



Office of the Chief • Chief John R. Batiste

*** For Immediate Release ***

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Government and Media Relations

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Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons National Coordinator Gathering to be Held at Muckleshoot Resort November 5-7

- **Media is Invited to Cover Welcoming/Convening**
 - **When:** Wednesday, November 5th from 6 – 8 PM
 - **Where:** Medicine Creek Room at the Muckleshoot Casino Resort at 2402 Auburn Way S, Auburn, WA 98002
- **Local, state, and national response leaders/advocates available for interview beginning at 5:00 PM.**

Auburn, WA – Leaders from across the United States addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) issues will gather in Auburn, Washington later this week to discuss current trends, challenges, and response strategies.

Hosted by the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe at their Resort and Community Center facilities, this will be the second national gathering of MMIP coordinators and is expected to be attended by approximately 60 individuals from government and law enforcement agencies, advocacy groups, tribal nations, and the courts. 12 western states will be represented.

The gathering will be facilitated by the Tribal Relations Unit of the Washington State Patrol (WSP) and the Arizona Governor's Office on Tribal Relations. Media is invited to cover the official opening and convening which will include a cultural presentation, a welcoming from the WA Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, and a dinner hosted by the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. Local, state, and national response leaders and advocates will be available for interviews beginning at 5:00 pm and throughout the evening.

The event is Wednesday evening, November 5th, and will be held in the Medicine Creek Room at the Muckleshoot Casino Resort at 2402 Auburn Way S, Auburn, WA 98002.

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Background: For decades, Indigenous women and persons have experienced higher rates of violent crime than other race and gender subgroups. In fact, homicide is one of the top 10 leading causes of death for Indigenous women. Studies have shown that as many as 84% of Indigenous women in the US have experienced violence in their lifetimes and over 56% have experienced sexual violence. In our state, Indigenous persons make up 2-3% of the population but in some years account for over 7% of the missing persons lists maintained by the Washington State Patrol.

In 2018, the state passed legislation creating two tribal liaison positions in the Washington State Patrol and beginning in 2019, WSP began keeping a [list of Missing Indigenous Persons](#). The list is updated every two weeks and distributed to state-wide law enforcement. Currently there are 110 indigenous persons listed as missing in our state which is likely an undercount as often race profiles are incomplete or mislabeled.

Washington is also a leader in the nation with its Missing Indigenous Person Alert system. Since its inception in 2022, 194 alerts have gone out to the public with a number of those alerts leading directly to information that assisted in recovery or resolution of the case.

In 2023, in response to recommendations from the state's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force, the Washington Legislature created and funded the MMIWP Cold Case Investigations Unit (MMIWP CCU) within the Attorney General's Office. The purpose of the CCU team is to review and attempt to solve missing person and cold homicide cases involving persons of Indigenous ancestry. Currently, the unit has 25 active investigations related to unsolved murders and suspicious missing person cases. Since its inception, the CCU has assisted in locating over 20 missing indigenous persons.

It is hoped that continuing the regular meetings of those involved with these issues from around the country will allow for the sharing of best practices in incident response as well as the development of greater coordination in advocacy, education, and prevention strategies.

According to Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya, the Missing and Murdered Persons Program Coordinator for the Arizona Governor's Office on Tribal Relations who hosted the Inaugural National Missing & Murdered Indigenous People Coordinator Gathering last year, "Participants came from all over the country to continue being a voice for their communities and states." She added, "This year, we are grateful to the Washington State Patrol and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe for their leadership in continuing this important work. Gatherings like this are vital as we come together to share, learn, and strengthen our collective response. By understanding each other's challenges and successes across states, we can improve how we respond, advocate, and educate. Through learning and working together, we can begin to lessen the vulnerabilities our Indigenous communities face and ultimately, save lives.

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