

[STAFF REPORT FOR USE FOR WORK SESSIONS AND COUNCIL MEETINGS]

OBSERVING MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY OF AWARENESS

Date: April 14, 2025

Department: COO/GAPD Tribal Affairs

Meeting Date: May 1, 2025

Presenter(s), (if applicable): Katie McDonald, Tribal Liaison, Felicia Teba, Community Education and Stewardship Technician, Stephanie Tabibian, Tribal Government Planner, and Willow Howard, Tribal Liaison

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Length: 45 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

For decades, American Indian and Alaska Native communities have struggled with high rates of assault, abduction, and murder of tribal members. Tribes and community advocates describe the crisis as a legacy of generations of government policies of forced removal, land seizures and violence inflicted on Native Peoples. This crisis, known as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples or MMIP, is present across the nation, in the Pacific Northwest, and impacts Tribes, urban Indigenous communities and families regionally.

This presentation offered through a collaboration between Metro's Tribal Affairs Program and Native staff affinity group will discuss several historical and contemporary factors, laws and policies that contribute to the MMIP crisis. Staff believe that Metro's continued observation and honoring of MMIP each May will build broader awareness of the issue across the greater Portland area and help identify opportunities for Metro and other parties to help respond to the issue. Metro's continued education and programming on this important issue will also contribute to building lasting and trusting relationships with interested Tribes and urban Indigenous community members and community organizations.

ACTION REQUESTED

No specific action is requested at this time.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

Metro Council and staff will deepen their understanding of the MMIP crisis, including direct and indirect factors that contribute to the crisis. This increased awareness will help Metro Council and staff identify opportunities where Metro's projects, programs and activities could support addressing the MMIP crisis and how these opportunities can be provided in

culturally informed and responsive ways in partnership with interested Tribes and urban Indigenous community members.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The staff presentation today continues Metro's commitment to honoring MMIP and educating Metro Council and staff about this important issue. Specifically, it continues Metro's commitments made in Resolution No. 23-5336 "For the purpose of proclaiming the fifth of every May as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People in the greater Portland area".

Today's presentation advances goals of Metro's Tribal Affairs Program that include training and educating Metro Council and staff on tribal relations and priorities, regional history and context, federal and state Indian policy, and topical issues within Indian Country. The MMIP epidemic results from the legacy of colonization and genocide against sovereign Tribes in the United States, various state and federal policies that have reduced, eliminated or complicated the jurisdiction of investigating and prosecuting crimes perpetuated against tribal members in Indian Country, and is a priority issue for resolution for many of the Tribes Metro regularly consults with along with Tribes across the United States.

Council's continued support for honoring MMIP will further Metro's commitments to the goals stated in the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Continuing to observe the day of awareness provides a distinct opportunity for Metro Council, staff and the public to learn about disparities Tribes and Indigenous Peoples face when they experience sexual and domestic violence in the United States as well as the systemic and systematic barriers that exist in their efforts to find justice and healing for impacted persons and families. With a deepened understanding of the MMIP epidemic, Metro Council and staff will be better equipped to identify where Metro projects, programs and activities can help address the crisis. Staff and Council will also deepen their understanding of the lived and legacy experiences of Tribes and Indigenous Peoples, aiding them in delivering on the agency's racial equity goals to meaningfully engage communities of color, allocate resources in a manner that advance racial equity, supporting regional partners to advance racial equity, and create safe and welcoming services, programs and destinations.

The greater Portland region's desired outcomes include climate leadership; safe, reliable transportation; economic prosperity; clean air, water and healthy ecosystems; racial equity; and vibrant communities. Each of these desired outcomes have direct and indirect links to the MMIP epidemic as a preventative or protective factor when these priorities are advanced. Challenges in several of these areas of work have also been identified as factors contributing to or hampering responsiveness to the MMIP crisis when they are not addressed. For instance, the displacement and dispossession of Tribes and Indigenous Peoples from land was frequently accomplished through government sanctioned approaches involving violence in the Euro-colonial settlement of the United States. Research and best practices in tribal communities identify that access to nature and opportunities for cultural and traditional practices in tribal communities are both a

preventative factor against MMIP violence and can support healing and transformation of impacted persons and families. Staff see a clear linkage between this and having clean air, water and healthy ecosystems in our region that interested Indigenous community members and Tribes have access to.

Many of the Tribes who consult and engage with Metro's Tribal Affairs Program host annual programming to observe MMIP, increase awareness and to provide healing and justice resources to impacted tribal members and families in their respective communities. Many of the Tribes have also established formal year-round programming and support services for their tribal members and communities. Example programs include family domestic and sexual violence services, health services and establishing a family liaison program for MMIP cases on reservation. It is common for the Tribes to collaborate with each other and non-Indigenous and governmental organizations to increase awareness and create lasting policies to address the issue across the states of Oregon and Washington.

The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) has passed numerous resolutions advocating for resources, programming and responses to address the MMIP crisis at the state and national level.

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has passed more than 30 resolutions advocating for improved services and comprehensive responses to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking as part of their policy agenda and advocacy to address the MMIP and violence against women issues in Indian Country. Despite this advocacy and the realization of a number of the NCAI resolution priorities, the organization identifies there is much work to do.

BACKGROUND

MMIP is a movement that advocates for the end of violence against Native People. The movement seeks to draw attention to the disproportionate rates of disappearances and murders of Native People compared to other groups as well as the disproportionately high rates of violence and victimization Native People face in the United States. American Indian/Alaska Native rates of murder, rape and violent crime are all higher than the national averages (Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA). When looking at missing and murdered cases, data shows that Native American/Alaska Native women make up a significant portion of missing and murdered individuals (BIA). Here are some of the reported data and figures on rates of violence and victimization faced by Native People:

- A 2016 study by the National Institute of Justice found that more than four in five American Indian/Alaska Native women (or 84.3 percent) have experienced violence in their lifetime, including 56.1 percent who have experienced sexual violence. The study also found that overall, more than 1.5 million American Indian/Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime.

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey, non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native women experienced the second highest rates of homicide in 2020. Additionally, in 2020, homicide was in the top 10 leading causes of death for American Indian/Alaska Native women ages 1-45.
- In the same survey, the CDC found non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native men have the second highest rate of homicide compared with men in all other racial and ethnic groups. Homicide was also in the top 10 leading causes of death for American Indian/Alaska native men ages 1-45 in 2020.
- A 2004 study published in the journal Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology reported that gender-based violence, including sexual assault and physical violence, is committed against 78-85 percent of Indigenous Two Spirit individuals.

Many historical and contemporary factors, laws and policies contribute to the MMIP crises. Here are a few identified by involved organizations and agencies:

- A legacy of generations of government policies of forced removal, land seizures and violence inflicted on Native Peoples (BIA) that is perpetuated by historical trauma, historical grief, and the resulting vulnerability for Native People (Urban Indian Health Institute).
- Limitations placed on tribal government jurisdiction by the United States are a key contributing factor, with non-Native perpetrators repeatedly falling through cracks in the system (Native American Rights Fund).
- Investigations can remain unsolved, often due to a lack of investigative resources available (BIA).
- Lack of quality data including underreporting; racial misclassification; poor relationships between law enforcement and American Indian/Alaska Native communities; poor record-keeping protocols; institutional racism in the media; and a lack of substantive relationships between the media and American Indian/Alaska Native communities (Urban Indian Health Institute).

In response, Tribes, Native Peoples, families and Native- and tribal-serving organizations across the United States are calling for justice and reforms to dismantle the systemic barriers impacting the safety of Native People and to increase support for protections as defined by Indigenous voices, languages and teachings (National Indigenous Womens Resource Center, NIWRC). Through turning grief into action, they are calling upon federal, state, Tribal, local and international policymakers to address foundational reforms required to address MMIP beyond responding to individual cases (NIWRC). They are also advocating for the MMIP crisis to be brought to the general public's awareness to increase accountability of all levels and aspects of government systems and their responses.

Metro has been observing MMIP since 2018 when the agency passed its first resolution to adopt and proclaim May 5 as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.

In 2023, the Metro Council approved Resolution No. 23-5336 “For the purpose of proclaiming the fifth of every May as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People in the greater Portland area”. This resolution confirmed Metro’s ongoing annual commitment to honor and acknowledge the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People year with staff and the community and updated terminology used to refer to the Day of Awareness to be inclusive of all Indigenous Relatives who are impacted by this epidemic.

Previous year’s MMIP programming at Metro has included educational presentations to Council and staff on MMIP, a culturally informed educational display in the Metro Regional Center lobby, and a coffee hour with community partners to discuss this important issue and hear priorities directly.

ATTACHMENTS

None