



Policy Resolution 2026-10

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons

A. **BACKGROUND**

American Indian and Alaska Native people, particularly women, are disproportionately likely to experience violence, murder, or to go missing. This disproportionate risk is encapsulated as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) crisis. The MMIP crisis is fueled by complex and historic underlying factors affecting indigenous communities, including: insufficient law enforcement resources, funding, and cultural understanding among non-tribal law enforcement agencies; lack of non-tribal and tribal collaboration; a shortage of personnel on historic tribal lands; substance misuse issues; historic lack of trust of non-tribal entities; and deficient housing and infrastructure. Additionally, tribal nations receive a variety of funding that can vary by state and status, including Pub. L. 280 tribes, treaty tribes, and tribes that have administrative control through Pub. L. 93-638. The Governors and states represented herein do not intend for language used to be legally binding or to be viewed as a reflection or concession of any Governor or state's position related to the reservation status of any specific tribe.

B. **GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT**

1. Several western states have created their own MMIP offices to act as liaisons between tribal, state, and federal partners. Western Governors support federal efforts to develop and strengthen MMIP state-level offices and other state-level MMIP initiatives.

Addressing Law Enforcement Shortages

2. Having sufficient law enforcement personnel is important to ensure timely response and adequate resources for MMIP cases. Western Governors urge the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to increase the number of tribal officers on lands under tribal and federal jurisdiction and increase the pace of hiring officers.
3. Tribal officers employed by BIA or tribes use the 638 process to self-administer federal funds to support their tribal police forces. Western Governors encourage BIA to ensure that 638 tribes receive funding equivalent to the BIA tribal police pay scale to allow 638 tribes to support officers at an equivalent level to BIA-administered tribal police forces. Western Governors urge BIA to consider pay scales equivalent to local and state agencies.
4. Tribal courts and justice systems provide critical infrastructure to process and prosecute MMIP cases. Western Governors recommend appropriate, ample funding for tribal courts and justice systems.
5. While MMIP cases occur across both urban and rural Native populations, Western Governors recognize that there are specific limitations for law enforcement in rural communities. Western Governors encourage creative solutions to support the recruitment and retention of tribal officers, particularly housing programs to ensure that tribal officers can remain within their communities.

6. Currently, tribal officers can receive training from BIA's Indian Policy Academy in New Mexico and the Indian Policy Academy Advanced Training Center in North Dakota, both of which can be a significant distance for recruits to travel for basic training. Western Governors urge BIA to expand beyond the single tribal officer training program and create regionalized law enforcement training programs that reduce the burden of training for officers. Specifically, Western Governors urge Congress to create and appropriate additional funding for a second police academy in the Great Plains region to enable prospective officers to receive training closer to home. Western Governors urge BIA to support state trainings for tribal officers, and to ensure both category one and category two officers can receive reciprocity.
7. Western Governors recognize diverse agreement opportunities exist, such as cross deputization, joint powers agreements, and mutual aid agreements, to assist with the speed of law enforcement response and suit the variety of systems and scenarios across the West, and support efforts to share best practices.
8. The AMBER Alert system is the only nationwide alert system for those who are missing or abducted. Across the West, states have also implemented state-specific MMIP alert systems. Western Governors support efforts to create MMIP alert systems, urge Congress to consider supporting state level programs, and urge federal agencies to increase inclusion of state level systems into federal alert systems.

Support Systems

9. BIA victim services advocates provide direct services to victims and crucial assistance for victims navigating complex bureaucratic systems. Western Governors request federal funding for victim services advocates.
10. Savanna's Act (Pub. L. 116-165) directed U.S. Attorney offices to develop regionally appropriate guidelines to respond to MMIP cases. However, there continues to be a need to connect communities to resources. Governors urge U.S. Attorney Offices to proactively reach out to tribes and local stakeholders, including through creating positions that work directly with the community, to ensure effective and timely access to resources.
11. Ensuring federal staff receive cultural sensitivity training provides them with the ability to effectively work with survivors. Western Governors urge federal agencies to implement culturally sensitive training and response courses for new employees working on all aspects of MMIP. Additionally, Western Governors urge agencies to ensure those already in the workforce also receive cultural sensitivity training.
12. Western Governors call for greater transparency on how federal funding is allocated among tribes with 638 status and BIA administered services. Specifically, Western Governors implore the federal government to coordinate and collaborate with survivor support services at the state, tribal, and community nonprofit level so that survivors and their communities receive the maximum number of resources.
13. To ensure wrap around services, Western Governors urge Congress to increase funding for mental and behavioral health services for survivors and their communities.

Collaboration

14. MMIP cases span across many jurisdictions, which can complicate response times. Western Governors urge federal partners to streamline emergency response communications across related federal agencies, including BIA, U.S. Attorney Offices, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
15. Consistent collection of data across jurisdictions and each level of government is necessary to understand the scope and scale of MMIP cases. Western Governors support sharing best practices for data sharing agreements to allow for a more comprehensive view of the crisis, and urge federal agencies to proactively work with tribes to ensure data can be shared, while ensuring tribes continue to maintain ownership.
16. The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) is a vital tool allowing for greater access to criminal justice information. However, there is a great need to ensure the system is flexible to allow data sharing agreements. Western Governors urge FBI to proactively seek ways to ensure NCIC is flexible enough for MMIP cases, including streamlining data collection at all levels.
17. Western Governors Association urge DOJ's Tribal Access Program (TAP) to fund and support access coordinator positions at the tribal level to ensure continuity within individual programs.
18. During any lapse in funding, Western Governors recommend that the federal government work collaboratively with states and tribes to ensure continuity of essential services with discretionary funding.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Governors direct WGA staff to work with Congressional committees of jurisdiction, the Executive Branch, and other entities, where appropriate, to achieve the objectives of this resolution.
2. Furthermore, the Governors direct WGA staff to consult with the Staff Advisory Council regarding its efforts to realize the objectives of this resolution and to keep the Governors apprised of its progress in this regard.

This resolution will expire in June 2029. Western Governors enact new policy resolutions and amend existing resolutions on a semiannual basis. Please consult <http://www.westgov.org/resolutions> for the most current copy of a resolution and a list of all current WGA policy resolutions.