

WASHINGTON STATE

**MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS
WOMEN AND PEOPLE TASK FORCE**



2026 INTERIM REPORT

Office of Washington State Attorney General



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Introduction

June 1, 2026

Five years ago, the Legislature established the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) Task Force, administered by the Attorney General's Office (AGO). In those years, the Task Force and subcommittees held hundreds of meetings with family and community members, survivors, service providers, Tribal leaders, law enforcement, research partners, and others to better understand the scope of the crisis and improve responses when Indigenous Washingtonians go missing or are murdered.

The Task Force owes a great deal to family and community members who have contributed their time, experience, and care to promote healing, justice, and accountability for victims, survivors, and families. They have our deep respect and gratitude.

So far, the Task Force has adopted thirteen unanimous recommendations to address this crisis, and conducted extensive research to better understand systems that contribute to and respond to Indigenous people going missing or being murdered.

While we recognize these are productive steps forward, we also understand that fully addressing the MMIWP crisis is as urgent as ever. The Task Force remains committed to pursuing justice for all Indigenous people, and bringing all loved ones home.

This report is in three sections describing the Task Force's past, current, and future work:

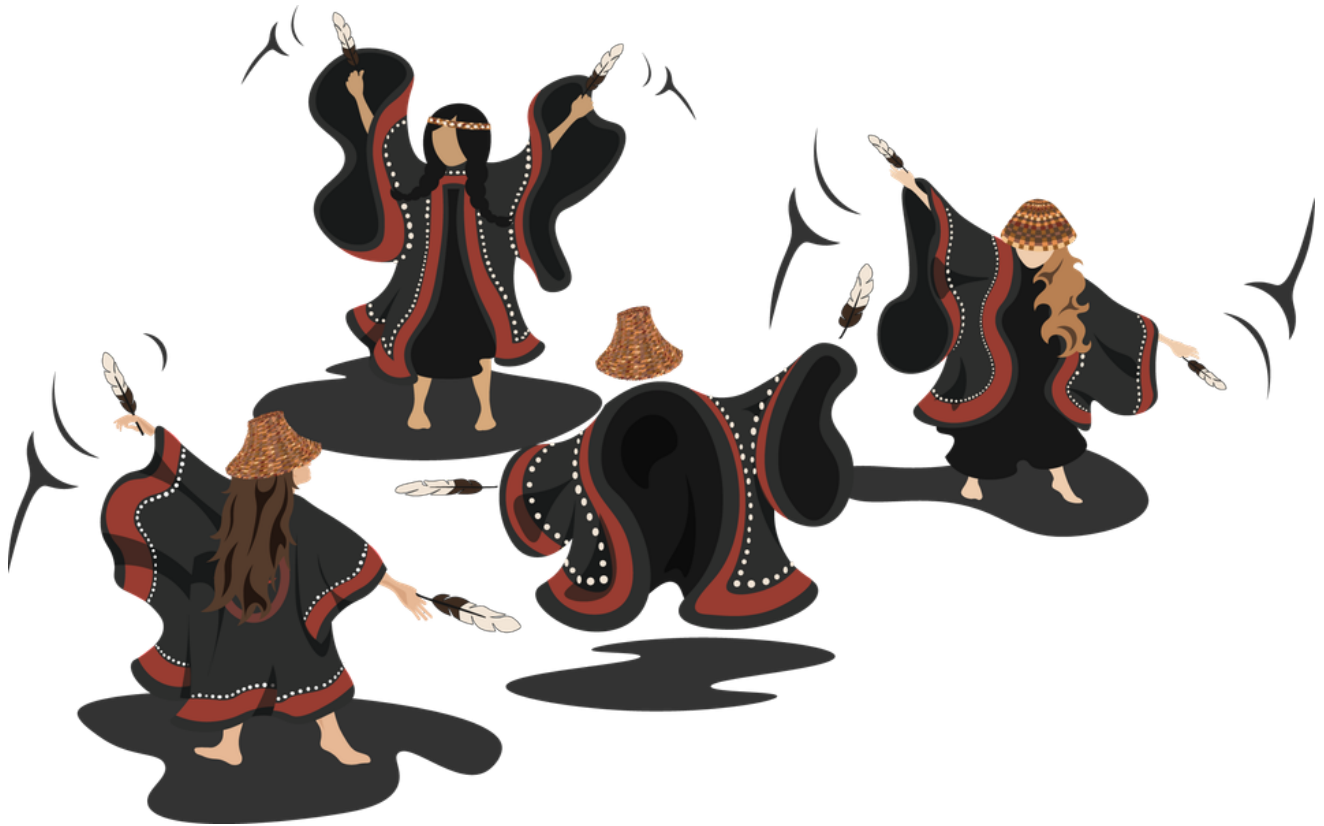
1. Task Force structure and directives,
2. Details about the milestones in the Task Force's work to date, and
3. Anticipated areas of focus for the Task Force moving forward.

If you have any questions about any of the information in this report, please reach out to Deputy Policy Director Ellen Austin Hall at Ellen.AustinHall@atg.wa.gov or 206-735-1767.

The Task Force and the AGO appreciate the Legislature's continued support of our work, and welcome additional dialogue.

Task Force Structure

The Task Force has 23 members representing impacted family and community members, Tribal leaders, Indigenous-serving organizations, state and local government, and the criminal legal system. The full Task Force met on November 5, 2025 at Muckleshoot Community Center, in coordination with the 2nd Annual National Missing and Murdered Indigenous Person Coordinator's Gathering, hosted by the Washington State Patrol and the Arizona Governor's Office.



Executive Committee

The Task Force is guided by a five-member Executive Committee, which provides support and direction on the Task Force's work and reviews deliverables. Patricia Whitefoot and Representative Debra Lekanoff co-chair the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee meets monthly, and more frequently as needed.

Subcommittees

The majority of Task Force discussions happen in subcommittee meetings, which are open to the public as part of our ongoing goal to hold the experience of families and survivors at the center of the work. Task Force members are required to serve on at least one subcommittee.

- The Families Subcommittee recently combined with the Community Services and Resources Subcommittee. Together, this group meets twice each month to provide for the needs of families and survivors. The subcommittee identifies resources and services, guides trauma-informed approaches, develops recommendations, and provides testimony and lived experiences to influence Task Force priorities.
- The Criminal Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee meets monthly to discuss barriers and systemic issues that prevent justice for families and communities, and offer public policy recommendations. Recurring themes in these conversations include the need to:
 - Improve communication between law enforcement agencies, service providers, families, and others involved in responding to MMIWP cases;
 - Strengthen and broaden networks to support improved communication; and
 - Provide additional education about Tribal government and cultures and practices, jurisdictional issues, and other areas that impact MMIWP cases and response.
- The Data and Research Subcommittee guided the research work by the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC) at the University of Wyoming, which concluded in late 2025. The AGO contracted with WYSAC to provide data and research support to the Task Force. Additional information about WYSAC's work is appended to this report.
- The Tribes Subcommittee is a place to honor Tribal sovereignty by engaging with Tribal leaders, ensuring work aligns with Tribal priorities and values, and facilitating Tribal consultation on the Task Force's work.

Key Actions

1. *Missing Indigenous Person Alert*

From the first meeting, the Task Force heard from family and community members about the need for improved response by law enforcement to MMIWP cases. In 2022, the Legislature passed [HB 1725](#), establishing the Missing Indigenous Person Alert (MIPA), sponsored by Representative Debra Lekanoff, Task Force co-chair. The law defines missing Indigenous people of any age as endangered, so that when an Indigenous person is reported missing in Washington, law enforcement can activate a public alert right away when the case is reported to law enforcement and an active entry is entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). The alert system is administered by the Washington State Patrol, which began issuing alerts in July 2022. Data about the MIPAs issued is in the chart below.

Year	Total MIPAs	Recovered	Still Missing	Deceased
2022	34	31	1	2
2023	51	45	4	2
2024	52	51	0	1
2025	64	59	5	0
2026 (as of 4/21/26)	19	17	2	0
Totals	220	203	12	5

The number of MIPAs issued each year continues to grow as more law enforcement agencies learn about and utilize the alert. This increase does not indicate that more Indigenous people are going missing. To receive MIPA notifications, please visit <https://wsp.wa.gov/media/subscribe/>.



2. *MMIWP Cold Case Unit (CCU)*

In 2023, based on a unanimous Task Force recommendation, the Legislature passed [HB 1177](#), sponsored by Representative Debra Lekanoff and requested by the Attorney General's Office, to establish the Cold Case Unit focused on MMIWP cases within the AGO. This bill established a unit within the Attorney General's Office to assist federal, municipal, county, and Tribal law enforcement agencies in solving missing person and cold homicide cases involving persons of Indigenous ancestry who go missing or are murdered. The Unit consists of one Chief Investigator/Supervisor, four Senior Investigators, and one MMIWP Victim/Witness Advocate and Case Coordinator. For more information, please visit: <https://www.atg.wa.gov/mmiwp-cold-case-unit>.

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

- Assists law enforcement agencies, Tribes, and medical examiners in solving cold cases of missing and murdered Indigenous individuals.
- Uses a culturally attuned and trauma-informed approach to communicate with and ensure that victims, families, and communities are treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity.
- Expands available resources, training, and support for agencies handling these cases.
- Collaborates with Tribal, federal, municipal, and county law enforcement to improve communication and coordination in solving these cases.

You can contact the MMIWP Cold Case Unit at: crjmmiwp@atg.wa.gov or 844-770-7900 (toll-free). Calls to this number may be made 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Though this number may not be staffed, the voicemail messages are regularly monitored. We recognize that members of our community may be reluctant to report information. It is helpful if callers left their name for additional follow up, but tips to this unit can be made anonymously.

In December 2025, in collaboration with local law enforcement, the CCU secured the first conviction for the murder of George David in 2016. George David was a master woodcarver, resident of Neah Bay, and member of the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation of Vancouver Island, B.C. Although they had a primary suspect, the Port Angeles Police Department did not have sufficient evidence to convict. In 2024, the Port Angeles Police Department requested assistance from the CCU, which provided additional investigation. The AGO worked with the Clallam County Prosecutor to charge and ultimately secure a conviction.

The Unit is actively working with local law enforcement agencies across the state to investigate cold cases involving Indigenous victims, and to support family and community members impacted by these cases.

3. *Missing Indigenous Persons Toolkit*

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

Task Force members and Families Subcommittee Co-chairs Carolyn DeFord (Puyallup) and Maureen Rosette (Chippewa Cree), with AGO staff support, spent more than three years meeting with and listening to families of missing or murdered Indigenous people. The Subcommittee and AGO held four full-day work sessions and numerous focused Subcommittee meetings to shape the content of the toolkit.

In May 2025, the AGO released the [Missing Indigenous Persons Toolkit](#). The toolkit gives families and friends awareness, prevention, and intervention strategies and provides organizational tools for relatives and friends to have during the difficult and chaotic time when someone is missing.

The Subcommittee and the AGO hold that the unique nature of each missing person case means that the toolkit may not address every situation, and appreciate continued feedback from people who use the toolkit to ensure the resource remains responsive, respectful, and effective. To provide feedback on the toolkit or request copies, please reach out to TribalPolicy@atg.wa.gov.



Click on image to open the Missing Indigenous Persons Toolkit

4. Tribal Warrants Act

In 2025, following years of advocacy and negotiations, the Washington State Legislature passed the Tribal Warrants Act, codified at [RCW 10.32](#). This Act establishes a legal framework for recognizing and enforcing Tribal arrest warrants within state jurisdictions. The Act aims to enhance cooperation between Tribal and state law enforcement agencies, ensuring that individuals who violate Tribal laws cannot evade justice by leaving Tribal lands. It also sets due process protections for defendants and outlines procedures for extradition between Tribal and state jurisdictions.

At any time, Tribes can submit information confirming compliance with the Tribal Law and Order Act and attestation forms to the Attorney General’s Office to be recognized as “Certified Tribes.” As of May 2026, seven Washington Tribes, including the Suquamish Tribe, the Tulalip Tribes, Squaxin Island Tribe, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, and Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, are certified. The list of all currently certified Tribes is available at: <https://www.atg.wa.gov/washington-state-tribal-warrants-act>.

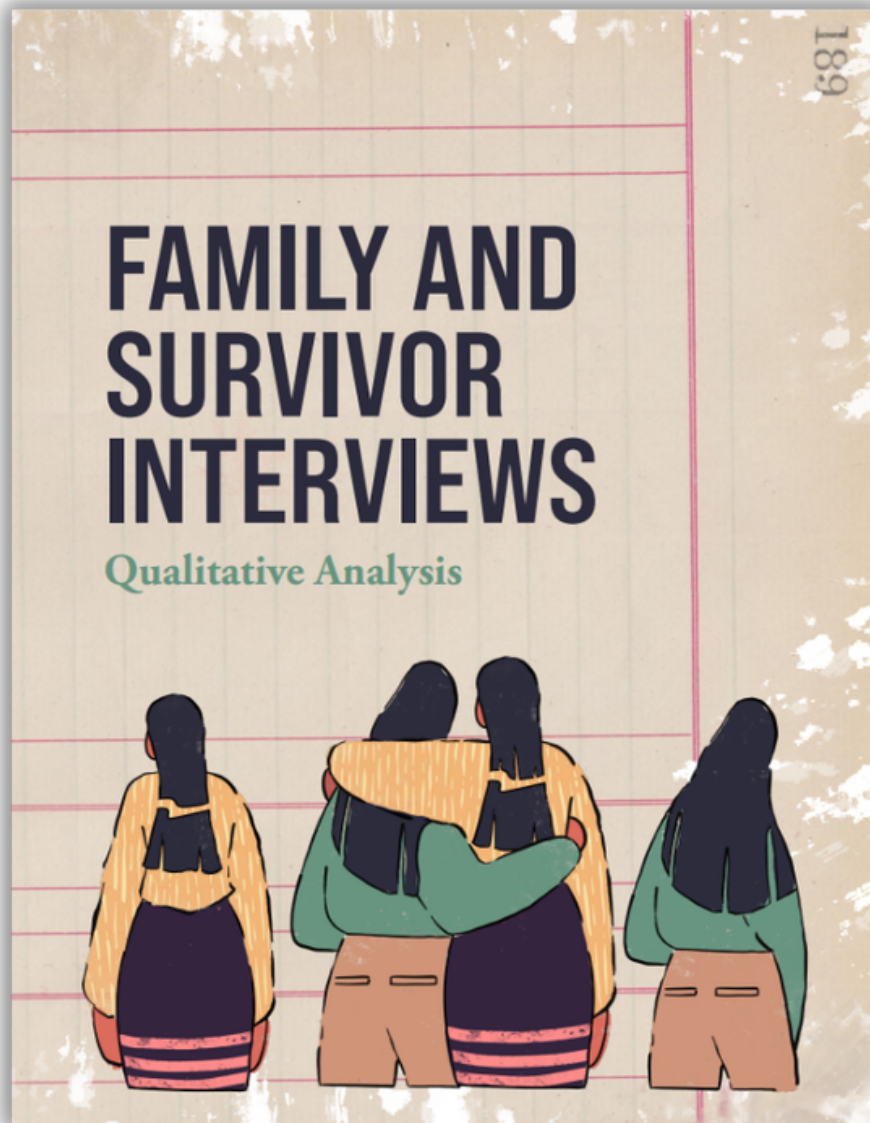
5. Research in partnership with the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center

The WYSAC research team, closely collaborating with AGO staff and the Data and Research Subcommittee, provided significant research support for the Task Force to provide a strong foundation of understanding of the systems contributing to the MMIWP crisis and recommendations to address contributing factors. WYSAC research included:

- Literature review of MMIWP in the Pacific Northwest;
- Interviews with family members and survivors across Washington;
- Law enforcement survey;
- Analysis of prosecutorial trends;
- Analysis of relevant jurisdictional laws and databases;
- Survey of data collection regulations and policy; and
- Analysis of homicide data and missing person data.

Findings from this research reinforce the Task Force’s call for improved data collection methods, strengthened interaction and cooperation between all parts of the criminal legal system and organizations that serve Native people and communities, and systemic reforms to ensure Indigenous communities are visible, protected, and supported.

A fact sheet about each of the research components is attached to this report. Full reports, including [*Confronting the Crisis: Addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous People in Washington*](#), and [*Family and Survivor Interviews: Qualitative Analysis*](#), are available on the [AGO website](#).



Click on image to open the Family and Survivor Interviews: Qualitative Analysis report

Looking Forward

Over the past five years, the Task Force has particularly focused on developing and providing resources for families and loved ones responding to a missing or murdered loved one and improving short-term and long-term responses when Indigenous people go missing or are murdered. Moving forward, the Task Force will continue to build on this work to ensure that when Indigenous people go missing or are murdered, their cases are handled with the care and respect they deserve, and systems are better equipped to provide a measure of justice.

In addition, the Task Force will continue to understand and address factors outside the criminal legal system, including generations of genocidal policies perpetuated by all levels of government, housing, food, and economic instability, presence in the foster care system, generational trauma, disconnection from culture and community, and other contributors to the MMIWP crisis, to help prevent the trauma and harm in the first place.

The AGO will coordinate two Task Force meetings before the end of 2026, with the goal of providing recommendations for the Legislature in the 2027 session. The AGO is currently in the process of hiring for the position to lead the Task Force. Based on previous and current work, AGO staff will identify potential recommendations and areas for additional research, consideration, and discussion.

Research

Subject to the availability of funding, additional research could support the Task Force to broaden the scope of recommendations and resources to address social and economic, historic, institutional, and cultural risk factors. Potential research topics could include:

1. Understanding the increased risk of violence when an Indigenous person is pregnant, unhoused, in poverty or economic precarity, dealing with substance use disorder, in foster care or has a history in foster care, and other systemic risk factors.
2. Analyzing disparities in the foster care system, including outcomes for current and former foster children, and develop recommendations to reduce disparities for Indigenous youth and improve outcomes.
3. Effectiveness of dating violence prevention resources and curricula and other education for youth.
4. Analysis of data on violence other than homicide impacting Indigenous people, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, and trafficking.
5. Effective policies and resources to support Indigenous youth who experience MMIWP cases in their families and communities.

Recommendations

In addition to continued research and analysis, the AGO team and Task Force will renew their work to develop and put forth policy recommendations for Task Force consideration. Potential recommendations could include, but are not limited to:

1. State and local investment in programs supporting Indigenous youth, including language and cultural revitalization programs.
2. Support existing safe dating curriculum and resources for youth to understand warning signs for trafficking and exploitation.
3. Paid leave and job protection for family members and loved ones to handle issues relating to a missing persons case, including conducting searches, seeking or assisting with seeking medical or psychological treatment, relocating, receiving supportive services, or preparing for legal proceedings.
4. Legal protections for trafficking victims who report their victimization to prevent arrest for other legal issues, to encourage reporting.
5. Reduce housing insecurity for Indigenous people in Washington and support anti-poverty programs to reduce risk factors for exploitation or victimization.

Collaboration

The AGO also administers the Truth and Healing Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC), directed to address the harmful legacy of Indian boarding schools for Tribes and Tribal communities across the state and region. This legacy contributes to the MMIWP crisis through severed connections between Native people and their Tribal communities, languages, and cultures, history of physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse of Native children, and other damage. AGO staff on both of these projects will collaborate on shared research and seek opportunities to develop recommendations across projects.

In 2023, the AGO applied for and received a grant through the Emmett Till Cold Case Investigations and Prosecutions Program. This grant provides funding for the AGO to partner with Tribes to conduct research and identify cold cases from before 1980 involving Tribal members, and if possible, referring cases to the AGO's MMIWP Cold Case Unit for investigation and potential prosecution. In addition to identifying cases, this work seeks to hear from family and community members about what justice and healing could mean.

The Task Force will also pursue greater collaboration with the Washington Tribal Opioid Task Force, led by the American Indian Health Commission. This Task Force works to address the high rates of opioid use and overdose in Tribal communities across Washington state, which intersect with the MMIWP crisis in a number of ways. Additional collaboration could provide more capacity to address these intersections and reduce harm to Indigenous people.



Conclusion

The Task Force and AGO appreciate the continued urgency of this work, and the need for institutional changes to reduce and eliminate systemic risk factors of violence against Indigenous people.

This report, and the ongoing work detailed within its pages and accompanying reports, reflects the collective commitment of survivors, families, and community members whose lives have been touched by this crisis, as well as members of the Task Force, AGO leadership and staff, and the team at the University of Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC). We extend our deep gratitude to each person who offered their expertise, shared their story, or stood in solidarity in the pursuit of justice. Your dedication, care, and commitment will continue to inspire and guide us in our efforts to ensure that the stories and struggles of those impacted by this crisis are heard, honored, and acted upon. We are committed to the continued pursuit of justice and systemic change together.



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

Appendix: Task Force Proviso

The Task Force shall review current laws and policies relating to missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native people for the purpose of:

- (a) Assessing systemic causes of violence including patterns and underlying historical, social and economic, institutional, and cultural factors which may contribute to disproportionately high levels of violence that occur against American Indian and Alaska Native people and recommending changes to address these systemic causes;
- (b) Identifying ways to improve cross-border coordination between law enforcement and federally recognized tribes that share a border with Washington state;
- (c) Assessing and recommending improvements to data tracking and reporting practices relating to violence against American Indian and Alaska Native people in Washington State;
- (d) Making recommendations for improving:
 - 1. The collection and reporting of data by tribal, local, and state law enforcement agencies to more effectively understand and address issues of violence facing American Indian and Alaska Native people;
 - 2. Jurisdictional and data-sharing issues on tribal reservation land and urban areas that impact violence against American Indian and Alaska Native people;
 - 3. The collaboration and coordination between law enforcement agencies and federal, state, county, local, and tribal social and health services; and
 - 4. Strategies and practices to improve communication and transparency with family members in missing and murdered Indigenous women and people cases;
- (e) Reviewing prosecutorial trends and practices relating to crimes of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native people in Washington state, identifying disparities, and recommending changes to address such disparities;
- (f) Identifying barriers to providing more state resources in tracking and addressing violence against American Indian and Alaska Native people and reducing the incidences of violence;
- (g) Assessing and identifying state resources to support programs and services for survivors, impacted family members, and tribal and urban Indian service providers working with American Indian and Alaska Native people who have experienced violence and identifying needs of survivors, impacted family members, and tribal and urban Indian service providers that are not currently being met;
- (h) Identifying and making recommendations for increasing state resources for trainings on culturally attuned best practices for working with American Indian and Alaska Native communities for tribal, local, and state law enforcement personnel in Washington state;
- (i) Supporting efforts led by American Indian and Alaska Native people to address this crisis, with the recognition that those personally impacted are already doing critical work to address the impacts of the missing and murdered indigenous women and people crisis in communities and that community-led work must be centered in order to identify and fully address the scope of the issue; and
- (j) Developing best practices for law enforcement agencies, county coroners, and medical examiners on collecting Indigenous demographic data. The task force shall submit a report including findings and recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature by June 30, 2026.

