

No More Stolen Sisters

May is Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women/People (MMIW/P) Awareness Month. Indigenous families coping with a missing loved one and their quest for answers face seemingly insurmountable barriers. From skepticism and a lack of urgency from law enforcement to virtually nonexistent resources, Indigenous communities face unique obstacles in the already harrowing process of finding a missing loved one. As advocates support members from Indigenous communities, it is critical to understand that dismissive responses and the overall lack of legal protections perpetuate the longstanding distrust between Indigenous communities and law enforcement.

In the 2021 MMIW National Briefing hosted by the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, relatives of missing and murdered Indigenous people and advocates discussed some of the trials faced when Indigenous people go missing, including heartbreaking recounts of dismissive responses from those meant to serve and protect the community.¹

"We were told the same thing we hear a lot in our communities. 'She just turned 18, she was probably just out with her friends,'" Yolanda Fraser recounted her family's experience working with law enforcement when her granddaughter, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, went missing. Kaysera was found murdered in 2019, reflecting the dire consequences of law enforcement's failure to take MMIW/P reports seriously.

In Washoe County, the loved ones of Anna Marie Scott, whose body was found in a burning vehicle on the I-580 in February 2022, are still searching for answers.² Washoe County Sheriff's Office has not released any new information since her body was found, including the make, model, or color of the car she was found in or who it was registered to.



Insufficient resources and unclear jurisdiction responsibilities significantly delay efforts to locate MMIW/P. The intricate federal Tribal legal framework adds further complexity, creating

¹ NIWRC. (n.d.). *2021 MMIW National Briefing - Addressing the National Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women: Advocacy in Action*. <https://www.niwrc.org/resources/webinars/2021-mmiw-national-briefing-addressing-national-crisis-missing-and-murdered>

Carson Now. (2024, February 3). It's been two years since Anna Marie Scott was murdered, and still, law enforcement remains. <https://carsonnow.org/story/02/03/2024/it-s-been-two-years-anna-marie-scott-was-murdered-and-still-law-enforcement-remains>

numerous barriers for Indigenous communities striving to safeguard their citizens. Additionally, the scarcity of resources coupled with the lack of culturally appropriate services exacerbates the struggle, leaving affected families with little to no support.

Indigenous families deserve peace. As we stand on the precipice of this Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women/People Awareness Month, we must heed the call for justice and solidarity. Only by acknowledging the failures of the past, amplifying Indigenous voices, and fostering a culture of empathy and accountability can we pave a path forward toward healing and justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People.

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