

**TESTIMONY  
OF  
CHARLES ADDINGTON  
DIRECTOR – OFFICE OF JUSTICE SERVICES,  
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
BEFORE  
THE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
HEARING ON “MISSING AND MURDERED: CONFRONTING THE SILENT  
CRISIS IN INDIAN COUNTRY”**

**DECEMBER 12, 2018**

Good afternoon, Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, and members of the Committee. My name is Charles Addington and I am the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Office of Justice Services (OJS) at the Department of the Interior (Department). Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement before this Committee on the crisis of missing persons and murder victims in Indian Country.

More than half of Native American women have been sexually assaulted, including over a third who have been raped during their lifetime – a rate of rape nearly 2.5 times higher than for white women, according to a 2016 National Institute of Justice study<sup>1</sup>. With indigenous women and girls facing alarming levels of violence across the country, more can be done to support meaningful efforts to address the high rates of violence in Indian Country.

Although the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) have helped bring attention to this high rate of violence and have begun to address gaps in law enforcement for tribes and federal authorities, there remain gaps in data that exacerbate the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women. These challenges are present across multiple sectors, but are particularly problematic in the context of criminal justice, in which Federal, state, tribal, and local governments share responsibilities. It is important to continue

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Justice, *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men*.

efforts to build accurate data and provide Congress, the public, and, most importantly, the tribes, with the information needed to identify and analyze the criminal justice needs in Indian Country.

These data gaps impact how law enforcement officials handle or follow up on these cases, predominantly due to underreporting, racial misclassification, potential gender or racial bias and a lack of law enforcement resources required to follow through and close out cases appropriately.

In 2017, the Urban Indian Health Institute surveyed 71 cities across the U.S. to collect data on murdered and missing indigenous women and girls in urban settings. The Institute's survey and analysis of the collected data culminated in their 2018 report, *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, which highlights some of the challenges of data collection with respect to American Indian and Alaska Native populations in urban populations.

For Indian Country, BIA collects monthly crime statistics from Tribal and BIA law enforcement programs and submits the information to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) each quarter. The information collected is specific to the data required for the FBI Uniform Crime Report (UCR), which currently does not track missing persons or domestic violence statistics.

In light of these significant data collection challenges facing missing and murdered indigenous persons, BIA has partnered with DOJ's Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), a program of the National Institute of Justice to create new data fields in their system to specifically capture tribal affiliation data. The new fields are expected to be operational after January 1, 2019. This will assist law enforcement agencies across jurisdictions with tracking and investigating missing persons throughout the country.

Going forward, better inter-agency coordination and cooperation is needed to improve the

integrity of the data collected. While it is widely believed that there may be a correlation between opioid and other narcotics abuse, human trafficking, and domestic violence and missing and murdered indigenous women, without sufficient data, it is difficult to draw solid conclusions. Federal agencies must develop concrete solutions to improve agency data collection to ensure these crimes are being tracked and investigated appropriately so that any trends can be properly identified and addressed. For example, adding these types of incidents to the data collected by DOJ and BIA and making the data submissions mandatory from all law enforcement agencies would be a great start to addressing the data collection problem.

BIA has also began efforts to raise awareness and provide training to Indian Country law enforcement personnel. In January 2018, the BIA Indian Police Academy began discussions with the National Criminal Justice Training Center (NCJTC) on collaborating to create joint training programs for cold case investigations, long-term missing investigations, and child abduction investigations for use throughout Indian Country.

To specifically address the missing persons aspect of this issue, earlier this year the BIA-Indian Police Academy launched human trafficking courses in the Indian Country Police Officer Training Program; the Basic Police Officer Bridge Training Program; and the Indian Country Criminal Investigator Training Program (a joint FBI, BIA, and Tribal attended program).

In February 2018, the NCJTC and BIA-Indian Police Academy identified dates and locations for three pilot training programs on Advanced Cold Case Long Term Missing Investigations in Montana and North Dakota. The three training programs were held at Blackfeet, Montana and New Town, North Dakota. A total of 117 personnel were trained in these programs.

The BIA-Indian Police Academy is also scheduled to participate in the assessment of an NCJTC project to create a web/mobile-capable investigative guide for tribal first responders on

endangered missing and abducted persons.

As identified above, BIA OJS has taken numerous steps this year to create a number of solutions to address the crisis of missing persons and murder victims in Indian Country. We look forward to working with our other federal and tribal partners to collaborate on sound solutions to protect and serve our Native men, women, and children.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement and my written testimony will be provided for the record. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.