

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2021

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Attorney General Garland and Secretary Haaland,

I write to ask for your continued support of a priority shared by communities throughout the West and across the country: addressing the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW). Specifically, I'm requesting a Cold Case Task Force Office be established through Operation Lady Justice in Yakima, Washington.

Last year, Congress made significant progress in addressing the crisis of MMIW by sending two important bipartisan bills to the President's desk to be signed into law, *Savanna's Act* and the *Not Invisible Act*. The signing of these bills was a monumental step toward accomplishing our shared goal of delivering justice to the families, loved ones, and Native communities across the country impacted by this crisis.

Additionally, as part of Operation Lady Justice, the interagency task force established by President Trump, the federal government has established Cold Case Task Force Offices throughout the United States. These offices – staffed by the Department of Justice, the Department of the Interior, and special agents from the Bureau of Indian Affairs – aim to delve into past cases of MMIW and violent crimes on and around tribal lands.

I hope the Cold Case Task Force, Operation Lady Justice, and our work to address this crisis will remain a top priority for the Biden Administration. We must continue working to ensure Native American women will no longer face violent crimes that go uninvestigated or unsolved, and that work must begin in the communities most affected.

This office is needed now more than ever, as evidenced by recent data demonstrating that my home state of Washington is particularly impacted by the MMIW crisis.

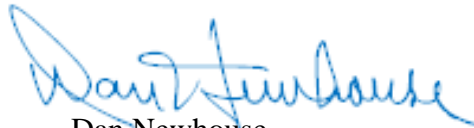
Native Americans make up an estimated 2% of our state's population, but a recent report by the Washington State Patrol shows that Native Women account for 7% of the state's reported missing women. My congressional district is home to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville Tribes) and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation) – two of the 29 federally-recognized tribes in Washington state. There are currently 32 open cases of MMIW on or near the Yakama Nation reservation alone. Despite these sad and staggering numbers in our community, the closest Cold Case Task Force Office is currently located in Billings, Montana.

Both Yakama Nation and Colville Tribes have been actively engaged in working with my office to enact solutions that improve law enforcement coordination, empower law enforcement agencies to effectively investigate MMIW cases, and increase communication with Native communities.

With an understanding of the outsized impact this crisis has on Central Washington, it is imperative that a Cold Case Task Force Office be established through Operation Lady Justice in Yakima, Washington through dedicated funding provided to your agencies through FY21 appropriations. This office will be instrumental as we continue to work to address and put an end to the decades-long crisis that affects native communities throughout the country.

I look forward to working with you in your capacities at the Office of the U.S. Attorney General and the Department of the Interior to ensure the voices of our Native friends and neighbors continue to be heard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dan Newhouse", with a stylized, cursive script.

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress