Pueblo of Santa Clara
- Kristeen Mowitch, Tribal Council**
Quinault Indian Nation
- Stephanie Terrell, Advocate/Outreach Specialist**
Quinault Indian Nation
- 12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. Working Lunch: NamUs Update, U.S. DOJ OJP, NIJ
- Chuck Heurich, M.F.S., Senior Scientist**
Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, Office of Investigative and Forensic Science
- Cornelia Perry, Tribal Case Liaison**
NamUs
- 1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony
- Harriet Brady, Councilmember**
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe
- Keely Linton, Executive Director, Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition, Inc.**
Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians
- 2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. NIJ Research Presentation: The Scope and Context of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons in New Mexico
- Don Metzmeier, Intelligence Analyst**
Federal Bureau of Investigation, Albuquerque Field Office
- Dr. Tara Richards, Ph.D, Distinguished Professor**
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Nebraska at Omaha
- Dr. Emily Wright, Ph.D (Cherokee Nation), Senior Research Fellow**

Justice Policy Center, Urban Institute

3:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Break

3:45 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.

Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal
Leader Testimony

Andrea Gonzalez, Tribal Council Member

Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona

Lila Kills In Sight, Tribal Council Representative

Rosebud Sioux Tribe

Kimberly Lee, Director

Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Pauline Okitkun, Tribal Administrator

Kotlik Traditional Council

Sophie Swope, Council Member

Orutsararmiut Native Council

5:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks for the Day

Linda Phan, Deputy Director for Policy & Communications

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal
Affairs Division

Thursday, November 21st

7:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Registration and Information Desk

7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.

Breakfast

9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Open Meeting Space Available

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Resource Marketplace

General Session

8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

Call to Order and Daily Remarks

Benjamin C. Mizer, Principal Deputy Associate Attorney

General (video)

Department of Justice, Office of the Associate Attorney General

Rosie Hidalgo, Director

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal Affairs Division

8:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony

Chair Bernadine Atchison, Council Member

Kenaitze Indian Tribe

Maria Guerra, Family and Social Services Director

Kenaitze Indian Tribe

Dr. Juana Majel Dixon, Tribal Justice

Pauma Yuima Band of Luiseño Indians, SCTCA

10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony

Gary Lujan, Councilman

Pueblo of Taos

Holly Summer-Berries, Victims of Crime Coordinator

Pueblo of Taos

12:00 p.m. - 1:15p.m. Working Lunch: U.S. DOJ OJP and COPS Updates

Eileen M. Garry, Tribal Affairs Advisor

Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Cory Randolph, Deputy Director

Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)

Kristina Rose, Director

Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime

1:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony

Secretary Gabe Aguilar, Tribal Council Member

Mescalero Apache Tribe

Beatriz Arakawa, DV/SA Advocate, LEFA Program

Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

Claudia Chavez, Director of Pala Social Services

Pala Band of Mission Indians

**Stephanie Langdeau, Advocate, Restoring Hope and Director,
Native Women's Society**

Lower Brule Sioux - Kul Wicasa Oyate

President Mary Matthew

Native Village of Kwinhagak

**Cheryl Neskahi Coan, DV/SA Training Coordinator,
WomenSpirit Coalition**

Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe

Assistant Chief Brian T. Palmer

The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma

Governor Randall Vicente

Pueblo of Acoma

**Sadie Rose Warbelow, Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction
Manager**

Village of Dot Lake

3:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Break

3:45 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.

Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal
Leader Testimony

Rick Haskins-Garcia, Esq., Director, Law and Policy

Organized Village of Kake

Darlene Isaac, Council Member

Village of Ohogamiut

**Cathleen Osborne-Gowey, Eastern Shawnee Haven Program
Admin and Advocate**

Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma

Hon. Melissa Pope, Chief Judge

Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi

Hilario Tanakeyowma, Chief of Police
Tonto Apache

5:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Closing

Rosie Hidalgo, Director
Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women
Sherriann C. Moore, Deputy Director
Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal
Affairs Division
Closing Prayer: Governor Jenelle Roybal, Pueblo of Pojoaque

Appendix 3: Consultation Framing Papers

The following four framing papers were distributed to Tribal leaders in advance of the consultation:

1. [Improving the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System \(NamUs\) for American Indian and Alaska Native Individuals](#)
2. [National Institute of Justice Framing Paper on Tribal Study Data Collections: Access, Sharing, and Archiving Considerations](#)
3. [National Baseline Study on Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women](#)
4. [Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Tribal Public Safety and Criminal Justice Funding](#)