



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MMIWG Alaska - We Will Never Lose Sight

Demanding justice on all fronts, addressing the MMIWG crisis from a place of healing despite widespread attention shifting to the COVID19 pandemic

ANCHORAGE - Native Peoples Action (NPA) and Native Movement recognize that the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) is a complex issue, however action is needed now. As transitions occur and priorities shift across our communities in the face of COVID-19, NPA and Native Movement remain vigilant and dedicated to keeping our Indigenous women and girls safe. We would like to take this opportunity to provide information and updates on our work in this critical area.

The nationwide MMIWG movement has exposed how Indigenous women and girls are targets for violence, abduction and homicide. Yet on the homefront, another [young girl was taken too soon](#) in Quinhagak on March 16, 2020. This is heartbreaking and unacceptable. Now and during difficult times we continue our action oriented work focused on healing, justice, accountability and systemic change.

We recognize that there are other groups and organizations working on similar efforts from public safety to jurisdictional to response and capacity building. We applaud and stand in solidarity with those working to address these issues and believe everyone can be a part of the solution, thus we are taking a grassroots-led approach to amplify the need for justice on all fronts. Tribal, local, state, and federal systemic changes are needed now and we will continue to be vocal on that front.

By listening to direct feedback from community members, NPA and Native Movement have co-organized media campaign materials to elevate awareness and grow the MMIWG movement, we created a public Facebook group [MMIWG Alaska](#), and are hosting community awareness events in 2020, while also practicing social distancing. Our work in this area does not stop due to the global pandemic.

We believe in the power of Indigenous-led efforts. NPA and Native Movement are continuing to build relationships with Tribal, local, state, and federal entities, to advance true systemic change as we actively work to protect Indigenous women and girls.

Along with community healing and strengthening gatherings, our MMIWG work has included meetings with:

- Anchorage Police Department
- Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz
- Anchorage Assembly members
- Statewide Alaskan Legislators
- Assistant Attorney General with the Alaska Department of Law
- The Alaska State Troopers
- Monthly statewide MMIWG planning calls
- Engagement with numerous Tribes and Indigenous organizations throughout Alaska

Tangible outcomes from these meetings include: a pathway for developing updated cultural awareness curriculum with the Anchorage Police Department, data reclamation from the Alaska State Troopers, an Alaska Federation of Natives resolution, an Anchorage Assembly resolution recognizing the MMIWG crisis in Alaska, and an Alaska State bill focused on addressing MMIWG. We are also demanding accountability within communities across the state. We first need to teach respect and abruptly disrupt the continued cycle of violence.

To actively address MMIWG our organizations are:

- Curating community gatherings to uplift our voices and hold space for healing as Indigenous peoples as we navigate our way forward.
- Hosting an annual MMIWG Community Vigil and Heartbeat of the Drums Ceremony
- Bringing our events to online platforms as we practice social distancing including a [MMIWG Lunch & Learn Webinar](#) and a [MMIWG missing persons database webinar](#).

Upcoming events we are hosting include:

- Women's Self-Defense Seminar via webcast
- Women Are Sacred 5K run (postponed until fall)
- Organizing a rally for the 2020 Alaska Federation of Natives convention.
- Indigenous Womxn's Gatherings where we update community members on the work being done around MMIWG, while sharing our own stories, laughter and love.
- All of these events are on the MMIWG Alaska Facebook page and all are welcome.

It has been nearly one year since the U.S Department of Justice issued a Public Safety emergency declaration for rural Alaska. We know this is a rural and urban issue, while we are doing our part, the federal government needs to continue hearing from Alaska Native and Tribal leadership expressing the continued lack of safety and accountability occurring across Alaska. Native Movement and NPA strongly support increased government-to-government partnerships

to address this. In addition we are working with the national missing persons database and NamUs, to provide Alaska-specific training.

In all of our engagement and actions to address the MMIWG crisis, we strictly adhere to cultural protocols and partner through Indigenous-led efforts. We are grateful to non-Indigenous allies who support Indigenous-led work and contribute to meaningful change. In alignment with community input, we recognize the sensitivity for many families across Alaska who share personal experiences which provide insight into the individual, inter-personal and collective traumas we are facing. We deeply respect all those impacted by the MMIWG crisis, and we act out of love for our community and invite you to join us in this healing movement. As we work in this arena we will honor and respect personal and community boundaries and encourage others working in this field to do the same. Our focus remains on uplifting our people and communities to the best of our ability, to support Native peoples' in our healing journeys, and to be advocates for systemic change. We encourage others, including media outlets, to seek truth, justice, and to respect Indigenous-led efforts, and to put it bluntly not use our sisters as entertainment or merely a statistic. We know our stolen women and girls are grandmothers, mothers, aunties, daughters, sisters and friends, and we hold each of them in a sacred healing space.

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