



20TH ANNUAL GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT
TRIBAL CONSULTATION

January 21-22, 2026 | Prior Lake, Minnesota

ANNUAL REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Disclaimers

This document is a summary of testimony provided at the 20th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation, held pursuant to Section 903 of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2005, as amended. It does not reflect the opinions or positions of the Department of Justice; rather, it provides a comprehensive description of two days of testimony and dialogue at the Tribal Consultation. This document has no force or effect of law and does not create any legally binding rights or obligations for any person or entity.

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Tribal Consultation Event

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) held its “20th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation” on January 21-22, 2026, at the Mystic Lake Center in Prior Lake, Minnesota. Participants included 44 Tribal leaders, 25 authorized designees, 94 federal representatives; and 322 other attendees from the Tribal community, including Tribal organizations and coalitions, for a total of 485 in-person and virtual attendees, representing 134 Tribes.

Traditional Opening Ceremony

Rebekah Jones, Acting Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Department of Justice (DOJ), Office on Violence Against Women, invited Tribal leaders to sit at the hollow square at the front of the room, before turning the proceedings over to Nicole Matthews with the Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition who introduced the opening ceremony participants.

The opening ceremony began with smudging the room, followed by an opening prayer offered by Janice Badmoccasin. Imnizaska, an inter-Tribal drum group based in St. Paul, Minnesota, opened the grand entry with a flag song and victory song. The honor guard, Dakota Kit Fox Society, presented an eagle staff, as well as flags of the United States, the Department of Justice, and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community. The flags were followed by red jingle dress dancers and representatives from Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions.

After the flags were posted, a traditional shawl ceremony was presented by Nicole Matthews and Cinnamon Bankey of Mending the Sacred Hoop, a second Tribal coalition of Minnesota, in honor of the 20th annual consultation. They explained that the first honor shawl ceremony was presented at the 2006 consultation, also on Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community land. Tribal coalition representatives placed a shawl on each of seven chairs displayed for all to see throughout the consultation. The shawls on the empty chairs represent sexual violence, domestic violence, sex trafficking, missing and murdered Indigenous relatives, two spirit and LGBTQIA relatives, and Indian boarding schools, and a kuspuk, a traditional Alaskan Native hooded overshirt, represents Alaska Native relatives who have experienced domestic and sexual violence at some of the highest rates. Ms. Bankey reminded everyone that this ceremony honors the lives of Native relatives who were taken by violence and whose memory and love will continue to reside in the fabric of their families, loved ones, and communities.

Welcoming Remarks

Rebekah Jones, Acting Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Ms. Jones introduced Secretary Ashley Cornforth to provide opening remarks on behalf of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

Ashley Cornforth, Business Council Secretary/Treasurer, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

Secretary Cornforth welcomed attendees to Dakota land on behalf of the Tribe’s entire Business Council, Chairman Cole Miller and Vice-Chairwoman Natasha Hacker and named this consultation as more than a meeting, but as a government-to-government responsibility, grounded in treaty rights, trust obligations, and the inherent sovereignty of Tribal Nations. She emphasized that true partnership means listening to Tribal leaders, not just during consultations, but in implementation as well, and that although great progress has been made over the past 20 years, violence against Native women remains at crisis levels requiring sustained commitment. She encouraged everyone to have open, honest dialogue over the coming days, and invited federal partners to listen deeply and act boldly. Secretary Cornforth finished by appreciating every single person’s presence.

Ginger Baran Lyons, Deputy Director for Grants Development and Management (Supervisory Official), Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Ginger Baran Lyons welcomed everyone to this 20th Annual Tribal Consultation, and extended gratitude to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and Ms. Cornforth for hosting and welcoming attendees to their land. She thanked Ms. Badmoccasin for blessing this gathering, the Red Jingle Dancers for bringing a spirit of healing

into the space, and Imnizaska for the honoring of drum and song. She recognized the Shawl Ceremony led by the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and Mending the Sacred Hoop as especially poignant since the first was presented before the Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation in this same place 20 years ago.

Ms. Baran Lyons acknowledged that the U.S. government representatives are here to listen to testimonies and recommendations. She then introduced and recognized United States Associate Attorney General Stanley Woodward for his leadership, sharing that he had met with a group of survivors who urged him to be at this consultation. He promised he would be here, and he upheld that promise.

Stanley E. Woodward, Jr., Associate Attorney General, Department of Justice

Associate Attorney General Stanley Woodward emphasized the Department of Justice's commitment to addressing violence against women and children in Tribal communities, acknowledging that statistics for domestic violence and sexual assault remain unacceptably high. He framed the administration's goals as prioritizing public safety, providing more resources, and reducing "red tape" while respecting Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. He stated that his primary purpose at the consultation was to listen to and learn from Tribal leaders to find concrete, measurable ways to improve safety.

He outlined several key initiatives, such as Operation Not Forgotten, which focuses on unresolved violent crimes and has recovered 80 missing Indigenous children since 2023. He also highlighted the connection between drug trafficking and violence, noting that U.S. Attorneys' Offices charged over 280 defendants in fiscal year 2025 for drug offenses impacting Tribal lands. Other highlighted efforts include the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) Regional Outreach Program, expanded access to national crime databases through the Tribal Access Program, and the awarding of half a billion dollars in grants over the last five years to support Tribal victim services.

He further focused on simplifying the grant administration process, pledging to reduce overhead and ensure funds reach those who need them most rather than being spent on administrative hurdles. He concluded by asking to be held accountable for real change, expressing a desire to see tangible benefits in Tribal communities.

Introductions of Federal Representatives from DOJ, Department of Interior (DOI), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Rebekah Jones facilitated the introduction of federal participants attending in person, including the following DOJ representatives:

- **Gina L. Allery**, Director, Office of Tribal Justice
- **Katherine Darke Schmitt**, Acting Director, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime
- **Dawn Doran**, Acting Director, Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Registering and Tracking (SMART)
- **Eileen M. Garry**, Office of Justice Programs, Office of the Assistant Attorney General
- **Sheena Gilbert**, Social Science Research Analyst, National Institute of Justice
- **Tammie Gregg**, Acting Director, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance
- **Erin Lorah**, Associate Director, Office on Violence Against Women, Grants Financial Management Division
- **LaToya Pickett-Bell**, Supervisory Grants Management Specialist, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
- **Cody Poplin**, Counsel, Office of the Deputy Attorney General
- **DB Robinson**, Supervisory Special Agent, Indian Country and International VC Unit, Federal Bureau of Investigation

As mandated by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), as amended, federal partners from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) participated in the Tribal consultation.

HHS representatives included:

- **R. Kim Hartwig**, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Indian Health Service
- **Kim Koval**, Acting Commissioner, Administration for Native Americans, Administration for Children and Families

- **Reshma Mahendra**, Deputy Director for Management and Program Operations, Division of Violence Prevention, Injury Center

The representatives from DOI were:

- **Brian Archdale**, Special Agent in Charge, District 7 Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services
- **Arlene Armijo**, Supervisory Victim Specialist, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Justice Services, Missing and Murdered Unit
- **Gwendolyn Castro**, Acting National Coordinator, Office of Justice Services Victim Assistance Program, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Finally, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sent the following representative:

- **Allison D. Kolar**, Policy Advisor, Office on Gender-Based Violence, Office of the Secretary

For the sake of simplicity, federal attendees who arrived after the main introductions have been included above. In addition, Ms. Jane Lee, Senior Attorney Advisor with DOJ's Criminal Division, Money Laundering, Narcotics and Forfeiture Section, provided a brief update regarding the Backpage Remission Compensation Program in honor of the Blue Shawl and human trafficking awareness month. It is the largest remission that the Department has ever launched for victims and survivors of human trafficking and is specifically for victims and survivors of sex trafficking facilitated through Backpage or through CityXGuide between 2004 and 2018. Ms. Lee invited attendees to visit Backpageremission.com to learn more about the \$200 million in compensation for victims funded with the forfeited assets of Backpage and CityXGuide. Compensation can be made for medical costs, past and future, behavioral health needs, and other monetary losses, and the deadline to submit a petition for remission was extended to March 31, 2026.

Tribal Testimony

In total, 39 Tribal leaders and designees representing 28 Tribes shared testimony at the Tribal consultation, including two pre-recorded testimonies. The following sections summarize this testimony, with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Violence Against Women Task Force kicking off the summarized testimony, followed alphabetically by Tribe and accompanied by the name and title of the speaker(s).

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. Testimony from 17 Tribes choosing to provide solely pre-recorded or written remarks also has been summarized and included in this report.

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

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

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

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

Larry Wright, Jr., Executive Director, NCAI (Written)

Introduction of Shannon Holsey

I serve as the President of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians and as the Co-chair of the NCAI Violence Against Women Act Task Force. My people are originally from Upstate New York, but we carry a history of forced removal that relocated us to Wisconsin. I view the current crisis of violence through a lens that stretches back to 1492, recognizing that the systems of violence against Indigenous people are not new but are deeply rooted in our complex historical relationship with the federal government.

I stand before you to emphasize that women are respected and held sacred in our Tribal Nations because they are the ones who maintain order within our communities. I see how the evolution of colonization has systematically eroded these sacred statuses and dehumanized our experience, leading to the high rates of violence we face today. It is essential that we look for ways to address this traumatization and find opportunities for Tribal Nations to practice our traditional culture and ways of life as a means of healing.

I recognize that the spectrum of violence, including domestic abuse, homicide, and human trafficking, is intertwined with systematic barriers regarding the disposition of our Tribal lands and the stewardship of our natural resources. These are not just individual acts of crime, but larger societal and public safety issues that create dangerous situational circumstances for our relatives. The challenges we face illustrate the complicated legal and policy barriers that are embedded within the complexity of federal Indian law.

I advocate for the full protection of all our relatives, including those in Alaska, the lower 48, and our LGBTQ communities. My colleagues and I provide recommendations based on years of leadership and advocacy to ensure that our federal agencies and congressional delegates fulfill their responsibilities to all 575 federally recognized Tribes. I ask that you approach this consultation with ears wide open and hearts open so that we can collectively find holistic solutions to end this cycle of violence.

Introduction of Carmen O’Leary

I am the Director for the Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains, representing 20 Tribal coalitions, and I serve as a Co-chair for the NCAI Violence Against Women Act Task Force. I bring over 30 years of experience to this table, including 17 years spent working directly in a shelter and two decades leading my current organization. I speak truthfully from a Lakota and Dakota perspective, rooted in the cultural value that everyone, including our elders, our relatives with disabilities, and our LGBTQ kin, has a sacred place in our circle. I push back against federal

mandates that interfere with our cultural training, as we use our traditions to push back against the wave of abuse in our communities.

I see a critical need for transparency and efficiency in our partnership. It is problematic when federal inefficiencies cause “emergencies” in our Tribal programs, forcing us to rush budget approvals. I want to see where earmarked money for Indian Country goes if it remains unspent at the end of the year. To help us manage our staffing and time, I recommend a predictable “season” for grant applications so that we aren’t forced to write complex grants while we are in the field providing services.

I am deeply concerned by rumors of OVW consolidation. This office was created because we lacked a voice, and I believe its independence is required by law. Furthermore, decisions like *Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta* (*Castro-Huerta*) represent an invasion of Tribal sovereignty. I demand that every Tribe applying for Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) receives full funding so we can protect our citizens regardless of an abuser’s nationality. We should also be funded based on our total Tribal membership, allowing us to provide safety for our relatives even when they are far from home.

In the Great Plains, our high poverty rates and vast geography make safety expensive. When a woman is 40 miles away from law enforcement or a hospital on 2 million acres of land, getting her to safety takes significant resources. We often have no transitional housing, meaning victims must stay in shelters long-term. I also urge you to restore the “Not One More” report to federal websites and ensure the community-driven recommendations of the Not Invisible Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-166) are fully funded and followed.

Introduction of Tami Truett Jerue

I am a citizen of the Anvik Tribe in Alaska and the Executive Director of the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center. I speak to you today as a mother, a grandmother, and a survivor of generational trauma who has spent 40 years holding the hands of mothers searching for missing daughters. I have three generations of my family here with me because I refuse to let my granddaughter sit before these same panels when she is my age. I want the need for this table to disappear entirely.

While we mark 20 years of consultation, the rates of violence against our women still shock the conscience of this nation. I see a devastating resource gap where the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funds our law enforcement at only one-fifth of the identified need and provides our Tribal courts only 3% of the funding they require to operate. These courts are the living expression of our sovereignty, and by failing to fund them, the federal government actively prevents us from exercising the self-governance we are guaranteed.

In Alaska, the violence has reached catastrophic proportions, with murder rates in some communities 10 times higher than the national average. Our geography creates unique perils. When it is 50 below zero and storms ground all planes, victims are trapped for days without law enforcement, health aides, or safe housing. I recommend that the DOJ create long-term funding streams that acknowledge these challenges and prioritize “human infrastructure,” the personnel and training needed to sustain our systems, over physical buildings.

I also stand in solidarity with our relatives who face wrongful detention and racial profiling by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. Many of my Alaskan sisters were too afraid to travel to this consultation because they only possess Tribal IDs, which federal agents often fail to recognize as proof of U.S. citizenship. I demand safe passage and witness assurances for all Tribal members participating in these government-to-government dialogues. We cannot wait any longer for action. The cost of federal inaction is measured directly in human lives.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Tribal Nations, Tribal leaders, and advocates have tirelessly raised concerns about barriers preventing the protection of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women. They have identified the following issues, concerns, and recommendations through NCAI resolutions passed since 2000, as well as during numerous NCAI VAW Task Force meetings. These issues are not new. They illustrate the complicated legal and policy barriers embedded in the layers of federal Indian law.

Topic 1. Response to Department of Justice's Intent to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

OVW must remain a separate and distinct office within DOJ, as mandated by federal statute. The office's specialized subject matter expertise and institutional knowledge are vital for maintaining federal investment in addressing domestic and sexual violence. Consolidating the OVW with other departments would likely weaken the enforcement of the VAWA and jeopardize the victim-centered services that are critical for the safety of Indigenous women. Any such structural change would legally require statutory amendments by Congress and extensive Tribal consultation. Ms. O'Leary further argued that removing the Deputy Director's office would be inefficient and illegal without Congressional approval, as it was established to ensure funding and programming are culturally appropriate.

Similarly, the Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ) must not be merged with other agencies because its mission to advise on the broad treaty and trust relationship is fundamentally different from offices focused solely on community policing or violence against women. The OTJ serves as a permanent, central point of contact for the 575 federally recognized Tribes, coordinating diverse issues such as jurisdiction, Tribal courts, and the MMIWR crisis across the entire DOJ. Without this independent agency, Tribes, particularly those in Alaska, would lose their primary gateway for navigating complex federal bureaucracy. The DOJ should not administratively dismantle an office that Congress deliberately codified into law to ensure consistent policy coordination in Indian Country.

Recommendations:

1. OVW must remain a separate and distinct office within the Department of Justice.
2. OTJ must not be merged with other agencies.

Topic 2. Programs That Serve American Indians and Alaska Natives Must Maintain Full Funding

Funding cuts to programs serving Indian Country would be devastating, have disproportionate impacts on the safety, sovereignty, and well-being of Tribal communities, and undermine the federal government's trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations. According to a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) survey, violence against AI/AN people remains a public safety crisis, with 84.3 percent of AI/AN women and 81.6 percent of AI/AN men experiencing violence in their lifetime. Grants and programs serving Tribal Nations and AI/AN populations, including those from the OVW, are essential to responding to this crisis and keeping communities safe.

Cuts to these programs can mean the difference between life and death in our communities. The disruption of life-saving services and resources would erode Tribal self-determination, increase violence and trauma in Indian Country and surrounding communities, and breach the federal trust responsibility to ensure safety and justice for Tribal Nations.

Ms. Holsey emphasized that the current spectrum of violence is intertwined with systematic barriers and urged federal agencies and congressional delegates to address these ongoing funding and policy gaps.

Ms. Truett Jerue provided specific data showing that the BIA only funds Tribal law enforcement at 20% and Tribal courts at a mere 3% of their identified operational needs. She argued that failing to fund courts prevents Tribes from exercising the self-governance guaranteed by sovereignty.

Ms. O'Leary highlighted that high poverty and geographic isolation in the Great Plains make it more expensive to ensure safety, noting that a victim may be 40 miles from help.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ and all federal agencies must oppose any proposed reductions to Tribal violence prevention, public safety programs, and programs that otherwise serve AI/AN people.
2. DOJ should advocate for increased and sustained funding for Tribal programs and all violence prevention and public safety programs that serve AI/AN people.

3. DOJ should work with Tribal Nations to identify long-term funding solutions that support Tribal justice systems and culturally-appropriate prevention and healing programs that respect Tribal sovereignty over its cultural expressions.
4. DOJ should prioritize Tribal set-aside funding and direct funding streams to Tribal Nations to avoid overly burdensome competitive grant processes.
5. DOJ should establish a predictable “season” for grant applications so that Tribal staff, who are often in the field providing services, can better manage their time and staffing requirements.
6. DOJ funding should be based on a Tribe’s total membership, rather than just those residing within Tribal boundaries, to ensure they can care for citizens regardless of residency.
7. DOJ should provide transparency regarding previous years’ budgets, specifically providing reports on how much money was spent and whether “earmarked” funds that went unspent remained within Indian Country programs.
8. DOJ should expand “infrastructure” funding of physical buildings to include “human infrastructure,” such as the dedicated funding of personnel and training necessary to sustain Tribal justice systems.
9. DOJ should provide witness assurances and “safe passage” for Tribal members traveling to consultations, ensuring they are not subjected to racial profiling or immigration enforcement by federal agents while exercising their sovereign right to participate.

Topic 3. Support the Full Restoration of Tribal Jurisdiction Over Non-Indian Offenders by Supporting the Expansion of STCJ

The 2022 reauthorization of VAWA (VAWA 2022) expanded the list of covered crimes over which Tribal Nations can exercise jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators. While a pivotal step forward, the most recent reauthorization did not address serious crimes that co-occur with domestic and sexual violence. 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.

Ms. O’Leary expressed concern that many Tribes that applied for STCJ grants were not funded this year. She stated that protecting citizens regardless of an abuser’s nationality is a fundamental aspect of Tribal sovereignty.

Ms. Truett Jerue acknowledged that while the 20-year partnership with the federal government has expanded Tribal jurisdiction, the violence remains at “catastrophic proportions,” necessitating further federal action.

Recommendations:

DOJ should support efforts by Congress to enact a full *Oliphant* fix through legislation that recognizes and reestablishes the inherent criminal jurisdiction of Tribal governments over all offenders, as outlined in NCAI Resolution #SPO-16-037.

1. DOJ should support efforts by Congress to expand STCJ to related offenses such as drug trafficking and firearm crimes, as outlined in NCAI Resolution #LV-24-077.
2. DOJ and DOI should coordinate and collaborate to fully implement the provisions of VAWA 2022 and support Tribal Nations in implementing their restored jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators.
3. DOJ and DOI should support legislation that would fully restore Tribal Nations’ jurisdiction over non-Indians for any offense on Tribal lands.
4. DOJ, DOI, and all other federal agencies should live up to their trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations by including annual, consistent, and sustainable noncompetitive funding for Tribal Nations for all public safety and victim services needs in their annual budget requests. Tribal Nations are unable to meaningfully exercise restored jurisdiction and make Indian Country safer without public safety funding and resources to implement it.
5. DOJ should request the full amount of funding authorized for Tribal programs in VAWA 2022.
6. DOJ must ensure every Tribe that applies for an STCJ grant receives funding.

Topic 4. DOJ and DOI Must Not Pull Vital Resources from Indian Country After the *Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta* Supreme Court Decision

In 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its decision in *McGirt v. Oklahoma* (*McGirt*) that the reservation for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation within the State of Oklahoma was never disestablished, reaffirming the exercise of Tribal jurisdiction rather than state jurisdiction over Native American defendants. Subsequently, Congress and agencies sought to invest more resources in Tribal Nations within Oklahoma Indian Country. However, only two years later, the Supreme Court ruled that states have concurrent jurisdiction over all of Indian Country with respect to non-Indian defendants. The decision dilutes the urgent need VAWA met by granting Tribes everywhere the ability to prosecute non-Indians who commit certain crimes. The purpose of STCJ was to have Tribes shoulder prosecutions of non-Indians for crimes of domestic, dating, and sexual violence.

Since the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Castro-Huerta*, Tribal Nations have expressed concerns that the federal government has reduced much-needed justice-related resources for Tribal Nations in Oklahoma. Tribal Nations reported that Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) agents and staff have been removed from the state since the 2022 decision and have also shared that some U.S. Attorneys in the state are declining to take on cases against non-Indians in favor of sole state or local government prosecution. These decisions are being made without coordination and without government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations in Oklahoma or throughout the country.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ and DOI should continue to prioritize public safety in Indian Country by addressing the disproportionately high rates of violence experienced by AI/AN people.
2. DOJ and DOI must allocate more staff, resources, education, and training to Indian Country to ensure that safety is increased.
3. DOJ should provide training and education on the links between Tribal sovereignty, Tribal consultation, and safety in Indian Country for all U.S. Attorneys, FBI personnel, Criminal Chiefs, Victim-Witness Coordinators, and any additional relevant DOJ staff.
4. DOJ and DOI should issue guidance stating that the *Castro-Huerta* decision does not alter federal jurisdiction to prosecute crimes in Indian Country pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §§ 1152 and 1153 and should not rely on states to meet the federal trust responsibility of pursuing justice in Indian Country.
5. DOJ must communicate to Congress that it supports the proposed legislation encapsulated in NCAI Resolutions #SAC-22-043, #SAC-22-039 and #SEA-25-0847 to expand and affirm Tribal sovereignty in a way that protects Native women and children, whose lives are at stake.

Topic 5. Outstanding Injustice of MMIWR

The federal response to the MMIWR crisis is a breach of the federal trust responsibility as reflected in the statistical disparities documented by the NIJ. An adequately resourced local Tribal response to prevent abductions and murders is critically important in Indian Country. In the 2017 DOJ Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions report, DOJ noted that “it is the Department’s position that prioritization of initiatives in Indian Country, including the effort to build capacity in Tribal courts, will eventually lead to enhanced public safety for Native Americans.” The failure to adequately fund Tribal services and Tribal law enforcement, and the lack of response from federal law enforcement, contribute to the increased violence against AI/AN people.

Ms. Truett Jerue spoke to the gap and grief left in families when deaths are not investigated or are incorrectly labeled as suicides or “unsubstantiated” due to a lack of evidence collection.

The Not Invisible Act established the creation of the DOI and DOJ Joint Commission on Reducing Violent Crime Against Indians. The Commission, called the Not Invisible Act Commission (NIAC), submitted its report, *Not One More: Findings & Recommendations of The Not Invisible Act Commission*, to the DOI and DOJ on November 1, 2023. NIAC developed recommendations through the work of six subcommittees focused on improving intergovernmental coordination and establishing best practices for Tribal, federal, and state law enforcement. These recommendations aim to bolster resources for survivors and victims’ families and to combat the crises of

missing persons, murder, and trafficking of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples, as specified under the law.

Ms. O’Leary emphasized that the NIAC was a community-driven effort with families traveling long distances to share stories of murder and missing relatives, yet the resulting report is currently difficult to find on federal websites.

Recommendations:

1. DOI and DOJ, as well as other relevant federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and HHS, should implement the NIAC recommendations in a timely manner and share frequent updates of progress and plans for implementation. The “Not One More” report should be restored and accessible to the public on both the DOJ and DOI websites.
2. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should coordinate with Tribal Nations to help find MMIWR victims during or after disasters.
3. The NIJ research program contained in the 2005 reauthorization of the VAWA should be fully implemented and specifically provide Tribal Nations information regarding MMIWR, including unique barriers facing Tribal Nations and Native women in P.L. 280 states.
4. All federal departments should coordinate efforts to increase support for Tribal responses to MMIWR as required by Savanna’s Act (P.L. 116-165) and the Not Invisible Act.
5. DOJ and DOI should support the enactment of the Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety for Native Communities (BADGES) Act (S.390) and the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act.
6. DOJ should ensure that data on Indian Country, Tribal Nations, and Tribal citizens is included in the various reports. In particular, the public reports that contain anonymized data from the Accountability Database should include a breakdown of what cases occurred in Indian Country and in what BIA region the conduct occurred.
7. While preventing the occurrence of MMIWR should be the primary goal, further steps must be taken to ensure that when crimes occur, both families and victims are supported in a culturally-appropriate way. In many reported incidents, the pain of losing a loved one was exacerbated by improper or culturally insensitive treatment of the case or remains.
8. Federal agencies should develop protocols in consultation with Tribal Nations which recognize the inherent right of AI/AN people 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. The protocols must address the following:
 - a. The cremation of AI/AN peoples’ remains without notice or consent of a family member: In numerous cases, like in the case of Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, families did not consent to the coroner’s unilateral decision to cremate the body of an AI/AN victim.
 - b. The denial of requests by immediate family members to see the bodies of their loved ones: In documented cases, the requests of the family to see the remains of the AI/AN victim have been denied without explanation.
 - c. Mailing and shipping human remains without notice to the family. Remains are often mailed or shipped without proper clothing or modesty covers.
 - d. DOJ should provide witness assurances and safe passage for Tribal members traveling to consultations, ensuring they are not subjected to racial profiling or immigration enforcement by federal agents while attempting to provide testimony on these crises.

Topic 6. Disparities in Funding for Tribal Nations in P.L. 280 States

More than half of all federally recognized Tribal Nations are located in P.L. 280 states. Tribal Nations report their perspective that some P.L. 280 states fail to investigate and prosecute crimes involving violence against AI/AN women. Yet Tribal Nations located in P.L. 280 states receive little, if any, support for Tribal law enforcement and Tribal courts. Consequently, the Tribal Nations under P.L. 280 have insufficient resources to develop their own

Tribal justice systems, while states with concurrent jurisdiction fail to fulfill their responsibilities under the law. 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.

Ms. Truett Jerue described the "catastrophic proportions" of violence in remote areas of Alaska where law enforcement may be hours or days away, leading to rape rates 12 times the national average.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ should work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to request appropriate additional federal funding to provide public safety and justice resources to Tribal Nations located in P.L. 280 states.
2. BIA should provide funding to Tribal Nations located in P.L. 280 states for Tribal court systems and law enforcement agencies and administer that funding in a sustainable and equitable manner.
3. BIA should seek to end the disparity in funding between Tribal Nations within and outside of P.L. 280 states.

Topic 7. Federal Accountability and Compliance with The Tribal Law and Order Act Of 2010 (TLOA)

Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-211) Section 212 requires U.S. Attorneys to coordinate with Tribal justice officials on the use of evidence when declining to prosecute a crime on a reservation. Sharing evidence of crimes committed on a reservation is critical to keeping AI/AN women safe. Tribal officials must receive timely notice when a U.S. Attorney declines to prosecute sexual assault or domestic violence cases and be informed of the reason the case was declined. Additionally, Section 261 requires the U.S. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to notify Tribal justice officials when a sex offender is released from federal custody into Indian Country.

Ms. Truett Jerue supported this by recounting how families are often left with no answers about what happened to their loved ones because cases are closed without thorough investigation or communication. When relatives are lost at such a high rate and investigations yield no information, families are robbed of the opportunity to properly grieve their loved ones. She highlighted that many deaths are incorrectly termed as suicides or labeled "unsubstantiated" because law enforcement was unable to reach remote locations or lacked the personnel to collect necessary evidence.

She described the long-term societal result of being left without answers as families are shattered, often leaving grandmothers to raise their grandchildren because of the violence that took the parents. These unresolved cases contribute to generational trauma, impacting the decisions and lives of survivors across multiple generations. Ms. Truett Jerue concluded that the ultimate cost of inaction in addressing these resource and investigative gaps is directly measured in human lives.

Recommendations:

1. The U.S. Attorney General should direct U.S. Attorneys to implement the Section 212 of TLOA and be accountable for the necessary coordination and reporting duties with Tribal justice officials pursuant to 25 U.S.C. § 2809(b). The failure to implement the law should be tied to employee performance metrics.
2. BOP should ensure that Tribal justice officials are notified of prisoner release and re-entry on Tribal lands, regardless of the process by which this occurs. Proper implementation of this provision is critical to the safety of AI/AN women.

Topic 8. Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)

Tribal leaders, Tribal communities, and AI/AN survivors of violence have 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. FVPSA authorization expired in 2015, though funding has been maintained for these important programs.

Ms. Truett Jerue has a direct connection to the programs impacted by these funding levels. She testified that current funding levels leave many survivors without access to life-saving services, sharing the story of a victim trapped in a remote village during extreme weather. She described a scenario where 50-below-zero temperatures

and storms prevent planes from flying for nearly a week, leaving a victim “sitting in a village that doesn’t have any resources or safety or any place to go.” In such cases, she noted these communities may not even have a health aide, let alone law enforcement.

She further emphasized that because local Tribal programs lack the resources for safe housing and emergency services, many survivors are forced to make the impossible choice to remain in dangerous situations. She concluded that the result of these funding shortfalls is that many survivors are left without essential services that could mean the difference between life and death.

Recommendations:

1. The DOJ and 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 StrongHearts Native Helpline, a project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center.
 - d. Provides permanent funding for the Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence, led by the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center, to reduce disparities facing Native victims.
 - e. Provides permanent funding for the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence.
 - f. Expands “infrastructure” funding to include “human infrastructure,” in addition to physical buildings, such as the dedicated funding of personnel and training necessary to sustain Tribal justice systems.

Topic 9. DOJ 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 consultation reports. The federal government must coordinate and collaborate to enact changes that will address the disproportionate rates of violence against AI/AN women. The OVW Annual Report of Proceedings, documenting the Annual Government-to-Government VAW Tribal Consultation, and the DOJ Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions Report to Congress are important mechanisms for ensuring coordination and collaboration.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ must consistently and timely submit the OVW Annual Tribal Consultation Report to Congress to post the report on the DOJ website.

Topic 10. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

The 2005 VAWA Reauthorization Act mandated that the NIJ within the DOJ conduct research into violence against AI/AN women. Although Congress initially appropriated \$1,000,000 for this NBS, and even though money has been appropriated annually since 2012, this study has yet to be conducted.

The study’s primary purpose is to evaluate the effectiveness of various levels of government—Tribal, federal, state, and local—in responding to crimes such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and murder.

Ms. Truett Jerue noted that 20 years after the first consultation, Native women still face the same shocking rates of violence, illustrating the need for the data the NBS was intended to provide, while Ms. O’Leary expressed frustration with federal financial transparency, questioning what happens to money earmarked for Indian Country that remains unspent at the end of the year.

DOJ cited insurmountable obstacles in 2024, including the study’s vast scope across 575 Tribes and insufficient funding; however, reducing the study’s size would fail to satisfy the intent of Congress. Similar nationwide data is successfully collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suggesting that established

methodologies exist. A comprehensive NBS is critical to documenting jurisdictional barriers and prosecution declinations, particularly in areas where the federal government or P.L. 280 states fail to act against perpetrators.

Recommendations:

OVW and the NIJ should seek adequate funding from Congress to perform the NBS as conceptualized in the 2005 VAWA Reauthorization Act.

1. The OVW should consider allocating funding within Tribal programs to collect and analyze data in services such as Tribal court systems, law enforcement departments, prosecutors' offices, and victim services.
2. OVW and the NIJ should support Tribally led victimization studies on a regional basis to cover all 575 federally-recognized Tribes, accommodating cultural sensitivities for collecting data in appropriate and supportive ways.

In conclusion, we look forward to working with the DOJ and other federal agencies with overlapping jurisdiction to fully implement and translate these recommendations into meaningful action resulting in the protection of AI/AN women. When AI/AN women are protected, their children, families, and communities thrive.



Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma

Monique Carpitcher, Domestic Violence Advocate - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

I am Monique Carpitcher, and I have the privilege of speaking for the Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma. I serve as a domestic violence advocate and a regional representative with the Native Alliance Against Violence (NAAV). As a Native American woman living in Oklahoma, I see a daily crisis. For a decade, my state has consistently ranked in the top ten for domestic violence and homicides. I help lead the Rising Warrior program, which provides trauma-informed care and safety planning for nearly 5,000 Tribal members and over 1.2 million residents in central Oklahoma.

Topic 1. Criminalization of Survivors by Law Enforcement

We see women seeking protection who are instead arrested due to outstanding warrants for minor, unrelated infractions. Officers often misinterpret trauma-induced distress or defensiveness as aggression or noncompliance. This systemic failure prioritizes enforcement over safety and discourages victims from reporting crimes.

I recently worked with a client who did everything "correctly." She reported the rape of her child and her own assault only to face a harrowing journey. Her abuser was released twice on low 5% bonds and immediately began stalking her at a safe residence. Through OVW funding and coordination with NAAV, we provided a legal advocate and transitional housing. After a year of preparation, her child testified, and the abuser received a life sentence.

Recommendations:

1. Use OVW funding for workshops and certification programs to teach officers about the unique needs of Native survivors.
2. Fund formal partnerships between Tribal, local, and state law enforcement to improve coordination.

Topic 2. Complications with Transitional Housing Grants

We encounter significant hurdles when trying to modify Tribe-owned mobile homes used for transitional housing. Current OVW policies do not fully account for the realities of operating on Tribal property, creating a gap between what our community needs and what federal policy allows.

Recommendations:

1. Hire a Tribal consultant to help align federal policy with the practical realities of Tribal communities.

Topic 3. Lack of Grant Transparency and Flexibility

We have found administrative uncertainty regarding allowable and unallowable costs. Our geographic isolation and unique service models require innovative approaches that are often hindered by narrow interpretations of grant costs.

Recommendations:

1. OVW should maintain a clearly articulated list of pre-approved allowable uses of funds to reduce uncertainty and allow us to respond to emerging needs.

Topic 4. Data Gaps and Underreporting

Information on Native women who experience violence is fragmented and scarce due to jurisdictional discrepancies and systemic mistrust. The removal of the “Not One More” report has created a critical gap in our understanding of this crisis.

Recommendations:

1. Restore public access to all legally mandated reports.
2. Enhance interagency data-sharing agreements and engage Native communities directly in data collection to build trust.

Topic 5. Failure to Prioritize Prevention

Society focuses too much on responding after harm occurs, but no remedy can fully repair the physical and psychological scars of violence. We must address the root causes of abuse before the trauma occurs.

Recommendations:

1. Fund education and awareness initiatives in schools that teach respect and non-violent conflict resolution. Implement stricter laws to deter perpetrators and provide specific funding for prevention training in Native communities.

Topic 6. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

We oppose the consolidation of the OVW with other grant-making components like COPS or OJP. I believe the OVW must remain a standalone office to maintain the high level of concentration necessary to serve our communities.

Topic 7. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

We see the current conceptualization of the National Baseline Study (NBS) as a single national study as flawed.

Recommendations:

1. Reauthorize the NBS as a flexible, Tribal-led research program rather than one massive study.
2. Provide Tribes with the research instruments and tools to conduct their own culturally appropriate studies.
3. Use federal victimization data only as a supplement to this Tribal-led research.



Akiak Native Community

Dr. Michael Williams, Sr., Tribal Council Member and Tribal Judge - Tribal Leader (Pre-recorded Oral and Written)

I speak to you today as an elected Tribal leader and judge for the Akiak Native Community, a Yup'ik Village that has stood on the banks of the Kuskokwim River since time immemorial. I am a son, brother, uncle, husband, father, and grandfather. As a leader and a mental health counselor, I am trusted to love, protect, and care for my family and my community of 400 Tribal citizens.

We live by the rhythm of the seasons and the knowledge of our elders, but we have no permanent law enforcement presence. When violence threatens our mothers and daughters in the night, we are often forced to rely only on ourselves. I raise my voice in unity with Tribes across this nation because for too long, the federal failure to honor its trust responsibility has manifested in the bodies of our women being stolen, murdered, and disappeared.

The following are the critical issues I see regarding the safety of our people and the challenges we face in ending this epidemic of violence.

Topic 1. Funding Predictability and Delays

There is a pattern of delays where funding opportunities that used to arrive in the spring now come months late, sometimes as late as August. This forces us into perpetual crisis management mode where I cannot promise to keep my staff or guarantee that life-saving services will continue.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ must implement policies requiring all funding notices to be published by April 1st each year with a July 1st deadline to ensure an October 1st start date.
2. I also urge the expansion of project periods to five years so we can focus on doing the actual work rather than always being in startup mode.

Topic 2. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

We strongly oppose any proposal to merge the OVW or OTJ into larger components like the Office of Justice Programs. If OVW is absorbed, the violence against our women becomes just one priority among hundreds rather than a core mission.

Recommendations:

1. These offices must remain separate and distinct as Congress mandated.
2. We need the OTJ to remain our principal point of contact for the full spectrum of Tribal justice issues, from the FBI to U.S. Attorneys.

Topic 3. Lack of Alaska-Based Staffing

It is not enough to have staff dedicated to Alaska. We need staff who live and work in Alaska. People based in D.C. cannot fully understand the unique legal, geographical, and cultural challenges our 229 Tribes face.

Recommendations:

1. The OVW and OVC must employ staff based in Alaska who understand our humanity and our traditional ways.

Topic 4. BIA Funding Caps on Tribal Courts

Our Tribal courts are the living expression of our authority, yet the BIA has imposed an inadequate \$200,000 funding cap and forced us to pick only our top three priorities. This is paternalistic and contradicts our right to self-determination.

Recommendations:

1. The BIA must remove or substantially increase this cap to reflect the actual costs of running a court in isolated areas and provide full funding for our submitted budgets.

Topic 5. Disaster Response and Victim Services

This year, Akiak experienced a power outage that lasted 43 days. When our Village goes dark for weeks, I see immediate increases in alcohol abuse, depression, and domestic violence. When disasters force our people to evacuate to places like Bethel or Anchorage, our women and children become even more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking.

Recommendations:

1. Develop Alaska-specific disaster protocols that provide emergency funding for victim services during power outages or floods.
2. We need pre-positioned resources and culturally appropriate mental health services that recognize the link between community trauma and domestic violence.

I leave you with the reminder that our women and children are sacred. Our right to self-determination includes the right to protect our families within our own communities according to our own laws and values. When you make policy decisions, remember you are making decisions about real families and real lives. Qu yana.



Anvik Village

Elizabeth Jerue, Executive Director, Healing Native Hearts Coalition - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

I'm Elizabeth Jerue. I'm Deg Xit'an Athabascan from the village of Anvik, Alaska. My father is Carl Jerue and my mother is Tami Jerue. My home is an isolated community on the Yukon River, where we are rich in culture but must travel by small plane or boat just to reach a hub. I come before you as a mother of four, including my three-year-old daughter, Laura, and as the Executive Director of the Healing Native Hearts Coalition, where we serve an Interior region nearly as large as the state of Texas.

As an angsty teenager, I once swore I would never follow in my mother's footsteps because I saw that her work was never finished and she was never off the clock. Growing up in Anvik, I would wake up for school to find people and children sleeping in our living room because they needed a safe place and there are no shelters in rural Alaska. My parents were the law enforcement. They were pepper-sprayed and had weapons pointed at them. They chose to break cycles of violence for our family, and I continue this work because that cycle is not yet broken for all our people.

Topic 1. Proposed Reorganization and Consolidation of DOJ Offices

We strongly oppose any proposal to merge or absorb OVW into other components like the Office of Justice Programs. For us, these aren't abstract administrative shifts. When funding is destabilized, shelters close and advocates leave. In remote Alaska, there is often no second option for a survivor besides a violent home or leaving their community entirely.

Recommendations:

1. Publicly affirm that the OVW will remain a separate, standalone office as explicitly mandated by Congress.
2. Recognize that DOJ lacks the constitutional authority to subsume an office created by statute without new legislation.

Topic 2. Federal Treaty Rights vs. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Frameworks

The federal government must distinguish between political Tribal programs and racial diversity initiatives. Our funding is not based on race or ethnicity. It is a legally binding treaty obligation and a fulfillment of the trust responsibility owed to sovereign nations.

Recommendations:

1. Issue immediate formal guidance affirming that all Tribal programs are rooted in the federal trust responsibility and are categorically exempt from DEI-related terminations or rollbacks.
2. Build this guidance upon the Department of Education's April 2025 clarification and extend it across all federal agencies.

Topic 3. Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Delays and Predictability

The late release of funding opportunities over the past year has caused significant disruption. While some see these delays as paperwork, for our Interior Alaska communities, they are the difference between safety and harm, life and death.

Recommendations:

1. Establish and enforce NOFO release deadlines to ensure Tribes have adequate time to plan and sustain life-saving services.

Topic 4. Lack of Alaska-Based Staffing

Having one grant manager for 229 Tribes is neither sufficient nor realistic. The substantial time difference between Alaska and the East Coast creates a massive barrier for Tribes trying to meet mandates and reach their grant managers

Recommendations:

1. Assign at least one grant manager to each of the five major geographic areas of Alaska who understands our unique legal and cultural challenges.
2. Fund Alaska-based technical assistance providers, such as the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, which has supported our region for over a decade.

Topic 5. Statutory Reporting and Meaningful Consultation

This year, consultation reports were extremely delayed, meaning we were asked to provide recommendations without knowing what happened to last year's input. Without meaningful participation and assessment, this becomes a federal listening session where Tribal voices simply disappear.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a binding timeline to release the Consultation Update Report no later than 45 days before the annual consultation begins.
2. Extend the written comment period to allow Tribal leaders enough time to submit detailed recommendations after they have actually reviewed the Update Report.

Topic 6. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

We oppose any move to eliminate the National Baseline Study in favor of fragmented "community-level" studies. Remote Alaska villages lack the research infrastructure for such studies, and asking us to do them shifts the federal burden onto Tribes that are already struggling to serve victims with inadequate resources.

I oppose seeking an exemption from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) for this task force. Transparency requirements protect us from federal agencies that might otherwise ignore Tribal input.

Recommendations:

1. Dedicate the majority of carry-forward funds to completing the NBS as Congress mandated.
2. Provide Tribes with the tools and instruments for local research as a supplement to—not a replacement for—the national study.
3. Require federal agencies working in Alaska to collect and report prevalence data on the victims they encounter.
4. Strengthen the Task Force with adequate resources and a regular meeting schedule.
5. Convert the Task Force from an advisory body into a decision-making body

I would like to thank all the Tribal leaders who have spoken before me, and those who will speak after me, for being willing to leave your families and communities to advocate for the safety of our women and children. And I would especially like to thank my mother Tami for teaching me to stand up for injustice, for showing me how to care for our most vulnerable, and for breaking cycles for our family so that, in 20 years, my daughter does not have to be up here fighting the same battles.

**Asa'carsarmiut Tribe**

Carol Redfox, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

Catherine Moses, Tribal Administrator - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

Nita Stevens, OVC Outreach Coordinator/Case Manager - Authorized Designee (Written)

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

Victoria Wilde, Victim Advocate - Authorized Designee (Written)

The Asa'carsarmiut Tribe is a Yup'ik community located in Mountain Village, Alaska, on the lower Yukon River. With a population of approximately 850 to 1,400 members, the Tribe is situated in a remote, off-road region about 80 miles inland from the Bering Sea. The community is entirely dependent on subsistence hunting and gathering, including moose, birds, berries, and salmon, to sustain a way of life that has existed for thousands of years. Accessibility is limited to air, water, snowmobile, or ATV, and emergencies often require flying 100 to 450 miles to Bethel or Anchorage.

Introduction of Carol Redfox

My Yup'ik name is Naniquan, which means "light." I have been a wife for 38 years and a mother of four, though I carry the heavy weight of losing one of my sons back in 2010. I was born and raised right here in my village, and for 28 years, I've worked as the administrative assistant at our K-12 school. I enjoy my job tremendously because I get to see the beautiful, smiling faces of our 177 students every single day. I've served on the Tribal Council for about ten years now, currently as the Secretary/Treasurer, because I want to protect our women and our way of life in this rapidly changing world.

Introduction of Catherine Moses

I am Catherine Moses, the Tribal Administrator for the Asa'carsarmiut Tribe. I represent a community in Mountain Village, a remote area of Western Alaska that lacks road access and is frequently isolated from communication and electricity during severe weather. I strongly believe that subsistence fishing is in our DNA, and I advocate for the protection of our salmon and cultural identity as a vital way to heal our souls and prevent the social issues, such as alcohol abuse and domestic violence, that arise when our traditional way of life is threatened. My primary mission is to ensure Tribal self-determination by challenging federal micromanagement and securing the necessary funding for housing and public safety programs that reflect the unique needs of our village.

Introduction and Personal Account for Victoria Wilde

My name is Victoria Wilde, and I am a member of the Asa'carsarmiut Tribal Council and the OVW Victim Advocate for our Tribe. I am a full-blooded Yupik Eskimo who lives off our traditions and ways of life. Though I am not fluent in our language, I hunt for food and live off the land just as our ancestors taught us.

I want to share what led me to become a Victim Advocate, because since I started this work, I feel like I have finally found my purpose in life and my place. I grew up in a family of alcoholics, which meant I had to grow up fast to look after my five siblings. I felt alone and unprotected, like I had no one to talk to, and as a young teenager, I turned to alcohol myself just to numb my pain.

At the age of 15, I entered a relationship that became one of the biggest lessons of my life. During that time, I was physically, mentally, and sexually abused. There were times I was truly scared for my life and had to fight just to stay alive. He would give me bruises in places where no one could see them, and even though my mom tried to protect me, once even trying to throw me out of a boat so I wouldn't go on a trip with him, I was too embarrassed to reach out for help.

Eventually, I left that relationship and never looked back. I knew I had to put a stop to the cycle for my siblings and my own children. My parents stopped drinking in 2019, and I have worked hard to rebuild myself. Today, I am with a loving, caring, gentle man who takes wonderful care of me and our children. I know what it feels like to be an outcast and to be hurting, and now I do my best to make sure the people in my community feel accepted and never alone.

Introduction and Personal Account for Nita Stevens

I work for the Tribal Council as the OVC Outreach Coordinator and Case Manager. I make referrals for our people to get help in Bethel or Anchorage, and I organize wellness trips for ice fishing and berry picking to help our people remember our way of life. I know the pain of our village. I lost a niece to suicide who was using Gabapentin and meth, and I lost a nephew to suicide after he was bullied at school. My commitment to this work is personal because, in my younger years, suicide was never a problem we talked about, but now it feels like an epidemic.

Back in October 1993, my husband decided to drink, and he got aggressive and beat me up. I thought my only way out was to jump out of our living room window. I didn't even feel my left ankle break until I hit the ground and tried to run. When my husband saw me lying there, he sobered up, but my kids were so scared. The state pressed charges even though I didn't want them to, and a social worker tried to take my kids away while I was recovering for a month in the hospital. I am thankful to God that we stuck together. We have seven children and ten grandkids now, and my husband has never hit me again.

My dad always told me that when you have problems with your husband, you deal with it yourself and don't involve your siblings. He taught me that when someone does you wrong, you don't pay them back, you forgive before you go to bed. Even with all the hardships we face, we stand together to make the impossible possible. I want our programs to grow so our younger generation knows there is always help and they should never give up.

Introduction and Personal Account for Lorraine Mike

My English name is Lorraine Mike, and I am a Yup'ik Eskimo from a large family of eleven children. I serve as the OVW Program Coordinator, focusing on community wellness and supporting our women who are survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking. We host Yuraq, our Native dancing events, because it gives an indescribable sense of well-being. Watching all ages, from babies to elders, take part in the drumming and singing helps us heal from the hardships and historical trauma that we carry.

It is very hard for me to disclose this, but I want to speak about my personal experience to help me advocate for my community. When I was about seven or eight years old, I was a victim of sexual assault by a male family relative. It happened at our old fish camp, on the beach where we loved to play on the Yukon River. I didn't understand what was right or wrong back then because my immediate family never did anything like that, but I grew up with a deep sense of disgust with myself that I hid for most of my life.

That experience hardened me on a different level. I would like to say more about what people did to my family and the trauma they bestowed on us, but it is so hard to admit these things to people. I share this now because if someone hears it, it might help prevent it from happening to another child. We are facing so many problems with drugs and violence breaking our families apart, and I want our efforts to be strong so that we can keep our women and children safe from harm.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Topic 1. Geographic Isolation and Infrastructure Failure

The village's complete isolation from the road system means that when storms or typhoons hit, we lose all communication and electricity. Without power, our subsistence foods spoil in freezers, and families are left in the dark and cold without a way to call for emergency help because cell service and landlines fail.

When medical or safety emergencies occur, the weather often prevents air travel, leaving us entirely out of touch with the world. The high cost of travel, reaching up to \$2,000 for a single trip, further limits our ability to access the health care and jobs that could provide a path out of poverty and violence.

Recommendations:

1. Provide direct assistance and grants for high energy costs, home efficiency upgrades, and weatherization.
2. Invest in renewable energy and infrastructure loans to ensure long-term stability during disasters.
3. Fund the Rural Postsecondary and Economic Development program to create local job pathways and offset travel costs.

Topic 2. Subsistence Rights and Cultural Identity

The decline of king and chum salmon due to climate change and deep-sea commercial trawlers is a direct threat to our community's safety. For Yup'ik people, salmon is as essential as beef is to others. It is the core of our diet and our sense of self-worth.

When our men are prevented from fishing and providing for their families, they face a profound identity crisis that frequently leads to increased alcohol abuse and domestic violence. We believe the federal government prioritizes commercial fisheries over our human need for food and spiritual healing.

Recommendations:

1. Fight climate change through regulations, carbon pricing, and clean energy standards to protect traditional habitats.
2. Reform federal and state fishing regulations to prioritize local subsistence needs over commercial trawler bycatch.
3. Fund culturally relevant wellness activities, such as Yup'ik dancing (Yuraq) and subsistence events, to help heal historical trauma.

Topic 3. Law Enforcement and Jurisdictional Gaps

Public safety is severely limited because we currently have only one police officer for the entire community, leading to extreme burnout and gaps in 24/7 coverage. When we call for help, we must often wait 30 to 45 minutes for a response, and in major cases, we wait days for state troopers to fly in from Fairbanks.

A few years ago, one of our young men was beaten to death, but the state troopers investigated for only a few days before leaving without a prosecution. It is an uneasy feeling to live in a remote village knowing a murderer remains among us because the state decided the case was "unsubstantiated".

Recommendations:

1. Fund Tribal Police Programs that allow for 24-hour coverage and multiple officers.

2. Establish a federal requirement to conduct independent investigations when the state fails to prosecute violent crimes in Tribal villages.
3. Provide funding for the training of Tribal judges and the development of drug ordinances that can be locally enforced.

Topic 4. Federal Micromanagement and Grant Burdens

Federal agencies often treat Tribes like “beggars” by imposing a lengthy list of special conditions that hinder our progress and prevent self-determination. We spend so much time trying to meet these administrative hurdles that we are forced to ignore the actual program goals intended to help our people.

Furthermore, current regulations often prevent us from using water and sewer funding for the very housing projects we are building to reduce the overcrowding that contributes to domestic violence. We need to be treated as partners rather than being micromanaged by officials who do not live in our villages or understand our costs.

Recommendations:

1. Implement mandatory April 1st release deadlines for all Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs).
2. Expand project periods to five years to reduce the burden of annual reapplications.
3. Streamline continuation applications to a maximum of 10 pages for Tribes in good standing.
4. Appoint Tribal liaisons in every agency and allow Tribes to access their own water and sewer funding directly.

Topic 5. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

We are deeply concerned by proposals to consolidate OVW and OTJ into larger federal departments. These offices must remain separate and distinct as mandated by Congress to ensure our specific needs are not lost in a massive bureaucracy.

We also believe the federal government must honor its trust responsibility as a legal obligation rather than a discretionary policy. Our safety and funding should not be subject to the whims of changing political administrations or broad diversity initiatives.

Recommendations:

1. Reject all proposals to merge, absorb, or consolidate the OVW or OTJ.
2. Issue an OMB directive establishing that all Tribal funding based on the trust responsibility is permanently exempt from DEI-related policy changes.
3. Fund Alaska-based technical assistance providers who understand the unique geographic and cultural realities of the region.

Thank you for listening to our concerns and recommendations.



Cahuilla Band of Indians

Samantha Thornsberry, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Written)

I want to highlight the federal government’s failure to meet its trust and treaty responsibilities regarding the rising rates of violence, human trafficking, and missing and murdered Indigenous persons in Indian Country. I am deeply troubled by the lack of good faith from federal agencies, demonstrated by the absence of key decision-makers

during our government-to-government consultations. My testimony is structured around the four mandated consultation topics, summarized below.

Topic 1. Administering Tribal Funds and Programs

Recent federal cuts, consolidations, and proposed mergers of departments like the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), OVW, and NIJ diminish access to life-saving services and reduce the workforce needed to administer them. To me, this looks less like streamlining and more like a way to narrow our access to funding and limit Tribal access to essential federal resources. Furthermore, the elimination of culturally specific services shows a disregard for the federal trust obligations to sovereign Tribal Nations. Services for Native Americans are not race-based initiatives, but a fulfillment of those trust responsibilities.

Recommendations:

1. Halt proposed mergers and funding consolidations (such as COPS, OVW, and NIJ) that reduce transparency and Tribal access to essential federal resources.
2. Provide sufficient detail, analysis, and an opportunity for Tribal review and comment prior to implementing any structural changes to federal grants.
3. Ensure that federal agencies understand that services for Native populations are a fulfillment of federal trust obligations, rather than viewing them DEI or racial preferences.

Topic 2. Enhancing the Safety of Indian Women

To combat the increasing severity and complexity of domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking, our funding must be reliable rather than sporadic or overly competitive. I am highly critical of the reduction in the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) grant award ceilings and the consolidation of OVW funding. It is also entirely unfair that our Tribes are penalized for unspent balances that often result from the federal government's own prolonged budget approval processes or our own careful fiscal management.

Recommendations:

1. Provide consistent, predictable, and appropriately set-aside funding for Tribal Nations each fiscal year, taking inflation and the severity of victimization into account.
2. Remove all DEI-related language and special conditions from Tribal NOFOs, as they are inappropriate for sovereign Tribal Nations.
3. Stop penalizing our Tribal programs for unspent grant balances, recognizing that delays are often caused by federal budget processes or careful fiscal procurement.

Topic 3. Strengthening the Federal Response to Violent Crimes

A meaningful federal response requires direct investment in our Tribal law enforcement and justice infrastructure. Current COPS funding is structurally flawed, offering low award ceilings that fail to cover basic equipment or the creation of start-up police departments for rural Tribes like ours. I also must highlight the unique challenges we face in P.L. 280 states like California, where state jurisdiction often results in under-policing, delayed responses, and jurisdictional confusion. Furthermore, many of our Tribes lack foundational infrastructure like 911 systems, detention centers, and courts.

Recommendations:

1. Reform COPS Funding: Increase award ceilings indexed to inflation, create a dedicated funding track for start-up Tribal police departments, and expand allowable expenses to include training, vehicles, ammunition, and dispatch systems.
2. Provide multi-year, renewable funding commitments (5–10 years) and establish a guaranteed annual Tribal set-aside within COPS.
3. Address P.L. 280 Challenges: Create dedicated public safety funding streams for Tribes in P.L. 280 states,

fund Tribal-State cross-deputization agreements, expand federal investigative support, and streamline retrocession efforts.

4. Provide direct, block-style funding for the full Tribal justice ecosystem, including courts, public defenders, probation, victim services, and basic infrastructure like detention facilities and broadband.

Topic 4. Improving Access to Crime Information Databases

Our Tribal law enforcement agencies operate at a structural disadvantage due to jurisdictional barriers that block real-time access to state and federal criminal history repositories, arrest records, and protection orders. This information gap jeopardizes the safety of our officers, victims, and communities, particularly in PL280 states. While the Tribal Access Program (TAP) is highly effective, our smaller and rural Tribes often cannot access it due to infrastructure limitations, funding gaps, or phased enrollment caps.

Recommendations:

1. Mandate parity of access to state and federal criminal justice databases for all federally recognized Tribes.
2. Incentivize states to execute information-sharing agreements with Tribes by conditioning federal criminal justice funding on their cooperation.
3. Ensure our Tribal authorities and victim advocates have access to state disposition data and supervision status records to effectively plan for survivor safety.
4. Guarantee universal eligibility for the Tribal Access Program (TAP) for all Tribes, accompanied by expanded funding for hardware, secure workstations, broadband upgrades, and long-term operational support.
5. Fund regional Tribal criminal justice information hubs and develop standardized Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) for state-Tribal data exchange.



Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes

Richard Peterson, President - Tribal Leader (Written)

Paulette Moreno, Vice President - Tribal Leader (Pre-recorded Oral)

I am submitting this testimony on behalf of our more than 38,000 Tribal citizens. I am providing these comments for the 2025 Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation to emphasize the urgent need for structural reforms that uphold Tribal sovereignty, enhance safety, and honor the federal trust responsibility. Violence against our people is an attack on our sovereignty, and the federal government must act as an ally, not a gatekeeper.

Topic 1. Administering Tribal Funds and Programs

Tribal governments are not passive grantees. We are sovereign nations with demonstrated capacity to administer justice, safety, and victim services programs. The greatest barriers to efficiency and effectiveness are not in Tribal communities, but in federal structures that delay and complicate access to resources.

Recommendations:

1. Provide direct, non-competitive funding to Tribes rather than routing it through states, and ensure guaranteed base funding regardless of a Tribe's size.
2. Expand multi-year, flexible block awards to reduce administrative burdens and allow for long-term planning, as one-year competitive grants destabilize our programs.
3. Streamline federal requirements by eliminating duplicative reporting and relying on the Single Audit Act

for accountability.

4. Respect Tribal sovereignty in program design so we can tailor services to our cultural lifeways rather than relying on one-size-fits-all federal templates.
5. Pair jurisdiction with resources so that we have the necessary funding and technical assistance to build the courts, law enforcement, and data systems required to actually exercise our authority.

Topic 2. Enhancing the Safety of Indigenous Women

Safety for our citizens and children requires both the restoration of Tribal authority and the investment in community-based solutions. In Alaska, where jurisdiction is uniquely fragmented, and many villages lack local law enforcement, federal inaction translates directly into increased harm.

Recommendations:

1. Restore full Tribal jurisdiction by expanding VAWA's Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction to cover all violent crimes, including sexual assault, trafficking, and homicide.
2. Address the MMIP crisis by supporting Tribal-led search and recovery efforts and ensuring Alaska Tribes are full partners in federal task forces.
3. Fund safe housing and transportation, including dedicated streams for transitional housing and subsidized transportation (such as airfare vouchers and ferry credits), because in rural Alaska, transportation is safety infrastructure.
4. Support traditional healing by investing in trauma-informed programs grounded in Indigenous knowledge.
5. Address violence linked to resource extraction, as these large-scale projects bring increased rates of violence and trafficking. The DOJ must proactively direct resources to prevent and respond to this harm.

Topic 3. Strengthening the Federal Response

The federal trust responsibility requires DOJ and partner agencies to act as allies, not gatekeepers. Yet in Alaska, federal personnel often lack the resources, training, or accountability to effectively respond to crimes against Native women.

Recommendations:

1. Improve interagency coordination and FBI accountability by formalizing Tribal-federal task forces and directing the FBI to dedicate agents to rural Alaska and co-chair MMIP task forces.
2. Increase accountability by publishing transparent data on federal case declinations in Indian Country and Alaska Native villages.
3. Mandate training in sovereignty, jurisdiction, and cultural awareness for all federal personnel working with Tribes.
4. Invest in Alaska-specific solutions that expand law enforcement presence in rural areas, tailored to our geographic realities.
5. Close jurisdictional gaps in Alaska by restoring our full criminal jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators and providing the funding necessary to build systems to exercise this authority, so abusers no longer act with impunity.

Topic 4. Improving Access to Criminal Justice Information Systems

Tribal governments cannot protect our communities if we are denied access to the very systems that track crime, offenders, and threats. Alaska Tribes remain at a structural disadvantage in this regard.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure full, direct Tribal access to federal databases like National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) without forcing us to use state intermediaries.

2. Support IT and training capacity by investing in technical assistance and broadband infrastructure so we can meaningfully utilize these systems.
3. Guarantee equity for Alaska Tribes by developing targeted solutions to overcome the unique connectivity and jurisdictional barriers faced by our rural villages.

Topic 5. Additional Recommendations

Beyond the main consultation topics, I want to stress the following:

Recommendations:

1. Establish consultation accountability by creating timelines and public reporting for DOJ responses to our recommendations, because consultation without follow-through erodes our trust.
2. Co-create solutions by shifting from mere consultation to co-design, ensuring we are equal partners in shaping policies.
3. Respect data sovereignty by acknowledging Tribal ownership of data collected in our communities, ensuring information-sharing is guided by Tribal consent.

Safety is sovereignty. Every day of federal inaction leaves Native women in rural Alaska stranded with no way out. I urge the DOJ to move swiftly from listening to action by implementing these recommendations in full partnership with Tribal Nations.



Cherokee Nation

Chuck Hoskins, Jr., Principal Chief - Tribal Leader (Written)

Daniel Mead, Marshal - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

Introduction of Chuck Hoskins, Jr.

On behalf of our Nation, I want to address the urgent crises of violence against Native women, MMIP, and the ongoing implementation of the VAWA.

Introduction of Daniel Mead

I am Daniel Mead, the Marshal of the Cherokee Nation, a United States Marine Corps Combat Veteran, and a 19-year veteran of the Cherokee Nation Marshal Service. I am here to speak the truth about the federal government's shortfalls in honoring treaties signed hundreds of years ago, which deeply impacts our 7,000-square-mile, 14-county reservation in Northeastern Oklahoma. The time has passed for mere ideas. It is time for concrete solutions and actions.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Topic 1. Addressing the MMIP Crisis and Implementing VAWA

The MMIP epidemic is not an abstract issue for the Cherokee Nation. We have missing citizens whose families are still searching for answers. While we confront this crisis directly by investing in our law enforcement, prosecutors, and survivor services, such as our ONE FIRE program, national systems consistently undercount Native cases. VAWA has been critical in restoring our limited criminal jurisdiction to hold offenders accountable, but expanding our authority without providing sufficient support undermines our effectiveness.

Recommendations:

1. Match expanded Tribal responsibility with sustained, flexible federal support that is consistent with the federal government's treaty obligations and trust responsibility.
2. Continue supporting VAWA and Tribal-led programs like ONEFIRE to ensure we have the tools necessary to hold offenders accountable and protect survivors.
3. Commit to frequent, ongoing conversations between the federal government and Tribal leaders to implement actual solutions, rather than limiting these vital discussions to once a year.

Topic 2. Investing in Justice and Detention Infrastructure

Despite our operational capacity, the Cherokee Nation does not operate its own correctional facility, forcing us to rely on agreements with local governments that strain our partners and limit our VAWA authority. The scarcity of federal resources is alarming. The Bureau of Prisons currently allocates only 100 beds for all of Indian Country, of which we utilize 20, forcing Tribes to compete for space.

Recommendations:

1. Make meaningful investments in Tribal detention and corrections infrastructure so we can fully exercise our jurisdiction.
2. Expand the Bureau of Prisons' bed capacity for Indian Country and commit to a sustained federal partnership to support Tribal-operated justice infrastructure.

Topic 3. Removing Statutory Limitations and Addressing Federal Declinations

Our Tribal courts remain severely constrained by statutory sentencing caps that often fail to reflect the severity of violent offenses, which weakens deterrence and jeopardizes victim safety. Being limited to stacking sentences up to a maximum of only nine years is a slap in the face to victims and handcuffs our ability to deliver justice.

Daniel Mead: I have personally witnessed the devastating impact of this. I had to notify two inmates that the federal government declined their cases, meaning their potential sentences dropped from 20+ years to just nine years under Tribal jurisdiction, causing one offender to literally jump for joy while leaving me feeling defeated as an officer.

Recommendations:

1. Increase sentencing authority for Tribal courts to ensure appropriate offender accountability and establish parity with federal justice systems.
2. Provide greater clarity, transparency, and meaningful consultation regarding federal referral and declination decisions so that offenders do not benefit from jurisdictional fragmentation.

Topic 4. Streamlining Federal Grant Administration

To administer programs efficiently and effectively, we need practical frameworks that reflect the realities Tribes face.

Recommendations:

1. Integrate OVW grants under the P.L. 102-477 framework.
2. Allow Tribes to include OVW grants within P.L. 477 plans to reduce administrative duplication, leverage federal funding alongside Tribal resources, and deliver services in a highly coordinated and culturally responsive manner.

Topic 5. Federal Declination of Cases

Too often, cases referred to federal prosecutors are declined, even when they involve serious acts of violence against Native women and children, creating dangerous consequences for our communities.

Recommendations:

1. Provide Tribes with greater clarity, transparency, and influence over federal referral decisions and declinations so that offenders can no longer benefit from these jurisdictional gaps.

Topic 6. Law Enforcement Recruitment and Retention

Daniel Mead: My Marshals hold Tribal, State, and Federal commissions, and we are cross-deputized with 14 counties and over 50 cities, yet we do not have access to retirement and pensions. In today's economy, it is incredibly difficult to recruit young officers and even harder to retain them once they gain experience, because we simply cannot compete with outside agencies that offer retirement benefits.

Recommendations:

1. Establish retirement and pension options for Tribal law enforcement officers to ensure we can recruit and retain the highly trained personnel necessary to protect our communities.

Topic 7. VAWA, MMIP, and Victim Services

VAWA is critical to our ability to respond to the interconnected crises of MMIP, domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking. We have heavily invested in our law enforcement, prosecutors, and survivor services, such as our ONEFIRE program, which provides essential housing, advocacy, and legal help across our reservation.

Recommendations:

1. Continue supporting VAWA and Tribal-led programs like ONEFIRE to ensure we have the tools necessary to hold offenders accountable and protect survivors.
2. Commit to frequent, ongoing conversations between the federal government and Tribal leaders to implement actual solutions, rather than limiting these vital discussions to once a year.



Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

Ryman LeBeau, Chairman - Tribal Leader (Written)

I feel a great responsibility to ensure our voices from the traditional homelands of the Oceti Sakowin are heard by DOJ. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe (CRST) is a Federally Recognized Tribe with sovereign, self-governing authority over the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. Cheyenne River comprises four bands of the Teton Lakota and is one of the Great Sioux Nation signatory Tribes under the 1851 and 1868 Fort Laramie Treaties.

Topic 1. Enhancing Public Safety Funding and Service Delivery

Under the BIA Office of Justice Services (OJS), in 2021 Indian Tribes received \$450 million, and BIA OJS Reports that Indian Tribes have unmet needs for an additional \$3.09 Billion Public Safety and Criminal Justice Services. Accordingly, to improve the delivery of services to Indian Country, DOJ should:

Recommendations:

1. Award grant funding based on clear data and evidence of high crime rates, ensuring resources go to the reservations that need them most rather than those who can simply afford the best grant writers.
2. Provide full funding for BIA OJS so that Tribes can maintain robust, fully functioning justice systems.
3. Establish major new DOJ block grants for Tribes and ensure comprehensive, coordinated planning between the DOJ, BIA OJS, and Tribal governments, such as coordinating COPS funding without limitations.

4. Provide for Coordinated, Comprehensive Planning, Contracting, and Compacting between DOJ, BIA OJS, and Tribal Governments. COPS funding should be coordinated with BIA OJS Tribal Police Funding to fund Tribal officers without limitations.

Topic 2. Restoring Tribal Jurisdiction and Securing Funding

While VAWA 2022 restored jurisdiction to Tribes choosing to exercise Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction, it did not cover all serious crimes, leaving perpetrators able to slip through the cracks. Furthermore, Tribes lack the flexible and consistent funding necessary to actually implement this restored criminal jurisdiction.

Recommendations:

1. Pass a full *Oliphant* fix to restore every Tribal Nation's jurisdiction over all crimes committed by non-Indians on Indian land.
2. Provide annual, consistent, and sustainable noncompetitive funding to fully cover Tribal public safety and victim services, including requesting the full \$25 million authorized for the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction grant program.
3. Fully fund the VAWA 2022 Alaska Pilot Project, remove limits on the number of eligible Tribal Nations, and provide justice funding directly to Alaska Native Villages rather than the state.
4. Overhaul the BOP Tribal prisoner program and require the BOP to cover the transportation costs for moving inmates to designated facilities.

Topic 3. Mitigating the Impact of the Castro-Huerta Decision

The Supreme Court's *Castro-Huerta* decision has threatened our sovereignty by giving states jurisdiction to prosecute cases on Indian lands without Tribal consent. Since this decision, we have witnessed a reduction in federal resources and FBI personnel in Indian Country, and some U.S. Attorneys are declining cases in favor of state prosecution.

Recommendations:

1. Reverse the retreat of federal resources by pouring more DOJ and DOI staff, education, and training into Indian Country.
2. Ensure U.S. Attorneys and the FBI actively implement the September 2022 DOJ directives that recognize Tribal sovereignty and advise against altering referral practices without formal Tribal consultation.
3. Support legislation to correct the *Castro-Huerta* decision to prevent courts from continuing to rewrite federal statutes that were meant to affirm Tribal sovereignty.

Topic 4. Confronting the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Crisis

The continuation of the MMIW crisis and the inadequate federal response constitutes a breach of the federal trust responsibility and a human rights violation. When crimes do occur, victims and their families are often treated with cultural insensitivity, such as the shipping of human remains without proper modesty covers or the denial of proper burial rites.

Recommendations:

1. Require the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to implement MMIW protocols, establish permanent MMIW staff, and fully staff its Office of Tribal Affairs.
2. Investigate state and local agencies that demonstrate a pattern of inadequately responding to MMIW cases.
3. Establish culturally sensitive protocols for the handling of human remains and provide direct funding to help families transport their loved ones home for culturally appropriate burials.
4. Fully implement the NBS and include targeted questions regarding human trafficking and MMIW.

5. Direct the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to establish a specific National Emergency Alert System event code for Missing and Endangered AI/AN Persons over the age of 21, and provide congressional funding to support it.

Topic 5. Reforming the Crime Victim Fund (CVF) and Family Services

The DOJ currently administers the CVF in ways that impose unnecessary administrative burdens and inappropriately interfere with Tribal decision-making. Additionally, the expiration of the FVPSA has left Tribes without essential funding for domestic violence shelters.

Recommendations:

1. Support a permanent, flexible Tribal set-aside in the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).
2. Commit to regular Tribal consultations and appoint a Standing Working Group of Tribal Experts to improve the administration of the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Program.
3. Allow historical and intergenerational trauma to be officially recognized as named victim services, and extend the CVF grant project period for up to four years.
4. Reauthorize FVPSA, increase its Tribal set-aside, and authorize permanent funding for Native Domestic Violence Resource Centers and hotlines.

Topic 6. Correcting P.L. 280 Funding Disparities

Tribes located within P.L. 280 states represent 65% of all federally recognized Tribes, yet they receive substantially lower BIA support for law enforcement and courts, essentially leaving them with no sustainability or safety.

Recommendations:

1. Direct the BIA to request appropriate additional federal funding to end the disparity in resources for Tribes located in P.L. 280 states.
2. Provide sustainable and equitable BIA funding to P.L. 280 Tribes for their Tribal court systems and law enforcement agencies.
3. Expeditiously conduct an updated BIA study to accurately identify the comprehensive public safety budgetary needs of P.L. 280 Tribes.

Topic 7. Holding Extractive Industries Accountable

There is a documented historical link between extractive industries and escalations of sexual and domestic violence against Native women, largely driven by the influx of itinerant workforces into man-camps near Tribal lands.

Recommendations:

1. Require the development of an enforceable community safety plan as a condition for any permit that would result in a man-camp on or near Tribal lands.
2. Create standard protections against extractive industries' employment of militarized police forces, ensuring no excessive force or civil rights violations occur against Tribal citizens.
3. Establish strict screening guidelines to prevent convicted predators and violent offenders from gaining employment with extractive industries near Tribal lands.
4. Perform gendered violence impact analyses during all federal permitting processes for mines and extractive projects.

Topic 8. Ensuring TLOA Accountability and Communication

To protect survivors, Tribal officials must be kept informed about the status of cases and offenders. However, coordination from the federal government is often lacking regarding case declinations and prisoner releases.

Recommendations:

1. Direct U.S. Attorneys to comply with Section 212 of the TLOA by coordinating with Tribal officials when declining cases, and tie this compliance to employee performance metrics.
2. Ensure Tribal justice officials are consistently notified regarding sex offender releases and re-entry onto Tribal lands, in accordance with TLOA Section 261.
3. Consistently and timely submit the VAWA Annual Tribal Consultation Report to Congress on the DOJ website.

**Citizen Potawatomi Nation*****Nathanial Amdur-Clark, Attorney - Authorized Designee (Oral)***

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. I am Tanner Amdur-Clark, Citizen Band Potawatomi and an attorney with the Sonosky law firm. I have the honor of being an authorized designee of my Tribe, and I am also here as counsel for the national 477 Tribal Workgroup. Our workgroup represents approximately 300 federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations served through eighty 477 plans.

Topic 1. Barriers to the P.L. 477 Program

We have recently observed what we can only describe as hostility from DOJ toward the P.L. 477 Program and our efforts to integrate DOJ and OVW programs into our 477 plans. This has created barriers, such as when the DOJ refused to transfer funds to the BIA for the Wyandotte Nation until Congress scheduled an oversight hearing. Additionally, last October, CPN's amendment to include DOJ programs was denied at the department's urging, despite the programs having been run successfully for years in other 477 plans. We believe this stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of the 477 Program.

Recommendations:

1. We ask that you work with us to clear up these misconceptions within DOJ so that OVW can support Tribal self-determination and become an advocate for this critical program.

Topic 2. Purpose and Benefits of the 477 Program

The 477 Program allows our Tribal Nations to combine federal funding from programs across 12 federal agencies into a single 477 plan. This plan is designed by the nation itself to weave together services to best support our community members in their efforts toward self-sufficiency. The program provides crucial flexibility by requiring only one annual report in place of all other reporting mechanisms, allowing us to pool and reallocate integrated funds, and ensuring unexpended funds remain available without a fiscal year limitation. These functions are all designed to place more decision-making power in the hands of Tribal Nations so that we can better respond to our communities' needs. We consider 477 to be the single most powerful tool we have to build on self-governance and self-determination.

Recommendations:

1. The federal government should recognize and affirm that the 477 Program is the single most powerful tool we have for self-governance and self-determination.
2. Support the program's inherent flexibility, which allows us to do what works best for our communities, supporting the expansion and improvement of services.

Topic 3. Misconceptions and Clarifying Scope of the 477 Program

The main misconception we hear, including from DOJ, is that 477 allows Tribes not to provide the services for which a grant was originally provided. This is false. We are still required to provide the services, but 477 integration allows us to bring additional resources to bear, access efficiencies, and ultimately provide more services, not less. Another misconception is the view, consistently espoused in DOJ's writings, that 477 is only for employment and job training programs. This is also incorrect, as Congress amended the statute in 2017 to clearly establish that supportive services are included within the scope of the 477 Program. Comprehensive, wrap-around supportive services are critical for community stability and self-sufficiency, covering both crime prevention and dealing with the aftermath for victims and perpetrators.

Recommendations:

1. I ask that you work with us, please, not against us, to ensure the full inclusion and integration of Tribal programs into the 477 Program.
2. Acknowledge that 477 integration supports our goal of increasing the availability of services, as we are still required to provide the services called for by the grant.
3. Confirm that supportive services are fully included under the scope of the 477 Program, in line with the 2017 amendments.



Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribe

Danielle Matt, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral)

My name is Danielle Matt, and I am a Council member for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). I am here to share how vital OVW's Tribal Governments Program is to our people on the 1.25-million-acre Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. I know these programs work from a very deep, personal place. I am a survivor, and I am alive today because of these programs. Until I was about 22, I did not know a home without violence, but this program broke that cycle for my family. My grandkids are going to be the first in my immediate family who do not have to grow up with violence in their household. I even plan to use this program again in 2028 to get a restraining order when my perpetrator is up for parole. This work gives me my life back, and it keeps our kids out of the system by showing them that violence is not normal.

Topic 1. Inadequate Staffing and Funding Levels

Our current funding only covers two staff members, and they are stretched incredibly thin trying to meet the needs of our survivors. We serve about 80 to 100 survivors every year, seeing some of them multiple times in a single week. To truly take care of our Tribal community's needs, we need at least four or five people on staff, but we just cannot do that with the funding we have now.

Recommendations:

1. The DOJ must press Congress for increased appropriations for the Tribal Governments Program.
2. Continue providing the essential funding that keeps our doors open for culturally appropriate advocacy.

Topic 2. Administrative Delays and Restrictions on Accessing Funds

It is really hard to run a program when I am waiting for somebody to say "yes" so I can use the money already given to us. When we receive a grant, we can initially only use a tiny amount for travel to an orientation, but we cannot access funds for salaries or rental assistance while waiting for budget approval. This process can take six months to a year, creating dangerous gaps in our service delivery.

Recommendations:

1. Allow Tribes to access grant money while we are still working through budget finalization requirements.
2. Expedite the approval process to ensure the timely release of grant funds.

Topic 3. Housing Infrastructure Barriers

On our reservation, we have a major lack of available housing, and even when we offer rental assistance, it is not enough because the cost of living is so high. Survivors often have nowhere safe to go when they flee violence. We want to build the capacity to run our own shelters and construct tiny homes that provide privacy, dignity, and healing spaces, but current grant restrictions do not allow us to build this critical infrastructure.

Recommendations:

1. Allow Tribes to use grant funds for the construction of emergency shelters and transitional housing.
2. Recognize Tribal sovereignty by letting us deploy resources to build housing that aligns with our Tribal values.

Topic 4. Mandated Partnerships with Non-Tribal Entities

Current grant stipulations require us to collaborate with non-Tribal domestic violence coalitions and programs. However, Tribal and non-Tribal programs do not always mesh. Our values, our approaches, and our community needs are very distinct. We need the autonomy to build a justice system that actually meets the needs of our specific community.

Recommendations:

1. Remove the grant stipulation that requires collaboration with non-Tribal programs.
2. Allow Tribes to determine our own partnerships based on what serves our people best.

Topic 5. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I am very concerned about the idea of consolidating DOJ grant offices. If our funding streams are merged, our domestic violence programs will have to compete for money against entirely different public safety priorities. Combatting violence against our women requires a dedicated focus and dedicated resources that should not be subject to fluctuating annual appropriations.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain the specialized and dedicated support currently provided by the OVW.
2. Ensure that funding for Tribal public safety remains reliable and fulfills federal trust and treaty responsibilities.



Craig Tribal Association

Aaron Bean, Governmental Affairs Specialist - Authorized Designee (Oral)

I am Aaron Bean. My father was born in the Bay of Pillars, and his name means “moon” in English. He eventually moved to Sitka, where I was born and raised. I have spent my life in Southeast Alaska, serving as a police officer on Prince of Wales before moving back to Craig in 2019. I remember when I was eight years old and asked my father to teach me to carve, but he told me he didn’t want me to learn. He wanted to protect me from the pain he

experienced in boarding schools, where his head was shaved and he was forbidden from speaking Tlingit. Today, I am inspired by the expansion of Tribal jurisdiction to help our Tribe build a court that can finally protect our people from the violence that has persisted for too long.

Topic 1. The Failure of Meaningful Consultation

I see a fundamental misunderstanding of what consultation means. It should be a dialogue and a distribution of power, not just a session where we speak and you listen. Under Executive Order 13175, federal agencies have a fiduciary duty to engage regularly with Tribal officials when developing policies with Tribal implications. True consultation means actively asking Tribes what we need and taking concrete action, rather than treating us like wards as the federal government has done since the Treaty of Cession in 1867.

Recommendations:

1. Federal agencies must sit down with Tribes to share concerns and co-create solutions through actual dialogue and feedback.
2. When regulations are changed, the Department of Justice should include a preamble in the federal register explicitly stating what Tribal concerns were raised and exactly how those concerns were addressed.

Topic 2. Jurisdictional Gaps and Public Law 280

I see P.L. 280 as a colonial vestige that has diminished Tribal authority and created jurisdictional gaps that directly exasperate violence in our communities. This history of disregarding our sovereignty continues today. For example, when I drafted a civil diversion agreement for the Tribe to handle certain cases, the state's Attorney General's office dismissed it out of hand, demanding we use their rigid template instead. I see the state acting in bad faith by failing to amend its constitution for subsistence rights, and I believe this same reluctance applies to ceding control over criminal matters.

Recommendations:

1. Broaden the definition of Indian Country in VAWA to explicitly include Alaska Native villages for jurisdictional purposes.
2. Grant all Tribes opt-in authority for special Tribal criminal jurisdiction without restrictive Indian Country requirements.
3. Support retrocession petitions under 25 USC 1323, allowing the federal government to take back jurisdiction when it is proven that the state is not acting in good faith to handle criminal matters.

Topic 3. Inadequate Funding and Administrative Inequity

I notice an apartheid-like system where our sovereign Tribes are forced to compete for limited funding while the DOJ budget has grown to \$58 billion. We face hard caps on budgets that make it impossible to pay attorneys competitive rates or cover the indirect costs of administering grants. Furthermore, our efforts to build court capacity are frequently hindered by bureaucratic hurdles and delays in processing funding for victim services.

Recommendations:

1. Prioritize direct, flexible funding to Tribes that reduces administrative delays.
2. Increase set-asides for Alaska Tribes under the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside (TVSSA) Program and OVW programs.
3. Provide dedicated federal funding for Tribal law enforcement, judges, attorneys, and case workers in Alaska.

Topic 4. Lack of Support for Prevention and Cultural Restoration

I see that the federal government often avoids funding prevention programs because they are hard to quantify, yet prevention is the most important work we can do. In our smaller communities, people often feel like wards who

don't have a place. If a child is connected to their culture and language, they are much less likely to fall into cycles of violence or dysfunction. We need to move away from a system where we are constantly asking for permission to enforce our own laws.

Recommendations:

1. Invest in youth programs that teach traditional language and ecological knowledge, ensuring children feel connected to their community.
2. Support restorative justice initiatives, such as community circles and victim-offender mediation, which affirm Tribal sovereignty and traditional values.
3. Provide grant writing assistance and technical support to help Tribes build out their own independent legal systems.



Crow Creek Sioux Tribe

Peter Lengkeek, Chairman - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

Good afternoon, my relatives, esteemed colleagues, and esteemed leadership. I am Peter Lengkeek, Chairman of the great Crow Creek Sioux Tribe of South Dakota. I speak today on the homelands of my people, the Dakota People. In our language, "Dakota" means to be in a state of peace, balance, and harmony. We are a people of love and compassion, but we are also some of the fiercest warriors to ever walk this planet.

We stand here today not as visitors, but as the original people of this land who were exiled by the United States government. Our presence is shaped by genocide, forced removal from Mní Sóta (Minnesota), and the largest mass execution a government has ever carried out in 1862. We were marched out and relocated to an arid place with no infrastructure known then as Prisoner of War Camp 342, which is today Fort Thompson.

The following are the critical issues I see regarding the safety of my people and the challenges we face.

Topic 1. The Generational Continuum of State-Sanctioned Violence

I want to be clear: the violence we see against our women and children today did not begin recently. It is a generational continuum that began with the forced removal, the destruction of our kinship systems, and the criminalization of our language. The drug trafficking and suicide clusters we see now are direct outcomes of that original state-sanctioned violence.

Recommendations:

1. The Department of Justice must formally acknowledge that forced removal and generational trauma are direct, active drivers of today's violence.
2. Adopt a victim-centered and culturally grounded approach that recognizes the historical harm caused by the federal government.

Topic 2. Economic Hardship and Housing Shortages

Our community faces staggering economic challenges that trap survivors in abusive situations. We have a very young population, a median age of 27, and our unemployment rate is upwards of 85%. We have approximately 2,500 residents but only 240 homes available, forcing families to double or triple up in small houses. When there is no alternative housing, a survivor cannot leave a dangerous home.

Recommendations:

1. Provide comprehensive advocacy services and emergency financial assistance to help survivors achieve independence from abusers.
2. Increase infrastructure support for Tribal housing to eliminate the overcrowding that exacerbates domestic violence.

Topic 3. Inadequate Law Enforcement Capacity

As a direct service Tribe, we rely on the Bureau of Indian Affairs for public safety, but they are operating at a deficit. We do not have the minimum number of officers required to cover our 300,000-acre reservation. Our average response time is 30 minutes to one hour, which means women and children cannot be protected when they are in immediate danger.

Recommendations:

1. Provide immediate emergency and sustained funding to increase staffing, equipment, and officer coverage for BIA law enforcement on our reservation.
2. Stabilize public safety infrastructure so that prevention and victim services can actually function effectively.

Topic 4. Skewed Data and Lack of Agency Coordination

Our data is fragmented and skewed because federal, state, Tribal, and private agencies are all collecting information on my people but none of them are communicating. On paper, it looks like we live in “Nirvana” because nothing is reported, yet our rape rate is 166.1 per 100,000, which is more than triple the state rate.

Recommendations:

1. Establish mandatory coordination and transparency between federal law enforcement and Tribal leadership on investigations and violent crime responses.
2. Ensure timely case acceptance and information sharing to close the jurisdictional gaps that allow traffickers to operate with impunity.

Topic 5. Failure to Prosecute and Lack of Victim Advocacy

I remember one year when I worked for our domestic violence shelter, which we no longer have, where 31 rape cases came through our doors, and all 31 were denied prosecution. Many cases never go further than an arrest, resulting in a “cool-off period” rather than actual justice. Without advocates to support them, victims are less likely to cooperate with a system that has ignored them.

Recommendations:

1. Implement mandatory accountability for federal law enforcement partners to ensure crimes on Crow Creek are investigated and prosecuted, not ignored.
2. Fund permanent, sustained victim advocacy services rather than short-term pilot programs.

Topic 6. Flawed Funding Models for Active Violence

Competitive grant models do not work for communities like ours that are living with active, ongoing violence rooted in federal displacement. One-year grants or intermittent attention cannot undo generations of harm. Stability is what saves lives.

Recommendations:

1. Establish noncompetitive, direct funding pathways for direct service Tribes to address violence immediately.
2. Move away from short-term projects toward sustained increases in base funding for law enforcement and investigative services.

Topic 7. MMIWR and Unresolved Violent Crimes

Underfunded Tribal responses to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives are a breach of the federal trust responsibility. Currently, Crow Creek has one missing persons case and two unresolved murders.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure Crow Creek receives dedicated resources to implement the Not Invisible Act Commission recommendations.
2. Provide the investigative capacity and culturally appropriate response protocols needed to address sex trafficking and homicide.

Topic 8. Meaningful Consultation Before Decisions

Decisions made without us continue to harm us. We did not choose removal, and we did not choose this violence.

Recommendations:

1. Reaffirm and enforce the requirement that Tribal consultation occur before any federal decision is made regarding violence prevention funding or law enforcement staffing.

Safety for my people requires immediate investment and the fulfillment of the federal trust responsibility. Thank you for your time.



Curyung Tribal Council

Tiffany Webb, Member Chief, Tribal Wellness Services Coordinator - Tribal Leader (Written)

I am Tiffany Atsaruaq Webb. I am a Member Chief, and I serve as the Tribal Wellness Services Coordinator for the Curyung Tribal Council in Dillingham, Alaska. I stand here representing a sovereign nation whose mission is to preserve our cultural values and protect the inherent rights of our people. I carry the weight of our history with me. Our Tribal chiefs emphasize that the violence our women and children face today when interacting with government agencies is extreme and painfully echoes the boarding institutions that once destroyed our relationships and our communities. We are at a point where we must be honest: what is happening now is not working. I am here to demand a system that treats us as the sovereigns we are and holds our women in safety.

These are the challenges and recommendations regarding the crisis of violence in our communities.

Topic 1. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I see the proposal to merge OVW with other departments as a direct threat to our safety. OVW is not just a grant office. It is a statutorily mandated entity that understands survivor safety and culturally specific responses. If you subsume it into a generalized justice model, you erode the specialized expertise that protects our families.

Additionally, our Tribal Council has passed CURYUNG TRIBAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2026 – 03: CURYUNG TRIBAL COUNCIL OPPOSITION TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE GRANT OFFICES which addresses this proposal.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ must reject this consolidation effort entirely.
2. DOJ must provide clear, written answers on how Tribal set-aside funding and Tribal-specific requirements

will be protected from being diluted in a centralized bureaucracy.

3. Ensure that any restructuring affecting VAWA funding is co-designed with Tribes to explicitly protect Tribal sovereignty and survivor autonomy.

Topic 2. Failure of One-Size-Fits-All Federal Administration

I find that federal grant administration is often a site where our sovereignty is compromised by systems that fail to reflect our rural and remote conditions or our cultural frameworks for healing. We are currently operating under complex conditions, jurisdictional barriers and geographic isolation that general criminal justice programs simply do not understand.

Recommendations:

1. Replace competitive grant models with flexible formula funding that allows us as a sovereign to protect our families without jumping through bureaucratic hoops.
2. Structure all grants and services to support protections for both rural and urban Alaska Native women and their families.
3. Empower and retain OVW staff expertise specifically regarding Tribal Nations to ensure our unique needs are met.

Topic 3. Increasing Trafficking and the Echoes of Historical Trauma

Violence in the United States is increasing, and with it, the occurrence of trafficking in our rural communities and urban centers in Alaska. This modern violence is inseparable from the historical trauma of exploitation and the systemic failures of the past that targeted our people.

Recommendations:

1. Fulfill the federal trust and treaty responsibilities by developing effective plans that specifically help Tribal governments respond to sex trafficking and stalking.
2. Ensure that federal systems are not designed without us, as those systems routinely fail us.

Topic 4. Meaningful Consultation vs. Procedural Formality

I am deeply concerned that consultation is being treated as a procedural formality rather than a substantive process. For us, centralization often means the people making the decisions are even further distanced from the communities they are impacting.

Recommendations:

1. Establish mechanisms to ensure that Tribal consultation meaningfully influences final decisions before key determinations are made, rather than occurring after the fact.
2. Move beyond mere notification and toward genuine accountability to Tribal Nations.



Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma

Cathleen Osborne-Gowey, Haven Program Administrator and Crime Victim Advocate - Authorized Designee (Written)

I am Cathleen Gowey, and I provide this testimony on behalf of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. I have been attending these consultations and giving my testimony since 2010, and while I am grateful for the

foundational impact the OVW grants have had on our program, I am also weary. I have traveled across the United States for years, sharing our needs and heartbreak, only to return home and realize we haven't truly been heard. I see DOJ representatives nodding as we share our stories of pain, yet year after year, the results stay the same. I am here once again to advocate for the safety of my community and to demand that the federal government finally stands for our Tribal sovereignty.

The following are the critical issues we face and the changes that must occur to protect our relatives:

Topic 1. The Burden of Competitive Grant Funding

I find it ineffective and exhausting that Tribal communities are forced to compete against one another for essential services. Not all Tribes have the resources for professional grant writers, yet we are still pitted against each other to obtain the funds necessary to assist victims. This model disregards our sovereignty and our actual needs.

Recommendations:

1. Transition the OVW Grants to Indian Tribal Governments Program to a noncompetitive, formula-based model similar to the OVC Tribal Set-Aside.
2. Allow Tribes to apply for funding based on our self-defined service area and population size. For example, my Tribe has only 3,500 members, but we serve all of Ottawa County, which has over 30,000 residents, our funding must reflect the reality of who we actually serve.

Topic 2. Inappropriate “Cookie-Cutter” Standards for Transitional Housing

I am frustrated that our transitional housing programs are held to the same rigid standards as large, non-Native residential facilities. These policies prevent us from providing basic necessities. When a victim leaves violence, they often have nothing but the clothes on their backs, yet federal rules restrict us from purchasing the furniture they need to start a new life.

Recommendations:

1. Remove restrictions that prevent Tribal programs from purchasing necessary basic furniture for clients.
2. Eliminate the unsafe and inefficient requirement for advocates to re-enter a client's home to “inventory” furniture after they have left the program.

Topic 3. The Urgent Need for Shelter Construction Funding

I see a massive gap in safety because there are simply not enough Tribal domestic violence shelters in Oklahoma or across Indian Country. We are consistently told that we can use funds to run a shelter, but the Tribe itself must find the money for the largest expense: construction. This is a barrier many Tribes cannot overcome.

Recommendations:

1. Create a separate grant specifically for the construction of Tribal domestic violence shelters.
2. Ensure that grant funding is large enough to cover the actual costs of building, maintaining, and staffing these essential facilities.

Topic 4. Cultural Barriers to Outreach and Healing

I notice that essential cultural elements are often excluded from allowable costs. Food is a central, staple part of our culture and is vital for our outreach and building trust with survivors, yet we are repeatedly denied the ability to use grant funds for this necessity.

Recommendations:

1. Allow Tribes the flexibility to use funding for food and other cultural essentials that are central to outreach and healing.

Topic 5. Jurisdictional Erosion and the Need for Federal Support

I am deeply concerned about the erosion of Tribal jurisdiction following the *Castro-Huerta* ruling, which granted the state concurrent jurisdiction over non-Natives on our lands. This has created a greater need for federal support that has not yet materialized.

Recommendations:

1. Advocate to Congress for the explicit restoration of Tribal jurisdiction to prevent courts from circumventing Tribal authority.
2. Increase the number of federal investigators and U.S. Attorney's staff to meaningfully prosecute crimes in Indian Country and support Native victims.

Topic 6. Fragmented and Inaccessible Crime Information

I find it dangerous that our advocates, officers, and prosecutors must navigate multiple different websites to get a full picture of a perpetrator's history. In Oklahoma, only a handful of the 38 Tribes have their charges appear on public state databases, which means violent offenders might be granted early release because a judge lacks the full information.

Recommendations:

1. Establish centralized, streamlined access to local, regional, state, and federal crime information databases.
2. Grant Tribal advocates access to federal crime information systems to assist in safety planning and serving protective orders.

Topic 7. The Ineffectiveness of the Consultation Process

I believe it is wrong to expect us to travel and relive our trauma year after year just to get your attention. Our statements of facts regarding domestic violence, stalking, and human trafficking should be enough to prompt action.

Recommendations:

1. Treat our testimony as a direct call for action rather than a procedural formality.
2. Honor the federal trust responsibility by implementing the changes Tribes have requested consistently for over a decade.



Emmonak Village

Sanda Rice, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Written)

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

My name is Sandra Rice, and I currently serve as a Tribal Council Member for the Emmonak Village Tribe in Southwest Alaska. In addition to my role within my family, I am a Tribal leader and community member. It is my hope that by highlighting our concerns, we can make positive changes in every community and increase safety for every person in our nation.

Emmonak is an Alaska Native Yup'ik community in a region of Alaska that is the size of the state of Oregon. Our community lives by strong cultural traditions, and the majority live a subsistence lifestyle. The population of our Village is about 1,300. There is no road system connecting the 48 communities that call this region of Alaska home.

Entry into most of our Villages is mainly by small air carrier planes based out of the hub community of Bethel, 164 miles away. Anchorage is the closest city, 490 miles away. Local travel is primarily by ATV, snowmachine, or boat, depending on the time of year. All travel in our region is dictated by the weather. People have been weathered in or out for days or weeks at a time if the weather isn't safe for travel.

I submit these comments not only as a Tribal leader but as a grieving sister. In 2014, my sister, Crystal Shannon Rice-McDonald, was tragically murdered by her husband. Following her death, our family suffered from stalking by the offender's family, delayed law enforcement responses, and a justice system that allowed crime scenes to be compromised and offenders to manipulate the outcome. The systemic failures we experienced are far too common in our remote Native villages.

I want to bring you to March 20th, 2014. That day, I received the worst call any sister should ever receive, informing me that my sister, Crystal Shannon Brice McDonald, a Yupik Alaska Native woman, was deceased from a single gunshot. My sister was killed by her husband who planned his revenge. He took out a life insurance policy, researched ways to kill her, and conspired with an officer friend to ensure incorrect charges. In addition, the officer failed to read the killer his Miranda rights and waited to have him arrested on a Friday evening so his family could remove the children from Alaska before Child Protective Services (CPS) could intervene. These stories are not uncommon. When we call for help, it often doesn't come for days, leaving crime scenes compromised and resulting in injustice for victims and family members, with no accountability for offenders. The federal response to the MMIP crisis is a breach and violation of the federal trust's responsibilities and a continuation of the genocide committed against Native people.

Topic 1. Direct Tribal Funding and Infrastructure

When we call for help in rural Alaska, it often does not arrive for days, resulting in compromised crime scenes and no accountability for offenders. We lack the foundational funding for public safety, court services, and law enforcement infrastructure. When we are forced to rely on outside agencies, we lose precious time explaining our unique, off-road, weather-dependent reality.

Recommendations:

1. Provide direct, permanent funding to Tribes for public safety, law enforcement, courts, holding facilities, and victim services, allowing us to address our situations in ways that actually work for us.
2. Create a permanent 10% crime victim set-aside for Tribal Nations to directly fund Tribal communities and victims.
3. Conduct an evaluation of past grants that existed prior to the Tribal victim set-aside programs to help create a comprehensive, formula-based program for increased victim services.

Topic 2. Addressing Domestic Violence, Stalking, and Child Protection

In Alaska, women are involved in domestic violence at disproportionately high rates, representing 48% in recent statistics. Stalking is a dangerous tactic of power and control that frequently escalates to lethal violence, yet it is often minimized. Furthermore, we must empower our youth to recognize and prevent abuse.

Recommendations:

1. Fund dedicated programs for domestic violence that focus on awareness, education, batterers' intervention, and victim assistance.
2. Elevate stalking to be more than a misdemeanor to proactively hold offenders accountable for dangerous behaviors and prevent the escalation of violence against Native women.
3. Increase funding to agencies, institutions, and schools that serve youth to support child protection outreach, counseling, and prevention efforts.

Topic 3. Combating Alcohol Addiction and Seeking Corporate Accountability

Alaska leads the nation in horrific, preventable abuses, and alcohol and drug abuse are deeply tied to these

statistics. The root causes often stem from historical and generational trauma that has left a lasting impact on Native communities.

Recommendations:

1. Provide Tribes with comprehensive local resources to develop treatment and recovery services, including placing federal staff in regional hubs to assist Tribes firsthand with budgeting and reporting.
2. Fund community outreach and education so Tribes can address the root causes of addiction in our villages.
3. Hold alcohol and liquor companies accountable for the poisoning and disproportionate impact their products have on Native peoples, similar to the nationwide accountability demanded from the opioid, fentanyl, and tobacco industries.

Topic 4. Alaska-Specific Support

The federal response to the MMIP crisis is severely lacking, constituting a breach of federal trust responsibilities and a human rights violation. Furthermore, the federal entities meant to assist us must be protected and properly staffed by people who understand our specific realities.

Recommendations:

1. Continue supporting the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) and mandate that any technical assistance providers serving Alaska Tribes are actually based in Alaska, so they understand our trauma-informed and culturally appropriate needs.
2. Demand accountability for the MMIP crisis by having the federal government directly address the lack of resources and law enforcement response, which currently acts as a continuation of genocide against Native people.

Topic 5. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

The federal entities meant to assist us must be protected and properly staffed by people who understand our specific realities.

Recommendations:

1. Do not consolidate OVW. It must remain a separate and distinct office within the DOJ, rather than being merged into OJP, OTJ, or the COPS Office.
2. Do not consolidate the OTJ. It must remain a dedicated, separate office serving as the DOJ's principal point of contact for Indian Tribes.



Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

Loni Greninger, Vice Chair - Tribal Leader (Written)

On behalf of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, I submit these comments and recommendations, in accordance with 34 U.S.C. 20126 mandating annual Tribal consultation with the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, "the strong people" are the original inhabitants with deep ancestral ties to the lands, resources, and waterways located along the North Olympic Peninsula coast in Washington state where we have lived, hunted, fished, and gathered since time immemorial.

I urge you to address funding and policy barriers that undermine Tribal sovereignty and Self-Governance, harming AI/AN victims and communities. This requires partnering with Tribal leaders to resolve jurisdictional issues, outdated policies, chronic underfunding, unequal access to justice, and biased perceptions of Tribal public safety.

Socioeconomic disadvantages and reductions in the Federal workforce further limit resource access, exacerbated by the closure of offices responsible for trust and treaty obligations. Inflammatory Administration statements trivialize violence, and the intentional purging of Federal data hinders victim support, program tracking, and funding justification. We seek investment to help and heal our victims, families, and communities.

Topic 1. “Administering Tribal Funds and Programs” Funding Challenges and Expanding Resources for Tribal Public Safety, Justice, and Support Services

Recent federal actions, including proposed budget cuts, the cancellation of hundreds of competitive grants, and the freezing of funding opportunities, have severely disrupted our public safety and victim support services. These actions, compounded by federal workforce reductions and the disastrous *Castro-Huerta* Supreme Court decision, are modern termination-era policies that undermine our sovereignty and the federal government’s treaty obligations. Our programs are based on our unique political status as sovereign nations, not on race or DEI initiatives.

Recommendations:

1. Mandate funding for Tribal programs/services, holding Tribes harmless from any budget cuts or eliminations.
2. Do not freeze future funding for AI/AN programs. These are treaty/trust obligations, not discretionary spending.
3. Expand Self-Governance into the Department of Justice for public safety funding via compacts/contracts. Interim: Coordinate with the Department of the Interior to funnel funds through existing compacts/contracts.
4. Provide sustainable, formula-based “base funding” for Tribes to address community needs.
5. Continue to remove funding barriers that undermine Tribal sovereignty and Self-Governance.
6. Following *Castro-Huerta*, ensure continued Federal engagement and coordination between Federal, Tribal, and state law enforcement.
7. Urge the Administration to support amending 18 U.S.C. §1152 to expressly pre-empt state jurisdiction over non-Indian crime in Indian Country.
8. Provide additional resources to execute restored jurisdictional authority under VAWA.
9. Support legislation to authorize permanent funding for the National Indigenous Domestic Violence Hotline.
10. Support increasing FVPSA funding from 10% to 12.5%.
11. Address implementation issues in the Alaska Pilot Project to support Tribal justice systems.
12. Create a permanent funding source for Alaska, Hawaii, and urban centers serving AI/AN populations.
13. Cease workforce reductions for staff overseeing Tribal programs/services. Ensure adequate Federal workforce for Tribal trust/treaty obligations. Conduct targeted hiring if needed.
14. Refrain from closing or consolidating Federal offices providing treaty and trust services to Tribes.
15. Protect AI/AN women’s health, safety, and economic security programs/services from funding cuts or eliminations.

Topic 2. Formula Funding

Relying heavily on competitive grants limits our Self-Governance and creates enormous administrative burdens for our under-resourced Tribe. Just as every state and U.S. territory receives a base amount of formula funding, we need stable, predictable base funding to maintain our operating budgets and effectively deliver essential governmental services.

Recommendations:

1. DOJ must use a funding formula to provide base funding to Tribes, replacing competitive and current formula grants.
2. Treat Tribes equitably as sovereigns: provide base funding similar to states/territories, with remaining funds distributed proportionally by population.
3. Maintain grants as supplemental resources to enhance, not replace, Tribal base funding/operating budgets.
4. Re-engage with Tribes to find solutions for implementing DOJ formula base funding.
5. Expand Tribal Self-Governance authority to DOJ.
6. Interim step: Create a P.L. 477-like mechanism allowing Tribes to combine all public safety/justice funding sources into a single plan with minimal reporting.
7. The Administration must advocate for mandatory, not discretionary, funding for Tribal public safety/justice, aligning with trust/treaty obligations.
8. Advocate for substantial base funding increases for Tribal public safety/justice.
9. Provide direct funding to Tribal Nations, bypassing state administration.
10. Provide stable, predictable, and consistent recurring base budgets for public safety/justice.
11. Enhance inter-agency coordination across the Federal government for better Tribal community outcomes.

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

I am deeply disturbed by statements from this Administration that trivialize domestic violence as a “little fight with the wife,” which endangers our women and emboldens perpetrators. Furthermore, the ongoing crisis of MMIP is exacerbated by the influx of transient workers at extractive industry “man-camps” near our lands. We cannot protect our communities if we are restricted from exercising full jurisdictional authority over those who commit violence against our citizens.

Despite new DOJ protocols per Savanna’s Act and the Not Invisible Act, recent Administration actions—removing key data and contradicting statutory transparency/collaboration requirements—raise concerns about a lack of urgency and coordination in responding to Indian Country violence. Additionally, DEI is inapplicable to Sovereign Tribal Nations with distinct government-to-government relationships with the U.S.

Recommendations:

1. Condemn and retract this Administration’s harmful, false, and offensive comments minimizing domestic violence as a “little fight with the wife” that “inflates crime statistics.”
2. Cease eliminating Federal policy bodies and prevention divisions that provide AI/AN women with life-saving services, address violence, health disparities, and gender inequality.
3. Prioritize, fund, and implement policies for gender equality to prevent violence and ensure Indigenous women’s safety.
4. Support restoring full Tribal inherent jurisdictional authority to effectively address violence against our citizens and communities.
5. Ensure Tribes have the capacity and resources to properly execute their jurisdictional authority.
6. Restore the Congressionally mandated Not Invisible Act’s “Not One More” Report to the DOJ website. Its removal impedes addressing the MMIP crisis, which concerns sovereign nations and violence, not DEI.
7. Tribes strongly oppose “man-camps” near Tribal Nations and call on DOJ to increase safety measures for AI/AN women and children. Measures should include studies, data gathering, terminating Federal contracts for contractor/employee misconduct, and collaborating with Tribes to condition Federal permits on an “enforceable community safety plan.”

8. Department of Defense (DoD) must take targeted action to educate and prevent violence against AI/AN people by military personnel, collect better data on incidence, and hold members accountable. DOJ should guide DoD on data collection, tracking, and accountability for AI/AN people.
9. Provide adequate resources for culturally appropriate victim and survivor services throughout all investigation stages.
10. Rescind P.L. 280 nationwide and provide funding to affected Tribes to address public safety and justice concerns.
11. Allow Tribal governments to determine their own victim service, public safety, and justice solutions, rather than establishing priorities or stringent program parameters.
12. Remove systemic barriers, improve access to data systems, and enhance data sharing and inter-agency coordination on public safety and justice issues.
13. We urge DOJ to enhance coordination among Tribal, Federal, and state governments, restore the Not One More Report, improve public safety/MMIP data collection, quality, and access, provide additional law enforcement training, and increase outreach to Tribal communities.

Topic 4. Strengthening the Federal Response to Violent Crimes

Recent Executive Orders and policies aimed at rolling back DEI initiatives have been inappropriately applied to Tribal Nations by the DOJ, jeopardizing the safety of our women. The creation of “forbidden word” lists, banning terms like “Tribe” or “Native American”, infringes on fundamental rights and hinders the delivery of life-saving services to marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ survivors within our communities.

Recommendations:

1. Re-examine Executive Orders and policies on women’s issues to align with stated protection goals. Restore critical support, including substantial funding for violence against AI/AN people, re-establish key enforcement teams, eliminate restrictive grant conditions on violence protection programs, and retract comments downplaying domestic abuse.
2. Re-stabilize Federal support for AI/AN violent crime victims by ceasing all funding pauses, cuts, government shutdowns, Federal Reductions in Force, and data purges.
3. DOJ should issue a blanket exemption for Tribes from the DEI initiative Executive Order, recognizing the government-to-government relationship and unique status of Tribes.
4. Restore the “Not One More” Report to the DOJ website.
5. All victims deserve healing services regardless of identity. The Federal Government should consult with Tribal Governments to determine services, priorities, and eligibility.
6. Changing policies/services without Tribal Consultation violates Government-to-Government laws. The “forbidden words” list, for example, should have triggered consultation, as Tribes would have advised against including “Tribe” and “Native American.”
7. Proposed Administration actions have caused Domestic Violence organizations to cease or scrub online content, hindering life-saving services and further traumatizing victims due to fear of losing funding over policies targeting marginalized groups.
8. Amend all legal and regulatory impediments harming Tribal citizens and communities.
9. Enhance Federal agency coordination with each other and with Tribal Nations on public safety and justice services for better outcomes for victims, survivors, and families.
10. Expand Self-Governance to all Federal public safety and justice programs, including DOJ, allowing funds through Self-Governance compacts and P.L. 638 Self-Determination contracts.
11. Adopt a holistic approach to reduce crime in Indian Country, allowing Tribes flexibility to combine law enforcement with behavioral health and prevention programs to address root causes like substance abuse, domestic violence, and trauma.

12. Structure programs to work with both victims and perpetrators, employing culturally appropriate solutions.
13. Permanently reauthorize Tribal coalitions providing culturally appropriate services to AI/AN victims, survivors, and their families.

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

We are alarmed by the federal government’s strategic removal of datasets and resources from federal websites that document the disparities faced by our people. Taking these tools offline without Tribal Consultation suppresses our visibility and threatens the integrity of scientific research. Access to accurate, shared criminal justice data is essential to keeping our communities safe.

Recommendations:

1. Stop data and information rollbacks that threaten scientific integrity and suppress the visibility of Tribal communities.
2. Continue investing in TAP for National Crime Information so we have the data needed to track protection orders and hold offenders accountable.
3. Deploy ongoing training and technical assistance throughout Indian Country to strengthen our capacity to use the TAP system.
4. Enhance inter-agency coordination to ensure our Tribes have the necessary broadband and spectrum access required to successfully deploy and utilize these databases.
5. Support the collection of accurate data to develop community profiles that truly reflect the public safety conditions and funding needs across Indian Country.



Kenaitze Indian Tribe

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

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

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

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe is a sovereign nation of the Dena’ina Athabascan people, who have been stewards of their lands and waters in Southcentral Alaska since time immemorial. Located on the Kenai Peninsula—a region they call Yaghanen, or “the good land”—the Tribe consists of approximately 2,168 enrolled citizens and provides services to nearly 5,000 Alaska Natives and American Indians. Their traditional territory is marked by three significant volcanoes—Mount Iliamna, Mount Redoubt, and Mount Spurr—which serve as landmarks that connect the people to their ancestors and remind them of their core values: Na’ini (courage and strength), Naq’eltani (Creator, pure love, and truth), Qiz’unch (doing what is right), and Ada (care and concern).

Introduction and Personal Account of Bernadine Atchison

I am Bernadine Atchison, the Chairperson of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe. To understand my present, you must look at the timeline of my life, which is a map of layered trauma. My family’s history is full of loss. My great-grandmother was an orphan of the flu epidemic in the 1890s, and my mother was raped at fifteen and sent away in shame. My parents buried their trauma in alcohol, a weapon of defense they passed down to me. I was born into a household of child abuse and sexual assault. I’ve lived through the suicide of my sister, who gave her baby up for adoption

and lived with an “empty expression” until the day she died. I’ve been arrested for fishing to feed my family, and I’ve fought the school systems that allowed my great-niece and grandchildren to be bullied to the point of despair. I share these dark moments because healing is not just about stopping violence. It is about providing the tools so we can thrive.

Introduction of Mary Ann Mills

I am Mary Ann Mills, a Council Member and former Chief Tribal Judge. I have been bringing these same reports to the federal government for 13 years because precious little has changed. Our nation was born in genocide, and I see the federal government using Public Law 280 as a shield to avoid its trust responsibility. When I asked the FBI for help with violent crimes against our people, they told me they couldn’t assist because they gave their power over us to the State of Alaska. We are the evidence of forced assimilation and ethnocide. I ask for a written definition of “justice” because the way the federal government defines it seems very different from our Dena’ina understanding.

Introduction and Personal Account of Maria Guerra

I am Maria Guerra, the Family and Social Services Director. We walk with the un’ina, those who come to us, and our caseload stays above 300 every month. These aren’t just numbers to us.

We worked with one woman who lived in active danger with an armed perpetrator for years because she was terrified of losing her home. We helped her get a protection order and change her locks, and now she is self-sufficient.

We spent 27 months attending meetings for two children who were sexually assaulted just to make sure the state didn’t “forget” the case. We know how to help our people heal, but we need the resources to maintain our infrastructure and reduce the financial barriers for our un’ina to get to safety.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Topic 1. Jurisdictional Gaps and the Legacy of Public Law 280

Alaska is currently ranked as the deadliest and most violent state in the Union for women, with sexual violence rates for Alaska Native women estimated at 90% or greater. The federal government has used P.L. 280 to shift its trust responsibility to the State of Alaska, creating an unfair and discriminatory system where the federal government claims it is unaccountable for the safety of Tribal citizens.

This jurisdictional complexity often leaves Tribal governments with little say in how crime is addressed in our communities. Furthermore, the lack of federal law enforcement presence in Alaska Native villages means that perpetrators, many of whom are non-Native, are often not held accountable for crimes like domestic violence and sex trafficking.

Recommendations:

1. Repeal the P.L. 280 status in Alaska and fully resume federal U.S. Trust Responsibilities.
2. Provide a written definition of “justice” as it pertains to the Department of Justice and federal laws to provide clarity to Tribal Nations.
3. Advocate to the U.S. Congress and Senate for Alaska to be placed back on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

Topic 2. Failures in the Education and Child Welfare Systems

Alaska is the least safe state for children, reporting the highest rate of missing children nationwide. Within schools, bullying and prejudice are rampant. Chairwoman Atchison’s 11-year-old niece committed suicide after being threatened with rape, yet the family was denied information by a school system that is protected from being sued.

Additionally, the state child welfare and judicial systems are criticized for putting pressure on victims while failing

to hold perpetrators accountable. This traumatization from cradle to grave is fueled by a systemic devaluation of Native families and a lack of cultural approach training for judges and police officers.

Recommendations:

1. Address violence and bullying across all federal departments, including Education, Family Services, and the Justice System.
2. Implement trauma-informed and cultural sensitivity training for court judges, police departments, and school officials.
3. Ensure that federal funding is flexible enough to address long-term healing from trauma, which can manifest years after the initial violence.

Topic 3. Ineffective and Competitive Funding Models

We find that current funding models are often short-term, competitive, and administratively burdensome. The need for healing does not end when the violence stops, as trauma can be passed through generations if not properly addressed.

Administrative hurdles, such as the late release of NOFOs and the lack of Alaska-based grant managers, create unnecessary stress for Tribal programs. The current system often requires redundant narratives for continuation grants, taking time away from actual service delivery.

Recommendations:

1. Transition funding to a non-competitive, continuous, and formula-based model that is flexible to the needs of individual communities.
2. Establish mandatory April 1st deadlines for the release of all DOJ NOFOs.
3. Expand project periods to five years to allow for sustainable program development and reduce the annual reapplication burden.
4. Fund at least two Tribal organizations based in Alaska to provide regional technical assistance that reflects an understanding of the state's unique geographic and cultural realities.

Topic 4. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe strongly opposes any attempts to rewrite federal law to eliminate or fundamentally change the National Baseline Study requirement. Analyzing existing federal data is an insufficient substitute that would fail to capture critical gaps in the populations served.

We also oppose seeking a statutory exemption from FACA for the Section 904 Task Force. We believe that transparency requirements protect Tribal interests from being ignored by federal agencies.

Recommendations:

1. Dedicate the majority of carry-forward funds to completing the National Baseline Study as originally mandated by Congress.
2. Strengthen the Section 904 Task Force by providing adequate resources and converting it from an advisory body to a decision-making body.
3. Ensure that any analysis of existing federal victimization data explicitly documents which populations are not captured to identify the need for the NBS to fill those gaps.

Conclusion of Bernadine Atchison

In closing, thank you for all that you do, and for this opportunity to provide testimony. I like to share a Dena'ina prayer. Thank you, Creator, the one of above us, for one spirit, the Dena'ina language, the children, the ancient Dena'ina, our elders, people of our place, the earth, and the good land. Creator, the one above us, help our families walk the path of wellness. Help us walk the path of truth, respect, and goodness the right way. Creator, thank you for today.



Lummi Tribe

Terrence Adams, Vice Chairman - Tribal Leader (Written)

Rosalee Revey-Jacobs, Treasurer - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Introduction of Rosalee Revey-Jacobs

My name is Rosalee Revey-Jacobs, and I am the Treasurer of Lummi Nation. It is an honor to speak on behalf of my Lummi community, and I am here with our victims of crime team. I am honored to be on Lakota lands for the VAWA Consultation, and I especially appreciated the blessing song, which was very healing and helped put my heart at ease.

I come here today with a heart full of questions and a deep sense of responsibility to my people. One year ago yesterday, our beloved elder, Besalynn James, went missing from her home, just six doors down from our women's shelter. She was in an abusive relationship with a non-Tribal drug dealer, and despite the suspicious circumstances and a deep freeze that night, the response between the Tribe, the state, and the feds was incredibly chaotic and frustrating. Today, that man is in Idaho with no charges, and our family has no justice and no Besalynn.

Introduction of Terrence Adams

I serve as the Vice Chairman of the Lummi Indian Business Council, the governing body of our Nation. Our people have taken a stand by adopting Resolution #2026-053, which formally affirms our exercise of Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) under the 2022 VAWA Reauthorization. We have made significant investments in our own justice systems because we are committed to protecting our women and children from domestic violence and sex trafficking. However, I am here to deliver a message: jurisdiction without funding is nothing more than structural inequity. We are exercising our sovereign authority, but the federal partnership must finally match our efforts with meaningful and predictable resources.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Topic 1. Insufficient Funding and Administrative Burdens

Our natural resources must constantly match the need for services, which is a struggle because we are almost entirely grant-funded. These grants come with strings attached and create a "cookie cutter" mold that doesn't account for how all Tribes are different. It puts an unnecessary burden on us, and we ask you to stop these complications so we can use our funds in the way our community actually needs.

When Congress expanded our authority, they didn't give us the sustained investment needed to actually run the system. Implementing our own criminal jurisdiction requires police, prosecutors, judges, and data systems. These aren't optional, they are federally required safeguards. Without a real federal investment, our sovereignty is undermined by funding instability.

Recommendations:

1. Support direct, non-competitive funding pathways that recognize the federal trust responsibility and Tribal sovereign status.
2. Ensure grant structures and funding formulas reflect the true cost of infrastructure, staffing, and long-term operations.
3. Provide Tribes with the flexibility to administer funds as they see fit rather than imposing a "cookie cutter" mold.

Topic 2. Systemic Delays and Retraumatization of Victims

Sexual assault cases can take up to six years to move through the Tribal, state, and federal systems. By the time a case is finally addressed, the victims have already tried to move on with their healing, only to be dragged back and retraumatized by a slow justice system. To make it worse, perpetrators are often released after receiving a “slap in the face” sentence or pleading to lesser charges, allowing them to return and provoke fear in their victims all over again.

We also face a massive technical hurdle with the Washington State crime labs, which have a two- to three-year backlog for processing DNA and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) exams. This delay is a failure to our people and must change. We need to do better for our victims, including those who are no longer with us and deserve proper funeral support and markers.

Recommendations:

1. Increase federal oversight to eliminate the multi-year backlog for DNA and SANE exam processing.
2. Improve coordination between Tribal, state, and federal jurisdictions to reduce the six-year delay in criminal cases.
3. Provide specific funding for funeral support and special markers for victims of violence who have passed away.
4. Topic 3. Jurisdictional Chaos and the MMIP Crisis

Topic 3. Jurisdictional Communication

The disappearance of Besalynn James is a painful example of how confusing and chaotic things get between the Tribe, the state, and the feds. When our people are taken from us and we are given no answers, we are failing our people and disregarding our treaty rights. It is impossible to understand how, in this day and age, a grandmother can go missing and the only thing the FBI tells the family is that she is no longer alive, while the suspect gets away to another state with no charges.

We maintain jurisdiction over our members, but the response to our missing and murdered relatives is failing the trust responsibility. Our families deserve swift and certain justice, and our Besalynn deserves to be brought home. We need our federal partners to hear our story and work with us to hold those accountable for these injustices.

Recommendations:

1. Address the “confusing, frustrating, and incredibly chaotic” response between agencies during MMIP investigations.
2. Ensure that federal investigative agencies provide families with transparent answers and pursue perpetrators who flee across state lines.
3. Fulfill the federal trust and treaty responsibility by ensuring Tribal jurisdiction over members is respected and supported.

Topic 4. Threats to Victim Services Funding

We are deeply concerned about any proposed reductions to the Crime Victims Fund and VOCA allocations. Tribes already operate with limited enforcement tools and very little funding stability as it is. Any reduction in this funding would be a direct threat to the safety of our victims in Indian Country.

We must protect the resources that allow our victim service providers to do their jobs. If VOCA funding is cut, it disproportionately impacts our Tribal communities who are already struggling to provide basic safety.

Recommendations:

1. Oppose any reductions to the Crime Victims Fund and VOCA allocations.
2. Advocate for increased federal funding dedicated specifically to help Tribes operationalize Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction.

3. Ensure that federal partnerships match the congressional expansion of Tribal authority with predictable funding streams



Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin

Rachel Fernandez, Director of Advocacy Support Services - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

I am Rachel Fernandez, and my Menominee name is Namaewkukiw (Sturgeon Woman) of the Bear clan. I serve as the Director of Advocacy Support Services for the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and am a former Tribal Legislator. I submit this testimony as a survivor of child sexual assault, domestic violence, rape, sex trafficking, and having been missing. This advocacy is my “heart work.” Meaningful Tribal consultation requires more than just information sharing. It requires actionable commitments, Tribally driven solutions, and sustained federal accountability to uphold the United States’ trust responsibility.

Topic 1. Administering Tribal Funds and Programs

Tribes have the inherent right to govern our peoples, land, and resources. The DOJ must acknowledge our sovereignty and self-determination by ensuring we have a voice in the decisions that affect us.

Recommendations:

1. Provide flexible, non-competitive, multi-year, and fully sustained funding structures to support Tribal Nations.
2. Engage Tribes during policy changes that affect our funds and programs before decisions are made, ensuring we have meaningful and impactful input into how DOJ funding policies are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Topic 2. Enhancing the Safety of Indian Women and Relatives

Because of my own experiences, and the trauma many of our relatives carry, I know firsthand that we must prioritize the safety of Indian women and our relatives across Indian Country. Our sovereignty is encroached upon when our people cannot speak their truth or heal from historical and inter-generational trauma.

Recommendations:

1. Support Tribally led, survivor-centered, and culturally grounded approaches that prioritize prevention, protection, safety, and healing.
2. Fund prevention initiatives rooted in community, Tribal culture, language, and ceremony.
3. Allow Tribes and survivors to define our own safety and healing initiatives, and let us inform the DOJ on where investments in our victim and survivor services should be directed.

Topic 3. Strengthening the Federal Response and Law Enforcement

Federal systems must be accountable to Tribes and cannot operate independently of our Tribal governments and communities. As we see more of our relatives go missing and murdered, we face severe challenges in recruiting and retaining officers to protect our people.

Recommendations:

1. Improve coordination, accountability, and transparency across federal law enforcement and prosecutorial systems serving Indian Country.

2. Establish clear standards for the timely investigation and prosecution of crimes involving Indian victims, so that our survivors and their families are not left waiting endlessly for information on their cases.
3. Support federal pension and retirement benefits for Tribal law enforcement officers to prevent them from leaving for city and county departments, thereby improving our retention and our ability to protect our relatives.

Topic 4. Improving Access to Crime Information Databases and Data Sovereignty

As the Data Sub-Committee Co-Chair for the Wisconsin MMIW Task Force, I know that our data is built off the backs of our victims, survivors, and missing and murdered relatives. Data systems must serve our safety goals while respecting our right to govern the collection, ownership, and application of our own data.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure all Tribes have access to criminal databases and information systems to improve victim safety and hold offenders accountable.
2. Acknowledge and support Tribal data sovereignty, giving us governance and control over how our data is accessed, shared, and used.
3. Consult with Tribes before implementing new data sharing systems or policies that affect Tribal access.

Topic 5. Meaningful Consultation and Sustained Accountability

As Tribal Nations, we are best positioned to identify the solutions that protect our relatives and strengthen our families. Consultation must result in concrete changes, not just listening sessions.

Recommendations:

1. Shift from fragmented systems to co-creation models and coordinated justice grounded in Tribal leadership and the voices of survivors and families.
2. Establish consequences for the failure to consult with Tribes.
3. Commit to annual public reporting on progress, implement timelines, and co-develop accountability metrics directly with Tribes.



Mesa Grande Band of Diegueno Mission Indians

Curtis La Chusa, Chairman - Tribal Leader (Pre-recorded Oral and Written)

As a Tribe in a P.L. 280 state with limited economic development, we struggle to sustain our justice system and currently rely on Tribal funds just to operate a civil court. It takes millions of dollars to run a government, and the harmful perception that “Casino Tribes” can easily self-fund ignores the reality that, unlike states and cities, we do not have a tax base to rely on. We need the federal government to honor its trust responsibilities and provide the resources we need to keep our people safe.

Topic 1. Securing Non-Competitive, Comprehensive Funding

Tribes in P.L. 280 states have been chronically underfunded by the DOJ and BIA, leaving us without the basic infrastructure, such as jails, full-time judges, and bailiffs, needed to exercise special criminal jurisdiction. Furthermore, because we are forced to rely on competitive, unreliable grants, we frequently lose our trained law enforcement officers to state and city agencies that offer better pay, benefits, and pensions.

Recommendations:

1. Provide guaranteed, mandatory, and non-competitive base funding for the full spectrum of Tribal justice infrastructure, ensuring sustainability rather than forcing us to compete for limited grants.
2. Address the severe BIA funding disparities specifically affecting Tribes in P.L. 280 states.
3. Establish a Tribal prison program to adequately support our Tribal courts.

Topic 2. Restoring Tribal Jurisdiction and Authority

Our sovereignty is continually undermined by jurisdictional complexities and court decisions that limit our ability to protect our community and hold offenders accountable.

Recommendations:

1. Pass a full *Oliphant* fix to restore Tribal jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators for all offenses.
2. Course-correct the impacts of the *Castro-Huerta* decision to ensure states cannot exercise jurisdiction on Tribal lands without our explicit Tribal consent.
3. Support the addition of subpoena and warrant authority for Tribal courts, ensuring our law enforcement can access crucial evidence, such as social media accounts in stalking and trafficking cases.

Topic 3. Improving Law Enforcement Coordination and Training

In California, there is a severe lack of coordination and meaningful dialogue between local state law enforcement and Tribal governments. Furthermore, officers often lack the necessary training to handle highly dangerous domestic violence calls safely.

Recommendations:

1. Mandate a minimum of 40 hours of specialized domestic violence and sexual assault training for all Peace Officers, integrating trauma-informed care and de-escalation techniques.
2. Require at least 20 hours of Tribal cultural training for all federal and state staff working within P.L. 280 jurisdictions.
3. Provide federal support for the joint or cross-certification of our Tribal law enforcement officers within the state.
4. Increase information sharing with Tribal governments regarding violent crime investigations and cases that are declined on Indian lands.

Topic 4. Addressing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) Crisis

Despite California having the largest Tribal population in the country, we do not have a dedicated BIA MMIP coordinator to work with local agencies. The current BIA unit in the state is virtually non-existent, leaving us to rely on local agencies that lack cultural competence.

Recommendations:

1. Create an MMIP Coordinator position solely dedicated to California Tribes, and ensure this position is filled by a Native person chosen by Tribal leadership.
2. Direct MMIP funds straight to Tribal Nations so we can build and lead our own community-driven responses to the crisis.
3. Hold child welfare systems accountable for foster children who go missing while in their care.

Topic 5. Protecting Victim Services, Housing, and VAWA Funding

Our victims need safe housing, cultural healing, and dedicated advocacy. It is crucial that we do not undo the progress made by advocates who fought tirelessly for the Tribal Title within VAWA.

Recommendations:

1. Keep all victim service funding separate and distinct. Do not consolidate it into a P.L. 477-type program unless the strict protections for victim services and VAWA appropriations are fully safeguarded.
2. Reauthorize FVPSA and increase the Tribal formula funding distribution from 10% to 12.5%.
3. Establish a permanent 10% Tribal set-aside in the OVC Crime Victim Fund.
4. Allow housing funds to cover existing rent, mortgages, and utilities. Keeping victims housed in their current homes is more cost-effective and culturally appropriate than forcing them to relocate and sever ties with their land.
5. Provide equal funding and technical assistance for Traditional Healing practices, recognizing them as a fundamental part of holistic care.

**Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Bois Forte Band*****Megan Treuer, Chief Judge - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)***

Good morning. My name is Megan Treuer. I am a first-generation descendent of the Leech Lake and Bois Forte Nations, and I am honored to speak before you today as the Chief Judge of the Bois Forte Nation.

As a member of the Eagle Clan, my unique role—given that my father was a non-Native Holocaust survivor—is to negotiate and act as an in-between for my Anishinaabe people and the world at large. I have been working in Anishinaabe Country for 20 years, continuing the work my mother began in 1978 as one of the first Native American attorneys and judges in the country. Our guiding principle is the law of a good path of life, which directs us to have healthy, safe communities, and in my court, I adhere to our seven grandfather teachings: love, respect, courage, honesty, humility, wisdom, and truth. We recognize that many of our current problems are the result of seven generations of colonization, and I encourage everyone to be mindful that healing will also take seven generations.

Topic 1. Law Enforcement Capacity and Resource Scarcity

The Bois Forte Nation is a mandatory P.L. 280 state, but we retroceded 50 years ago and now exercise criminal jurisdiction, including enhanced sentencing authority. Resources are very scarce. Our reservation is made up of two communities 40 miles apart, and we often have only one law enforcement officer on duty at a time, resulting in significant response delays. Our resources are strained, and we are short on officers.

Recommendations:

1. We need immediate, dedicated funding to cover expensive incarceration costs for non-Native defendants in local jails, as we cannot rely entirely on limited reimbursement applications.
2. We urgently need funding to cover costs like GPS monitoring, which is at the top of my court's priority list for supervising defendants.
3. Grant all Tribal funding requests for extended domestic violence jurisdiction over non-Indians, as well as all funding related to enhanced sentencing authority under TOLA. I was alarmed to learn that numerous Tribes have been denied such funding. To deny this funding is to leave non-Native offenders uncharged and free to offend against Native victims.

Topic 2. Jurisdictional Barriers and Judicial Gaps

Despite fully enacting special criminal jurisdiction over non-Indian people under the 2013 and 2022 VAWA provisions, we immediately hit a barrier with jail arrangements for non-Native defendants.

After one federal attorney left their position, the preliminary agreement to house non-Native defendants in the BIA jail was invalidated, forcing us to secure expensive agreements with two local jails. Furthermore, the *Oliphant* decision forced our Tribal Council in 1980 to remove jurisdiction over non-Indian defendants, creating a void where crimes committed by non-Natives against Native victims often go unpunished or uninvestigated by the state or federal government.

For instance, federal authorities have filed only one sexual abuse of a child case in the ten years I have been here. This complexity means even my knowledgeable county judge colleague was surprised to learn that she would not have jurisdiction over a non-Native driver who killed a Native woman on the reservation. Even when we successfully enter a warrant into the TAP program, a violent repeat offender was arrested by a county and then released because the statute does not authorize state agencies to transfer custody based on a Tribal warrant. Assuming that state authorities are aware of the implications of decisions like *Castro-Huerta* and will begin pursuing cases is dangerous.

I plan to return next year with statistics tracking the outcome of every reported incident of a crime committed by a non-Native person against a Native person, and I urge other Tribes to join in this data-gathering effort.

Recommendations:

1. I urge an immediate *Oliphant* fix to restore Tribal criminal jurisdiction over all defendants within our territorial jurisdiction.
2. The BIA must resolve the uncertainty surrounding housing non-Native defendants so we can fully utilize our VAWA special jurisdiction.
3. We need legislation that allows state agencies to transfer custody of offenders to Tribal authorities when an active Tribal warrant is present.
4. I recommend regular training and education about Tribal sovereignty and jurisdiction for all U.S. Attorneys, FBI agents, victim-witness coordinators, etc.
5. The Attorney General should clarify that *Castro-Huerta* is not a replacement for federal jurisdiction, and the U.S. should not assume that states are now actively pursuing criminal cases where they did not before.

Topic 3. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

The fact that we are still here discussing these issues 20 years later confirms that this area needs dedicated focus. We need collaboration and decision-making by Tribal officials and local stakeholders who are working in the field, not just those in Washington, D.C.

Recommendations:

1. I strongly recommend against consolidating the department focused on Tribal affairs and putting it under the grantmaking section of the Department of Justice.
2. The Department must keep the Office on Violence Against Women and the Tribal specific department separate. The specific focus on the complicated crisis of violence against women, and specifically violence against Native women, must remain specialized and focused.
3. We must fully support the Not Invisible Act (NIA) and ensure that Tribal officials are included in resolving these issues.
4. The U.S. Attorney General needs to require cooperation and collaboration with DOI/BIA. The NIA should be followed, and the NIA Commission report returned to the DOI website and given the highest priority. The BIA needs to work regularly and closely with the FBI and US Attorneys to deliver consistent justice in an efficient manner. This is one area for improving cost efficiency.



Native Village of Kwinhagak

Matilda Evans, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Carol Cleveland, OVW Director - Authorized Designee (Written)

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

The Native Village of Kwinhagak is located in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta of Southwest Alaska, approximately 70 air miles from the regional hub of Bethel and 420 miles from Anchorage. The village encompasses 5.2 square miles of flat tundra and is home to roughly 776 to 800 residents. The community is predominantly Yupik, with over 90% of the population identifying as Alaska Native and nearly all residents communicating bilingually in Yupik and English. Kwinhagak faces severe climate-related threats, including permafrost thawing, coastal erosion, and flooding that endanger its homes, roads, and water systems.

Introduction and Personal Account of Matilda Evans

I am Matilda Evans, and I serve as a council member for the Native Village of Kwinhagak. The failure of our public safety system is not just a policy issue for me, it is deeply personal, as I lost both of my brothers to the water only eleven months apart. While we recovered my oldest brother, my younger brother was never found, and his disappearance remains unsolved to this day. Years ago, when remains were found in a neighboring village, I begged the state troopers in Bethel to investigate, but no one ever came to give my family answers. My parents died without closure or the basic dignity of a proper investigation.

I also see the trauma in the eyes of my grandson, who had a frightening encounter with police in Anchorage when he was very young. For a long time after, his small body would tense with fear whenever he saw anyone in a uniform. I tried to find a professional to help him process that trauma, but those services simply do not exist in our village. I eventually had to pull him out of Head Start because, while he was intellectually thriving, he was emotionally carrying wounds that I could not heal on my own without the help of a child psychologist.

Introduction and Personal Account of Carol Cleveland

I am Carol Cleveland, the OVW grant Project Director for the Native Village of Kwinhagak. I see the dire struggle of our families every day because we have no safe house and no transitional housing for victims of domestic violence. When a victim finally finds the courage to come to my department for help, I often have to contact the Tundra Women's Coalition in Bethel, only for the victim and her children to be sent right back to our village to wait because the hub is full.

There are no vacant buildings for me to lease, and our families are forced to live in overcrowded, rotting homes. Our current grant allows me to buy diapers, wipes, and cleaning supplies, but it gives me no way to build the actual walls and roofs our survivors need to stay safe from their abusers and the elements.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Topic 1. Lack of Safe Housing and Transitional Shelters

We are deeply concerned about the complete lack of safe housing and transitional shelters in Kwinhagak. When violence happens, victims have nowhere to go. Our families are already overcrowded, and there are no vacant buildings available for my department to lease for emergency use. Our current funding is strictly limited to providing "essentials" like diapers or rental assistance, but it does not allow us to build the infrastructure required to actually house victims in crisis.

The housing we do have is ancient, most of it was built in 1979 or 1980, and many homes are rotting, leaking, and falling off their foundations. I see families living in storage shops with inadequate heating just to have a place to stay. When disasters like Typhoon Halong strike, the lack of sturdy housing forces our people to flee their community entirely just to find a safe roof, which tears apart our social fabric.

Recommendations:

1. Modify grant structures to allow funding to be used for the construction of safe houses and transitional housing.
2. Provide direct funds through grants or partnerships to demolish and rebuild every home that has been deemed unlivable due to rot and damage.
3. Increase funding for rebuilding entire homes for overcrowded families who lack the financial resources to fix their current residences.

Topic 2. Public Safety and Law Enforcement Crisis

Our village is facing a severe public safety crisis because we have no village police officers, no Village Public Safety Officers (VPSOs), and no permanent state troopers. We rely entirely on our Tribal police officers, but they lack the funding and specialized training needed to handle sensitive crimes like sexual assault and stalking. Because the nearest state trooper is 70 air miles away, investigations are often delayed and evidence is lost.

Many cases of domestic and sexual violence go unreported because our people know that a timely response is unlikely. Even our Tribal Court judges do not have enough funding to attend the training they need to properly handle these cases. We work together across our departments, but without dedicated resources for law enforcement and the courts, we cannot fully combat the violence that impacts our relatives.

Recommendations:

1. Increase dedicated public safety funding for Tribal law enforcement and Tribal courts.
2. Provide more training opportunities and specific funding under OVW grants for local Tribal police officers to combat domestic and sexual violence.
3. Allocate specific funding to allow Tribal Court Judges to attend a wider variety of legal and judicial training.
4. Establish federal investigative capacity to ensure that deaths and disappearances in Native villages receive proper and timely investigations.

Topic 3. Substance Abuse and Pediatric Trauma Care

We are struggling with a substance abuse crisis, yet we have no treatment facilities in our community. When our young people need help, they must travel hundreds of miles to urban settings like Anchorage, where they often face cultural insensitivity and discrimination from the very people supposed to help them heal. This geographic barrier makes recovery incredibly challenging for families who cannot afford the travel or the disruption to their lives.

There is also a complete absence of trauma-informed mental health care for our children. We have no child psychologists or pediatric trauma therapists in Quinhagak to help children who have witnessed violence or experienced frightening encounters with authority figures. We are forced to watch our children suffer emotionally, even when they are intellectually thriving, because the professional resources they need do not exist in the village.

Recommendations:

1. Fund village-based substance abuse treatment programs that allow survivors to heal within their own cultural support systems.
2. Mandate cultural competency training and accountability measures for all facilities receiving federal funding to serve Alaska Native populations.

3. Integrate pediatric and child-focused mental health services, including play therapy and trauma therapy, into the village setting or through reliable telehealth.
4. Provide school-based behavioral health support in Head Start and K-12 education to address trauma early.

Topic 4. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

We strongly oppose any plan to merge or consolidate OVW or OTJ into other parts of the Department of Justice. These offices were explicitly mandated by Congress to be separate and distinct. If they are absorbed into larger bureaucracies, our specific needs as Tribal Nations will be diluted and ignored.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain the OVW as a separate and distinct office within the DOJ to ensure a focused response to violence against Indigenous women.
2. Ensure the OTJ remains a standalone office to serve as the principal point of contact for Indian Tribes within the Department of Justice.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our community's needs. We stand ready today to work with all of you to implement solutions that will save lives and restore justice to our Alaska Native communities.



Native Village of Nunam Iqua

Bernadette Hanson, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Written)

My name is Bernadette Hanson. I am a single mother, a domestic violence survivor, a Tribal member, and a community member. I serve as the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) funding coordinator for my Tribe, and I have been designated by our Tribal Council to speak for those who cannot. My community, Nunam Iqua, was historically known as Sheldon Point. It is a small Yup'ik Eskimo village of 330 members located at the mouth of the lower Yukon River in Southwestern Alaska. In our language, our name means "End of the Land," and we are truly isolated. We have no roads. We travel by river in the summer and snowmobile in the winter, and if the weather is bad, we can be cut off from the rest of the world for weeks.

It is my responsibility to ensure the safety of my family and my community, but we face these critical issues in protecting our women and children:

Topic 1. Public Safety Gaps and Lack of Law Enforcement Response

We have no local or state law enforcement in our village and must rely on the Alaska State Troopers in Emmonak, 18 miles away. When the weather is bad, they cannot get to us, and they often prioritize larger villages over small ones like ours. I have had to act as an untrained first responder myself, which is a heavy emotional toll. I once had to sit with a deceased community member for three days just waiting for troopers to arrive. This creates a lasting trauma that never really leaves you.

Recommendations:

1. Prioritize federal funding specifically for public safety and victim services in rural Alaska.
2. Fund the construction of infrastructure, such as public safety buildings, to allow for effective local responses.
3. Establish a permanent 10% set-aside for Tribal Nations in all crime victim funding.

Topic 2. The Desperate Need for Secure Housing

Our women and children are left vulnerable because there is nowhere safe for them to go. There are few volunteers willing to house victims because everyone fears retaliation from abusers. In March 2024, a young woman in our village was beaten so severely she died. Because the troopers took so long to respond, critical evidence was lost, and the perpetrator received only a ten-year sentence for negligent homicide. If we had secure housing, she might still be here.

Recommendations:

1. Establish secure, supportive housing within the village so families can find safety and stability without having to flee their community.
2. Require the OVW, OVC, and HUD to work on legal amendments that allow for meaningful housing infrastructure support for Tribes.

Topic 3. Federal Grant Delays and Administrative Uncertainty

I find it impossible to plan for our community's safety when federal grant notices are issued months late. We should know our budgets by October 1st, but often we are left waiting until July or August just to find out if we can even apply. This makes it hard to keep the doors open or pay our staff, and it leaves our families wondering if they have to leave the village just to find the support they need.

Recommendations:

1. Establish clear and predictable funding release deadlines so Tribes aren't left guessing.
2. Provide at least three months for the application process so we have time to think through and write comprehensive narratives.
3. Expand project periods to allow for long-term strategic planning and program sustainability.

Topic 4. Need for Alaska-Specific Specialized Support

Our history and geography are nuanced and require a deep understanding to provide competent services. We face violence rooted in historical trauma and systematic neglect. We need training and technical assistance from people who actually live here and understand our "on-the-ground" realities. The Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) has been our partner for over a decade, and they make a world of difference because they understand our background.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to provide dedicated funding for the AKNWRC so they can support Tribal advocacy and justice responses.
2. Ensure federal partners provide specialized training that reflects the unique circumstances of Alaska Tribes.

Topic 5. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I strongly oppose any plan to merge or absorb OVW or OTJ into other departments. These offices were created for a reason. OVW must remain a separate and distinct office as Congress mandated, and OTJ must remain our principal point of contact at the DOJ.

Recommendations:

1. Reject all proposals to consolidate or merge OVW or OTJ with other Department of Justice components.

Topic 6. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

I do not believe the law should be rewritten to turn the NBS into small "community-level" studies. If you do that,

Alaska Native women will be systematically left behind because our small, remote villages don't have the research infrastructure to do it ourselves. It is the federal government's responsibility to fulfill this mandate, not the Tribes'.

Recommendations:

1. Complete the National Baseline Study as a single national study as written in the statute.
2. Use carry-forward funding to complete the study as Congress mandated.
3. Use existing systems, like the Community Health Aide Program, as a supplement to collect prevalence data.
4. Maintain and strengthen the 904 Task Force as a transparent, decision-making body under FACA.



Native Village of Tetlin

Sadie Rose Warbelow, Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction Program Manager - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

As a former law enforcement officer in rural Alaska, I have witnessed the severe public safety breakdown caused by a lack of consistent, fully certified law enforcement. I am speaking for Tetlin and other Indigenous communities to highlight the dangerous realities we face daily and to advocate for equitable public safety capacity.

Topic 1. The Failure of the Village Public Safety Officer Program and Under-Policing

The VPSO program is a poor replacement for a robust state public safety system and simply does not work. A six-week training period is vastly insufficient, especially when compared to the 1,008 hours of training and three months of field training I received as a law enforcement officer. When law enforcement is absent or delayed, perpetrators exploit these gaps, victims are left to manage their own safety, and community members put themselves in harm's way to intervene. In severe cases, our villages are forced into lockdown to preserve a crime scene while waiting days for officers to arrive, leaving residents scared and in shock.

Recommendations:

1. Prioritize stable, multi-year funding for fully certified, Federal-level Tribal law enforcement staffing models.
2. Support comprehensive training pipelines that provide proper certification, field training, and specialized instruction, rather than relying on inadequate half-measures.
3. Implement 24/7 staffing models that reflect real community needs, along with cross-deputization and interagency coordination where requested by the Tribe.

Topic 2. Funding Realities and Infrastructure Needs

Tribal communities cannot survive on patchwork staffing, short grant cycles, and temporary pilot programs that treat public safety like a project rather than a core governmental function. Funding must account for the reality of our remote geography, long distances, limited housing, and high call volumes related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and crisis intervention.

Recommendations:

1. Increase funding flexibility so Tribes can cover realistic operational costs, including competitive pay to recruit and retain officers, housing supports, dispatch, overtime, training, and equipment.
2. Reduce administrative burdens that pull small departments away from actual patrol duties, investigations, and community trust-building.

3. Expand technical assistance to help Tribes build sustainable law enforcement infrastructure, including recruitment pipelines and wellness/retention support to prevent officer burnout.

Topic 3. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

When our communities are under-resourced for public safety, we are forced into a constant state of triage and crisis, which allows outside systems to take control and dilute our internal sovereignty. We deserve federal structures that strengthen our self-determination and treat us with the respect owed to the first citizens of this nation.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure OVW remains a separate and distinct office within the DOJ. We strongly oppose any proposal to consolidate, merge, or absorb it into the Office of Justice Programs or the Office of Tribal Justice.
2. Incentivize and support Tribal organizations in implementing enforceable accountability structures that protect Indigenous staff and communities, ensuring that federal funding strengthens rather than destabilizes Tribal sovereignty.
3. Establish a policy protocol with ICE regarding the proper and respectful treatment of Alaska Natives and Native Americans.



Navajo Nation

Richelle Montoya, Vice President - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Eugenia Charles-Newton, Council Delegate - Tribal Leader (Oral)

Amber Kanazbah Crotty, Council Delegate - Tribal Leader (Written)

The Navajo Nation (Diné Bikéyah) is the largest Tribal Nation in the United States, with a population of approximately 420,000 citizens. Its vast land base encompasses over 27,000 square miles, nearly 17.3 million acres, stretching across the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, with a ranch in Colorado. This territory is geographically diverse and remote, featuring interstates that bisect the reservation and various border towns that create unique jurisdictional and public safety complexities.

Introduction of Richelle Montoya

I am Richelle Montoya, the 11th Vice President of the Navajo Nation and the first female ever elected to this office. I sit here today as a leader, but also as a survivor. I have lived through the same experience as 90% of the women in Indian Country. My great-grandmother, my grandmother, my mother, and I have all survived domestic violence. I carried my children through it and over it, and my life's work now is to ensure my girls do not have the same experience. I know how the system can fail us. I once had to go to court eight times for a restraining order, only to have it postponed every time because the offender was never served. I am here to advocate for the families who shouldn't have to navigate this alone.

Introduction of Eugenia Charles-Newton

I am Eugenia Charles-Newton, and I proudly serve the Diné people as a member of the 25th Navajo Nation Council and Chairwoman of the Law and Order Committee. I speak to you from a place of deep, personal pain. When I was 17 years old, I was raped and left for dead. Even as I lay in the ICU with bruises covering my body, I had to explain to officers over and over again why I needed help, yet my case went nowhere, and I never saw justice. My anger and frustration turned into a passion to return home and speak for a system that didn't work for me, to make sure no

one else has to endure what I did. I am here to tell you that the “crumbs” we are given to address these social ills are not enough.

Introduction of Amber Kanazbah Crotty

I am Amber Kanazbah Crotty. I am of the Kinyaa’áanii Clan and my maternal grandfather is Deeshchii’nii. I come from a long legacy of female leaders, weavers, and sheepherders from Sheep Springs, New Mexico. On the 25th Navajo Nation Council, I serve as the Chair of the Missing and Murdered Diné Relatives Taskforce. As a mother and community member, I advocate for those with little political agency, our LGBTQ2S+ relatives, our children, and our survivors. My guiding principle is “Atchíní bá a’nít’á – Do it for the Children,” and I am here to ensure that our pursuit of data and justice is culturally grounded and respects our sovereignty.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Topic 1. Chronic Underfunding

We find ourselves in a position where we must compete against other Tribal Nations for “crumbs” leftover from a larger pie. We apply for several grants a year just to make ends meet, yet these small increments of funding make it impossible to truly address the violence in our communities. We see federal agencies working in silos, failing to communicate with one another, which means we spend more time talking about the issues than actually addressing them.

Our current self-determination contracts were last properly negotiated in the late 1990s, meaning we are trying to provide safety using wages and costs that do not account for modern inflation or the increased cost of living. We are often expected to solve every societal issue with these minimal funds, acting as a bandaid bandage while we continue to lose our people to violence.

Recommendations:

1. Properly negotiate P.L. 638 contract funds to reflect current inflation, cost of living, and competitive benefits.
2. Increase the overall pool of funding for Tribal Nations to move beyond “incremental” grants.
3. Improve inter-agency communication to ensure funding is streamlined and addresses community needs holistically.

Topic 2. Severe Shortage of Law Enforcement and Investigators

We are facing a crisis in protection. For a nation the size of a small state, we have less than 200 police officers to serve over 400,000 citizens. While the national average for police protection is 2.8 officers per 1,000 people, we should have at least 560 officers, but federal formulas do not consider our massive land base. We lose our officers to neighboring jurisdictions that offer higher pay and less danger, leaving our remaining force overwhelmed.

Our criminal investigators are spread so thin that they must act as medical investigators, coroners, and victim advocates simultaneously. This lack of infrastructure leads to startlingly low arrest rates. For example, out of 2,113 rape calls made over several years, only 70 arrests were made. We are doing what we can by creating our own police academy, but we need federal help to sustain a force that can actually deliver justice.

Recommendations:

1. Support Tribal efforts to lower the recruitment age for police officers from 21 to 18 to broaden the applicant pool.
2. Provide funding for competitive benefits for Tribal law enforcement to improve retention.
3. Account for land base and geography in federal formulas for determining necessary law enforcement staffing levels.

Topic 3. Jurisdictional Gaps and Federal Declination of Cases

We feel a profound sense of injustice when the federal government declines to prosecute the cases we send them. Between 2016 and 2024, the Department of Justice declined 525 cases from the Navajo Nation, including 172 cases involving child sexual assault or abuse. These declinations leave victims without recourse and perpetrators free to re-offend.

Our jurisdictional powers are also limited. When a non-Navajo individual comes onto our lands and commits a crime, we are often powerless to act and must rely entirely on the United States government. This lack of accountability for outsiders makes our communities targets for exploitation and violence.

Recommendations:

1. Increase transparency and accountability for federal prosecutors regarding case declinations in Indian Country.
2. Expand Tribal jurisdictional powers to allow Tribes to hold all perpetrators of violence accountable on Tribal lands.
3. Strengthen cross-deputation and data-sharing agreements with outside agencies to close jurisdictional loopholes.

Topic 4. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

We are often invisible in federal data because surveys rely on broad racial categories. Identifying as “Native American” is not the same as identifying as a citizen of a specific Tribal Nation. We need data that reflects our Tribal affiliation and geographic context, such as whether a victim resides on the reservation or in a border town. Without this specificity, we cannot accurately analyze the unique experiences of our relatives.

We believe the NBS is urgent and must be prioritized, but it must be conducted in a way that respects our sovereignty. We are better positioned than federal agents to collect this sensitive information from our own people, yet we lack the technical tools and funding to do so at scale.

Recommendations:

1. Complete the NBS as a priority, ensuring it includes healthcare and public safety components.
2. Mandate the collection of Tribal affiliation in all federal victimization data and surveys.
3. Partner with Tribal Epidemiology Centers and utilize Tribal researchers to lead data design and implementation.
4. Exempt the Task Force from FACA to expedite the completion of required studies.

Topic 5. Need for Prevention, Education, and Judicial Reform

We believe that prevention must begin at home by teaching our people, especially our young men, how to be good fathers, spouses, and relatives. We have been reactive for too long, and we need resources to shift toward proactive education that restores our traditional values of honoring women.

Furthermore, the judicial system remains a barrier for our victims. Navigating the courts as a single parent is nearly impossible without legal guidance, and many victims lose faith when their cases lose momentum or when they face a system that treats them like they are “wasting time”. We need to empower our survivors to navigate these systems with dignity and support.

Recommendations:

1. Fund prevention programs that teach young men and women about healthy relationships and financial responsibility.
2. Provide scholarships for Tribal members to become attorneys and advocates who can guide victims through the judicial system.

3. Support programs like “Engaging Fathers” to build stronger family foundations and reduce cycles of violence.



Northern Cheyenne

Gene Small, President - Tribal Leader (Oral)

I am Gene Small, President of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, speaking on behalf of our 14,000 enrolled members. I brought my team, including our Healing Hearts Director and our attorney, to emphasize that a team effort is necessary to address the severe public safety and violence issues plaguing our community.

Topic 1. Rural Challenges and Critical Need for Victim Services

As a Tribe in a beautiful but rural setting, our services are spread thin, which presents major challenges. Our nearest women’s shelter for domestic violence is 100 miles away, forcing us to travel that far to take our victims to safety. Our Healing Hearts program, which advocates for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, operates in a community heavily impacted by alcohol and drug abuse. In 2025 alone, we received 97 domestic violence calls through the police department, plus over 300 additional victims who walked in seeking help, totaling almost 400 people needing assistance in one year.

Recommendations:

1. We need more advocates for our Healing Hearts program to service our community.
2. We need more vehicles to cover the long distances we travel to reach and transport victims.
3. My future goal is to secure a safe and secure place for our victims on the reservation, such as a gated community or shelter, so we do not have to travel the 100 miles to safety.
4. I feel it is important to support and get funding for Healing Hearts so we can get more advocates on our reservation.

Topic 2. Federal Agency Misconduct and Lack of Accountability

I am deeply upset by the continued pattern of sexual violence against our women by those sworn to protect them. In October 2025, a Bureau of Affairs’ Police Officer, Murrell D. Deela, was charged by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for sexually violating a 15-year-old Northern Cheyenne girl. Since then, two more girls have come forward. Deela tried to hide evidence by burning his own vehicle and blaming the victim’s brothers. Compounding this injustice, the BIA OJS disregarded the Tribe’s unanimous exclusion order against Deela, passed a year before he was charged, and allowed him to return to the reservation to work in the evidence office.

This exact type of incident with a police officer happened 20 years earlier in 2015. Furthermore, a high school teacher in a neighboring town was recently found guilty of multiple felony charges for sexually assaulting a 15-year-old enrolled member. I have to ask, who do we trust when police and teachers are committing these crimes against our women?

Recommendations:

1. I urge the DOJ and DOI to reverse the course of decreasing staff resources and instead pour more staff resources, education, and training into increasing, rather than decreasing, public safety.
2. The DOJ must provide training and education for U.S. Attorneys, FBI personnel, criminal chiefs, victim witness coordinators, and all relevant staff on the link between Tribal sovereignty, Tribal consultation, and safety in Indian Country.

3. The DOJ and DOI should continue to prioritize public safety in Indian Country by addressing the disproportionately high rates of violence experienced by Indigenous people.

Topic 3. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and Judicial Issues

Our Tribe has suffered greatly from the MMIW crisis. When the family of Hanna Harris, who was found deceased in 2013, sought assistance, they were met with no response or a rude response from local law enforcement. I personally found 14-year-old Henny Scott, who was missing, deceased near Muddy Cluster, Montana, in 2018. In response to these tragedies, the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and the State of Montana passed Hanna's Act in 2019 (Montana House Bill 21), which created a missing persons specialist and a Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force. Despite these legislative steps, core jurisdictional problems remain.

Recommendations:

1. We urge Congress to legislatively pass a full *Oliphant* fix.
2. The DOJ and DOI should coordinate and collaborate to implement the provisions of VAWA 2022 and support Tribal Nations in implementing jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators.

Topic 4. Public Safety Infrastructure and Funding Crisis

Our public safety infrastructure is failing. Our jail has been closed since 2019, and since that closure, our crime rate has gone up by 800%. We have only three full-time police officers to cover our 700 square miles. The crime statistics underscore the severity of this crisis. In 2025, we received 686 calls for intoxication, 223 for harassment and intimidation, 36 missing person calls, and 3 kidnapping calls.

Recommendations:

1. We need a functional jail on the Northern Cheyenne reservation.



Omaha Tribe of Nebraska

Cheyenne Robinson, Treasurer- Tribal Leader (Written)

I am Cheyenne Robinson, Treasurer of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, and I am submitting these written comments for the 20th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation. The violence against Native women, children, and families remains a persistent crisis for our people, and addressing it requires sustained federal investment, respect for our sovereignty, and policies rooted in the federal trust responsibility.

Topic 1. Meaningful Tribal Consultation and Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

Delayed or perfunctory consultation directly harms our ability to plan and sustain law enforcement and victim services in our rural region. Furthermore, OVW and its Tribal-specific expertise are essential to our survival and response to violence.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct Tribal consultation before any federal decisions are made regarding funding structures, program consolidation, staffing, or administrative changes.
2. Maintain the OVW as a distinct and fully resourced office within DOJ, and halt any efforts to weaken, consolidate, or reduce its authority or funding.

Topic 2. Law Enforcement Capacity and Tribal Courts

Our Tribal officers are often the first responders to domestic violence and sexual assault, yet we operate despite longstanding federal underfunding. Our Tribal courts, which are foundational to enforcing VAWA protections, are similarly underfunded relative to their immense responsibilities.

Recommendations:

1. Provide sustained and predictable funding for Tribal law enforcement that aligns with our expanded jurisdiction and enforcement responsibilities under VAWA 2022.
2. Support the recruitment, retention, and training of Tribal officers, specifically focusing on trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices.
3. Increase direct funding for Tribal courts to align with the requirements of Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction, ensuring adequate support for court staffing, defense services, probation, and victim advocacy.

Topic 3. Victim Services and Healing-Centered Approaches

Victim services are essential lifelines that extend beyond crisis response to include advocacy, shelter, and culturally grounded healing. These culturally appropriate services are not optional. They are central to survivor safety.

Recommendations:

1. Establish noncompetitive, direct funding streams for Tribal victim services.
2. Provide Tribes with the flexibility to design services that reflect our distinct culture, kinship systems, and community needs.
3. Ensure long-term funding stability to prevent dangerous service disruptions that place survivors at risk.

Topic 4. MMIP and the Not Invisible Act Implementation

The crisis of MMIP continues to deeply impact the Omaha Tribe, exacerbated by jurisdictional confusion and insufficient federal coordination. We are particularly concerned about the removal of the Not Invisible Act Commission's final report, Not One More, from the DOJ website, which undermines transparency and federal accountability.

Recommendations:

1. Fully implement the Not Invisible Act and Savanna's Act, and ensure regular public reporting on the progress of this implementation.
2. Restore the Not One More report to the DOJ website immediately and ensure it remains publicly accessible.
3. Distribute dedicated funding to establish and sustain Tribal healing and response teams, including multidisciplinary Tribal Community Response Teams that center survivors and families.
4. Provide ongoing, culturally grounded, and trauma-informed technical assistance for our response teams to help navigate unique jurisdictional and geographic realities.
5. Improve data collection and sharing related to MMIP cases occurring in Indian Country.

Topic 5. Federal Accountability and Intergovernmental Coordination

Consistent federal accountability is a cornerstone of public safety in Indian Country. When federal partners fail to coordinate with us, it weakens our justice systems and erodes our trust.

Recommendations:

1. Communicate prosecution declinations promptly and transparently. Decisions by U.S. Attorneys or federal law enforcement to decline prosecution must be reported immediately to Tribal authorities to protect victim safety.



Oneida Nation

Tehassi Hill, Chairman - Tribal Leader (Written)

Oneida Nation submitted responses to the consultation questions contained in the DOJ/NIJ National Baseline Study and Section 904 Statute Framing Paper. Each question from the framing paper is reproduced and answered in alignment with Oneida Nation's needs, sovereignty, and the realities of a P.L. 280 public-safety environment in Wisconsin.

Topic 1. Should the authorizing statute be rewritten to reconceptualize the NBS as a broader program of research instead of a single national study?

Oneida Nation supports rewriting the statute to conceptualize the NBS as a Tribal-led program of research rather than a centralized study. This respects Tribal sovereignty and addresses challenges NIJ documented, including Institutional Review Boards (IRB) delays, logistics, and the impracticality of sampling all 574 Tribes. (Framing Paper: impediments include scope, logistics, and insufficient funding). Smaller, regionally coordinated, culturally appropriate prevalence studies would allow Oneida Nation and Great Lakes Tribes to generate actionable data.

1a. Could NBS be reconceptualized as Tribal-led prevalence studies?

Yes. Oneida Nation supports Tribal-led studies using shared, NIJ-developed instruments and Tribal data-governance authority. Oneida Nation supports reconceptualizing the NBS as a Tribal-led program grounded in sovereignty, realistic logistics, and culturally informed methodologies. This approach aligns with the challenges NIJ described and with the community-driven safety priorities identified across Indian Country.

1b. Should NIJ share instruments/methods with Tribes?

Yes. Oneida Nation would use these tools for local prevalence, to understand community-specific victimization patterns, and to improve system response.

Topic 2. Would reports analyzing available federal victimization data be useful?

Yes, if limitations are clearly stated. Existing sources such as those cited in the Framing Paper can provide foundational insights, though NIJ notes limitations due to small AI/AN subsamples and misclassification. These analyses would supplement, not replace, Tribal-led data.

Topic 3. What other strategies might increase/enhance prevalence data within and across Tribal communities?

1. Fund Tribal research capacity (sampling, surveys, training).
2. Create regional Great Lakes collaborative cohorts including Oneida Nation to build consistent but non-uniform data.
3. Use NIJ's recommended small-area estimation and modular survey design to respect Tribal sovereignty.

Topic 4. Within guidelines, how should funds be used and what research topics matter most?

1. Use funds for community-led prevalence studies, contextual violence research, and evaluation of federal–state–Tribal response effectiveness as required under Section 904.
2. Invest in P.L. 280–specific response research, including barriers in Wisconsin's mixed jurisdictional landscape.

Topic 5. Should OVW pursue a statutory exemption from FACA to ensure more effective Task Force administration?

1. Oneida Nation supports a narrow exemption to increase Task Force responsiveness while maintaining transparency. NIJ/OVW identify FACA requirements as slowing the ability to convene meaningfully.
2. A flexible model allows faster turnaround between Tribal consultations and research design.



Organized Village of Kake

Joel Jackson, President - Tribal Leader (Written)

I am providing this testimony to urge the federal government to honor its trust responsibilities by providing the essential funding and support needed for our Tribal justice systems, victim services, and public safety infrastructure.

Topic 1. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I strongly oppose any proposal to consolidate, merge, or absorb OVW or OTJ into larger bureaucracies like the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) or the COPS Office. These offices were created by Congress for specific reasons that remain urgent today. For Alaska Tribes, OVW provides staff who truly understand our unique challenges, and OTJ serves as a crucial coordinating gateway into the entire DOJ.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain OVW as a separate and distinct office within the DOJ to ensure Native women's safety does not become a negotiable line item.
2. Keep the OTJ independent so that Tribes are not left navigating a fragmented bureaucracy without a clear advocate or central point of contact.

Topic 2. Tribal Justice and Public Safety Funding

Our Keex'Kwaan Tribal Court and Circle Peacemaking Court system address crime through Indigenous traditions that focus on healing and restoring relationships, rather than just warehousing people in punishment. Unfortunately, recent policy shifts by the BIA and Office of Tribal Justice Support threaten this progress by imposing arbitrary limits that violate our Tribal self-determination.

Recommendations:

1. Reverse the newly imposed \$200,000 funding ceiling from the BIA, as it falls far short of what is needed to sustain even minimal court operations.
2. Honor Tribal sovereignty by fully funding submitted Tribal budgets rather than forcing Tribes to select just three priority needs based on federal, paternalistic preferences.

Topic 3. Enhancing Law Enforcement Capacity

Alaska Native villages face a devastating public safety crisis because we are forced to rely on the VPSO program, which lacks arrest powers and 24-hour coverage. During a recent multi-day mental health crisis in our community, we experienced firsthand how this system creates dangerous coverage gaps, sending the message that our safety is not a priority.

Recommendations:

1. Provide dedicated, multi-year funding streams directly to Alaska Tribes for law enforcement so we can build a system tailored to our specific conditions.
2. Prioritize funding for infrastructure and equipment, including the construction of Tribal police facilities, officer housing, detention facilities, rugged vehicles, body cameras, and emergency response systems.

Topic 4. Grant Predictability and NOFO Delays

This year, DOJ NOFOs arrived months late, giving us just weeks to apply and forcing us to choose between operating blindly or shutting down essential services. This forces Tribes into a state of perpetual crisis management instead of allowing us to build strong programs.

Recommendations:

1. Publish all NOFOs by April 1st with applications due by July 1st, allowing Tribes to build realistic budgets and plan for October 1st funding start dates.
2. Expand grant project periods to five years to reduce the annual reapplication burden and allow for sustainable program development.
3. Fund regional, Alaska-based technical assistance providers, such as the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, to deploy specialized training.

Topic 5. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

In response to the framing paper questions, the federal government must not abandon its statutory obligations regarding data collection on violence against Native women.

Recommendations:

1. Do not rewrite the authorizing statute to reconceptualize the NBS. It must be completed as a national study as explicitly mandated by Congress, not broken down into a series of local Tribal-led studies.
2. Use existing federal victimization data only as a supplement to the NBS, not a substitute, and explicitly document which populations are missing from those datasets.
3. Dedicate the majority of carry-forward funds to completing the NBS, utilizing any remaining funds for Alaska-specific research and capacity building.
4. Oppose any statutory exemption from FACA for the Section 904 Task Force. Instead of removing transparency, strengthen the Task Force by converting it into a properly resourced decision-making body.

**Organized Village of Kasaan****Mike Jones, President - Tribal Leader (Oral)**

I am Mike Jones. I am from the Village of Kasaan in Alaska. We are a Haida Village. We are on the southeast tip of Alaska. We are in the Tongass National Forest, which is the largest rainforest in the world. We are totem pole people. Our history in the area goes back tens of thousands of years. We have no migration story. We've been in the same place we came into being about 80 miles away from where I live. I'm noticing some empty seats up there, and that doesn't make me feel comfortable and confident in moving forward right now. I would like to come all of this way and have the attention of the entire board.

Nonetheless, I want to thank OVW for creating this space for Tribal leaders to speak directly to the federal government. This consultation is not just a meeting, it is a reflection of the trust and treaty obligations that bind

our nations together. These obligations are not optional. They are promises made to our ancestors and to future generations. I sit here today to remind us of a truth that transcends law and policy. Women are the life-givers of humanity. Every nation, every community, every family exists because of women. When violence is allowed to harm Native women, it is not just an attack on the individual. It is an attack on the very foundation of our people and the future of our cultures. Protecting women is not charity, it is a sacred duty.

Topic 1. Addressing Violence Against Native Women and Trust Obligations

Alaska Native women face domestic violence and sexual assault rates that are two to three times the national average on our island. The federal government has a legal and moral obligation under treaties and trust responsibilities to ensure their safety.

Recommendations:

1. We must address the dangerous gaps created by current policies like Public Law 280, which leave Tribes without authority over non-Native offenders and victims vulnerable due to slow state law enforcement response.
2. We need sustained funding for Tribal law enforcement, Tribal Wellness Courts, and culturally grounded victim services.
3. We require operational support for essential facilities, such as the shelter we are currently building on our island.

Topic 2. Ensuring Operational Capacity of Tribal Courts

While we are grateful for the support in developing our Tribal Court facility—which included BIA TJS funding in 2019, hiring a Tribal court administrator in 2020, and a CTAS Purpose Area 4 grant in 2021, supplemented by the Denali Commission, to complete the facility in 2023—we now face critical operational challenges.

Recommendations:

1. We need sufficient, sustained funding to cover ongoing operational costs, including utilities and building maintenance, which are not currently funded.
2. The funding caps from the BIA and TJS program must be addressed, as they have significantly impacted our ability to maintain court operations, forcing us to reduce staff to part-time status and scale back programs.

Topic 3. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I strongly oppose any proposals to consolidate or merge vital offices that directly serve Tribal Nations and address violence.

Recommendations:

1. The OVW must remain a separate and distinct office within the DOJ, as Congress explicitly mandated.
2. The OTJ must also remain a separate office dedicated to serving as the DOJ's principal point of contact for Indian Tribes and coordinating Tribal justice issues.

Topic 4. Investing in Prevention and Addressing Generational Trauma

While we seek funding for courts and law enforcement, I believe we need more emphasis on preventative maintenance and addressing the root cause of violence, which is often tied to low self-esteem resulting from generational trauma. The extraction of wealth from places like Kasaan Bay has left us with generational trauma, including the trauma from three generations of boarding schools where people were not taught how to be parents.

Recommendations:

1. I urge DOJ to collaborate with the Department of Education to implement public curriculum that teaches children about self-love and self-respect, which I believe is key to combating crimes and destructive behaviors linked to low self-esteem, drug addiction, and alcoholism.
2. We need resources to combat generational trauma left by events like the boarding schools.
3. We must teach our kids about thought recognition and their own personal sovereignty, in addition to discussing Tribal sovereignty.

**Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council*****April January, Tribal Court Administrator - Authorized Designee (Written)***

I am April January, the Tribal Court Administrator for the Orutsararmiut Traditional Native Council (OTNC) in Bethel, Alaska. As one of 229 federally recognized Alaska Native Tribes, OTNC plays a central role in the well-being and safety of our region. Bethel serves as the hub for 56 surrounding villages, bringing together a rich blend of cultures and creating a uniquely diverse community.

Our Tribal government represents 4,102 Tribal Members within a city of just 6,335 residents, a powerful reminder of how deeply rooted our people are in this region. With such a large portion of the community relying on us, OTNC is often the first and most trusted point of support for victims of domestic violence. The need is real, immediate, and growing, and our work directly impacts the safety and healing of families across the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

Topic 1. Administering Tribal Funds and Programs

When administering Tribal funds and programs under federal grants, Department of Justice staff consistently acknowledge the real-world challenges Alaskan Tribal governments face, including frequent leadership transitions, staff turnover, and recurring Internet outages in rural Alaska. These factors directly impact the timeliness of grant reporting, performance updates, and financial submissions, underscoring the need for flexibility and continued support for Tribal communities working diligently to meet federal requirements.

My experience working with our DOJ OVW Grant Officer has been exceptionally positive. They have consistently provided clear communication and proactively connected me with the Grants Technical Assistance Provider, ensuring I have the support needed to complete grant reporting, performance reports, and financial documentation. This collaboration has been instrumental in strengthening our capacity and moving our program toward full grant compliance.

Recommendations:

1. To improve the effectiveness of federal grant administration in Alaska, it is essential that all DOJ Grants staff receive training on the unique operational realities of Alaska Tribal governments, including frequent leadership changes, staff turnover, and recurring Internet outages in rural communities. With this understanding, DOJ staff can better support Tribes by proactively connecting them with Technical Assistance Providers, ensuring that grant reports, performance updates, and financial documentation are submitted on time.
2. DOJ Grants staff should consistently encourage and guide Tribes in applying for continuation funding under the DOJ Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS) Grant, helping sustain critical programs that directly impact community safety and well-being.

Topic 2. Administering Tribal Funds and Programs

When applying for DOJ grants, it is critical that Technical Assistance Providers offer training specifically designed to support the long-term sustainability of Tribal court programs, wellness courts, juvenile wellness courts, and Tribal

youth courts. These trainings should go beyond basic compliance and include practical strategies for maintaining program operations after the grant period ends. By equipping Tribal staff with tools for long-term planning, resource development, and program stability, DOJ can help ensure that these essential justice systems continue serving our communities well into the future.

Our Tribal justice programs are the backbone of safety and healing in our community. When Technical Assistance Providers offer training that prepares Tribal courts to operate beyond the life of a grant, they empower us to build stable, culturally grounded systems of justice. This investment ensures that our people, especially victims, youth, and families, continue receiving the support they need long after federal funding ends.

Recommendations:

1. Provide sustainability training that helps Tribal courts continue serving victims, families, and youth long after grant funding ends.

Topic 3. Enhancing the safety of Indian women from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, homicide, stalking, and sex trafficking

In our community of Bethel, Alaska, we continue to deal with chronic law enforcement shortages among both local and state officers. Our Tribe does not have any Tribal Police Officers. Over a recent 90-day period, Bethel officers handled 1,000 violent-crime related calls, creating a heavy workload that contributes to burnout and staffing shortages.

Bethel's law enforcement includes the local Bethel Police Department (BPD) and Alaska State Troopers, whose officers rotate two weeks on and two weeks off. While the BPD has attempted to address the problem of violent crimes, its efforts are limited by staff resources and the need to respond to numerous domestic violence calls.

An example was shared by a Bethel Police Officer during a meeting that included me, our Self Governance Director, and our Director of Social Services, along with the Bethel Police Chief and staff:

Over one weekend (Friday–Sunday), officers received a call about three children roaming the streets after midnight. They could not determine whose children they were, and the Office of Children's Services on-call service wasn't available. As a result, the children were taken to the BPD offices and watched by available staff until an Office of Children's Services worker was available to address the issue the following day or two. Currently, there is no safe home (respite) available in Bethel for the placement of children who need a safe place to stay when issues arise in their families. This lack of shelter represents another critical need.

Over that same weekend, the officer noted they were not only managing the children's case but were also dealing with back-to-back priority calls. He and his partner responded from a suicide attempt call directly to two consecutive domestic violence calls that occurred almost simultaneously, with just the two of them covering all these calls that weekend. The BPD received over 1,000 calls during that single weekend. These situations illustrate how dealing with limited staff and resources can lead to burnout.

Recommendations:

1. There is a need for funding a safe home (respite) available in Bethel for the placement of children who need a safe place to stay when issues arise in their families. This lack of shelter represents a critical need.
2. Enhancing coordination between the DOJ and Tribal Governments for effective violence-prevention and victim services work in Tribal Communities depends on strong, consistent communication that includes establishing regular check-ins.
3. Support Tribal Healing to Wellness preventive activities that involve community activities such as culturally relevant programs that include elders, youth, survivors, and referrals from State Children Services families to attend. Our Tribe has the Healthy Families Program funded by OVC's Tribal Victim Set-Aside Program that connects individuals to Yupik traditional values and healing that has been successful to our Tribal members, families and survivors.



Pala Band of Mission Indians

Robert Smith, Chairman - Tribal Leader (Pre-recorded Oral and Written)

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony for the 20th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation. On behalf of Pala and California Tribal leaders, I want to thank the Department of Justice, the Office on Violence Against Women, and our federal partners for continuing this vital dialogue with Tribal Nations.

For generations, Native women and families have faced unrelenting violence—violence that is compounded by jurisdictional confusion, underfunded systems, and inconsistent responses from law enforcement. Despite our best efforts, California Tribes continue to see some of the highest rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons in the nation. We are united in saying that this crisis is unacceptable, and it will not end until Tribal governments are given the full tools, funding, and authority to protect our people.

Topic 1. Funding Disparities & Sustainability

Tribal justice systems in California operate under severe financial strain. Funding comes in short-term, competitive grants that do not meet the long-term needs of our communities. Tribal police, courts, and victim service programs often rely on temporary awards that leave staff positions unfilled and programs vulnerable to closure.

Recommendations:

1. We urge DOJ and Congress to move toward permanent, non-competitive base funding for Tribal justice and victim service systems—funding that is equitable, sustainable, and reflective of real community needs. Tribes must also have the authority to determine their own technical assistance priorities, rather than having those decisions made by outside agencies.

Topic 2. Jurisdictional Challenges under P.L. 280 & Castro-Huerta

Public Law 280 created a confusing patchwork of jurisdiction between Tribes, counties, and the federal government. In California, that confusion continues to cost lives. When emergencies occur, law enforcement response is often delayed, and jurisdictional disputes leave families without answers. The *Castro-Huerta* decision only deepened this uncertainty by inviting further state intrusion into Tribal matters.

Recommendations:

1. We strongly support the restoration of Tribal sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction over crimes committed on our lands. States should not exercise authority in Indian Country without Tribal consent.
2. We also call for mandatory cultural and trauma-informed training—at least 20 hours—for all officers serving in P.L. 280 jurisdictions.

Topic 3. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) Crisis

Families bear the emotional and financial cost of searching for missing loved ones, often without support or coordination. They pay for search operations, travel, and funeral expenses, while navigating disconnected systems like NamUs, California Missing and Unidentified Persons Section (MUPS), and local law enforcement databases.

Recommendations:

1. We call for dedicated MMIP funding that allows Tribes to directly support families through every phase, including search, recovery, repatriation, counseling, and long-term healing.
2. There must be stronger coordination between jurisdictions, consistent law enforcement training on the

Feather Alert system, and accountability when agencies fail to act swiftly.

Topic 4. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

We are deeply concerned about proposals to consolidate victim services under a single P.L. 477-style block grant. While flexibility can be useful, merging programs like OVW and OVC into broad funding streams risks erasing the hard-won protections for survivors. Victim services must remain separate, visible, and fully funded. These programs were created through decades of advocacy by Native women, and they must not be diluted or lost through administrative restructuring.

Recommendations:

1. We urge the DOJ to keep victim services funding separate from other funding streams.

Topic 5. FVPSA Reauthorization & Tribal Coalitions

FVPSA remains a lifeline for many Tribal programs, yet the Tribal set-aside remains too small and too unstable.

Recommendations:

1. We urge Congress to reauthorize and expand FVPSA, increase the Tribal set-aside to 12.5%, and provide direct, multi-year funding to Tribal Coalitions, especially in P.L. 280 states like California, where jurisdictional complexities are greatest.

In closing, I want to emphasize that California Tribes are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for fairness, stability, and the means to protect our citizens just as any other government does. We honor the generations of Native women who fought for VAWA and for Tribal sovereignty. Now it is time for the federal government to honor its trust and treaty responsibilities by ensuring that every Tribal Nation has the authority, resources, and respect necessary to keep our communities safe. Thank you for listening, and thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to Tribal Nations.



Pascua Yaqui Tribe

Gloria Alvarez-Gomez, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Written)

Hello, my name is Gloria Alvarez-Gomez, and I currently serve as one of the Tribal Council members of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe (PYT), a Federally Recognized Tribe from the State of Arizona. Thank you for the opportunity for the PYT to contribute to implementation of the VAWA of 2013 and 2022. The protections afforded to Indian victims under VAWA 2013 and 2022 are a vital continuance of an effective mechanism ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of Indigenous women throughout Indian Country in the U.S. I want to begin by thanking the United States Congress, the Administration, the DOJ, NCAI, the Tribal Law & Policy Institute (TLPI), and the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) for their continued leadership and assistance during the implementation of VAWA 2013 and 2022.

I wish to honor my ancestors, a resilient people who, like desert plants, adapted to and thrived in our ancient lands through centuries of struggle. They roamed aboriginal territories stretching from Durango in Southern Mexico, north to Colorado, and west to California, and their self-determination just was. It was never conferred or determined by another group. For nearly 500 years, the Yaqui people have fought to protect our homelands and ensure the persistence of our cultural knowledge, our language, and our sacred ways of living.

Historically, my people have always maintained law enforcement and dispute resolution, most notably through our ceremonial societies. While we were recognized by Congress as a United States Indian Tribe in 1978, we exercised

our own wisdom by taking over our judicial system from the BIA in 1988. We have now been operating our own official justice system effectively for 36 years. Our first duty has always been to protect and safeguard our people, for a crime against one person is an offense against our sovereign authority and the political integrity of our community.

Topic 1. The Evolution of Jurisdiction and the Need for a Full Oliphant Fix

Domestic violence is, and has historically been, the most pressing criminal justice challenge facing the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. At any given time, offenses involving domestic and family violence make up approximately 40% of our criminal caseload. For too long, federal law stripped us of the power to hold non-Indians accountable for these crimes, but the restoration of our authority through VAWA 2013 and 2022 represented a historic first step for law and order in our community.

Because we were one of only three initial Tribes to exercise this restored jurisdiction, we were the first to obtain a conviction of a non-Indian perpetrator since 1978. In 2014, we convicted a twenty-six-year-old male for domestic violence assault, and in 2017, we acquired the first jury trial conviction of a non-Indian defendant who had previously strangled the same victim. These successes prove that we no longer have to stand by and watch our women be victimized without recourse.

However, our current authority is still hampered by narrow definitions in federal law. We see numerous cases where violence is committed against our elders or other family members by non-Indians, yet because there is no “romantic or intimate relationship” involved, our jurisdiction is limited. We are often forced to watch these perpetrators go unpunished for harming our grandparents simply because of a technicality in the federal statute.

True justice requires that we are not restricted by the nature of the relationship between the victim and the abuser. We have proven our ability to provide due process, including an independent Public Defender’s Office and impartial juries that reflect a cross-section of both Tribal and non-Tribal members. Our system is ready to expand, but we need the federal government to move beyond incremental steps.

Recommendations:

1. Provide federal support for a full *Oliphant* fix to allow Tribes to exercise jurisdiction over any person, Indian or non-Indian, for all crimes committed on the reservation.
2. Restore corresponding and sustained funding to implement this full restoration of jurisdiction.
3. Increase coordination between Tribal and federal victim services for both pre- and post-conviction status updates to ensure victims’ rights are maintained.
4. Provide increased non-competitive and flexible funding for housing and shelter for victims that includes Yaqui culture and traditions.

Topic 2. Enhancing Federal and State Coordination to End Impunity

We believe in a collaborative approach to safety, which we have demonstrated through landmark intergovernmental agreements. We coordinate concurrently with federal and state agencies to ensure that criminals who harm our members are held accountable, no matter which court they end up in. This coordination has achieved better outcomes for victims and has even allowed us to successfully extradite non-Indians back to Tribal court from state facilities.

One of our most effective tools is the Special Assistant United States Attorney (SAUSA) program, which allows our Tribal prosecutors to handle reservation-based crimes in federal court. This ensures that our priorities, such as domestic violence, drug offenses, and violent crimes, receive timely prosecutorial attention. However, this program is often limited by a lack of shared training and resources.

We have also spearheaded an analog program at the state level. Following the *Castro-Huerta* decision, we entered into a landmark agreement with the Pima County Attorney’s Office to allow a special Tribal prosecutor to jointly handle cases in state court. While we have concerns about the disruption of nearly 200 years of jurisdictional precedent, we chose to work collaboratively rather than wait years for Congress to clarify the ruling.

Despite these partnerships, we still face gaps in communication. Federal reporting of reservation-specific crimes often lacks detail on investigations designated as “pending” or the specific reasons for declinations. We need more than just public press releases. We need a transparent reporting system that allows us to evaluate the status of every investigation affecting our people.

Recommendations:

1. Include Tribal prosecutors and SAUSAs in United States Attorney’s Office in-house Continuing Legal Education (CLE) training to make the SAUSA program more robust.
2. Improve federal reporting of reservation-specific crimes, including clear documentation of investigative statuses and the reasons for case declinations.
3. Improve FBI collaboration with local Tribal enforcement on high-priority cases, such as officer-involved shootings and drug offenses, to preserve evidence and include Tribal prosecutors in investigations.
4. Establish a framework for consistent follow-through on the significant interagency coordination required by VAWA 2022.

Topic 3. Addressing the MMIP Crisis Through Lived Experience

The crisis of MMIP is a foremost priority for our Tribal members. Because the Pascua Yaqui people live in multiple communities both on and off the reservation, a fragmented response is a failure of our duty to protect them. We cannot afford to have our relatives vanish into jurisdictional gaps between Tribal, state, and federal boundaries.

We believe that data regarding our missing relatives must be accurate and accessible, yet the current federal systems often fail to capture the full picture. We have found that survivors and those with lived experience possess the most vital insights needed to track these cases and confirm their resolutions. The federal government must stop acting as the sole gatekeeper of this data and empower us to lead these efforts.

Furthermore, healing from the loss of a missing family member requires more than a criminal investigation. It requires a restoration of the spirit. Our families need support that is grounded in our own traditions and language, rather than generalized services that do not speak to our Yaqui identity.

Coordination must be mandatory and consistent. When federal representatives fail to show up to task force meetings, it sends a message that our missing relatives are not a priority. We need a commitment that federal partners will be present at every table where we are working to bring our people home.

Recommendations:

1. Require a representative from the U.S. Attorney’s Office to attend every Southern Arizona MMIP Task Force meeting.
2. Provide dedicated funding to support survivor-led tracking of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons.
3. Fund services that center on Yaqui traditions, language, and healing practices to support families impacted by domestic violence or a missing relative

Topic 4. Detention Infrastructure and the Withdrawal of Federal Support

As we successfully convict more perpetrators, our need for detention services increases. However, detention is not just about incarceration. It must include culturally appropriate services and treatment to reduce recidivism. Under the federal trust responsibility, the cost of these services should be borne by the U.S. government, yet we are seeing a disturbing trend of federal withdrawal.

In July 2024, many Tribes were suddenly advised that the BIA Office of Justice Services was ceasing detention service contracts. This left us scrambling to find the resources to house the accused and the convicted, creating a direct threat to the safety of our communities. This cancellation was a breach of the trust obligation and has yet to be fully rectified.

Even when federal programs like the Bureau of Prisons' Tribal Prisoner Program (TPP) exist, they are woefully underfunded. There are currently only 100 beds available in the TPP for all 575 federally recognized Tribes, which is grossly inadequate for the scale of the need in Indian Country. We need easier access to the Bureau of Prisons for our Tribal inmates.

We are ready to do the work of rehabilitating our people, but we cannot do it without the infrastructure. Our Tribal courts and probation officers need better information-sharing and training to ensure our inmates can successfully enter federal programs. We cannot build a sustainable future if our federal partners abandon us the moment a conviction is secured.

Recommendations:

1. Provide full monetary support for detention services for defendants convicted in Tribal court as part of the federal trust responsibility.
2. Expand the Tribal Prisoner Program to include a number of beds proportional to the actual detention needs of all 575 Tribes.
3. Provide training and information sharing for Tribal courts and probation officers to assist in creating pre-sentence reports for successful entry into the TPP.
4. Immediately restore and stabilize BIA Office of Justice Services detention service contracts.

Topic 5. Modern Investigative Tools Legislative Integrity

We are currently fighting a modern war with outdated tools. We lack the enhanced authority needed to obtain the electronic evidence that is vital for successfully prosecuting traffickers and other serious criminals who use technology to evade the law. Legislative gaps in current federal law are allowing these predators to operate in the shadows of our reservation.

Additionally, we believe that a sustainable future for our government and people depends on a strong executive arm to enforce the mandates of our Constitution. We need improved collaboration with the FBI on high-priority cases, such as officer-involved shootings and drug offenses, to achieve efficient investigation decisions and preserve evidence. It is vital to the exercise of our Tribal sovereignty that we are able to analyze, evaluate, and be included in all investigations affecting our people.

Recommendations:

1. Support the passage of the Protection for Reservation Occupants against Trafficking and Evasive Communications Today Act of 2025 ("Protect Act of 2025") to enhance Tribal authority to obtain electronic evidence for trafficking and other serious crime prosecutions.
2. Provide a commitment to prosecuting low-level drug crimes that fall under historical felony threshold levels to address the damage illegal drugs cause to entire families.
3. Enhance FBI collaboration with local Tribal enforcement to streamline incident resolutions and include Tribal Prosecutors in investigations.
4. Improve the reporting of reservation-specific crimes, including clear documentation of declinations and cases designated as "pending further investigation."

Topic 6. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a) and Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

We believe that the transparency of federal government research is essential for Tribal oversight. The Section 904 Task Force was created to assist with the development and implementation of statutory research on violence against Indigenous women. If this task force is allowed to operate in secret, we lose the ability to ensure that the research actually reflects the lived reality of our Tribal communities.

Furthermore, the significant amount of interagency coordination required by VAWA 2022 requires a clear framework for follow-through to ensure that these mandates do not become hollow promises. We must continue

to educate our community members, Tribal law enforcement officers, and judicial officials on these new laws to ensure they are implemented correctly and that there are no safe havens for criminals.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that the Section 904 Task Force continues to operate under FACA to maintain public transparency and oversight of required statutory research.
2. Establish a specific framework or process for follow-through on the interagency coordination required by VAWA 2022.
3. Provide for the continual education of community members, Tribal law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges on the new provisions and daily implementation of VAWA.
4. Maintain OVW as a vital mechanism for ensuring the safety and welfare of Indigenous women

Conclusion

While there have been great strides in improved collaboration, complacency is the enemy of progress. We must collectively strive to improve our response to crime on the reservation because it is our obligation. We look forward to improved collaborations with all federal partners and a continuous dialogue on Tribal issues. The challenges facing law enforcement and the justice system in our communities are substantial, however, opportunities exist to continue to revolutionize and strengthen our system of justice.

The Pascua Yaqui Tribal Council, Law Enforcement, the Tribal Court, the Prosecutor's Office, and our federal and state partners have effectively worked together to effect change. The Tribe has taken significant steps to protect our communities, dedicated significant resources, and spent countless hours to implement VAWA 2013 and 2022 and is ready to dedicate additional hard work and resources to more fully actualizing justice for all persons living and working on PYT land through future expansion of jurisdiction over all non-Indian crimes.



Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe

Amber Caldera, Chairwoman - Tribal Leader (Written)

I am Amber Caldera, Chairwoman of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe (PGST). We are a self-governing nation located on the northern tip of the Kitsap Peninsula in Washington State, representing over 1,300 enrolled Tribal members. Under the Point No Point Treaty of 1855, the United States has a solemn treaty and trust obligation to provide for our well-being and protect our sovereignty. Despite this, our women and girls face daily threats to their safety that are exacerbated by jurisdictional complexities and limited access to essential services. Since 2018, we have exercised STCJ to hold non-Indian offenders accountable, but we require a federal partner that respects our status as a sovereign government rather than a nonprofit service provider.

Topic 1. Burdensome and Inconsistent Grant Administration

The current federal grant application and reporting processes are burdensome and do not reflect the realities of small Tribal programs. For example, our VAWA program operates with only two staff members responsible for everything from crisis response to compliance reporting. When requirements are duplicative or inconsistent across DOJ components, my staff must divert critical time away from survivors in crisis to handle paperwork, which can delay safety planning and reduce our availability during emergencies.

Recommendations:

1. Align federal administration with Tribal governance structures by recognizing Tribes as sovereign governments with distinct legal authorities.

2. Continue to simplify and reduce administrative burdens in the application and reporting processes without cutting funds.
3. Stabilize funding timelines by ensuring timely award notifications and implementing multi-year funding to reduce service disruptions.
4. Assign consistent grant managers with specific Tribal expertise to reduce communication delays and compliance risks.

Topic 2. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I am deeply concerned by the proposal to consolidate OVW into a larger bureaucratic structure. This plan contradicts the plain words of OVW's enacting statute and risks shifting the federal focus from survivor safety to law enforcement metrics. Consolidating these offices would dilute the specialized expertise Tribal Nations rely on and could weaken the survivor-first philosophy that guides our holistic responses to violence.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain the OVW as a separate and distinct office within DOJ to preserve its effectiveness and mission.
2. Reject the merger of grant offices to protect Tribal sovereignty and the specialized expertise central to fulfilling trust responsibilities.
3. Protect specific grants, such as the TSASP, from potential funding reductions caused by consolidation.

Topic 3. Inadequate Access to Criminal Justice Information Systems

Limited or delayed access to crime information systems, such as protection order registries and warrant databases, creates serious safety risks for our survivors and first responders. If our Tribal law enforcement officers respond to a domestic violence call without real-time access to these databases, they may be unaware of prior violence or active orders prohibiting contact. This lack of information compromises officer safety and leaves survivors at continued risk because we cannot make informed decisions or enforce protections effectively.

Recommendations:

1. Modernize and standardize the integration of Tribal agencies into national and regional data-sharing networks.
2. Remove administrative and cost barriers that currently prevent Tribal participation in state and federal systems.
3. Develop interoperable systems that allow Tribal courts and law enforcement to both submit and retrieve data in real time.
4. Establish clear data-sharing protocols that protect Tribal sovereignty and survivor confidentiality.

Topic 4. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

The federal government has failed for over twenty years to fulfill its congressional mandate to conduct a nationwide baseline study on violence against our people. I strongly oppose any attempt to rewrite the law to shift this burden onto Tribes through a "program of research". Existing federal datasets are insufficient as a baseline because they frequently underrepresent the scale of victimization in Indian Country and often misclassify Tribal citizens.

Recommendations:

1. Fully implement § 904(a) of VAWA 2005 as written by conducting a single, nationwide baseline study.
2. Conduct an audit or accounting of the funds already disbursed for these study purposes to explain the lack of progress.
3. Ensure that any prevalence data strategies are Tribally-led and reflect each Tribe's unique legal and cultural context.
4. Maintain the Section 904 Task Force under the FACA to ensure transparency and accountability.

Topic 5. Instability Caused by Discretionary and Enjoined Funding

Because the federal government treats VAWA funds as discretionary, my Tribe continues to experience instability that prevents long-term safety planning. In 2025, for instance, we experienced funding delays that forced us to divert staff time into financial monitoring rather than direct services. Furthermore, when grant requirements are enjoined by courts, my staff must spend hours interpreting evolving guidance. In one instance, an advocate was forced to review paperwork instead of responding to a high-risk domestic violence situation that required urgent coordination.

Recommendations:

1. Transition toward a needs-based budget structure that reflects victimization rates and geographic realities like infrastructure deficits.
2. Provide prompt, clear written guidance when grant requirements are paused or changed due to litigation.
3. Centralize federal communications to avoid conflicting information and allow Tribal programs to maintain staffing based on previously approved plans.
4. Move away from competitive grant processes and encourage the implementation of an allocation formula for distribution.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments. We look forward to working with you all and your respective agencies to eliminate gender-based violence in Tribal communities.



Quinault Indian Nation

Aliza Brown, Human Services Director - Authorized Designee (Oral)

Stephanie Terrell, Victim's Advocate, Sacred Healing Journey - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Quinault Indian Nation is located in the southwestern corner of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, bordering the Pacific Ocean. Our reservation spans 206,000 acres of forest lands, including 25 miles of coastline, and serves over 4,600 members. The Nation is deeply committed to protecting Indigenous women from domestic violence and sexual assault.

Introduction and Personal Account of Aliza Brown

Thank you for hosting this important consultation and for the opportunity to testify today. I am the child and grandchild of both parents and grandparents who were impacted by the U.S. government removal history to both boarding school and hospitalization in Tacoma, Washington, at the hospital where my parents endured unspeakable acts they can hardly acknowledge to this day.

I am a witness to the first impact of MMIP and the violence that managed to find its way to the villages of Quinault. We are ocean navigators and have a history of a strong cultural foundation. A teaching I have carried is that women are pure and they are the protectors. We fail to do this on a monumental level, which is why our Sacred Healing Journey Program is vital to uphold our teachings to honor women and young girls.

Just a few months ago my family hosted a ceremony, a traditional practice that means “coming of age.” This is a practice to prepare young girls for a year, right up to the very day she receives her new name, and we announce to our villages that she is a woman. These teachings are integral to allowing all people and families in not only my village, but all guests from other Tribes, in our case at our Potlatch Tribes from the state of Washington, and as far as New Mexico. It is active and living proof we are to honor women, support them, and hold them up. These cultural practices balance the world we know is also very real: the world of violence.

My staff have a difficult and sometimes impossible task protecting our victims. We live, work, and exist in small villages where we will likely face our perpetrators at the offices where we seek regular services like healthcare. I share that story of the work my family did for the coming of age to say we need adequate funding but also need less red tape to integrate staff into our cultural practices, to learn our traditions, and build a rapport with families, women, and children. The goal is that when the day of harm inevitably comes, they will know our staff and be less afraid to talk about the hurt they are having to live with.

Introduction of Stephanie Terrell

My name is Stephanie Terrell, and I am an enrolled member of the Quinault Indian Nation, currently working as a Victims Advocate for the Quinault Sacred Healing Journey (SHJ), our Domestic Violence and Victim Services program.

Our program serves the Quinault community of approximately 4,690 members across two counties in Washington State. As noted previously, SHJ began in 2017 with one employee. We have since grown to eight employees across two distinct, 100% grant-funded programs:

Sacred Healing Journey (Advocacy): Four employees, including a program manager (who also advocates), a victims advocate, a court support advocate, and an outreach specialist.

Sacred Healing House (Shelter): Five employees, including one director and four residential aides.

Topic 1. High Rates of Violence Require Increased Resources

The Quinault program started in 2017 with a single employee serving as advocate, outreach specialist, court liaison, and grant writer. It has since grown to eight employees, including a four-bedroom Sacred Healing House for victims of domestic violence and two offices. The program serves almost double the clients compared to 2017 and is usually at full capacity.

In 2025 alone, Quinault staff conducted nearly 860 hours of victim advocacy and services administered by a team of three advocates. These high rates underscore the urgent need for a more robust, immediate response to crimes within the community.

Both programs are 100% grant-funded through the DOJ. SHJ has three grants that run our program, and the healing house has one. Our Healing House grant ended on December 31, 2025, and we have yet to hear if we will receive new funds. Our shelter has been nearly full for the almost four years I have worked here, and we frequently have to turn families away. We are now in a position of possibly shutting down permanently.

Uncertainty around funding prevents managers from planning services, creating a significant barrier to providing consistent support to victims of violence, and it is a struggle to meet the needs of our community with the limited funding we receive.

Recommendations:

1. Increase resources and funding for victim services.
2. Provide additional training for law enforcement.
3. Improve coordination and collaboration among all federal enforcement agencies and Tribal, state, and local law enforcement.
4. Evaluate grants that existed before the Tribal Victims Set-Aside Program to create a comprehensive formula-based program for increased services.
5. Streamline grant application processes and reduce administrative burdens.
6. Conduct an evaluation of past grants to create a comprehensive formula-based program for increased services to victims of violence.
7. Request advance appropriations from Congress for OVW programs, similar to the funding structure for Indian Health Services. Timely grants and predictable budgets are essential.

Topic 2. Expansion of Eligible Expenses

The Sacred Healing Journey conducts off-site events that require food for attendees and youth. Current OVW guidelines do not allow expending funds for food items, forcing staff to cover costs out-of-pocket, despite food being central to Indigenous community building and healing. It acts as an unspoken offering.

Recommendations:

1. Alter express guidelines to allow food items to be reimbursable expenses.

Topic 3. Need for Culturally Competent, Responsive Services

Consistency and timeliness in case resolution are vital for providing a sense of safety and security to women. Programs must consider the unique cultural and traditional needs of the community in their outreach, program design, and service delivery.

Recommendations:

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

Topic 4. Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP)

The MMIP epidemic is viewed as a profound, ongoing failure by the federal government to uphold its trust and treaty obligations to Native Nations. The 2018 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Report highlighted that the federal government consistently fails to provide adequate resources for public safety, victim advocacy, and justice services. The lack of federal resources and law enforcement response is seen as a continuation of genocide committed against our people in this country.

Recommendations:

1. Increase the federal funding resources dedicated to addressing the MMIP crisis.
2. Improve federal law enforcement capabilities to collaborate and work effectively with Tribal, state, and local law enforcement.
3. Provide training for Tribal, federal, and local law enforcement on how to properly respond to MMIP cases.
4. Support and empower Tribal communities to lead the efforts to address MMIP.

Topic 5. Court Support and Jurisdictional Barriers

We have seen an increase in demand for our court support advocacy. Although we have our own police department and Tribal Courts, we span two counties, and more than half of our members live off-reservation, placing their cases under the jurisdiction of county superior courts.

Three years ago, two teenagers who were sexually assaulted while in foster care came to our program. The assault happened off-reservation (about 10-miles away), giving jurisdiction to the county. We provided support for their forensic interviews and police communication. However, it has been over two years, and the trial receives continuance after continuance, with still no conviction.

We at Sacred Healing Journey sit on two multi-disciplinary teams, one Tribal and one county. We are the only ones from our Tribe at that table with the county. We're the ones that brought this case up. This case sat at the sheriff's desk not being looked into, so we brought it up. It's still been two years. Where is their justice? These teenagers are now adults, and have significant mental health issues. One is in and out of jail, and both, I believe, are homeless.

Topic 6. Protection Orders and Revictimization

We assist victims in obtaining protection orders in Tribal and county courts, but the process is neither easy nor fast. Even when protection orders are approved and victims feel safe, the orders are often broken by abusers. Despite

taking all the right steps to report violations, little or nothing is done. We have to jump through the hoops with law enforcement and the courts. When we observe county courts, we see how many men are there for protection order violations and get little to no penalty.

The lack of accountability in the county courts is frustrating for our victims, who observe many abusers receiving little to no penalty for protection order violations. Victims are already dealing with the trauma of revictimization while simultaneously job searching, daycare searching, navigating state aid programs, and trying to find new housing.

Recommendations:

1. All police and court administration staff should receive trauma-informed training.
2. Allocate more funding for Tribal justice systems.
3. Increase staffing for forensic labs to ensure timely processing of evidence.
4. Create systems that streamline case processing to ensure justice is served promptly.
5. Improve coordination and collaboration of all federal law enforcement agencies with Tribal, state, and local law enforcement.

Conclusion of Aliza Brown

The baseline need is consistent funding to prevent violence that we have seen with our own eyes. Stolen children, overdoses from mental health, unrest from their victimization. Addiction, death, and the continuation of passing a generational torch to our children, who continue to witness their moms and grandmothers be beaten, abused, and belittled. When do we grab that torch and throw it into the fire to keep them warm? It has to be now. We need the support of our federal partners to take action.

I share words for you from a survivor of violence and abuse that she has agreed for me to share with you. “As a survivor of domestic violence, I understand the challenges victims face, particularly navigating the court system and life after gaining the encouragement to leave. The Sacred Healing Journey Program was instrumental in helping me through those difficult times, and without them I’m not sure I would be walking this Earth. The program helped me find bravery, courage, and strength through their endless support and resources they offer.”



Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians

Glenda Martin, Ponemah District Representative - Tribal Leader (Oral)

I am Glenda Martin, a Red Lake Nation Tribal member and the Ponemah District Representative on our Tribal Council. I stand before you as a mother, a grandmother, and a fierce protector of our self-governance and self-determination. I am incredibly proud to represent a Tribe that is unique in holding our land in common for our entire Tribal Nation—one of only two such Tribes in the United States. I am here to remind you that your role as the federal government is to uphold your treaty obligations, which are nonnegotiable and grounded in your trust responsibility.

Topic 1. The Persistent Crisis of MMIWR and Jurisdictional Gaps

MMIWR remains a heavy, persistent issue within our nation, and the federal government’s current response is a breach of the trust responsibility. While we have tried to establish our own community response, we are severely under-resourced, and the lack of funding for our law enforcement, coupled with a lack of response from federal agencies, only increases the violence against our people.

We are constantly hindered because too many non-Native individuals commit crimes against our women and children on our lands without facing Tribal consequences. Without the funding and resources to meaningfully exercise and restore our jurisdiction, the mission of making our nations safer feels far off.

Recommendations:

1. Restore Tribal Nations' full jurisdiction over non-Indians for any offense committed on Tribal lands.
2. Provide annual, consistent, sustainable, and noncompetitive funding for all public safety and victim services needs.
3. Request the full amount of funding authorized for Tribal programs in VAWA 2022.
4. Fully implement the recommendations from the Not One More commission report submitted in November 2023.
5. Provide Tribes with specific information and research regarding unique barriers facing MMIWR efforts.

Topic 2. Protecting the Future: ICWA and Child Welfare

Our children are not just individuals subject to state jurisdiction. They are the future of our Tribe, our next leaders, and our cultural barriers. Every Tribal child removed from our community without Tribal involvement is a detrimental impact to our sovereignty and our survival as a nation. We have worked hard to hold Minnesota counties accountable, but we still see pitfalls where children are placed in homes far from their people.

I am deeply concerned by an influx of abusers being given custody without due process for the victims this year. Despite federal laws, our Tribe is often not given the time needed for band members to obtain custody after children are placed off-reservation, which is an attack on our right to exist.

Recommendations:

1. Utilize the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) to provide structured guidance for counties to keep families together through active efforts.
2. Ensure meaningful participation for Tribes in all cases involving Tribal children to maintain their connection to their community and culture.

Topic 3. Housing and Shelter as a Treaty Right

Access to housing and shelter is a dire concern because they are key components of safety and are our treaty rights. Having shelter is what allows us to exist as Indigenous people in our own community. Without adequate housing on Tribal lands, victims of violence are often forced to leave their ancestral homes and culture to enter non-Tribal shelters that cannot meet their needs, or they are forced to return to their abusers.

The switch from formula funding to competitive funding for shelters has created a severe shortage. This design forces our Tribe to compete against our relatives for a small amount of money, which is fundamentally wrong. Additionally, flat funding for the Indian Block Grant for nearly 20 years has left us with a disparate impact that we must address.

Recommendations:

1. Adequately fund the Indian Block Grant under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act to address decades of flat funding.
2. Increase funding for transitional housing, transportation, and substance abuse support.
3. Fund housing navigators and domestic violence advocates specifically for housing needs.
4. Increase funding for project-based vouchers and remove artificial barriers like credit checks for housing access.
5. Refrain from enacting laws that criminalize homelessness.

Topic 4. The Fentanyl and Methamphetamine Crisis

Fentanyl is wreaking havoc on the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians. We are suffering from fatal overdoses where mothers and fathers are losing children, and children are losing their parents. In just the past two years, our law enforcement has seized over four pounds of methamphetamine and significant amounts of fentanyl, resulting in 433 opened cases.

This crisis requires a fighting chance, and that starts with funding. Our chemical health programs and victim services need the resources to provide wraparound services for those who are addicted so we can create healthy pathways for our people to be successful.

Recommendations:

1. Increase funding for programs to include wraparound services for those addicted to substances.
2. Increase support for Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) services and overdose protection.
3. Provide support for chemical health and family services to help rid communities of the ongoing drug crisis.

Topic 5. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I am hearing about a plan to consolidate the OVW, COPS, and OJP offices, and I believe the true purpose is to further restrict Tribal access to safety funding. Consolidation means years of confusion, delays in funding, and a loss of the subject matter expertise of federal workers who understand Indian Country.

This move is not even allowable under federal law, as these offices were congressionally established. Consolidating them suggests that the federal government cares more about appearance than it does about the safety of the citizens you are responsible for protecting.

Recommendations:

1. Halt the plan to consolidate the Office of COPS, OJP, and OVW.
2. Protect and uphold the statutory position of the Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs within the OVW as mandated by Congress.



Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians

Germain Omish-Lucero, Special Projects Director - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians (Rincon). I am honored to provide this testimony addressing the critical issues impacting Tribal communities, particularly those in Public Law 280 (P.L. 280) states such as California. As a Tribal delegate for the Rincon, I am here to advocate for the safety, justice, and well-being of our people, especially Native women and families who face disproportionate rates of violence, victimization, and systemic neglect.

Topic 1. Successes from Tribal Consultations

The State of California and California Tribes have been implementing their own, more localized, and culturally sensitive approaches.

Regional Tribal Liaisons: The California Highway Patrol (CHP) has established regional Tribal liaisons.

State-Level Action: The California DOJ has created a Senior Assistant Attorney General for Native American and Tribal Affairs position to advise on Tribal justice issues.

Tribal-Led Task Forces: The Sacramento County Sheriff's Office and District Attorney's Office partnered with the Wilton Rancheria Tribe to form a regional MMIP task force with dedicated attorneys, investigators, and victim advocates, which is considered the first of its kind in the state.

Tribal Investigators: The Yurok Tribe hired California's first full-time investigator dedicated specifically to MMIP cases.

Grant Programs: The California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) is funding Tribes directly to support MMIP coordinators and develop culturally based prevention strategies.

Feather Alert: AB 1314 established the Feather Alert, a public notification system specifically for missing Indigenous people.

Access to Information: AB 44 (2023) granted Tribal law enforcement access to the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS).

Training: The DOJ, through the Office of Native American Affairs, is conducting specialized MMIP training for law enforcement that focuses on cultural sensitivity.

Recommendations:

1. California Tribal leaders have consistently requested that the U.S. Department of Justice assign dedicated, California-based personnel to address the crisis.

Topic 2. Funding Disparities and Sustainability

Tribal justice systems and social service departments have been chronically underfunded, leaving Tribes without the essential resources and infrastructure needed to ensure the safety and well-being of our people. Competitive funding processes disadvantage smaller Tribes, and the lack of stable base funding leaves programs vulnerable to closure.

Recommendations:

1. Provide adequate funding to support the full spectrum of Tribal justice infrastructure, including judges, bailiffs, clerks, jails, and related staff.
2. Establish continuous, non-competitive funding mechanisms to ensure Tribes have sustainable resources year after year.
3. Ensure funding is allocated based on the needs of Tribal justice systems, not solely on population size or caseload numbers.

Topic 3. Jurisdictional Challenges under P.L. 280

P.L. 280 transferred jurisdiction without adequate resources, creating confusion between Tribes, counties, and federal agencies. This has led to delayed and inconsistent law enforcement responses, poor communication, and limited follow-up on cases.

Recommendations:

1. Increase information sharing on violent crime investigations and prosecutions terminated or declined on Indian lands with Tribal governments.
2. Mandate at least 20 hours of Tribal cultural training for law enforcement in P.L. 280 jurisdictions.
3. Expand special jurisdiction to address all crimes and restore full *Oliphant* fix.
4. Provide targeted technical assistance to Tribes in P.L. 280 states to navigate jurisdictional complexities and strengthen law enforcement capabilities.

Topic 4. Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) Crisis

California has some of the highest numbers of MMIP cases nationwide. Families often bear the financial and emotional burden of searching for missing loved ones, navigating disconnected reporting systems without meaningful support.

Recommendations:

1. Increase funding for MMIP-related expenses, including searches, travel, funeral costs, and long-term family support.
2. Mandate MMIP/Tribal awareness training for law enforcement and federal agencies.
3. Strengthen coordination for alerts like Feather Alerts (CA) and Amber Alerts across jurisdictions.
4. Establish a dedicated MMIP Coordinator for California Tribes to ensure culturally sensitive and coordinated responses.

Topic 5. Law Enforcement Training Initiatives

Law enforcement officers often lack training in Tribal sovereignty, VAWA protections, and trauma-informed response, leading to victim-blaming and cultural insensitivity.

Recommendations:

1. Mandate a minimum of 40 hours of specialized training for all Peace Officers, focusing on domestic violence, sexual assault, trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity, and de-escalation techniques.
2. Establish sustained Tribal-led training programs, including “train-the-trainer” initiatives, to promote culturally competent practices and systemic change.

Topic 6. Victim Services Capacity and Inclusion

There is a severe lack of Tribally operated shelters, transitional housing, and culturally grounded healing centers. Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ survivors remain underserved, and long-term support services for children, elders, and families impacted by violence and MMIP are limited.

Recommendations:

1. Increase funding for Tribally operated shelters, transitional housing, and culturally rooted healing spaces for Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ survivors.
2. Build stronger networks between Tribal governments and urban organizations to extend culturally appropriate services beyond reservation boundaries.
3. Expand funding for long-term programs addressing intergenerational trauma for children, elders, and families.

Topic 7. Protect Public Safety and Victim Services Funding

Victim services programs must remain separate from general block grants to ensure their visibility, priority, and effectiveness. Blending funding streams risks erasing hard-won gains and undermining Tribal sovereignty.

Recommendations:

1. Keep victim services funding separate and strong under VAWA, OVW, and OVC programs.
2. Require real Tribal consultation before Congress changes funding structures.
3. Guarantee confidentiality for victims and families under any new funding structure.
4. Ensure continued access to OVW and OVC technical assistance, training, and Tribal Coalition resources.

Topic 8. Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) Reauthorization

FVPSA is a critical funding stream for domestic violence shelters and supportive services, yet the Tribal set-aside is too small, and Tribal Coalitions are excluded.

Recommendations:

1. Reauthorize and fully fund FVPSA, increasing the Tribal set-aside to 12.5%.
2. Provide dedicated funding for Tribal Coalitions to ensure equal support as State and Territory Coalitions.
3. Expand FVPSA funding to address Tribal-specific barriers and support culturally competent services.

Topic 9. Casino Tribe Misconceptions

There is a perception that casino Tribes have sufficient funding to meet their needs, but running a Tribal government and providing social services requires significant resources that are often not met, even with casino revenue. These disparities hinder California Tribes from building and sustaining justice systems, social services, and victim support programs, leaving them vulnerable to systemic neglect and underfunding.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by Tribal communities, particularly in P.L. 280 states, are deeply rooted in systemic underfunding, jurisdictional confusion, and a lack of culturally appropriate resources. To address these issues, we urge the Department of Justice and other federal agencies to prioritize sustainable funding, restore Tribal sovereignty with a complete *Oliphant* fix, and strengthen support for victims and families.

We call upon the federal government to honor its trust and treaty obligations by providing consistent, predictable funding and resources to Tribal Nations. Together, we can build safer, stronger, and more resilient communities for AI/AN people.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony. We look forward to working collaboratively to address these critical issues and create meaningful change for our Tribal communities.

**Rosebud Sioux Tribe*****Kathleen Wooden Knife, President - Tribal Leader (Written)***

My relatives, I greet you with a good heart and handshake. I am President Kathleen Wooden Knife, speaking on behalf of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate (Rosebud Sioux Tribe). We thank the Office on Violence Against Women and the Department of Justice for convening this consultation pursuant to VAWA § 903, which affirms the Federal trust responsibility and our Nation-to-Nation relationship. Our requests are grounded in our duty to protect all our relatives and to ensure safety and justice for the next seven generations.

The Rosebud Sioux Tribe's reservation population is approximately 10,302, with 50.5% poverty and 60% child poverty, conditions that heighten victimization risk and service needs. The Tribe's law enforcement capacity (reported publicly in 2025) is fewer than a dozen officers patrolling nearly one million acres, with public safety emergency declarations in 2019, 2024, and 2025.

Topic 1. Collection and Use of Tribal Data and Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

Recognize Tribal ownership of data and fund Tribes to design, collect, govern, and use our own public safety and victim services data. Simply stated, research about us must serve us.

Operationalize Section 904 by turning the National Baseline Study and related research into program rules, funding priorities, and technical assistance that reflects reservation realities, with a public 904 consultation feedback opportunity each year.

Recommendations:

1. Fund Tribal data capacity such as data offices, analysts, software and interoperable systems so Tribes, not outside entities, design and run our public safety, MMIP, and victim service data collections.
2. Tie Section 904 research to Tribal controlled access and feedback loops, leveraging Native focused data resources to prioritize Tribal use of findings.
3. Include Tribal Data Sovereignty clauses and fund Tribal led data collection in every OVW /DOJ program that is utilized by our people.
4. The creation of small to mid-grants dedicated to Tribal surveys, records modernization, dispatch/CAD upgrades, and cross jurisdictional data integrations with US Attorneys, BIA, Indian Health Service (IHS), hospitals, and courts.
5. Implement requirements for Tribal review and approval for any non-Tribal researcher using Tribal data, with co-authorship/citation norms that honor sovereignty.
6. Provide technical assistance to build Tribal logic models and measures so each Tribe tracks what matters locally and improves services through culturally grounded evaluation.
7. Strengthen cross deputization, real time information sharing, and victim/family communication requirements.
8. Resource Tribal cold case units and community advocates, improve data accuracy and transparency, and align training and case protocols with Tribal data governance.

Topic 2. Competitive Pay and Officer Housing

Public safety fails when we cannot recruit and retain officers. On many reservations, officers cover large service areas with pay well below the standard wages. Adequate housing is an issue on most reservations, so having standard housing available for officers is nonexistent for us.

Recommendations:

1. Provide resources so Tribal Law Enforcement can modernize pay scales and develop housing to recruit and retain qualified officers.
2. We ask OVW/DOJ in collaboration with BIA and HUD to create set-aside funding so Tribes can raise pay scales to match competitive levels, offer hiring/retention incentives, and develop officer housing infrastructure.

Topic 3. Victim Services Infrastructure

Too many Tribal and non-profit programs operate shelters in aging, repurposed spaces that do not meet privacy, ADA, security, family space, or cultural needs. Most grants prohibit construction or major renovation. This is detrimental to the quality of services and level of security needed by victims.

Recommendations:

1. We ask OVW/DOJ to create dedicated capital grants for new shelter builds, renovations, security systems, ADA upgrades, family rooms.
2. Coordinate with HUD/HHS/BIA/IHS to braid capital and operating funds.
3. Pair capital with multi-year operating awards so facilities remain staffed, safe, and culturally grounded.

Topic 4. Sustained, Flexible Funding

Short cycle, competitive grants destabilize essential services in rural Indian Country. We ask for multi-year, flexible awards that allow Tribes to retain trained advocates and clinical/cultural staff, sustain ceremony-based healing, language access, kinship models, and meet rural geography realities (transport, lodging, internet services).

Recommendations:

1. Shift from short cycle, competitive grants to multi-year funding that matches rural reservation realities.

Topic 5. Sovereignty and Jurisdiction

Safety requires sovereignty in practice. Families need rapid, respectful, and accountable responses.

Recommendations:

1. We urge OVW/DOJ to expand Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction to cover all related crimes tied to domestic violence and sexual violence (child abuse, drug facilitated violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking), cut unfunded mandates, and streamline due process requirements.

**Salamatof Tribe*****Leannandra Ross, Vice President of Executive and Tribal Services, Southcentral Foundation - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)***

I am Leannandra Ross, Vice President of Executive and Tribal Service for the Southcentral Foundation. I am submitting this testimony following an initial denial for consultation—an act that was disrespectful to our unique role under VAWA and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638) —but made possible through the support of Salamatof Tribal President Chris Monfor. We operate the Nu’iju program, which focuses on healing from intergenerational trauma through traditional values, elder-led storytelling, and comprehensive care.

Topic 1. Administering Funds and Removing Administrative Barriers

We face significant challenges aligning OVW requirements with our culturally based family wellness approach. Current funding is strictly limited to awareness and education for five specific crimes, which prevents us from proactively addressing broader prevention needs, such as the MMIP crisis. Furthermore, the grant administration process is overly burdensome and inflexible.

Recommendations:

1. Allow OVW funding to be used for proactive MMIP events and broader prevention activities that promote healthy relationships and community wellness.
2. Shorten the review period for outreach and training materials from 20 days to a 5-day review so we can maintain continuity and momentum in our community engagement.
3. Allow the use of existing Tribal resolutions and letters of support rather than requiring highly burdensome, grant-specific Tribal resolutions during short proposal windows.
4. Increase budget flexibility between line items from 10% to 25% to match the flexibility offered by other federal agencies and clearly state this parameter in the Request for Proposals.
5. Improve the grant portal budget formatting by providing a clear spreadsheet outside of the portal to prevent confusion and make monitoring easier.

Topic 2. Cultural Allowances and Overcoming Cost Barriers

In Alaska Native cultures, upholding cultural values by providing a meal or giving customary items at gatherings is an essential part of relationship building and healing. However, current OVW award conditions restrict food purchasing and force us through burdensome pre-approval processes.

Recommendations:

1. Provide explicit allowances for culturally focused spending, including purchasing food for gatherings, potlatches, and customary cultural items.
2. Train grant managers and project officers on these cultural guidelines so they understand the necessity of sharing food with domestic violence survivors and can efficiently accommodate these requests.

Topic 3. Enhancing Safety and Addressing Regional Alaska Realities

Providing care in rural Alaska involves immense logistical hurdles, including weather delays and off-road travel via boats, planes, and snowmachines. Additionally, the severe lack of housing resources and privacy in rural villages makes it incredibly difficult for victims to escape unsafe situations or for us to safely shelter them.

Recommendations:

1. Increase flexibility in grant planning, spending, and timelines to accommodate the unpredictable realities and high costs of rural travel in Alaska.
2. Process Tribal coalition applications on time, ensuring that delayed funding does not force us to compress 12 months of scheduled work into a 10-month period.
3. Provide diverse, flexible funding for rural shelters, including creative solutions like funding hotel rooms that offer discreet shelter to individuals who cannot safely use a known shelter in a small village.

Topic 4. Access to Crime Information and Justice Databases

Finding accurate demographic data regarding the true impact of domestic violence on our people is a major challenge. State systems often use a single race category and fail to ask about Tribal status or specific Tribal membership. Furthermore, local employees and health aides in rural areas carry a heavy emotional burden.

Recommendations:

1. Require justice and demographic data sets to capture Alaska Native or American Indian status accurately, rather than relying on broad, incomplete racial categories.
2. Provide support and funding to address secondary trauma for local first responders, rural clinic staff, and the community members acting as “safe people” for victims.

**Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians*****Austin Lowes, Chairman - Tribal Leader (Written)******Dr. Aaron Payment, Board of Director - Tribal Leader (Oral)***

The Sault Tribe is a federally recognized Tribe of the Anishinaabeg or “original people” who have lived in the Great Lakes area for millennia. We currently have a service area that spans seven counties in what is now Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. We have over 50,000 Tribal members nationwide with over 15,000 of those members living within our service area.

We are recent recipients of the DOJ Tribal Governments Program and Tribal Jurisdiction Program. These programs fund our Advocacy Resource Center and allow us to provide comprehensive, culturally honoring, and trauma-informed responses to Tribal members impacted by the abuse of power and control, free of charge. These services are crucial to the health of our Tribal members and our community today and for the next seven generations.

Introduction and Personal Account of Dr. Aaron Payment

My name is Dr. Aaron Payment, and I'm a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe, where I serve as unit-one director. I also have served for 24 years in Tribal service, including as chairperson and CEO for four terms. Our Tribe is a federally recognized Tribe. We are the Anishinaabe or the original people who have lived in the Great Lakes region since time immemorial. We currently have a service area that spans seven counties in what is now the upper peninsula, Michigan.

Tribal leaders from my Tribe have traveled to consult with the DOJ on VAWA-related issues for well over a decade, including last year, where we outlined many detailed recommendations. So I lift up those past recommendations, in addition to others I will share today, and I request a transparent reconciliation of past recommendations from all Tribal consultations. I also ask for a commitment from each of your agencies and you as individuals joining us today to ensure all the stories of our relatives and the concrete data—evidence, really—we have traveled a long way to share with you gets carried forward to your colleagues throughout the administration.

On a very personal level, I wanted to share with you that we're all victims of crime in our respective communities. We all have an experience. My sister was in an abusive relationship. She was physically beaten and the victim of attempted murder. She finally fought back, but then she felt bad about it and attempted to kill herself. She finally got assistance and help, and substance abuse help, and she's recovered now. She developed my Tribe's first substance abuse plan, and empowered, she went back to school and she earned her Associate's Degree, her Bachelor's Degree, her Master's Degree, and her Doctorate Degree, and she's now a therapist in my Tribe, helping other victims of violence and substance abuse.

I also have a niece who was missing for two and a half years. She was in a domestic violence relationship a couple states away and he would not allow her to talk to us. Perpetrators groom their victims. They develop a relationship with them, they isolate them from their supports and their contacts, but fortunately, when she got pregnant, her perpetrator didn't have the resources, so she had to move home, and when she got reintegrated in our community, she became resilient. She left him and now she's working on her Bachelor's Degree, dual degree in nursing and criminal justice. So she will be protecting victims as well. Always remember that victims are our sisters, our mothers, our daughters, our nieces, our grandmas, our aunties, and our cousins. Our MMIP people that go missing are the same. They have names and they are loved ones. So please remember to say their name. Thank you.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Topic 1. Implementation of the Not Invisible Act Commission Report

We have a clear roadmap for justice, but we are failing to follow it. The 2023 Not Invisible Act Commission spent years gathering resources and stories to create a plan for federal agencies to prevent abductions and murders, yet those recommendations are not being implemented with the urgency they deserve. This work represents the voices of our relatives, and it must not be forgotten or allowed to sit fallow while our people continue to go missing.

Recommendations:

1. We are asking this administration to reprioritize this report because it aligns with the goal of shifting decision-making back to our local communities.
2. To fully realize these goals, we must ensure that the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) remains a separate, distinct office within the DOJ rather than being buried in a larger bureaucracy where our specific needs might be diluted.
3. Implement the recommendations from the 2023 Not Invisible Act Commission's report.
4. Provide Tribes with transparent updates on the progress of implementation across all federal agencies.
5. Maintain and increase funding for tribal programs and the data systems that make tracking violence possible.

Topic 2. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

We are frustrated that the National Baseline Study is more than a decade behind schedule. This delay leaves us without the critical data we need to make informed decisions about prevention and response, and in the worst cases, it means families are still waiting for answers about relatives who have been missing for far too long.

This study was designed by tribal advocates who understood exactly what data was needed to capture the reality of crime in our communities, and it must be honored. The federal government points to challenges like size, scope, and funding, but we believe that with the current \$4 million available for research, there is no more excuse for delay. We do not need to rewrite the laws or change the vision. We need to apply recognized data sampling methods and work directly with as many Tribal Nations as possible to get this done.

Recommendations:

1. Fully realize the National Baseline Study as originally envisioned by tribal advocates without further statutory amendments.
2. Apply recognized data sampling methods to implement the study immediately.
3. Make all instruments, methods, and tools generated during the NBS available to Tribes for our own local assessment.

Topic 3. Data Invisibility and Information System Gaps

We see a system where our people are often invisible because crime databases do not accurately track our Tribal affiliation. Even systems like NamUs, which are meant to help find the missing, do not automatically notify a Tribal Nation when one of its citizens is reported missing. This lack of communication is a major barrier to our safety and sovereignty.

We need a self-determination approach to data collection, much like we have for the Indian Child Welfare Act. We must mandate that fields for tribal citizenship and descendency be included in all identification and reporting mechanisms. Without these specific identifiers, we cannot reconcile the data or hold the system accountable for the violence waged against our native people.

Recommendations:

1. Apply a Self-Determination Tribal Census Approach to tracking VAWA-related crimes.
2. Add tribal citizenship, descendency, or unknown tribal affiliation to all identification and reporting mechanisms.
3. Establish a Central Repository for MMIP that automatically updates tribal-specific contacts as a validity check on systems like NamUs.
4. Train data collectors on trauma-informed practices and proper identification of American Indian and Alaska Native individuals.

Topic 4. Moving from Recovery to Rescue through Response Planning

When a relative, especially a child, is abducted, time is our greatest enemy. Within 48 hours, it is highly likely that they will be sexually exploited, yet our systems are often set up for “recovery” rather than “rescue.”

Our tribe was one of only five to pilot a Tribal Community Response Plan (TCRP), which helped us articulate exactly how we would cooperate with local law enforcement to be response-ready the moment a crisis hits. These plans work, but they have sat fallow because they lack the affirmative federal effort needed to reach out and help more tribes build them. We need technical assistance that is accessible and direct so that every community has a toolkit ready to protect their children. We shouldn’t have to figure out these vast and complicated resources on our own when lives are on the line.

Recommendations:

1. Appropriately fund technical assistance for the implementation of Tribal Community Response Plans.
2. Provide direct outreach to Tribes to help them develop and activate their own response-ready protocols.
3. Utilize resources from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to strengthen tribal response systems.

Topic 5. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

We strongly oppose the idea of OVW pursuing a statutory exemption for the Section 904 Task Force from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). We believe that doing so would dilute the effectiveness of the task force and weaken the critical relationship between its members and the federal government. We value transparency and the government-to-government consultation requirement in everything we do, and moving away from these standards would be a step backward.

Furthermore, the Department of Justice has a statutory obligation to keep us informed. We expect to see the Annual Tribal Consultation Reports and the Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions Reports submitted to Congress on time and made available to us on the DOJ website. We need this accountability to ensure that the stories and data we travel so far to share are actually resulting in progress.

Recommendations:

1. Reject any statutory exemption from FACA for the Section 904 Task Force.
2. Request a formal recommendation from the 904 Task Force itself before moving forward with any changes to its administration.
3. Ensure the timely submission of all statutorily required reports to Congress regarding investigations and prosecutions in Indian Country.

Conclusion:

As a final reminder, the Department must continue submitting the statutorily required Annual Tribal Consultation Reports and Indian Country Investigations and Prosecutions Reports to Congress, so we look forward to reviewing the reports on the DOJ website later this year.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide recommendations for this important government-to-government consultation. Please contact Government Relations Director, Mike McCoy, at mmccoy@saulttribe.net with any questions.

**Shoshone Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley Indian Reservation*****Kathy Gibson, Rural Project Coordinator - Authorized Designee (Oral and Written)***

I am Kathy Gibson. I am speaking today as an authorized representative for the Shoshone Paiute Tribe of Duck Valley Indian Reservation. I have with me Mr. J. R. Jones to my left, who is our child and youth advocate, and to my right I have Ms. Tamara Ashley, who is our Tribal social service worker. We heard testimony in reference to the times we have been up here, and the concerns that we've brought before to the organization, and how we are all dealing with the same issues continuously. Getting a resolution is what I am looking for today.

We have a population of approximately 2,100. Around 900 live on the reservation. We are on a 450 square mile reservation. The Duck Valley Reservation is geographically isolated, spanning the Idaho-Nevada border. Our

community is more than 100 miles from many essential services. This isolation significantly compounds public safety risk and limits access to emergency resources, particularly for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

We are working with the rural domestic violence grant to deal with domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, teen dating violence, and the victims of crime. We've also got a youth grant to help our work with children. We are looking at grants that are going to help our community to heal that deal create programs to heal with the youth, to the high school kids, to our adults who have young families, and to our elders who have lived in this and are just moving along.

Within this time span, it seems like we've run into a lot of concerns about everybody coming to the table and having it work for us. Some of the issues I raise today are not pragmatic in nature. They are sovereign concerns rooted in public safety, infrastructure, and federal trust responsibility to the Tribes. I have heard that echoed here with everything we are talking about, which ties into our programs.

Topic 1. Jurisdiction and Geographical Challenges of Sexual Assault Cases

We have to transport our sexual assault victims 100 miles to get a sexual assault kit. That's either Boise, Idaho or Reno, Nevada when they are not taking anybody or they are full. The same thing goes for our shelters. A lot of the time, our people are working, they have family there, kids going to school. It deters them from getting shelter.

Who is making that call whether a sexual assault case goes federal or not? Everybody is waiting for that answer. We are getting delayed cases there. When it does go federal, we have to travel over 100 miles to Reno, Nevada or to Boise to federal court. Traveling is exhausting when we are working with our clients and all the stuff they have in their heart they are carrying forward. For victims, this translates into fear of reporting, lack of protection, and erosion of trust in the justice system. Public safety cannot exist where law enforcement capacity is insufficient and doesn't meet our community needs.

Recommendations:

1. Coordinate interagency engagement to address public safety and housing infrastructure gaps.

Topic 2. BIA Staffing

The other concern I have run into is our law enforcement capacity. We are governed under the BIA Tribal police. We are slotted for 7 to 8 officers. Right now, we only have one officer. Officers are traveling 100 miles from Elko, Nevada to come on scene. The Tribe continues to experience BIA staffing shortages. They have incomplete reports, inconsistent follow-through on violent crimes on our reservation. I had a client wait three hours for a law enforcement officer to respond. We have missing reports that never get turned in. We have evidence that has been destroyed. We don't have the reports coming into our prosecutor's office like they should, and we are not able to move forward on any of our cases.

Recommendations:

1. Increase and sustain BIA staffing for Death Valley Indian Reservation

Topic 3. Shelters

We don't have a shelter in our community. We utilize a local hotel for emergencies, but we have to transport them out in the middle of the night, 100 miles away under tough weather to Mountain Home, Idaho, or to Elko, Nevada, and sometimes those shelters are full and they won't take them. So, we are looking at putting them in a hotel, and the cost for that, a hotel for two weeks to try to get them into something more stable or a shelter that is open, it could be more traumatic for our clients. Victims are often required to travel, sometimes across state lines, to seek safety. Many simply cannot leave due to barriers of family and other obligations or fear of retaliation. I have had advocates who have been shot at that we had to file reports for. We are far away and law enforcement doesn't respond. As a result, victims are frequently forced to remain in unsafe environments.

To get a shelter, the grants are far and few between, and there's always a cap on it. The housing shortage on the

Duck Valley Indian Reservation is not solely a housing issue; it is a public safety and victim safety issue. When three generations of a family are living in a single home and no transitional housing exists, domestic violence services and sexual assaults have no safe alternatives. Overcrowding in the absence of transitional housing directly undermines efforts to address violence and stabilize families and protect vulnerable community members. In situations where we have three family members living in a home, no transitional housing, no shelter in our community, we have kids that are surfing couches and have no place to go. They turn over to our homes, where there's high drug trafficking and alcohol, and then that system just perpetuates as they move along because housing isn't there for our kids. This reality forces victims to remain in dangerous environments, increases intergenerational trauma, and undermines federal investments in law enforcement services for our clients. These conditions reflect a broader failure to meet the federal trust responsibility.

Public safety, housing stability, and victim protections are not optional services. They are fundamental obligations owed to the Tribal Nations. When law enforcement is understaffed, shelters are nonexistent, and housing is insufficient, federal systems designated to protect our people cannot function as intended.

Recommendations:

1. Federal support for the development of local shelters and transitional housing, and coordination on housing infrastructure gaps.

Conclusion:

I respectfully request formal follow-up with Tribes regarding these concerns. These issues are long-standing, well documented, and deeply concerning. We raise them today so that we formally acknowledge, record, and address meaningful federal action. Thank you for this opportunity to provide consultation testimony on behalf of the Shoshone Paiute Tribe.



Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate

J. Garret Renville, Chairman - Tribal Leader (Written)

Winfield Rondell, Jr., Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral)

The Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation is a Treaty Tribe with a formalized government and Constitution that predates the formation of the United States. We are one of the 77 Tribes that rejected the terms of the Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act). Our reservation, located in the northeast corner of South Dakota and the southeast corner of North Dakota, encompasses 111,000 acres of trust land spread over 1,400 square miles. We represent over 14,000 members, with approximately 8,000 living on or near our lands. Our reservation is checkerboarded, consisting of both fee and trust lands, which creates constant jurisdictional hindrances to our public safety efforts.

Introduction and Personal Account of Winfield Rondell, Jr.

I am Winfield Rondell, Jr., and this is my first time giving testimony before you. I am a Marine Corps veteran, and when I served this country, I did it to protect everybody. It didn't matter who they were, I looked after everyone. As a Tribal person and a citizen, I sit in these meetings and wonder why the government thinks we don't want to protect our own women, as if we need a special law just for us. The justice system should be protecting all women equally.

I've seen how these jurisdictional gaps hurt us. About ten years ago, we had individuals cooking meth on one reservation. When they got caught, our officers had no authority, so we had to release them. They just went to another reservation and set up shop again. It keeps happening because our officers don't have the federal

authority to arrest non-members, and then the state gets involved and everything gets complicated. We also have a desperate need for housing. You can't have four families living in one house. It breeds disease and conflict. And when we finally do get funds, they are often two or three years late, and by then our problems have grown much larger than the money can handle.

Testimony (Oral and Written)

Topic 1. Jurisdictional Gaps and the Need for a Full Oliphant Fix

We face constant hindrances to public safety because our reservation boundaries are a checkerboard of fee and trust lands. While the VAWA reauthorizations have been a giant leap forward in recognizing our sovereignty, our current Tribal prosecutorial authority remains too narrow, and we are unable to address all crimes committed on our lands by non-Indians. We were one of the first Tribes in the nation to implement Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction, yet the gaps created by *Oliphant v. Suquamish* still prevent us from truly protecting everyone living, working, or visiting in Indian Country.

We believe that to truly serve our members, there must be a federal recognition of our inherent authority to address crime on our own lands against any person. Our Tribal Council has officially called for this fix since 2010, proclaiming that the best protection for our people requires criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians for all crimes. Without this authority, perpetrators can continue to exploit the jurisdictional maze to avoid justice.

Recommendations:

1. Enact a full *Oliphant* Fix or Congressional Act to fill the jurisdictional gaps in Indian Country.
2. Recognize the inherent jurisdiction of all Tribal Nations over all crimes and all persons on their lands.
3. Expand Tribal prosecutorial authority to address all issues related to domestic and dating violence.

Topic 2. The 2017 Infrastructure Crisis and Public Safety

Our ability to provide public safety was severely jeopardized in 2017 when the Bureau of Indian Affairs shut down our jail. This facility also housed our police station, Tribal court, sex offender registry, and re-entry program. The shutdown forced our law enforcement into a temporary location that is entirely unsuitable for our needs, creating a crisis for our police department and court system that continues to this day.

We have worked for years with federal counterparts to address our need for a detention facility, and while we have finally broken ground on a new law enforcement center, the gap in infrastructure has taken a toll on our community. We hope to establish a community justice center that takes a holistic approach, focusing not just on detention but also on substance abuse treatment and behavioral health.

Recommendations:

1. Provide sustained funding to complete and maintain the new detention facility and law enforcement center.
2. Support the establishment of a community justice center that integrates substance abuse and behavioral health treatment with criminal justice.
3. Ensure that federal funding is available for the long-term operational needs of Tribal police and court systems following a forced shutdown.

Topic 3. Drug Trafficking and the I-29 Corridor

We are uniquely vulnerable to violent crime because the I-29 corridor runs directly through our reservation, connecting Canada to Mexico. While these highways provide an economic advantage, they have significantly increased our exposure to sex and human trafficking. In November 2022 alone, our law enforcement worked with local county officers to seize nearly 50,000 fentanyl pills with a street value exceeding \$2,000,000.

This influx of drugs is a primary driver of violence on our reservation, as more of our young women are falling victim to sexual assaults and domestic violence linked to substance abuse. We lack the specialized data and research needed to truly understand the tactics of traffickers in our area, which makes it harder to protect our people.

Recommendations:

1. Allocate funding for public education to collect data on the prevalence and nature of trafficking.
2. Provide funding specifically to educate Tribal law enforcement and courts on trafficking identification and response.
3. Focus research on the causes, manners, and effects of trafficking to understand what to look for in Tribal communities.

Topic 4. Law Enforcement Staffing and Response Times

We struggle to provide adequate law enforcement coverage across the 1,400 square miles of our reservation. With only a small number of officers to patrol 111,000 acres of trust land, response times are often dangerously delayed. In some instances, an officer on duty may be in one community and receive an emergency call from another nearly two hours away in travel distance.

This staffing shortage is compounded by a lack of stable, long-term funding. We need to establish a strong, permanent workforce rather than relying on short-term fixes, and we must ensure that our funding considers all Tribal members without pitting reservation needs against urban Indian funding.

Recommendations:

1. Establish long-term and direct funding streams to help Tribes build and maintain a strong law enforcement workforce.
2. Implement equitable funding formulas that consider the total Tribal membership, both on and off-reservation.
3. Increase funding for Tribal court services and staffing to handle the increasing criminal and civil caseload.

Topic 5. Reluctance in Data Sharing and Research Trust

We see a reluctance to share data in our multi-jurisdictional area for two primary reasons: jurisdictions often compete for the same funding pots, and we do not trust that our information will be used appropriately outside the Tribe. Cultural differences and a history of abuse of Tribal information have created an environment where we are hesitant to release important data to public websites.

Furthermore, we find that outside researchers often do not understand our history or values. For research to be effective and respectful, those working with us must understand who we are as the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate.

Recommendations:

1. Improve information sharing between state, federal, Tribal, and county agencies to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.
2. Ensure that all research regarding the Tribe is culturally appropriate and respects Tribal values.
3. Provide Tribal officers with federal authority/cross-deputization to arrest non-members without state interference.

Topic 6. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

We strongly oppose any plan to consolidate OVW with other federal programs or offices. We believe it is essential for the OVW to remain a standalone office, as mandated by statute, to ensure that the specific needs of Tribal victims remain a priority.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain the OVW as a separate and distinct office within the Department of Justice.

**The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma*****Sheila Harjo, Assistant Chief - Tribal Leader (Oral)***

I am Sheila Harjo, the Assistant Chief in the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. I would like to thank all the agencies in the room for being present to hear the voices of many Tribal Nations. It is our greatest hope that by collaborating on local, state, and federal levels with agencies such as Indian Health Services, law enforcement, courts, and Congress, we can build safer communities.

The testimony you are going to hear today may very much mirror what has been previously said in the past years' testimony. "Why" do you ask? Because we are providing important information, and not much reform has occurred. The epidemic of domestic violence and sexual violence is still occurring, at astonishing volumes, while resources and funding continue to deteriorate.

The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is located in the heart of the State of Oklahoma. It has a large population of Indigenous people who continuously suffer high rates of domestic abuse and intimate partner homicide with state averages only rising. Therefore, the need for funding and resources is also on the rise. Tribal programs are often reliant on federal funding to be able to adequately provide culturally-sensitive services to victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault.

Topic 1. Funding Allocations

Oklahoma Tribal Nations are often competing against one another for funding while our state court counterparts are allocated funds. When discussing funding allocation, it's important to note that while the Seminole Nation understands formula funding, it is also based upon our Tribal enrollment and land mass.

Another consideration should be taken, such as shelter programs, SANE programs, and victim impact programs, to receive a base allocation and a formula. As a small nation, we serve both Native and non-Native victims of abuse, and we have only one of six Tribally-operated shelters in the state that is home to 38 federally recognized Tribes. One of six with 38 Tribes in Oklahoma. I want to point that out.

Seminole Nation of Oklahoma is situated in an economically deprived area. We have the same responsibilities as other Tribes without the bountiful economic arm of Tribal enterprises. When it comes to distributing federal funds, often there are not any external economic sources considered. That often leaves the Tribe covering the expenses of exercising sovereignty out of its own pocket. While Tribes should not be punished for flourishing in economic endeavors, the United States is in the unique position of supporting all Tribes and should be doing so equitably.

Recommendations:

1. Funds should be allocated equitably in relation to services provided. A base allocation for shelter services and other specialized services that are costly to provide would allow even the smaller Tribal Nations to provide much-needed advocacy and a greater capacity.

Topic 2. Community Safety

Collaboration with state agencies and local law enforcement is imperative. Oftentimes, victims have their own legal and personal issues. The present needs of the victims should be of utmost importance across all services, agencies, and jurisdictions. Regardless of the agency, everyone cares about the safety of our communities. It takes collaboration to accomplish these goals. The Seminole Nation reservation was re-recognized in 2021, and our criminal justice system is functioning at the max capacity to ensure public safety is at the forefront of our priorities.

Some things The Seminole Nation is currently doing.

- A first-time domestic violence offense is a felony versus the state, where the first time is a misdemeanor. We allow for hearsay in preliminary hearings, which helps prevent revictimization, retelling a traumatic event, and preserves testimony for trial.
- The Seminole Nation Court takes a restorative approach in addition to retribution, so that there are significant consequences for domestic violence cases, but the goal is to prevent recidivism.
- An estimated 40% of our criminal cases filed for domestic violence are in the Seminole Nation. The court is in the process of developing a Criminal Domestic Violence Court. This is a specialized court for criminal domestic violence cases. The new component will focus on intimate partner violence (IPV) and cases involving domestic violence, violation of protective orders, and stalking. The goal is to increase victims' safety and to hold the offenders accountable through increasing judicial monitoring.

Recommendations:

1. Collaboration between the local Tribe, state agencies, and local law enforcement on community safety.

Topic 3. Incarceration Limitations

It is the desire of the Seminole Nation to increase justice responses to violent crimes by increasing our capacity to prosecute perpetrators of violence; we can send a clear and concise message that the Seminole Nation will not tolerate domestic violence and sexual violence on our reservation. However, accountability comes at a cost.

Medical expenses, incarceration fees, increased cases require increasing court and advocacy staff, intervention programs, increased law enforcement, and specifically trained law enforcement who have knowledge and experience of working with victims of domestic violence and understand the trauma. Often the need for funding is greater than what is provided under BIA allocation. In order to effectively operate advocacy programs, law enforcement agencies, Tribal courts, etcetera, Tribes are managing many different funding sources. What we are lacking are the resources to aid in prevention and deterrence of domestic abuse.

The increased prosecution of domestic violence cases comes with increased incarceration costs. There's a lack of Tribal facilities for incarceration, which leaves the Tribes dependent on the local, state, and county facilities or the Bureau of Prisons, which are all at capacity.

Tribal governments are bound by The Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA) of 1968, 25 U.S.C. §§ 1301-1304, by which we are bound to one year or three years in incarceration. Primarily, we would like Congress to change the sentencing limitations under the Indian Civil Rights Act. The majority of Tribes are not much different than their state counterparts in that they have law-trained judges and attorneys that are barred in the state.

Often these cases could be referred to the United States Attorney's Office, but it has been our experience that these cases are often declined. It is common knowledge that oftentimes victims of domestic violence are unwilling or unable to cooperate in judicial processes, not giving a perfect easy case to federal prosecutors. Therefore, the cases aren't appealing to the United States Attorney's Office, leaving the Tribal courts to exercise jurisdiction within their limitations.

Not only are there issues in adult cases, but the access for juvenile justice is practically nonexistent. The United States Attorney's Office will not take cases unless the juvenile can be certified as an adult. Tribes are then left with whatever services the state will allow or whatever private companies have to offer. There are limited, preventive measures in juvenile delinquency matters and even fewer solutions with access to behavioral health services at an all-time minimum.

Recommendations:

1. Increase funding for incarceration or provide funding opportunities to build our own facilities.
2. Improve collaboration among law enforcement and local, state, and federal courts
3. Reform when it comes to prosecuting domestic violence crimes.
4. Stronger requirements for the United States Attorney's Offices to decline cases.

Topic 4. Access to Behavioral Healthcare

Behavioral health should be a priority for IHS because the capacity cannot currently meet the needs of the community members. Services are needed for the perpetrators, the victim, but also for the families involved. Proper behavioral health intervention will aid in the prevention of domestic and sexual violence, as well as repeat offenders. Access to behavioral health in Tribal communities is often unsustainable for various reasons: the wait time, the lack of providers, and the stigma. Not only is there a lack of behavioral health services in general, there are even fewer behavioral health services that are culturally centered.

Recommendations:

1. Expansion of Indian Health Services' behavioral health intervention programming to aid in the prevention of domestic and sexual violence, as well as repeat offenders.
2. Provide funding for culturally centered services provided to victims, perpetrators, and their families.

Conclusion:

Today I heard about the 20-year anniversary. My husband, former chief of the Seminole Nation, spoke at the very first one. I have come full circle as Assistant Chief of the Seminole Nation speaking to you today. Preparing for this today has been extremely difficult for me, personally. Thirty-seven years ago today, I prepared to bury my abuser with bite marks all over my face. Eight years of abuse. That particular night, he took the gun to his head instead of mine. So, I'm coming to you on a very personal basis.

Thirty-seven years ago, there were no services for victims of domestic violence. In 20 years, we've made strides. But in my opinion, not enough. We need more services. We need more money. We need more funding. Please look at the people around you. I would say 75 to 80% of women in this room have been victimized. I once read that when the hearts of our women are in the ground, we will no longer exist. I am here to tell you today that our hearts are not in the ground. We are fighting. We will exist, and we will continue, and we will stop domestic violence.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to come together as governments to discuss how through collaboration we can come together to make our communities safer and familiar, and healthier. I would like to acknowledge the diligent work of our Tribal programs, the hard-working advocates, the coalitions, and the service providers, as well as the staff in the Tribal Affairs Division (TAD) at OVW. Your guidance and responsiveness are much appreciated. Your dedication to safer communities in Indian Country does not go unnoticed.



Village of Alakanuk

Mary Ayunerak, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Written)

I am Mary Ayunerak, and my Yupik name is Tayaaran. I am born in Kwiguk and raised in Alakanuk by my adoptive parents, Johnson and Maggie Katchakoar. After graduating from high school in Oklahoma in 1970, I returned home to serve my community for over 30 years, first as a teacher and then as a home school coordinator. Today, I work as a parish administrator and am a proud mother, grandmother to 16, and great-grandmother to 14. I live by the Yupik values I was taught: to help our elders, to share our food, and to care for those in need. I stand before you because violence is not a part of Yupik culture, yet our community in Western Alaska is in the middle of a public crisis.

Topic 1. The Silence of Survivors and Lack of Reporting

I know the weight of this silence personally. In 1969, while working at the fisheries, two men grabbed me from behind, forced alcohol down my throat, and raped me. One of them threatened to hurt my family if I told anyone, so I never reported it or told my parents. It took until 2024 for me to finally approach the man who attacked me and tell him that I forgive him. Many women in Western Alaska still face this same fear and have nowhere to turn

when nearly 50% of adult women in our region experience intimate partner or sexual violence.

Recommendations:

1. Direct more state and federal funding specifically to Tribal communities in rural Alaska.
2. Expand real-time victim support, including hotlines and mobile crisis units.
3. Prioritize community-led solutions that respect Tribal sovereignty and traditions.

Topic 2. Gaps in Emergency Services and Shelter

In Alakanuk, we are off the road system and rely on snowmachines, boats, or planes to get anywhere. When violence happens, help is often far away. In a single day in Alaska, nearly 100 requests for help go unmet because we simply don't have the resources. Victims face massive delays when they need a shelter, a counselor, or a legal advocate.

Recommendations:

1. Fund 24/7 crisis response teams and expanded shelter capacity.
2. Provide culturally grounded counseling services and support to victims.

Topic 3. Generational Trauma and Lack of Services for Children

I see how the trauma of colonization, which our parents and grandparents survived at no fault of their own, compounds the violence our children witness today. We have almost no services for children who are traumatized by seeing violence in their homes, which means the cycle just keeps going.

Recommendations:

1. Invest in prevention and intervention that to strengthen the entire family unit.
2. Increase funding for specialized services for children who have witnessed trauma.

Topic 4. Unbroken Cycles Due to Missing Batterer Programs

While we struggle to help victims, there is almost nothing available for the offenders. Without counseling or accountability programs for batterers, the violence repeats itself across generations.

Recommendations:

1. Support the creation of local batterer intervention programs in partnership with regional organizations.
2. Fund restorative justice approaches that are specifically tailored to Tribal communities.

Topic 5. Administrative Burdens and Funding Delays

Our Tribes are small, often with only one or two staff members handling everything. When federal grant notices are delayed, it puts us at an unfair disadvantage. These grants are administratively heavy, meaning my staff spends more time on paperwork than they do helping victims.

Recommendations:

1. Set a mandatory release date for grant notices (NOFOs) by April 1st of each year.
2. Extend project periods so Tribes can plan for long-term sustainability.
3. Stop requiring successful programs to re-justify their capacity every time they apply for continuation funding.

Topic 6. Geographic and Cultural Staffing Disconnect

Most federal grant managers are located in Washington, D.C., 4,000 miles away. The four-hour time difference means a crisis occurring at 2 p.m. in Alaska requires waiting until the next day to speak with anyone. New federal staff often do not understand the unique and vast nature of Alaska.

Recommendations:

1. Base at least one OVW/OVC staff person in each of the five regions of Alaska to partner with regional non-profits.
2. Provide appropriate funding to existing Alaska-based technical assistance centers, like the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center.

Topic 7. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I strongly oppose any plan to merge the OVW or OTJ into other departments. These offices must remain separate to ensure Tribal justice remains a priority.

Recommendations:

1. Keep OVW and OTJ as separate and distinct offices within the DOJ as Congress mandated.

Topic 8. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

I do not want to see the laws rewritten to turn the National Baseline Study into a "community-level" study. This would leave out Alaska Tribes that don't have the resources to conduct their own research. I also oppose any move to hide the work of the 904 Task Force behind a FACA exemption.

Recommendations:

1. Complete the National Baseline Study as a single national study as Congress originally required.
2. Require all federal agencies operating in Alaska to collect and report data on the Native victims they encounter.
3. Strengthen the 904 Task Force by making it a decision-making body rather than just an advisory one.

Quyana, thank you for listening to the needs of my people.



Village of Bill Moore's Slough

Stella Fancyboy, OVC Program Director - Authorized Designee (Written)

I am Stella Fancyboy, and I serve as the OVC Program Director for my community, the Native Village of Bill Moore's Slough. I speak to you today not just as a director, but as a mother, a daughter, a sister, an auntie, and a lifelong member of the community where I live and serve. I was raised in Kotlik, a Yup'ik Eskimo village located near the mouth of the Yukon River, where the river is our highway and our people continue to live a traditional subsistence lifestyle. Because we are geographically isolated and not connected by any road system, our entry is restricted by air or water and can be cut off for weeks depending on the weather.

Topic 1. Inadequate Law Enforcement and Public Safety

I witness daily how alcohol and drug abuse impact our people, yet we lack the funding to address it properly. My community shares the village of Kotlik with two other Tribes, but we are only able to employ one village police officer (VPO) for a population of 655 people. Many times when our people call for help, it is hard to contact the VPO, who is often not even from our community, and victims are forced to suffer without the help they so desperately need. Because things are not addressed, community members are afraid to bring up issues, which only tends to make the situation worse.

Recommendations:

1. Provide adequate funding to employ a sufficient number of VPOs who are from the community.
2. Increase funding for VPO training so they can better address the specific needs of victims.

Topic 2. The Lack of Safe Housing and Normalization of Abuse

It is heartbreaking to see victims in our community who are bruised or battered. Because we have no available safe homes or housing in our village, survivors are forced to travel elsewhere for services. Most of our people don't want to leave their friends, family, or the comfort of the community they know, so many return to their violent situations. In turn, the abuse is normalized because there is no immediate way to escape it.

Recommendations:

1. Invest in the critical infrastructure needed to build safe homes and emergency housing directly in our community so survivors do not have to leave their support systems.

Topic 3. The Neglect of Children Affected by Violence

I see the children of survivors wandering the street, and we all know what they are going through because everyone knows each other in our community. These kids need a safe place to go where they can be protected from the violence in their homes, but we currently lack the facilities to provide them that refuge.

Recommendations:

1. Allocate specific funding for safe spaces and programs dedicated to the children of survivors.

Topic 4. Barriers to Community Education and Prevention

Many of us are aware of what happens to others and who is perpetrating the violence, but we don't know how to help address it. While spreading awareness is an allowable activity under our grants, we only have enough funds to employ one person. This one staff person cannot focus on community engagement or education because they are consumed by the heavy grant management and administrative burdens.

Recommendations:

1. Provide funding in adequate amounts to fulfill the need for prevention and education in our village.
2. Reduce administrative responsibilities and grant management burdens to allow staff to focus on community-level work.

Topic 5. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

I believe that if the NBS is rewritten to be a series of "community-level" studies, many Alaska Native Women will be left out. Small remote villages like ours lack the research infrastructure to conduct these studies, meaning the data will only represent larger hub communities. This puts an unfair onus on understaffed Tribes who are already functioning at or over capacity.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct the NBS as a single national study as originally mandated by Congress in 2005.
2. Use existing infrastructure, like our trusted Community Health Aides, to collect health-related data as a supplement to the study.
3. Provide funding to train local individuals on trauma-informed data collection so we can "trust our own" to collect this information appropriately.

Topic 6. Unpredictable Funding Cycles and Administrative Delays

My own position as OVC Director took longer than it should have to fill because of the uncertainty of funding for my Tribe. The delays in releasing federal NOFOs create unpredictable cycles that interfere with our lives, especially

during the critical Alaska subsistence season. We are also forced to fill out redundant narratives for OVW even when they already have our information, which creates unnecessary stress.

Recommendations:

1. Implement a policy requiring all NOFOs to be published no later than April 1st of each fiscal year.
2. Extend project periods from 3 years to at least 5 years to allow Tribes to develop lasting, sustainable programs.
3. Develop forms and budget templates that do not require extensive reviews for Tribes that already have an established relationship with the OVW.

Topic 7. The Need for Alaska-Based Staffing and Accountability

It is an understatement to say that contacting grant managers in a different time zone is challenging. When we try to meet deadlines, the offices we need are often already closed because they are four hours ahead of Alaska time. Staff who live and work in Alaska better understand our unique legal, geographical, and cultural challenges. Furthermore, we are being asked to provide new recommendations at this Consultation without even seeing the 2024 Annual Report to know what was done with our previous ones.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain OVW and OVC staffing within the state of Alaska.
2. Strategically place staff within each region of the state to accommodate working with regional non-profits.
3. Release the annual report and any updates on previous recommendations immediately, and increase the notice period for framing papers to at least 60 days.
4. Maintain the OVW and OVC as separate and distinct offices as Congress mandated to ensure they are not distracted by other duties.

In closing, thank you for your time and consideration, and for listening to our concerns. No community should have to suffer crisis after crisis without receiving any help. We hope that the federal government hears the issues we've raised and implements the recommendations so that every village can exist safely, no matter how remote. We need to continue to build alliances and to work together to advocate 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

Tracy Charles-Smith, President - Tribal Leader (Oral & Written)

My name is Tracy Charles-Smith, and my Athabaskan name means "She came back to me." I am the president of the Native Village of Dot Lake, but I speak to you today as a mother and a leader who carries the voices of the people who have survived on this land since time beyond memory. Our traditional lands are cradled between the Alaska Range and the Tanana River, where our elders still read the land and our children learn words in our Native tongue for the sound of ice breaking in the spring. But the land is changing beneath our feet. Climate change is not an abstract threat. It is the caribou and moose that no longer come. Survival for us means more than preserving tradition. It means protecting our most vulnerable from violence.

Topic 1. State Obstruction of Tribal Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART)

In 2023, we were awarded funding to create a SART to address the fact that survivors in our region must travel

hours on dangerous roads for forensic exams. Instead of welcoming this resource, the State of Alaska told us directly, “Just because you received a grant doesn’t mean we will work with you”. They refused us forensic kits and excluded us from trainings, forcing us to train our own elite team of nurses and advocates in silence. When state officials finally came to our village, a trooper got red in the face asking if he had to take evidence from a Tribal officer. I told them clearly, “Do not come to our house and tell us not to help victims.”

Recommendations:

1. Require states to provide forensic kits and law enforcement cooperation to federally funded Tribal SART teams at no cost.
2. Enforce compliance when states obstruct or refuse Tribal partnerships funded by the DOJ or OVW.
3. Mandate clear protocols for evidence transfer and chain of custody between state labs and Tribal SART teams.

Topic 2. Federally Subsidized Barriers and the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA)

ANDVSA receives millions in federal funding to support victims, yet they act as a barrier to Tribal collaboration. They have actively worked to block our access to state crime labs and oppose legal protections for our Tribal advocates, which undermines our self-determination.

Recommendations:

1. Provide federal oversight to ensure that federally subsidized agencies do not block Tribal access to critical services or trainings.
2. Ensure that federal priorities emphasizing Tribal sovereignty are reflected in the actions of state-level grant recipients.

Topic 3. Lack of Legal Protections for Tribal Advocates

Currently, Tribal advocates in Alaska do not have full confidentiality protection under state law, meaning they risk being subpoenaed to testify against the very survivors they serve. This undermines trust and silences victims who are already suffering from stigma and fear.

Recommendations:

1. Legally recognize Tribal sexual assault advocates as confidential providers under state law with protections equal to non-Native programs.

Topic 4. The Systemic Failure and Human Cost of Inaction

The failure of our systems leads to tragedies that are not inevitable. I think of a young woman in our village who suffered a miscarriage in a public laundry facility because she had no immediate medical support. She was later exploited through trafficking and struggled with substance abuse but never received the long-term behavioral health care she needed. She passed away because the system failed her at every stage.

Recommendations:

1. Invest meaningfully in victim services, medical access, and culturally grounded healing to stop these cycles of exploitation and early death.
2. Ensure Tribal communities have the resources to provide immediate emergency medical and behavioral health support.

Topic 5. Jurisdictional and Funding Inequity in Law Enforcement

We have built a Tribal police department that our elders trust, allowing us to run background checks and issue enforceable protection orders for the first time. However, the BIA excludes us from full law enforcement funding

because we are labeled “villages” instead of “reservations”. Furthermore, larger agencies often entice our officers away because the COPS program does not cover the real cost of retaining them in Alaska.

Recommendations:

1. Recognize Alaska Tribes as equal to those in the lower 48 for BIA law enforcement funding.
2. Adjust the DOJ COPS program to reflect the true cost of hiring and retaining officers in rural Alaska.
3. Remove cost-match requirements for Tribal grants, as many rural Tribes do not have \$50,000 to \$100,000 “lying around” to secure federal funds.

Topic 6. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

A one-size-fits-all study cannot capture the reality of small Alaska villages. We support reconceptualizing the NBS as a series of Tribally-led and regional studies so that communities like mine can collect and analyze our own data.

Recommendations:

1. Provide Tribes with access to survey tools and validated instruments to conduct their own prevalent research.
2. Grant an exemption from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) to allow the Section 904 Task Force to convene with more flexibility.
3. Ensure that dating violence, stalking, murder, and sex trafficking are explicitly included in all data collection efforts.

As I end today, I think of our great chiefs and the lengthy speeches they gave at potlatches about how to be a good human being. As Tribes, we always come to the table trying to be good. We ask that you honor your trust responsibility and stand with us.



Village of Ohogamiut

Rose Papp, Tribal Council Member - Tribal Leader (Oral and Written)

Francine Andrew, OVC Coordinator - Authorized Designee (Oral)

The Ohogamiut Traditional Council is located in the community of Marshall, Alaska, in the Southwest region along the Lower Yukon River. The community, shared with the Marshall Traditional Council, has a population of just under 500 residents, primarily Alaska Native families. The people of Ohogamiut live a year-round subsistence lifestyle based on hunting and gathering. Geographically remote, the village is situated 75 air miles from the hub of Bethel and is accessible mainly by air travel, though residents also utilize ATVs, snowmachines, and boats for local transport.

Introduction of Rose Papp

I am Rose “Marie” Papp, and I serve as a councilwoman for my Tribe, though my roles in the community go much deeper. I am a mother, a grandmother, a daughter, a sister, an auntie, and a teacher. I have lived in this village my whole life, and I see the struggle of my people every day.

On paper, it might look like our community is being served, but the reality is that we are losing hope. I carry the weight of making sure our voices are heard because we believe that by working together and listening to each other, we can break down the barriers that keep our families from being safe.

Introduction of Francine Andrew

I am Francine Andrew. I stand before you representing my Tribe and speaking for the many Alaska Tribes that are currently navigating a difficult landscape of limited resources and rising safety concerns. My story is one of steadfast advocacy for our people and a refusal to give up in the face of systemic challenges.

Topic 1. Lack of Housing and Safe Shelters

I see our community struggling with some of the highest rates of rape and domestic violence, and the opening of a liquor store here has only made things more dangerous. Since Marshall has no available shelter for victims, many women are terrified to report crimes because they have no safe place to hide from retaliation. For safety, victims must fly to regional hubs like Bethel or Emmonak, but these facilities are often full and forced to turn them away.

Building homes out here is nearly impossible because the cost is exorbitant and the permafrost is constantly melting and freezing beneath us, making foundations unsustainable. Even when we find the will to build, we are often told that construction is unallowable under our federal grants. We are trapped in a cycle where we cannot provide the basic safety of a roof to our most vulnerable relatives.

Recommendations:

1. Make more non-competitive grants available specifically to build shelters and safe homes in Tribal communities.
2. Ensure federal funding guidelines allow for the high costs associated with building on permafrost in rural Alaska.

Topic 2. Administrative Burdens and Funding Uncertainty

We are grateful for our OVC staff person, but one person simply isn't enough to look after our whole community. That staff member gets completely consumed by administrative paperwork when they should be out there providing essential services to victims. We are constantly in crisis mode because there are only three months between when a grant notice is released and when it is due, which doesn't give us enough time to plan properly.

Every year, we have to wonder if we will even be funded for the next one, which makes it impossible to provide any kind of stability for our programs. Small Tribes like ours cannot keep functioning under these short, high-pressure timelines.

A major new obstacle for our Tribe is the funding caps imposed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which have significantly reduced the support we have relied on for years. These caps place a heavy burden on us, forcing us to work with insufficient money that cannot cover the operational, travel, and training costs that are so crucial for a functioning justice system. I believe that when our staff cannot access training, the very quality and efficacy of the services we provide to our community are compromised. The safety of our Tribe depends on strong partnerships and robust funding, and we desperately need the infrastructure to overcome these obstacles.

Recommendations:

1. Increase funding amounts and expand grant project periods to five years to ensure program sustainability and long-term planning.
2. Fund at least two Alaska-based technical assistance providers, such as the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, who truly understand our unique geographic and cultural barriers.

Topic 3. Law Enforcement Failures and Jurisdictional Gaps

When we call for help, we lose hope because the Alaska State Troopers don't arrive for at least a day, and sometimes even longer. The people who cause trouble in Marshall know this. They know there is no response, so they aren't held accountable. They even hide when they know the troopers are finally flying in, then just come right back as soon as the plane leaves.

Our local officers are burnt out due to a lack of sufficient training and sustainable pay. We rely on city and Tribal

police, but without real federal support, the entire burden of keeping the peace falls onto the community members themselves.

Recommendations:

1. Provide non-competitive funding specifically for Tribal victim services and Tribal law enforcement.
2. Increase funding for training so our local justice systems can respond appropriately and ensure justice is served.

Topic 4. Response to Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

I strongly oppose any plan to merge the Office on Violence Against Women or the Office of Tribal Justice with other departments. Congress made these offices separate and distinct for a reason. We need them to stay focused on our specific needs rather than being buried in a larger federal bureaucracy where our voices will be diluted.

Recommendations:

1. Remove BIA funding caps and provide robust funding for Tribal Justice Systems, including operational, travel, and training costs.
2. Ensure the OVW, OTJ, and COPS offices remain separate and distinct as explicitly mandated by Congress.

Topic 5. Response to Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

I don't believe we should rewrite the laws just because finishing the study is a challenge. That statute was made to hold agencies accountable. If you replace the National Baseline Study with small community-level studies, Alaska will be systematically left out because we don't have the research infrastructure.

The carry-forward funds exist because the government failed to finish the study, and that money should be used first for the NBS. We can help by training our trusted Community Health Aides to screen for violence and help capture the data you need while they are already working in our villages.

Recommendations:

1. Commit to completing the National Baseline Study as a single national study as written in the law.
2. Use carry-forward funds as a first priority to complete the NBS and support outreach to Tribes.
3. Train and fund existing village infrastructure, like Community Health Aides, to help capture prevalence data.
4. Maintain FACA requirements to ensure transparency and public notice regarding Task Force meetings.

In closing, I would like to thank you for taking the time to listen to our testimony. We believe that in building partnerships, we can overcome anything, but we have to listen to and respect each other. By working together, we can break down barriers to build safer communities for all Native people.



Closing Comments

Closing Remarks and Traditional Closing Ceremonies

Ms. Ginger Baran Lyons thanked the Tribal leaders for traveling to share their testimonies and emphasized that the OVW's priority is to take action on the recommendations provided, particularly those aimed at reducing administrative burdens. She highlighted testimonies about how federal laws and resources have fallen short of what's needed in Tribal communities but also have helped. She acknowledged those whose testimonies included tough stories and pointed to the statement of Chairwoman Bernadine Atchison of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe that we have to understand the past to know the present, and how important it is to understand how we got here so the federal government can work with Tribal leaders to do better. She acknowledged that while OVW serves as the federal voice on violence against women, there is still significant work to be done to fulfill trust and treaty obligations and support solutions led by the Tribes themselves. Ms. Baran Lyons expressed humility regarding the incredible work already being done in Tribal communities and pledged to work with government partners to address resource deficits and support local efforts.

Ms. Rebekah Jones echoed the commitment to taking Tribal words seriously, asserting that the OVW team serves as dedicated advocates across the federal government to implement the Violence Against Women Act. She stated that the primary focus of OVW's Tribal Affairs Division is streamlining the grant process to reduce the administrative burden on Tribes, including assigning a single grant manager to each Tribe for all OVW awards to provide more consistent communication and help Tribes braid various funding streams to support victims. She offered a special thanks to the Tribal leaders and delegates who sacrificed time with their families and responsibilities at home to offer testimony. She specifically thanked Ms. Badmoccasin for setting up the room up and all attendees for their hard work, acknowledging those who testified for their good words. Furthermore, she highlighted the vital role of coalition leaders as the backbone of OVW's efforts because of their deep community knowledge and their tireless work in building robust policies and programs alongside Tribal leaders.

Ms. Jones specifically recognized the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and Mending the Sacred Hoop, the two Tribal coalitions based in Minnesota, for their partnership in planning the Consultation opening and closing ceremonies, ensuring they set a respectful tone for the land and the people. She also expressed gratitude to the Shakopee Tribe for providing the host facility and to the logistics contractors for their support in facilitating a respectful dialogue between federal representatives and Tribal leaders. Ms. Jones concluded by noting that the event has improved each year, providing a vital venue for moving Tribal recommendations forward.

Appendix 1: Presentations

Working Lunch: U.S. DOJ, OVW, Presentation of the 20-Year Report

Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 12:15 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Renee Stapp, Grants Management Specialist, Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal Affairs Division

Olivia Storz, Research Analyst, Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

Renee Stapp, a grant management specialist and citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and Olivia Storz, a research analyst at the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), presented a commemorative report titled “Carrying the Water, Demanding Justice: More Than 20 Years of VAWA in Indian Country and Alaska.” Ms. Stapp opened the presentation by acknowledging the historical responsibility of Tribal leaders and noting that their voices have directly shaped how OVW delivers federal grant funding. She recounted the evolution of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), highlighting milestones such as the 1995 creation of OVW, the formal recognition of Tribal coalitions in VAWA 2000, and the landmark affirmation of Tribal criminal jurisdiction in VAWA 2013 and 2022. Ms. Stapp also detailed recent administrative efforts to cut the red tape, which included simplifying grant applications and reducing reporting burdens.

Ms. Storz presented the data compiled from 20 years of performance reporting, emphasizing that while the numbers were impressive, they could not fully quantify the personal stories behind them. She reported that Tribal program grantees provided over 1.9 million bed nights, answered more than half a million hotline calls, and assisted victims in obtaining more than 72,000 protection orders over the past two decades. She shared more recent statistics from a six-month period, noting that grantees had served more than 4,000 victims and provided cultural advocacy over 3,000 times. Ms. Storz also utilized a map to demonstrate the program’s growth, showing that the number of Tribal awards increased from 73 in 2007 to 224 in 2024.

In the concluding portion of the presentation, Ms. Stapp characterized victim service work as Creator-driven and deeply personal, noting that most advocates have been touched by victimization. She highlighted the systemic progress made in areas like the “Full Faith and Credit” recognition of Tribal protection orders by state and federal law enforcement. Finally, the presenters encouraged Tribal leaders to use the data in the report to inform their own community decisions and to consider what they wanted the next generation of advocates to carry forward.

Working Lunch: Incidence of MMIP and Tribal Community Response Planning

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 12:15 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Dr. Aaron Payment, Sault Ste. Marie Tribal Council, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) Tribal Nation Fellow, NCAI Midwest Regional VP Alternate

Dr. Payment delivered a presentation on the incidence of Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) and Tribal community response planning. He addressed the 20-year history of the National Baseline Study (NBS), characterizing it as a false start and arguing that while the statute does not need rewriting, the study requires Tribal ownership and data sovereignty to be successful. Dr. Payment urged federal partners to shift their language from “research” to “data gathering,” noting that Native people have been studied enough and now require active solutions.

He highlighted critical data complexities, specifically that Tribal affiliation is not a required field in many federal reporting systems, which often leads to the misclassification of Native victims as “Latino” or “unknown.” He pointed out that while Native people make up only 1.3% of the population, they are overrepresented as missing persons by 2.7 times. He also noted a significant jurisdictional gap, explaining that 71% of Native people live off-reservation, yet federal law enforcement funding remains largely tied to reservation service areas. Regarding the MMIP crisis, Dr. Payment shared that 84.3% of Native women experience violence in their lifetime and that murder

is the third leading cause of death for Native women on Tribal lands. He warned of an emerging trend in online exploitation, citing a 300% increase in reports of online enticement from 2021 to 2023. To combat these threats, he noted NCMEC resources like Team Adam, which provides forensic and investigative support to Tribes, and the “Take It Down” tool, which allows youth to remove explicit images of themselves from the internet.

Dr. Payment emphasized the importance of Tribal Community Response Plans, sharing how his own Tribe’s plan led to the rescue of an abducted child within 72 hours. He recommended adopting a Tribal census approach to data collection and establishing a central MMIP repository that would automatically alert Tribes when their citizens are reported missing. He concluded by grounding the current crisis in historical trauma, linking modern violence and systemic mistrust to the legacy of boarding schools, land dispossession, and forced assimilation.

Appendix 2: Consultation Agenda

Tuesday, January 20th	
1:00 p.m. - 6:30 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 Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, January 21st	
7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Registration and Information Desk
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Resource Marketplace
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Tribal Leader Meeting Room
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Press Room
9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Open Meeting Room
General Session	
8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Call to Order & Opening Ceremony Opening Prayer: Janice Badmoccasin, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Honor Guard: Dakota Kit Fox Society Red Jingle Dancers: McKay Munoz, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Holly Miskitoos Henning, Marten Falls First Nation & Constance Lake First Nation Madison Kingbird, Mending the Sacred Hoop Jada Aljubailah Drum Group: Imnizaska Shawl Ceremony: Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) and Mending the Sacred Hoop Welcome Remarks: Secretary/Treasurer Ashley Cornforth, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Ginger Baran Lyons Deputy Director for Grants Development and Management (Supervisory Official), Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ Rebekah Jones Acting Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ

9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.	Opening Remarks & Introductions Ginger Baran Lyons Deputy Director for Grants Development and Management (Supervisory Official), Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ Rebekah Jones Acting Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ
9:30 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony Assistant Chief Sheila Harjo Seminole Nation of Oklahoma President Gene Small Northern Cheyenne
10:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Sovereign Tribal Leaders of the NCAI VAW Task Force President Shannon Holsey Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohican Indians Carmen O’Leary, Director Native Women’s Society of the Plains Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center
10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Break
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony Treasurer Rosalee Revey-Jacobs Lummi Tribe Rose Papp, Tribal Council Member Village of Ohogamiut Francine Andrew, OVC Coordinator Village of Ohogamiut
12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Working Lunch: U.S. DOJ, OVW, Presentation of the 20-Year Report <i>Presentation from 12:30 - 1:30 PM</i> Renee Stapp, Grants Management Specialist US Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal Affairs Division Olivia Storz, Program Analyst US Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Performance, Assessment, Research, and Evaluation Unit

1:30 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony Nathanial Amdur-Clark, Attorney Citizen Potawatomi Nation Dr. Aaron Payment, Tribal Council Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians President Tracy Charles Smith Village of Dot Lake
2:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	Break
2:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony Monique Carpitcher, Domestic Violence Advocate Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma Vice President Richelle Montoya Navajo Nation Chairwoman Bernadine Atchison Kenaitze Indian Tribe Mary Ann Mills, Tribal Council Member Kenaitze Indian Tribe Maria Guerra, Family and Social Services Director Kenaitze Indian Tribe
3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Break
4:00 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony Chairman Robert Smith (pre-recorded) Pala Band of Mission Indians Chairman Curtis La Chusa (pre-recorded) Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians
5:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Closing Remarks for the Day Ginger Baran Lyons Deputy Director for Grants Development and Management (Supervisory Official), Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ Rebekah Jones Acting Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ

Thursday, January 22nd	
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. - 4:00 p.m.	Resource Marketplace
8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Tribal Leader Meeting Room
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Press Room
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Open Meeting Room
General Session	
8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.	Call to Order & Daily Remarks Ginger Baran Lyons Deputy Director for Grants Development and Management (Supervisory Official), Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ Rebekah Jones Acting Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ
9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony Germaine Omish-Lucero, Special Projects Director, ATCEV Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians Kathy Gibson, Rural Project Coordinator Shoshone Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley Indian Reservation Rick Haskins-Garcia, Esquire, Director of Law and Policy, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center Emmonak Tribal Council Glenda Martin, Ponema District Representative Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians Daniel Mead, Marshal Cherokee Nation Megan Treuer, Chief Judge Minnesota Chippewa Tribe - Bois Forte Band
10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Break

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony Elizabeth Jerue, Executive Director, Healing Native Hearts Coalition Anvik Tribe Council Eugenia Charles Newton Navajo Nation Sadie-Rose Warbelow, STCJ & Tribal Law and Policy Specialist Native Village of Tetlin Secretary Danielle Matt, Tribal Council Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribe
12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.	Working Lunch: Incidence of MMIP and Tribal Community Response Planning <i>Presentation from 12:15 PM - 1:15 PM</i> Dr. Aaron Payment Sault Ste. Marie Tribal Council, NCMEC Tribal Nation Fellow, NCAI Midwest Regional VP Alternate
1:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony President Mike Jones Organized Village of Kasaan Chairman Peter Lengkeek Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Aaron Bean, Government Affairs Specialist Craig Tribal Association Carol Redfox, Tribal Council Member Asa'carsarmiut Tribe Catherine Moses, Tribal Administrator Asa'carsarmiut Tribe
3:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.	Break

3:45 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.	Government-to-Government Consultation Tribal Leader Testimony Winfield Rondell, Jr., Tribal Council Member Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Aliza Brown, Human Service Director Quinault Indian Nation Stephanie Terrell, Victim’s Advocate, Sacred Healing Journey Quinault Indian Nation Leandra Ross, Vice President of Executive and Tribal Services, Southcentral Foundation Salamatof Tribe Rachel Fernandez, Director of Advocacy Support Services Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin Matilda Evans, Tribal Council Member Native Village of Kwinhagak Rick Haskins-Garcia, Esquire, Director of Law and Policy, Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center Native Village of Kwinhagak
5:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Closing Ceremony Honor Guard: Dakota Kit Fox Society Red Jingle Dancers: McKay Munoz, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Holly Miskitoos Henning, Marten Falls First Nation & Constance Lake First Nation Madison Kingbird, Mending the Sacred Hoop Jada Aljubailah Drum Group: Imnizaska Shawl Ceremony: Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) and Mending the Sacred Hoop Prayer: Janice Badmoccasin, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Ginger Baran Lyons Deputy Director for Grants Development and Management (Supervisory Official), Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ Rebekah Jones Acting Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, Office on Violence Against Women, US DOJ

Friday, January 23rd

To ensure all in-person attendees could safely travel home before the incoming inclement weather, the 20th annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation concluded on Thursday, January 22nd. All Tribal leaders and authorized designees with scheduled times to testify were heard before the Consultation concluded. Tribal leaders and authorized designees were asked to submit written testimony before February 23rd, 2026, if they wished to make additional comments or were not able to attend the consultation

Appendix 3: Consultation Framing Paper & Notice of Intent to Consult



Tribal Consultation Framing Paper on Section 904(a)

August 2025

BACKGROUND

Section 904(a) of the **Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005** (VAWA 2005) required that the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) conduct research on violence against American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women.¹ There are three requirements for this research portfolio as outlined in the statute.²

- Conduct a National Baseline Study to examine violence against AI/AN women living in Indian Country and Alaska Native villages, including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking,³ stalking, and murder.⁴
- Evaluate the effectiveness of federal, state, Tribal, and local responses to violence against Indian women.
- Propose recommendations to improve the effectiveness of these responses.

Additionally, section 904(a) of VAWA 2005 required the Attorney General to establish a Task Force (Section 904 Task Force) to assist with the development and implementation of these requirements. The Section 904 Task Force, which is a Federal Advisory Committee, is comprised of representatives from national Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault nonprofit organizations, Tribal governments, and national Tribal organizations. The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) administers the Section 904 Task Force in collaboration with NIJ.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE NATIONAL BASELINE STUDY (NBS)

Since the establishment of the Section 904 Task Force, NIJ and OVW have convened it in keeping with its statutory purpose. NIJ funded a variety of studies and reports on the scope and context of violence against AI/AN women. For example, a 2008 NIJ-funded report titled "[*Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and the Criminal Justice*](#)

¹ Pub. L. No. 109-162, 119 Stat. 2960, 3078-79 (2006), *amended by* Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4, § 907(a), 127 Stat. 54, 125. The original statute authorized an appropriation of \$1,000,000 each year for this purpose (and the related task force) for fiscal year (FY) 2007 and FY 2008. This amount was reauthorized in 2013 for FY 2014 and FY 2015. Congress has appropriated \$1,000,000 annually since FY 2012.

² The statute is codified as amended at 34 U.S.C. § 10452 note. Please see **Appendix B** to review the language of the authorizing statute.

³ Note: sex trafficking was added in the 2013 VAWA reauthorization.

⁴ Hereafter, these crimes are referred to collectively as "VAWA crimes."

[Response: What is Known](#)” provided an overview of different data sources and their estimates of violence against AI/AN women and barriers to responding to violence against AI/AN women.⁵ In addition, a 2016 report titled “[Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey](#),” examines the prevalence of violence against American Indian and Alaska-Native women and men. Although both NIJ reports provide prevalence data, the National Baseline Study (NBS) requires more detailed baseline data on VAWA crimes in Indian Country and Alaska Native villages.⁶

Despite multiple efforts and attempts, NIJ has not been able to successfully carry out the NBS. There are three main impediments to carrying out the NBS: size and scope of the study, logistical constraints, and funding.

- **Size and scope:** The putative scope of the NBS includes all 574 federally recognized Tribes. Therefore, a representative NBS requires participation across Indian Country and Alaskan Native villages.⁷ Each of these are sovereign nations with their own approach to research and data collection. Negotiating government-to-government research contracts requires extensive time and detail. For example, to respect Tribal sovereignty throughout the research process, approval would have to be obtained from multiple Tribal Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and/or Tribal business councils. These deliberative procedures take time such that some IRB approvals expire while others are being considered. Consequently, an NBS with participation and consent of all Tribes and villages would not be practicable.
- **Logistical constraints:** The implementation of the NBS faces administrative obstacles inherent in federal grant administration. These include, for example, limited periods of performance for research grants, lengthy timelines for obtaining contracts and other contractual complications, and complex requirements for data archiving. These obstacles make it extremely difficult to issue a sufficiently flexible award and collect enough data in the lifespan of the contract or grant.
- **Insufficient funding:** The yearly funding available for the NBS is not sufficient to create and rigorously conduct custom data collection on a broad population across 574 Tribal nations.

APPROACHES MOVING FORWARD

Given the challenges summarized above, it is likely not possible to implement the NBS as originally conceptualized. However, the animating goal behind the NBS statute and the Section 904 Task Force remains essential: increasing understanding of the scope and prevalence of VAWA crimes against AI/AN women and the effectiveness of responses to those crimes. OVW has determined that there is approximately \$4 million in carryforward funds available for research on VAWA crimes against AI/AN women, including the NBS. OVW is consulting Tribes and requesting feedback on the following questions to most effectively research and address violence against AI/AN women.

⁵ Please see **Appendix A** for a full list of research funded under this portfolio.

⁶ NIJ approached the NBS through the development of one centralized survey to obtain national-level baseline data across Tribes.

⁷ While not specified in the statute, baseline data might also include AI/AN people not living in Indian Country or Alaska Native villages.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

1. Should the authorizing statute be rewritten to reconceptualize the NBS as a broader program of research instead of a single national study?
 - a. For example, might the NBS be reconceptualized as a series of Tribal-led prevalence studies conducted by and for specific Tribal nations at the community or regional level?⁸
 - b. Might Tribes benefit from receiving the instruments, methods, and other tools generated while attempting to develop and implement the NBS? How might Tribes use this information to collect and assess prevalence in their own communities?

EXPANDING PREVALENCE DATA

A centralized NBS representing each Tribal nation faces practical challenges. However, increasing prevalence data may be feasible by analyzing existing data collections on victimization such as the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), National Incidence-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), National College Health Assessment (NCHA),⁹ or the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS).¹⁰

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

2. As a way to produce foundational baseline data, might reports analyzing available federal victimization data on AI/AN populations be useful?
3. What other strategies might be explored to increase and enhance prevalence data on VAWA crimes both within and across Tribal communities?

UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT AND EFFECTIVE RESPONSES

Understanding the context behind VAWA crimes requires research that goes beyond examining prevalence. Furthermore, effective research in AI/AN communities requires cultural expertise, time, and flexibility. Grant making agencies are considering a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) that would provide funding to conduct this contextual research and evaluation.¹¹

⁸ For an example of how this might work, please see pages 11-15 of [Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018](#): Global, Regional And National Prevalence Estimates For Intimate Partner Violence Against Women And Global and Regional Prevalence Estimates For Non-Partner Sexual Violence Against Women. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; see also Maheu-Giroux, M., Sardinha, L., Stöckl, H. *et al.* [A Framework to Model Global, Regional, And National Estimates Of Intimate Partner Violence](#). *BMC Med Res Methodology* 22, 159 (2022).

⁹ This data is collected by the American College Health Association institutions of higher education on a wide range of health and wellness issues, including campus sexual assault and IPV. For more information, please see: [National College Health Assessment - ACHA](#).

¹⁰ This data is collected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from high school students to capture health-related behaviors and experiences, including sexual violence. For more information, please see: [About YRBSS | Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System \(YRBSS\) | CDC](#).

¹¹ Rather than funding broad, nationally scoped projects, this NOFO would support streamlined or more targeted grants that can be carried out within the timeframes and other logistical requirements associated with federal grants and contracts.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

4. Within the guidelines of appropriations and authorizing statutes, how would you like to see funds used, and what research topics are of interest?

SIMPLIFYING THE SECTION 904 TASK FORCE

Over the past two decades, Section 904 Task Force members have provided useful insight into researching and addressing VAWA crimes against AI/AN women. The Task Force operates under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) of 1972, as amended.¹² Under FACA, the Task Force cannot be convened without notice published in the Federal Register as well as other cumbersome requirements. The requirements of FACA constrain OVW's ability to nimbly and efficiently convene the Task Force as needed, thus limiting the day-to-day impact the Task Force can have on informing research.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

5. Should OVW pursue a statutory exemption from FACA to ensure more effective administration of the Task Force? Do you have any concerns about this change?

NOTE: This paper is not a statement of official Department policy. It is intended to provide information and suggest questions to be considered by Tribal leaders and representatives as they prepare to participate in the 20th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation. The Department welcomes input from Tribal leaders on this and other matters of concern to Tribal communities.

¹² 5 U.S.C. §§ 1001 *et seq.*

Appendix A: Key Studies Done to Date

- *The National Baseline Study on Public Health, Wellness, & Safety* (The NBS) (NIJ's Flagship Research Program Project)
 - Attempts to complete the NBS:
 - 2009 – 2011: NIJ developed an initial draft of the baseline questionnaire and tested study protocols and sampling techniques.
 - 2012 – 2013: Study sampling plan was developed and refined.
 - 2014: Contractors were brought on to implement the study
 - Securing study approvals and recruiting participating sites took longer than anticipated which impacted the contracts procured for the effort.
 - 2015 – 2017: Closed the initial contracts and secured more appropriate contract vehicles.
 - 2018 – 2023: Updated the study instrument, finalized sampling protocols, and recruited and secured participating tribes.
 - Experienced significant delays for study implementation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - 2023 – 2024: Due to significant changes around budgets and sampling considerations the NBS was deemed not feasible.
- *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*
 - Supplemental funding to CDC for an oversample of NISVS in 2010 (inaugural year) to get a 'national' oversample of AI/AN. This addresses the 'urban' Indian population that the NBS will not include.
 - Products: [NIJ report](#), [NIJ journal article](#), [VAIW Video](#), NISVS data workshops to train scientists to conduct further analysis, etc.
- *Exploratory Research on the Impact of the Growing Oil Industry in North Dakota and Montana on Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking* (grant | 2013-2016)
 - Final Report: <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/2013-zd-cx-0072>

- *An Innovative Response to an Intractable Problem: Using Village Public Safety Officers to Enhance the Criminal Justice Response to Violence Committed Against Alaska Native and American Indian Women in Alaska's Tribal Communities* (grant | 2013-2018)
 - Final Report: <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/awards/2013-vw-cx-0001>
- *Findings from the Federal, State, and Tribal Response to Violence Against Women in Indian Country Studies* (Post-doc study via cooperative agreement | 2009-2015)
 - Final Document: <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/findings-federal-state-and-tribal-response-violence-against-women-indian>
- *An Innovative Response to an Intractable Problem: Using Village Public Safety Officers to Enhance the Criminal Justice Response to Violence Committed against Indian Women in Alaska's Tribal Community* (grant | 2013-2018)
 - Final Report: <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/innovative-response-intractable-problem-using-village-public-safety-officers>
- *Tribal Special Assistant United States Attorney (SAUSA) Program Evaluability Assessment Study* (Post-doc study via cooperative agreement | 2014-2015)
 - Alison Brooks Martin (NIJ Post-Doc): qualitative studies and did an evaluability assessment of the tribal SAUSA program
- *Violence Against Women in the National Missing & Unidentified Persons System (NamUs)* (2020 | cooperative agreement)
 - Report: <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/301932.pdf>
- *Embracing Tribal Culture to Build Research Partnerships* (grant | 2018-2022)
 - Final Brief: <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/embracing-tribal-culture-build-research-partnerships>
- *A Descriptive Analysis of Missing and Murdered Native Women and Children in Nebraska: Barriers to Reporting and Investigation, and Recommendations for Improving Access to Justice* (grant | 2020-2022)
 - Final Report: <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/descriptive-analysis-missing-and-murdered-native-women-and-children-nebraska>
- *Tangentially Related: Effective Methods to Assess Exposure to Violence and Victimization Among American Indian and Alaska Native Youth* (cooperative agreement | 2014-2019)

- Final Report: <https://bibliography.icpsr.umich.edu/bibliography/citations/data/177234/fileDownload>
- *Identifying the Scope and Context of Missing and/or Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) in New Mexico and Improving MMIP Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting* (grant | 2022-2025)
 - Final Report: <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/identifying-scope-and-context-missing-andor-murdered-indigenous>

Appendix B: Authorizing Statute for the National Baseline Study and the Task Force

Codified at 34 USC 10452 note.

(1) In general.—

Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 [Mar. 7, 2013], the National Institute of Justice, in consultation with the Office on Violence Against Women, shall conduct a national baseline study to examine violence against Indian women in Indian country and in Native villages (as defined in section 3 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1602)).

(2) Scope.—

(A) In general.—The study shall examine violence committed against Indian women, including—

“(i) domestic violence;

“(ii) dating violence;

“(iii) sexual assault;

“(iv) stalking;

“(v) murder; and

“(vi) sex trafficking.

(B) Evaluation.—

The study shall evaluate the effectiveness of Federal, State, tribal, and local responses to the violations described in subparagraph (A) committed against Indian women.

(C) Recommendations.—

The study shall propose recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Federal, State, tribal, and local responses to the violation described in subparagraph (A) committed against Indian women.

(3) Task force.—

(A) In general.—

The Attorney General, acting through the Director of the Office on Violence Against Women, shall establish a task force to assist in the development and implementation of the study under paragraph (1) and guide implementation of the recommendation in paragraph (2)(C).

(B) Members.—The Director shall appoint to the task force representatives from—

- (i) national tribal domestic violence and sexual assault nonprofit organizations;
- (ii) tribal governments; and
- (iii) the national tribal organizations.

(4) Report.—

Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 [Mar. 7, 2013], the Attorney General shall submit to the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate, the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate, and the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives a report that describes the study.

(5) Authorization of appropriations.—

There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this subsection \$1,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2014 and 2015, to remain available until expended.

From: Tribal Consultation Support
To: Registered Attendees of 20th Annual Government to Government Tribal Consultation
Subject: Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices
Date: Monday, January 12, 2026

Department of Justice Notice of Intention to Consult on Proposed Consolidation of DOJ Grant Offices

The Department looks forward to consulting with Tribes at the upcoming Government-to-Government Tribal Consultation on Violence Against Women. The Department also welcomes Tribal recommendations for improving grants administration and anticipates an ongoing dialogue with Tribes to inform and refine these efforts.

The President's FY 2026 Discretionary Budget Request includes a plan to consolidate DOJ's grantmaking components—the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), and the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). This consolidation is intended to improve services to the field, reduce the burden associated with accessing grants, and lower administrative costs so that more funds can be provided to our communities. These efforts complement ongoing grant-streamlining efforts that respond to challenges raised by Tribes at prior years' consultations. For example, the three grantmaking components are developing a single Notice of Funding Opportunity template for all DOJ grants and working to establish a uniform grant review and administration framework, with a focus on reducing the overall burden on grantees.

Appendix 4: Acronyms and Definitions

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
AI/AN	American Indian and Alaska Native
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BJA	Bureau of Justice Assistance
BOP	U.S. Bureau of Prisons
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
COPS	Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
CTAS	Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation
CVF	Crime Victims Fund
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
FACA	Federal Advisory Committee Act
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FVPSA	Family Violence Prevention and Services Act
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HUD	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
IHS	Indian Health Service
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
MMIP	Missing and/or Murdered Indigenous People/Persons
MMIW	Missing and/or Murdered Indigenous Women
MMIR	Missing and/or Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives
NamUs	National Missing and Unidentified Persons System
NCIC	National Crime Information Center
NIAC	Not Invisible Act Commission
NIJ	National Institute of Justice
NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
OJP	Office of Justice Programs
OJS	Office of Justice Services
OTJ	Office of Tribal Justice
OVC	Office for Victims of Crime
OVW	Office on Violence Against Women
SANE	Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner

SART	Sexual Assault Response Teams
SAUSA	Special Assistant U.S. Attorney
STCJ	Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction
TAD	Tribal Affairs Division
TAP	Tribal Access Program
TGP	Tribal Governments Program
TPP	BOP's Tribal Prisoner Program
TLOA	Tribal Law and Order Act
TSASP	Tribal Sexual Assault Service Program
TVSSA	Tribal Victims Services Set-Aside
USAO	U.S. Attorney's Office
U.S.C.	U.S. Code
VAWA	Violence Against Women Act
VOCA	Victims of Crime Act
VPSO	Village Public Safety Officer