



Bob Ferguson
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF WASHINGTON

Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force (TF)

June 23, 2023 at 1 PM (Via Zoom)

- Call to Order
- Review of Agenda and Minutes
- Public Comment
- Task Force Discussion
 - Report Timeline
 - Upcoming Recommendations
 - Other additional items or brainstorming by TF members
- Subcommittee Discussion
- Dates of next meeting
- Adjourn

Task Force Members

Present:

Jani Hitchen

Manka Dhingra

Aubony Burns

Carolyn Deford

Patti Gosch

Anita Mitchell

Gina Mosbrucker

Annie Forsman-Adams

Debra Lekanoff

Vicki Lowe

Maureen Rosette

Abigail Echo-Hawk

Patricia Whitefoot

Anna Bean

Charlene Tillequots

Other attendees:

Asa Washines

Ellen Austin Hall

Alex Buijs

Shanna Howtopat

Agenda approved with addition of 4c.

Screen-share with PowerPoint – Annie went through the slides.

Questions about Important Upcoming Dates

Patsy: Last time, did we get public feedback on report?

Annie: We got a little bit – a couple emails related to implementing recommendations.

Patsy: The next quarterly meeting, is that Friday?

Annie: It's a Thursday.

Gina: Is the next TF meeting virtual or in-person? What about summit?

Annie: The TF meeting will be virtual, and we are still working on details for summit.

Asa: Can you explain the report?

Annie: The next report in November will be more educational than the last one, to give additional context around the issues in tribal communities and explaining tribal sovereignty, jurisdiction, etc. For the final report, we don't know exactly what that will look like yet, but will look back at the TF work and discuss next steps. And then we have a data research report being released in stages as well.

Patsy: Want to move beyond recommendations. Don't know how Legislature looks at recommendations – curious about that?

Manka: Those recommendations are very important. Recently, it's helpful when recommendations specify that legislative action is needed or agency policy is needed or if it is a fiscal ask. These recommendations turn into bills. Simple format turns into more easily implemented policy.

Gina: Important to have recommendations early and to prioritize them, and then sort out who is going to run them, success can depend on what committee you go through.

Abigail: Need to ensure the report is pushed out to community and legislators in a good way that represent the community.

Debra: Maybe we sit down to create communications plan to better do that.

Patsy: Want to bring up again that we should ensure that positions in WSP for tribal liaisons and in the AGO be preserved and protected.

Debra: Good point – Rep. Mosbrucker put into her law to put those positions into RCW – should confirm that and send out the info.

Recommendation 1: Develop MMIWP specific crisis response teams, establish support for community-led searches and community based programs.

Vicki: Will the response teams be added to Department of Health (DOH) like their teams?

Annie: We can discuss that – where they should be housed

Carolyn: Would we need policy change to make missing persons reports a priority?

Annie: In our next recommendation, we talk about that a little bit. So that would be a policy change to make it so missing persons reports are responded to with initial investigation.

Gina: Who would be in charge of this? AG? Who sets up the team? Is this only for MMIWP for tribal people?

Annie: Yes, it would be MMIWP-specific. What we've heard from community is that current search and rescue is not responsive to urban area searches. So people are searching cities and urban settings without support or training. What happens is that people volunteer to help but are not prepared for what that can entail.

Gina: So if you have two people missing – one tribal and one not – would this team only respond to the tribal person?

Debra: When searching for POC, there are some lessons learned during the crisis to help find them. It is to compliment current search functions, not to prioritize. We know that Native people are disproportionately missing and not looked for.

Gina: Using the state's search and rescue would be good resource.

Recommendation 2: Standards for Missing Persons Reports

Aubony: One thing we've fleshed out in the criminal justice subcommittee is identifying gaps in investigations and reporting. Standardization is key and ramping up systems to make it possible to standardize. There is no standard training for 911 dispatchers. Should consider standardizing training/interaction for 911 call takers.

Alex Buijs: The Trueblood Settlement provided funding to the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) to provide 911 dispatchers CIT training. The Military Department has the standardized 911 Telecommunicator Training Program that we work with as well. This is not my program I oversee, but I can connect anyone with my colleague at CJTC who wants more information regarding dispatcher training.

Aubony: Alex can you put me in touch with someone pretty please? I'd like to get that prioritized.

Gina: When investigator found someone missing or murdered and they do reports, they can misclassify the race of the person. That information is then lost. This recommendation may be place to add something about that – standard forms for collecting race data.

Jani: Definitions of missing people – we've heard frustration around "runaways" and stereotyping that impacts investigations. Will that be addressed here?

Annie: Yes, we will be addressing those concerns from community.

Carolyn: When reporting tips, want those to be prioritized because they can be time sensitive.

Patti: Need protocols for when a person is not completely found – cases where not all remains are found and they are taken out of NCIC.

Patsy: Make certain to include definitions of unidentified people – give priority.

Recommendation 3: State medical examiner's office, including a centralized repository for unidentified or unclaimed remains.

Aubony: Learned that in some areas in King County and elsewhere, some old bones cases were lent to universities and they have been in process to get back into repository. If we're recommending language here, could add something about returning bones to where they belong if DNA has established that.

Patti: Concerns that universities were not using remains appropriately. Needs to be oversight of how universities use bones and making sure they come back.

Patsy: Sounds like there is a need for oversight of coroners as well if they are handing off bones to universities – what kind of policies are in place allowing coroners to do that? That may be an issue to look into. How does NAGPRA play into this discussion?

Abigail: Taking care of unidentified remains involved ethical obligations. This is opportunity to leading in this area. This recommendation would set precedent in our state for treatment of unidentified remains and ensuring that universities are not mishandling remains.

Patsy: Another office – a NAGPRA Office

Recommendation 4: Federal law enforcement agencies pay for DNA testing of unidentified remains found on tribal land.

Manka: Are the feds unwilling to do tests or unwilling to pay?

Annie: From our experiences and research, they were unwilling to do either – pay or conduct the testing. When the FBI or BIA returns jurisdiction to a tribe, it is easier for a tribe to pay for testing. But when the federal government keeps jurisdiction, they are unwilling to accept payment from other sources.

Gina: This would be congressional issue – would need a congressperson to make sure there is testing. Not sure how the state would step in.

Annie: We can make recommendations to the federal government explaining that our state has observed this issue. This comes out of a real life issue.

Gina: Different strategies – go to a congressperson versus asking the agencies to change policy. Could do letter to congressperson or even the president.

Jani (in chat): recommendation – The WA state Legislature doing a sign on letter and advocating for this change.

Abigail: The TF is not limited to state changes. Tribes are sovereign nations, and are saying nationally that DOJ has this federal trust responsibility.

Maureen: Is the assumption that there isn't a crime associated with remains?

Annie: From what we understand, if they cannot clearly establish that a crime has happened, they assume one has not occurred.

Patti: Being missing is not a crime, which means it's not reported by agencies in a clear place. We did survey – 30 agencies returned info – 8400 calls for missing people, only 57% made it to reports, most agencies don't have resources, funding.

Aubony: Want to make sure we got our facts right on this one and be careful with language—think we should check with some others. Angela Williamson at the Department of Justice Programs gave me guidance on a cold case. Wants to talk to Annie about the examples and set up a meeting with Angela.

Recommendation 5: Require missing persons cases be entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).

This was a Task Force recommendation last year as well. No additional discussion.

Recommendation 6: Ensure tribal court orders are honored.

Debra: This comes back to jurisdictional issues so I want to raise that for Senator Dhingra.

Manka: This becomes very complicated so I reached out to Governor's office about this issue. I will remind them to set up meetings on this jurisdictional problem.

Debra: The AGO, Governor's office, and us at the legislature will hold meetings on this.

Asa: This came up at tribal opioid summit as well – are aware of issue.

Recommendation 7: Establish Tribal Liaisons in state agencies that do not currently have this position.

Debra: In relation to MMIWP, are we looking at liaisons that are tied to that work?

Annie nods.

Debra: Yes.

Recommendation 8: Regarding media coverage and reporting about MMIWP cases.

No discussion

Recommendation 9: Develop model policies for law enforcement agencies to implement self-identification and family-centered procedures for collecting demographic information.

Jani: Have seen this come up across the board in criminal justice – is this just for missing persons cases – what about in jails, reporting everywhere.

Annie: No would be holistic approach

Aubony: Hope that this one is prioritized

Patsy: With regard to data, think that AI/AN population needs to be included/captured so need to pay attention and be clear about that.

Debra: This recommendation can tie into the standardization recommendation – recommend funding and good leg language. Need to think about how the data is collected on state, local, tribal level so data can talk to each other. Is any other state working on this?

Abigail: Yes, other states are working on it, UIHI is helping them. The inter-operability issue is a systems issue and very expensive one to fix but one way to help with that is creating common definitions and practices of collecting and storing data, so that data could be merged and could talk to each other, which is long term goal and will be very expensive. In short term, this is a good policy. UIHI recommendations include native and Alaska native identities and tribal identities. The fiscal note attached to this is important – cost King County \$50,000 to add in correct data fields.

Aubony: This will have impact all communities – having the money to do it is one thing, but we also need allies who push for these system changes.

Patti: Need to include first nations in data collection as well.

Meeting adjourned.

ASL Interpreter | Mani to [Hosts and panelists](#)

01:01 PM

AI

Perfect.

Im unable to start my video

ASL-ENG Interpreter | crys (they/t... to [Hosts and panelists](#)

01:01 PM

AI

same here.

Sue Garcia CART Captioner to [Hosts and panelists](#)

01:02 PM



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Aubony Burns to [Hosts and panelists](#)

01:03 PM

AB

I want "Ellen is Magic" on a tee

Ellen Austin Hall, AGO (she/her) to [Hosts and panelists](#)

01:04 PM

EA



Sue Garcia CART Captioner to [Hosts and panelists](#)

01:05 PM



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Anita Mitchell to [Hosts and panelists](#)

01:06 PM



Apologies to all, we lost a member last night and I am helping/with the family off and on. To explain why my camera is off. This is important work, and they don't want me to miss it. But as an fyin

Carolyn Deford to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:07 PM

CD

Anita, sending prayers to your community. The losses this year have been devastating.

Manka Dhingra (she/her) to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:09 PM

MD

So sorry to hear that Anita.

Aubony Burns to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:10 PM

AB

So sorry to hear that Councilmember Mitchell. Sending strength your way

Anna Bean to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:18 PM

AB

Aye

Sue Garcia CART Captioner to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:21 PM



Please share with Everyone so folks who are not panelists get this:

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Patti Gosch | WSP Tribal Liaison | C... to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:37 PM



Is this a good time to talk about the survey results?

Carolyn Deford to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:37 PM

CD

Thank you for the insight and explaining Rep. Mosbrucker

Me to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:42 PM

SH

Hi Patti, we're going over the report plans right now. I think going over the survey can be done after this portion about the report and the coming recommendations.

Patti Gosch | WSP Tribal Liaison | C... to [Hosts and panelists](#) 01:56 PM



UCR Crime Categories:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uniform_Crime_Reports

Aubony Burns to [Hosts and panelists](#)

02:11 PM

AB

the legislators here have noted things like "this would be a good place to clean this or add this". If there is time in the meeting can we learn why or when certain recommendations/goals/priorities should be bundled together and how that has impact in your abilities to push the recommendations in the capitol?

Carolyn Deford to [Hosts and panelists](#)

02:15 PM

CD

Exactly!

Aubony Burns to [Hosts and panelists](#)

02:28 PM

AB

my understanding from the meet was they were no longer being given out to research places and the various MEs/coroners were trying to get them back

Jani Hitchen (WSAC Rep) WA Assc... to [Hosts and panelists](#) 02:40 PM



Recommendation: The WA State Legislature doing a sign on letter and advocating for this change.

Patti Gosch | WSP Tribal Liaison | C... to [Hosts and panelists](#) 02:45 PM



MISSING PERSONS ARE NOT INCLUDED IN EITHER PART OF THE UCR CRIME CATEGORIES: Part 1-violent and property crimes: Aggravated assault, forcible rape, murder and robbery, arson, burglary, larceny theft, motor vehicle. Part 2-simple assault, curfew offenses and loitering, embezzlement, forgery and counterfeiting, disorderly conduct, DUI, drug offenses, fraud, gambling, liquor offenses, offenses against the family, prostitution, public drunkenness, RUNAWAYS, sex offenses, stolen property, vandalism, vagrancy, and weapon offenses

Who can see your messages?

Patti Gosch | WSP Tribal Liaison | C... to [Hosts and panelists](#) 02:58 PM



https://othram.com/recent_casework.html

It is important to note that there are 2 types of DNA testing, one that identifies an individual by medical records or parents and the other that tests family lines and works backwards to the victim. I believe Othram is the only one that does the genetics testing. There are also tiers in testing that determines how far a test can proceed.

Vicki Lowe, American Indian Healt... to [Hosts and panelists](#) 03:09 PM



This also impacts the Opioid/Fentanyl public health crisis.

On the tribal liaison, I think RCW 43.376 just needs to be enforced.

Aubony Burns to [Hosts and panelists](#) 03:23 PM

AB

Our systems changes include options for identification of all federally recognized tribes including those in AK.

Patricia Whitefoot to [Hosts and panelists](#) 03:24 PM

P

Is there a possibility to include First Nationa ?

First Nations??

Abigail Echo-Hawk (she/her) to [Hosts and panelists](#) 03:25 PM

AE

UIHI recommendations on data use a fill in option for First Nations

Vicki Lowe, American Indian Healt... to [Hosts and panelists](#) 03:35 PM



Thanks Patti. I will check in with GOIA about Centennial Accord. It does make sense to discuss it there. Or maybe at the National Tribal Opioid Summit. Let's touch base. Also, would love to see your reports if you want to share them.