



West

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Ongoing Efforts to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons

While in Arizona on May 5, 2020, President Trump signed a [proclamation](#) declaring May 5 as Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives Awareness Day. “Under my Administration, tribal governments are not alone in fighting the epidemic of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native people” he declared. In addition, the President met with Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer to [discuss](#) the profound impacts of COVID-19 in native communities. The Navajo Nation, which stretches across parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, currently has the [highest per-capita](#) infection rate after New York and New Jersey with a fraction of the resources available to states.

In both Canada and the U.S., the past several years has given rise to the voices of Indigenous people uniting to create awareness as Indigenous families continue to search for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG). In 2019, Canada released a 1,200-page report on the national inquiry into thousands of MMIWG titled [Reclaiming Power and Place](#), which is the culmination of the national inquiry launched in 2016 by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In the U.S., the Urban Indian Health Institute published a comprehensive [report](#) revealing that New Mexico, Washington, Arizona, Alaska, Montana, California, Nebraska, Utah, Minnesota, and Oklahoma were the top ten states with the highest number of MMIWG in 2018.

During the CSG West Annual Meeting last year in Montana a [special forum](#) was hosted on the topic of MMIWG. During the session attendees participated in a review of the history, existing data, and challenges of developing legislation to



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address the violence against Indigenous people. The lack of extensive data has been a key concern among advocates as it impedes the ability to evaluate the problem and develop corrective efforts.

Dr. Hollie Mackey, a panelist in the session, has been collaborating with survivors, victims' families, tribal leaders, spiritual and historic preservation leaders, grassroots organizers, and law enforcement on addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) to develop an international database. [The RAVEN Project](#) focuses on reconciliation and accountability for and by Indigenous communities. The database provides Indigenous communities a secure, web-based location to enter information that can be used to assist in locating missing persons, assist communities with developing intervention efforts based on closed and unsolved case data, and inform policy recommendations. Entries are cross-referenced and verified through the appropriate jurisdiction(s) and existing state and federal databases to ensure accurate information is available for developing community-based prevention and intervention strategies.

Conversations and commitment to eliminate homicides and violence against American Indian and Alaskan Native women is gaining momentum. Yet, despite the tireless efforts on this evolving crisis, there is still much more work to be done. Additional information about The RAVEN Project is available on their [website](#).