

Oregon Senate Judiciary Senate Bill Testimony:
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Girls and Women Working Group

It is first important to honor the people who lived on the soil we gather upon now. Bands of Chinook, Tualatin Calapooya, Molalla, and others lived here freely before the Oregon state government was installed. It is equally important to honor the indigenous women who are missing, the indigenous women who have been murdered, whose murders continue to go uninvestigated, and the women who have made this legislation possible. When broad legislation is passed for the benefit of all Oregonians without racially-specific provisions targeting our communities to receive resources, Indian people do not experience the benefit.

Today we are asking you to join Oregon to a national movement of state governments choosing to begin valuing the lives of Native women, the first women of this land, the mothers of this continent. The cases of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) are overwhelmingly linked to rape and other forms of sexual assault. Indian women are raped more than any other group in this country. In the year 2000, the US Department of Justice's National Violence Against Women Survey reported that 34.1% of Native women will be raped during their lifetime. Bear that the federal and state governments of this country are not trusted by indigenous communities, therefore intimate violence will be underreported. In 2010, the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that 49% of Native women reported a history of sexual violence. Also, in 2010 the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI), a tribal epidemiology center that maintains trust-based relationships in Seattle WA's Indian communities, reported 94% of women identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN) in the city had been raped or coerced into sex at least once in their lives. It is vital that any resources allocated to addressing disparities faced by Native Americans are granted to qualified indigenous professionals and organizations in order to protect the veracity of data and protect victims from further harm.

Dr. Ronet Bachman, a national expert on national crime victimization survey data has identified troubling trends regarding the rape of Indian women. When asked whether aggressors physically hit them during assaults, over 90% of Native women responded affirmatively. Compared to 71% of White victims. 25% of Native women reported the perpetrator used a weapon compared to 9% of White women. This elucidates the especially brutal treatment of Native women in cases of rape.

In her book "The Beginning and End of Rape: confronting sexual violence in Native America", Sara Deere shares "As a baseline the vast majority of rapes in the United States are intra racial, meaning that victims are usually attacked by members of their own race." She goes on to explain Indian women are the sole exception to this rule. The US Bureau of Justice Statistics finds that nine in ten indigenous female rape survivors had White or Black assailants. Another report by Greenfeld and Smith entitled "American Indians and Crime" found 70% of assailants to be White.

After studying indigenous female sexual assaults in Seattle, the Urban Indian Health Institute published its "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" report in 2018. The report studied various aspects of MMIWG cases across 71 US cities. 72 law enforcement agencies received Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests from UIHI. Among its problematic findings was the reluctance of America's law enforcement community to honor these requests. UIHI then used a third-party organization specializing in FOIA requests. Through multiple requests from the two organizations, many of these agencies only provided partial or incomplete data. The Portland Police Bureau (PPB), a standout of the 72, never provided any data despite FOIA requests and

accepting payments to process the request. This is indicative of what our indigenous communities already know. Oregon is an especially dangerous state in which to be Native.

Over 60 Oregon tribes were terminated in 1953. This is the highest concentration of terminations of any state in the country. Thousands of Native women were forced or coerced into sterilization when in criminal justice, mental health, child welfare and healthcare systems. Poverty in our communities is triple that of Whites. Our incomes are typically half of that of Whites. The last US census showed our unemployment to be 70% higher than that of Whites. More than 20% of Natives experience hunger at least monthly. Despite crime dropping in our communities for over 23 years, Native Americans are just as likely to end up justice-involved as before the decline. 1 in 2 Natives are victims of violent crime at a rate of 250% higher than Whites. 70% of such crime is perpetrated by non-Natives. Although the PPB has refused to share data about Portland's MMIWG FBI hate crime statistics cross-referenced with American Community Survey (ACS aka census) population counts for US cities suggest that Portland consistently suffers hate crimes at a rate 5 times higher than Seattle.

Progressivism and liberal politics may be experienced by White communities in Oregon. Measured outcomes show these are not experienced by communities of color. The founding of Oregon's statehood was meant to precipitate a White utopia as envisioned by its architects. The laws and culture of that time are the soil that Oregon has grown from. The relationships between our communities were and are underpinned by rape and murder.

We do not need a well-intentioned apology. We need action. It's humiliating to have to come before another nation to ask them to simply count our missing and dead, not even to solve these crimes. It is impossible to be a self-determined people if half of our population cannot decide the use of their own bodies. It's greatly disturbing that non-Native officers routinely identify our people as White or Latinx. If we were valued, surely the basic functions of proper demographic identification in policing and prisons would have been solved. It has been for others. When is it our turn to be seen?

Today we come to you knowing that you care. We come to you confident that you hear us, you see us and will step up beside us. We hope that you walk with us to send a message to your other voters, the rapists and murderers, a message that this day of the invisible target is done.

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