

# Mobility of Indigenous Women - MMIW

National Tribal Transportation in Indian Country

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# Murdered Missing Indigenous Women - 5,712

- The National Crime Information Center reports that, in 2016 there were 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaskan Native women and girls. (NCIC 2018). Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- The US Dept. of Justice's missing persons database, NamUs, only logged 116 cases.
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that murder is the third-leading cause of death for Indigenous women.
- The rates of violence on some reservations can be up to 10 times higher than the national average. Urban Indian Health Institute, Seattle Indian Health Board (2016)



# Urban Indian Health Institute, Tribal Epidemiology center began study


- No research had been done on rates of violence against native women living in urban areas.
- Approximately 71% of American Indian and Alaskan Native live in urban areas. The American Indian and Alaska Native population: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau.
- UIHI-The study sought to assess why obtaining data on violence is so difficult, how law enforcement agencies are tracking and responding to cases, and how media is reporting on them.
- Try to understand the institutional practices that allow them to disappear not once but 3 times - in life, the media, and in data.

# Indigenous Mobility - Rez to City


- History and United States Government policies affected where tribal people live today.
- In the 1950s - Forced relocation from reservations to urban areas promoted by certain members of congress for termination.
- Termination policies - This policy eliminated government recognition of tribes and sell tribal lands. After they lost most all the could.
- Barriers to obtaining quality housing, education and employment on the reservation. Have to move to city

× COME TO DENVER.  
THE CHANCE OF YOUR LIFETIME !


**Good Jobs**  
Retail Trade  
Manufacturing  
Government-Federal, State, Local  
Wholesale Trade  
Construction of Buildings, Etc.




**Happy Homes**  
Beautiful Houses  
Many Churches  
Exciting Community Life  
Over Half of Homes Owned by Residents  
Convenient Stores-Shopping Centers



**Training**  
Vocational Training  
Auto Mech, Beauty Shop, Drafting,  
Nursing, Office Work, Watchmaking  
Adult Education  
Evening High School, Arts and Crafts  
Job Improvement, Home-making



**Beautiful Colorado**  
"Tallest" State, 48 Mt. Peaks Over 14,000 Ft.  
350 Days Sunshine, Mild Winters  
Zoos, Museums, Mountain Parks, Drives  
Picnic Areas, Lakes, Amusement Parks  
Big Game Hunting, Trout Fishing, Camping





# Safety of Indigenous Women & Mobility

Tribal people have unique mobility patterns.

Indigenous women travel from Reservation to City and back to reservation for family and ceremony.

Tribal people are connected to other natives and travel to many different reservations. Hitchhiking.

Ivory - South Dakota - stranded in City of Spokane. She had been on Kalispel rez and boyfriend's family dropped her off.

Not allowed to buy a bus ticket. Mom was on the phone with a credit card. Cash systems. Tribal ID not State Id.



# Violence Against Women - Visibility matters

- ½ of all Indigenous women experience Domestic Violence
- Many DV perpetrators are non-native, We have no jurisdiction over non-indians
- 67% of child abuse cases are thrown out by U.S. Attorneys Office.
- We had one molestation case that we had forensic interview that molester was yanking on his peepee. US Attny Declined. Oxygen tank.
- These Indigenous women were victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, police brutality, Sex workers, victims of trafficking, some victims identified as pregnant, homeless, some under age 18. Killed by partners- family member, serial killer, drug dealer.
- 83% of perpetrators identified were male, half were non-native



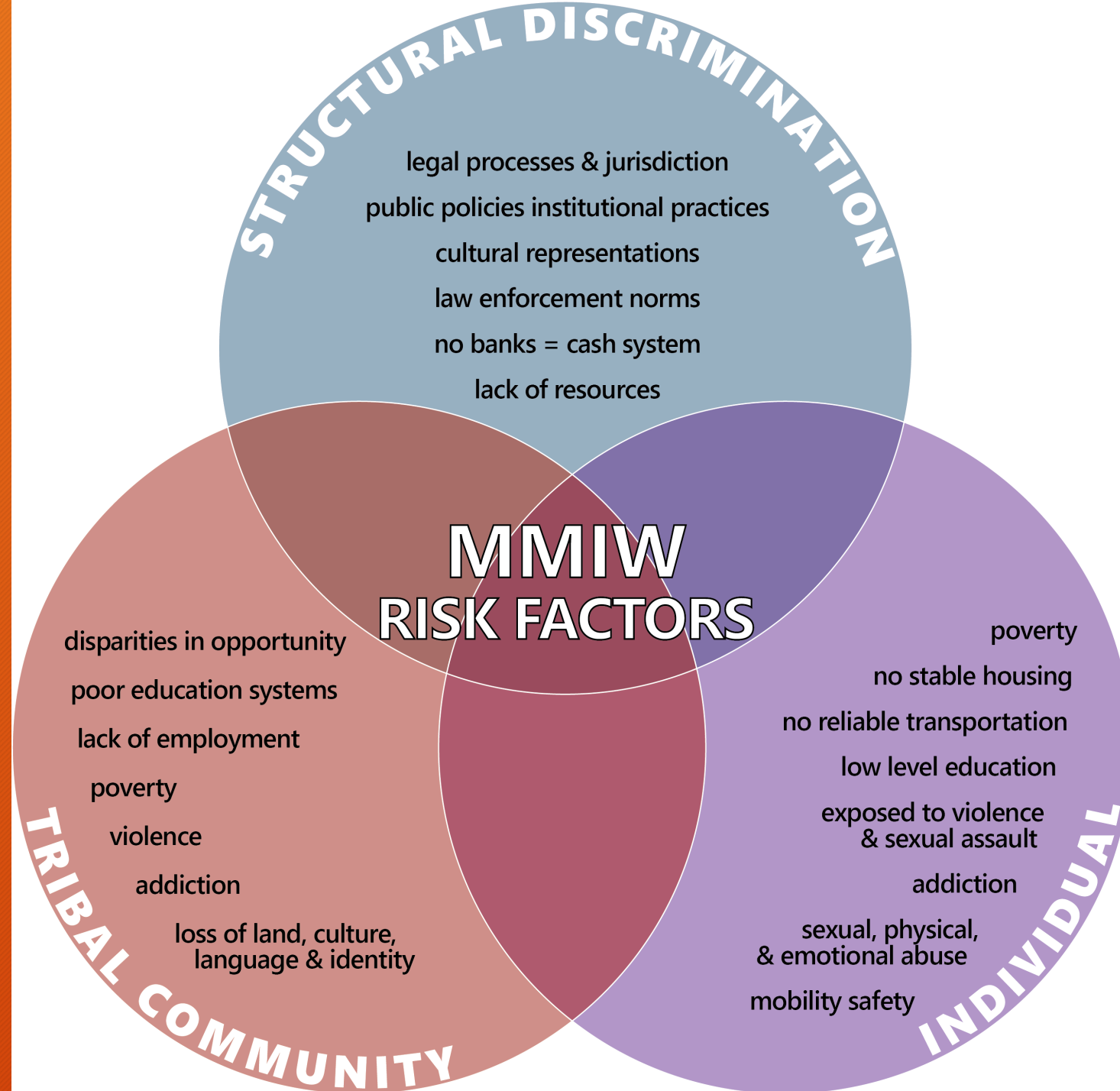
# Geography - Urban states/cities with highest # cases,

- New Mexico - 78 - Cities like Albuquerque (37)
- Washington - 71 - Seattle (45), (my daughter lives in Seattle)
- Arizona - 54 - Tucson (31)
- Alaska - 52 - Anchorage (31)
- Montana - 41 - Billings (29)
- California - 40 - San Francisco (18)
- Nebraska - 33 - Omaha, Missing persons database, just removed
- \*The Invisible - 153 Indigenous women, identified by UIHI that currently do not exist in law enforcement records.



# Idella's Story - Arapaho Rez, LA, Seattle, MT

- Northern Arapaho reservation first to Los Angeles and eventually to Seattle.
- As a young girl, her auntie's body was discovered in her grandparent's locked house while they were away at a Yakama pow-wow. They returned home when her grandma got a bad feeling but never received an explanation and no investigation was conducted.
- Idella went on to study at the University of Montana in Missoula, where she once again got a call about the death of a female relative. Her sister had died on the Wind River reservation. She and her family drove to Wind River to go tend to her sister's affairs. Upon arriving, Idella and her family found out that her sister's body was left to freeze outside the hospital door. However, no police officers came and there was no yellow tape.
- A few years later, Idella found herself in an abusive and violent dating relationship. The police told her that the laws of the state would not adequately protect her and she should move to some jurisdiction more able to do so.



MMIW Model  
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# Critical Issues of Tribal Jurisdiction

- Oliphant - No jurisdiction over Non-Indians
- Shortage of Tribal Law Enforcement
- Poor relationships with local counties - Spokane Tribe 4<sup>th</sup> July DV
- Complex Jurisdictional issues - PL 280, Yakama Retrocession
- Prejudice - Institutional Racism - No one even looks
- Major Crimes = Federal, FBI, U.S. Attorneys Office often declines prosecution.
- Wash State Patrol - told tribe their insurance won't cover there activities on reservation
- WSP- stop doing investigation when they found out 4 fatalities were tribal members on Hwy 97

# Media Coverage - Stereotyping

- More than 95% of cases were never covered by media
- Vast majority of MMIWG - was centered on reservation based violence.
- This minimizes this issue in urban spaces
- Bolsters the stereo type of American Indians as solely living on reservations and perpetuates the perception of tribal communities a violence-ridden environments.
- Media use language that can be perceived as violent or victim- blaming in their coverage of MMIWG.
- Drugs, alcohol, sex work, gang violence, victims criminal history, making excuses for the perpetrator.



# Legislation at Federal, Tribal & State level

- Navajo Nation passes legislation to protect children from Human Trafficking.
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)- Need to be reauthorized
- TLOA -
- Savannah's Act - federal bill, required federal law enforcement to track and report data. (doesn't include cities) The bill was blocked by one vote, Bob Goodlatte of Virginia opposed certain provisions.
- Challenges in accessing data - impede the ability of policy makers to make informed decisions to address this violence.

# Solutions - Police, Attorneys, Tribal Admin

- We need collaborative efforts across jurisdictions - Tribal and State and County
- We need standardized protocol for responding to cases of MMIWG
- We need resources for Law Enforcement
- We need U.S. Attorneys to step up and prosecute (my niece)
- In Washington State Patrol 2 position, East and West side liaison
- Gaps - racism - react too slowly to disappearance,
- Tribes need to create better polices to address sexual harassment and assault.
- Protect young girls from social media - snap chat, trafficking,



# Response

The ribbon skirt represents the sacredness of Indigenous women. Native women have their own stories of resilience and despite ribbons of trauma and violation stacked upon them. We chose to honor the sacredness of urban Indian women as well as women from the reservation. A majority of the murders, rapes, domestic violence assault cases never get prosecuted. Of the very few that go to court, nearly 30% are not found guilty.

## MMIWG STATISTICS FROM A SURVEY OF 71 CITIES ACROSS THE U.S.

The ribbon skirt is a form of cultural clothing that represents the sacredness of American Indian and Alaska Native women and the deep connection their bodies and spirits have to the land. Just like a skirt, each American Indian and Alaska Native community has its own beauty and stories of resilience despite multiple ribbons of trauma and violence stacked upon them. We chose to represent the study's findings in this way to honor the sacredness of our urban missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the prayers we hold them in, and the responsibility we have to care for their stories.

