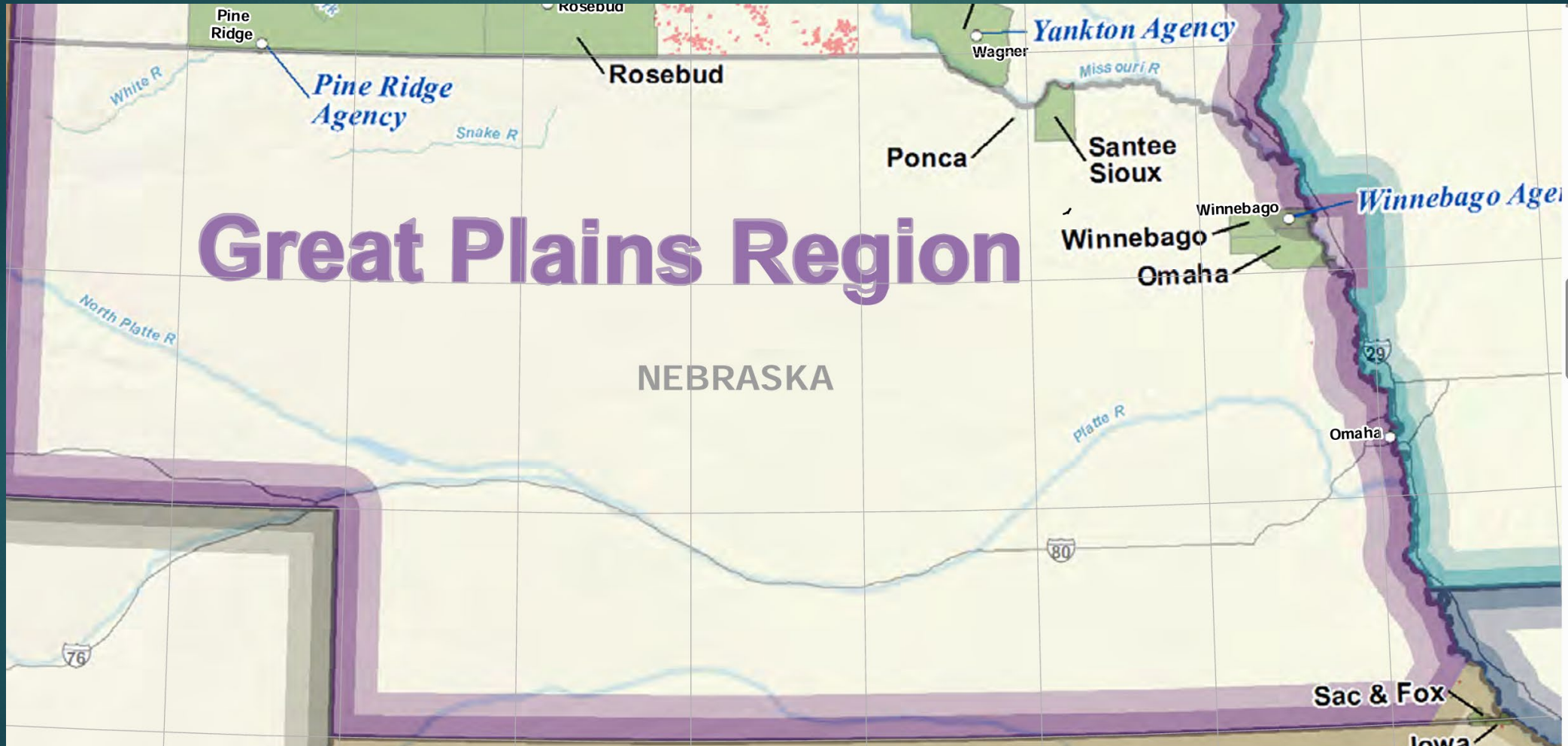


Missing and Murdered Indigenous People

GRACE JOHNSON, MS, LIMHP, LADC

MMIP LIAISON NE ATTORNEY GENERAL OFFICE

Knox Co, Thurston Co, Richardson Co & Sheridan Co



It's complicated

❖ Traditional life-Pre European contact

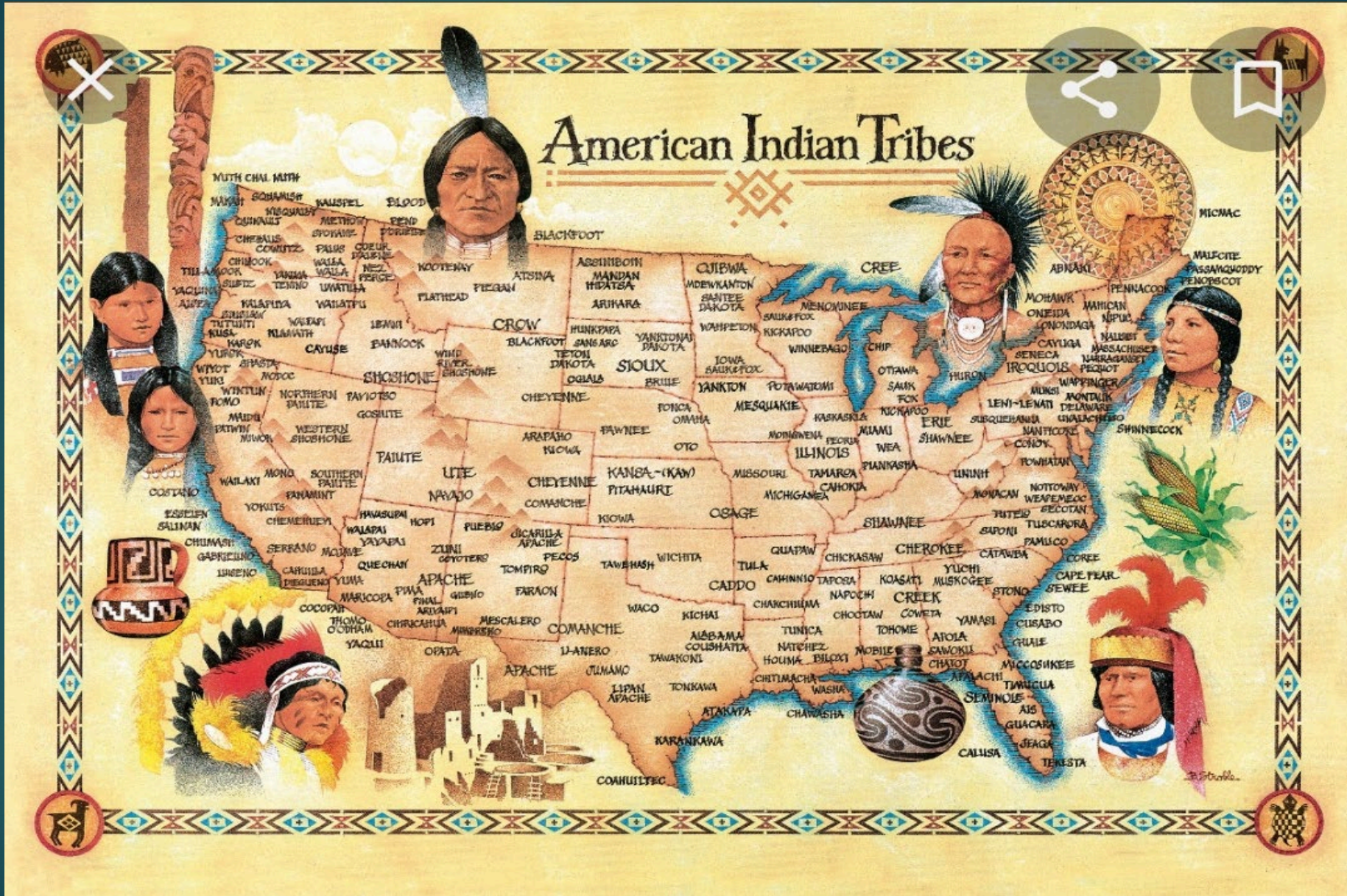
- **System that worked-peace making**
- Language/Family Gentle Parenting/Women's power
- Spirituality-embedded
- Healthy lifestyle, great planners, Budgeters, industrious
- Social Safety nets-values

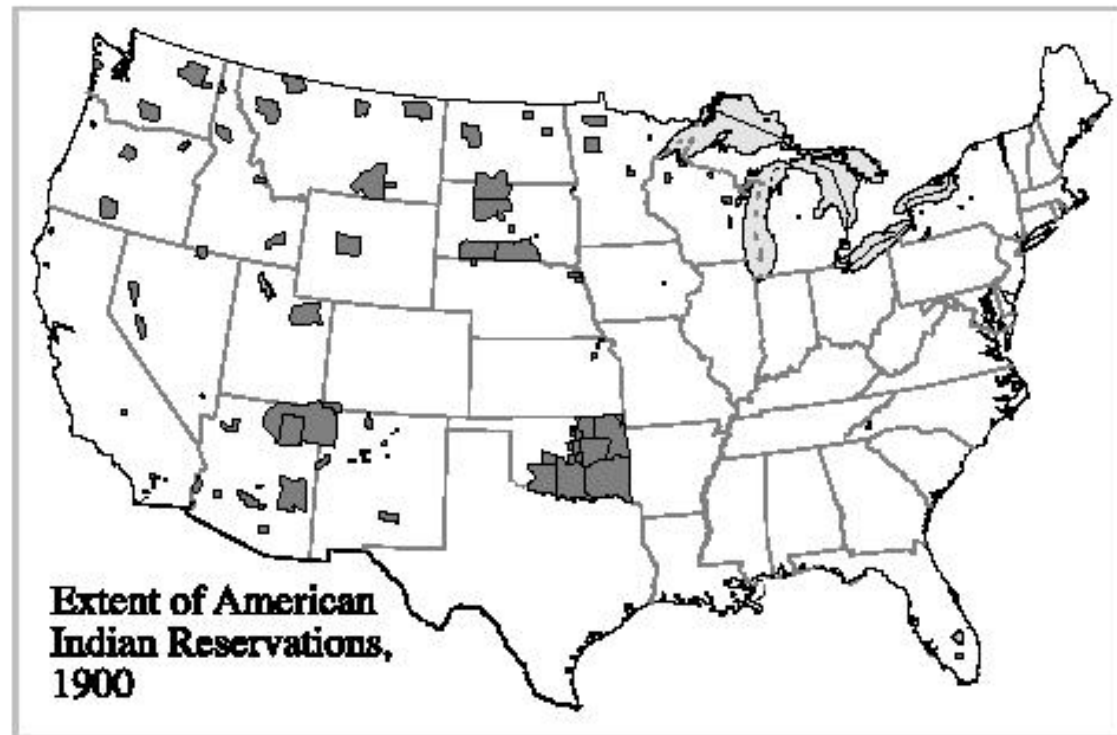


Values/Virtues (Social Safety Nets)



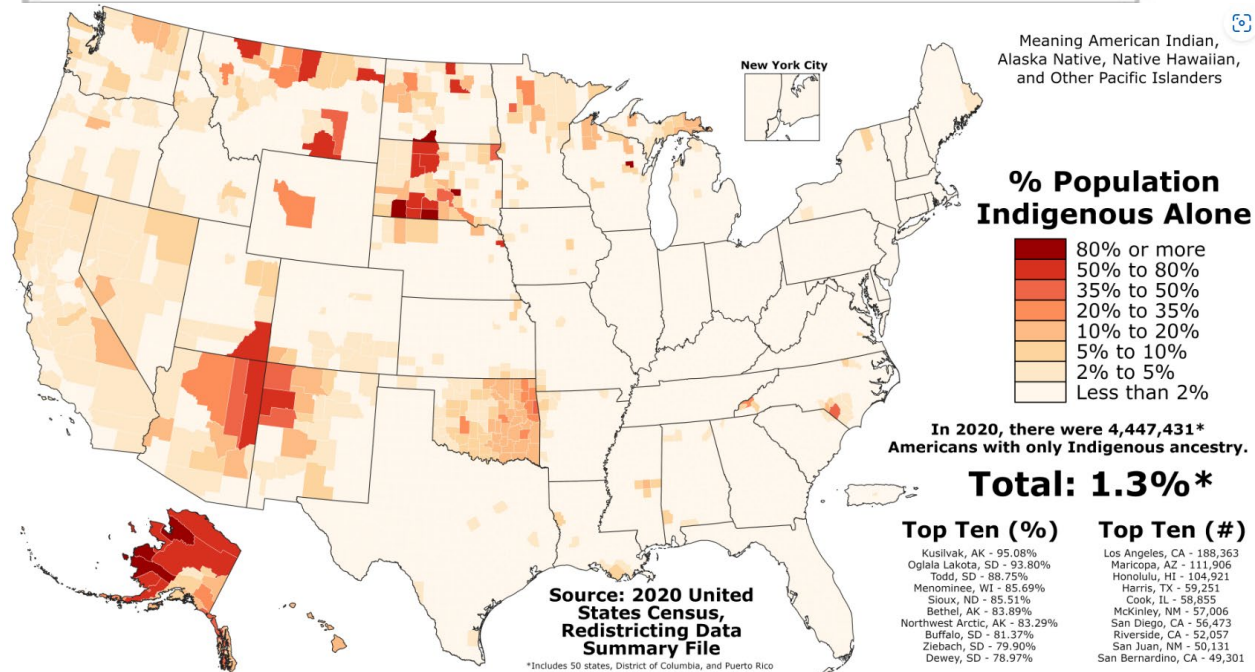
- 1. Woc'ekiya- Prayer, finding spirituality, comm w/ Creator
- 2. Yuonihan/Wao'hola- Respect, self, community, all life
- 3. Wasaskiye/Waun'sila- Caring & Compassion,
- 4. Wowijake-Truth, Woowotanla- Honesty, self & other, Sincerity
- 5. Wawokiya- Generosity/Helper- giving from the Heart
- 6. Wa'hwala/Onsihanpi- Humility, being humble- equality
- 7. Woksape- Wisdom, learning & recognizing experience (Elders)
- 8. Ohitika- Bravery, facing fears
- WOLAKTOA-Spiritual Way of Life-PEACE/Friendship/Right Way of life
- Similar Values across many Tribes





Columbus-50-100 million

Yr-1900, Census population 250,000



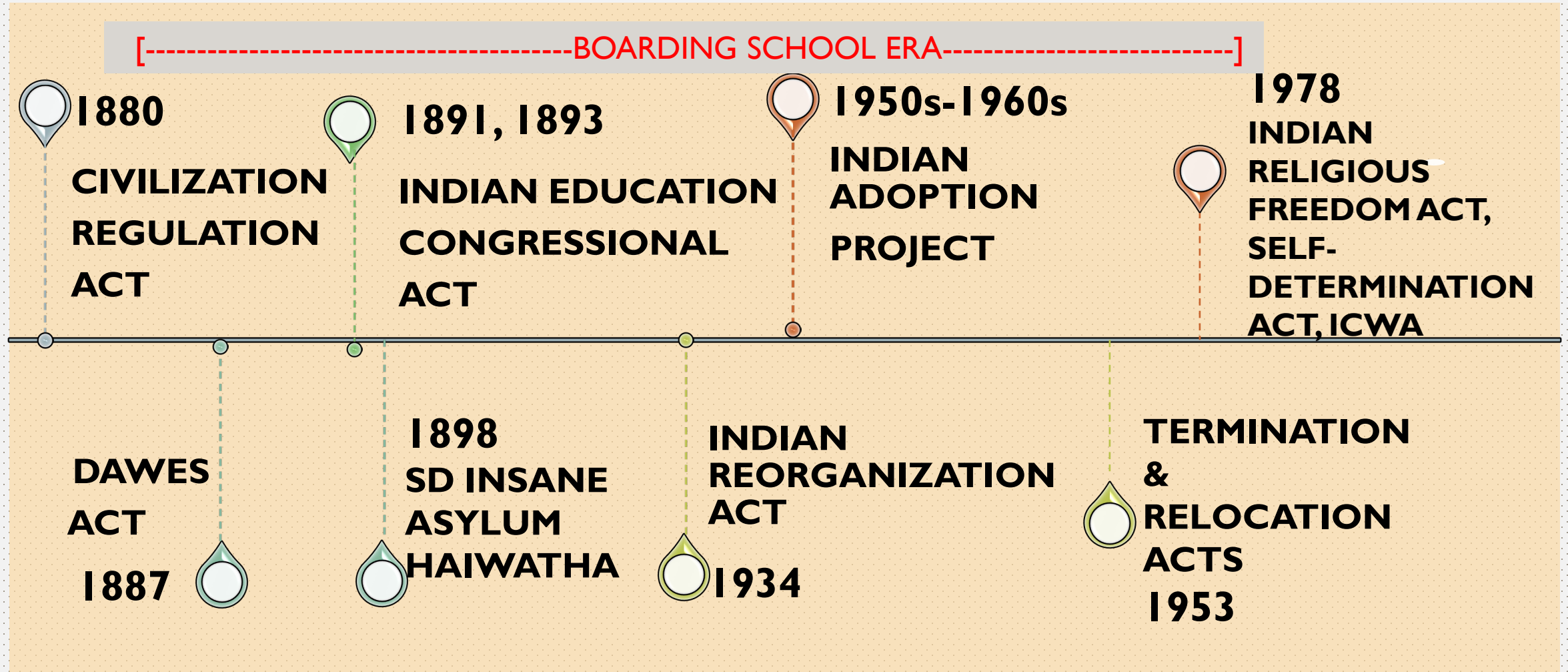
2020 census 9.7 million

not seen as modern

"Indigenous people have often been erased from the country's historical record" the National Congress of American Indians found that 87% of state history standards don't mention Native American history after 1900, while 27 states don't mention Native Americans in their K-12
This why people think we are extinct!!!

After
1900

TIMELINE OF CONGRESSIONAL ACTS

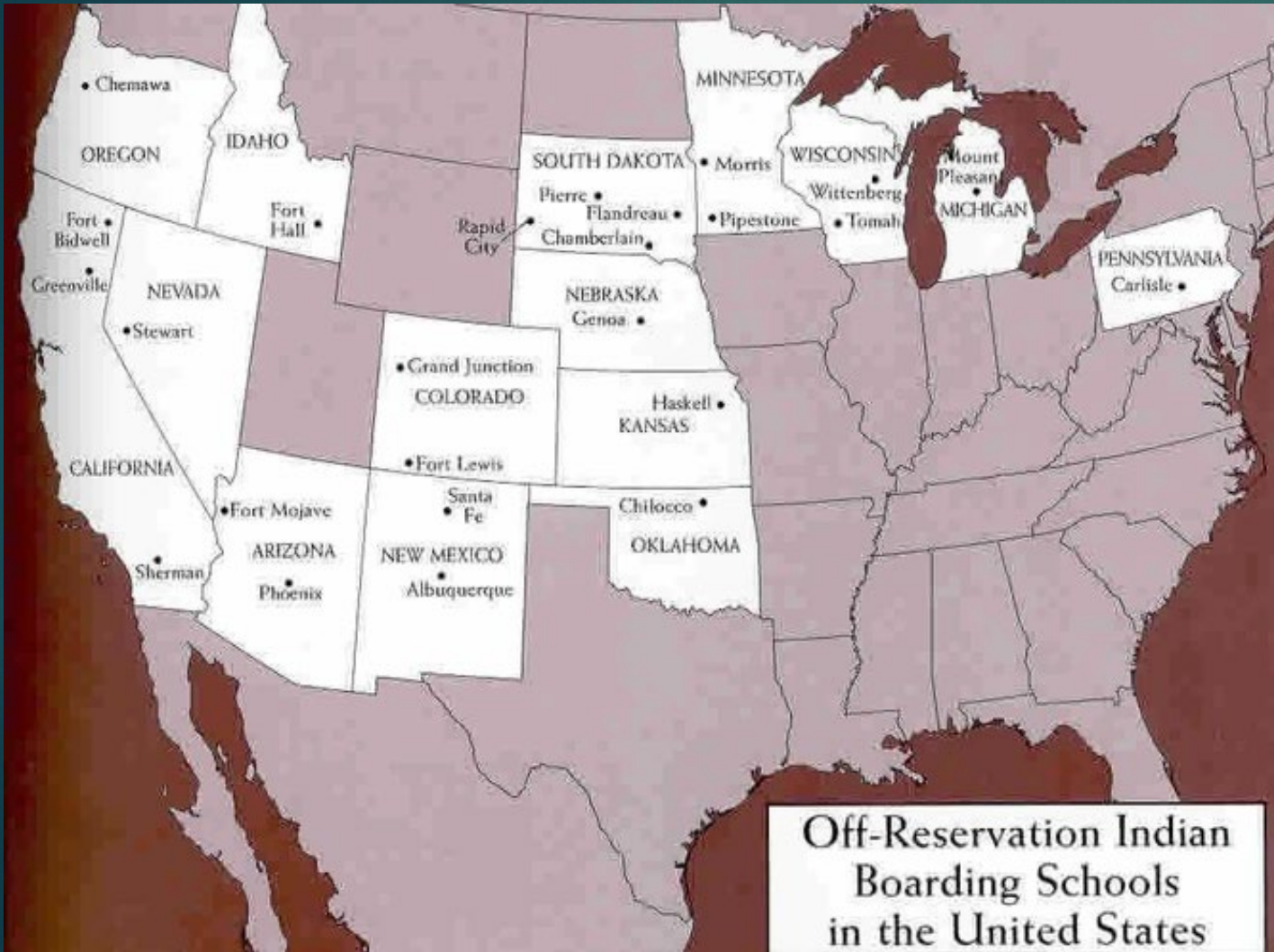




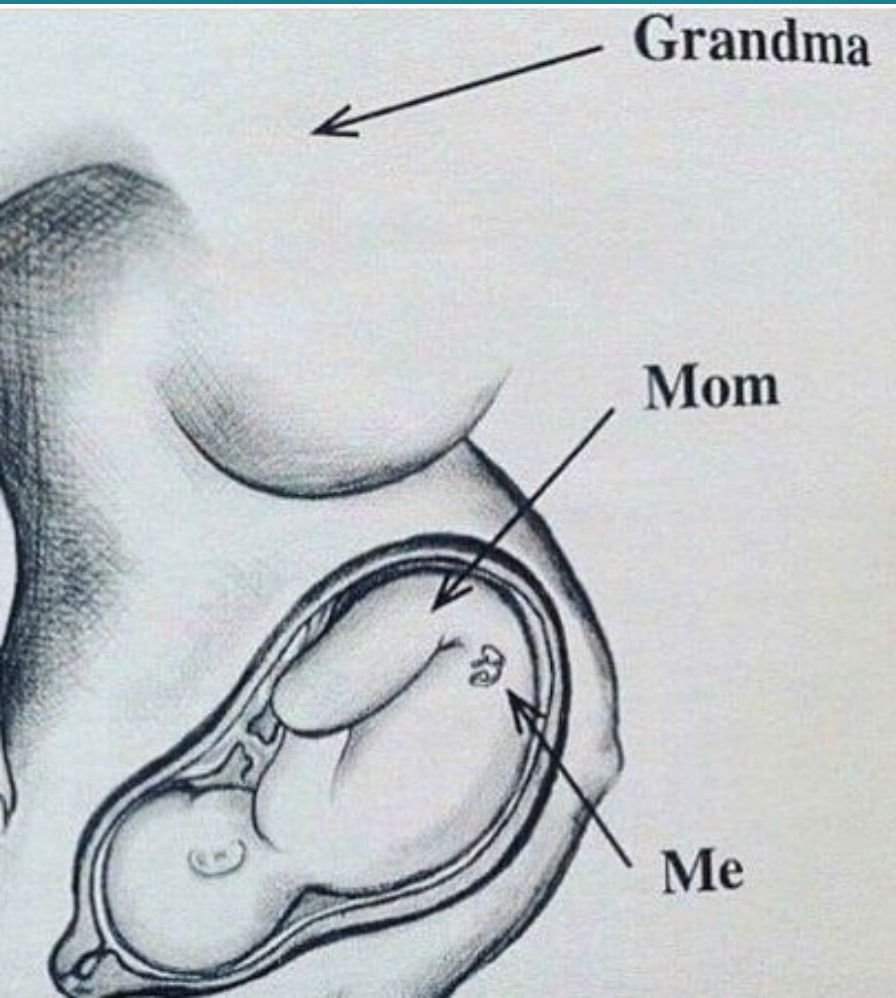
Boarding Schools 1879-mid 70s

- Strip identity/Culture
- Mandatory/English age 5
- Attachment issues
- Loss of parenting skills
- Forced religious conversion
- Graveyards at schools
- Genoa and Carlisle Indian School

Genoa & Carlisle Indian School



Intergenerational Trauma



- Every Native has a parent, grandparent or great grandparent attended Boarding Schools
- “Trauma affects genetic processes, leading to traumatic reactivity being heightened in populations who experience a great deal of trauma”

➤ Proper Assessment is important

- Domestic Violence
- Substance Use
- Cultural strengths
- Many vulnerabilities put youth and others at risk of drugs, trafficking and sexual assault.

2016 study by National Institute of Justice (NIJ) the most comprehensive study to date

- [Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men | National Institute of Justice](#)

Current Impacts of **Indian Boarding School**

The Federal Indian Boarding School over, but **the patterns of abuse are not.**

American Indian and Alaska Natives have higher rates of:

- Suicide
- PTSD
- Violence
- Alcohol-related deaths
- Drunk driving accidents
- Substance use and dependence

Native children are

2x

as likely to experience serious psychological distress

3x

as likely to be in foster care

In Minnesota, that number jumps to 15x (NICWA, 2021)

Native women are

2x

as likely to be **raped**

3x

as likely to be **murdered**

More than

4 in 5 Native women

experience **violence** in their lifetimes

More than

Half

have experienced **sexual violence** (Rosay, 2016)

5,712

reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls in 2016, but only 116 cases were filed in the Department of Justice federal missing person database.

Government stepped in

- ▶ **Savannah's Act 2017-Savannah Greywind 22yrs** old murdered 8 months pregnant, bipartisan, improve federal response to MMIP, increasing coordination among Federal, State, Tribal, & local law enforcement agencies. signed in October 2020.-[Tribal Justice and Safety | About DOJ Efforts to Address MMIP](#).
- ▶ **WHY?**
- ▶ “American Indian & Alaska Native girls/women experience some of the highest rates of DV & abuse in the US, yet policy change, funding, and advocacy has been slow to address high DV rates”.- [Domestic violence in American Indian and Alaska Native populations: a new framework for policy change and addressing the structural determinants of health - PMC](#)
- ▶ Native women & girls experience disproportionately high rates of sexual & gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence. Native MEN experience higher rates of violence, such as murder, sexual, and psychological violence, than other demographic groups.
<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/violence-against-american-indian-and-alaska-native-women-and-men>
- ▶ Homicide, **3rd leading cause of death** of American Indian & Alaska Native (AI/AN) girls 15yrs-19yrs & AI/AN women 20yrs to 24yrs in **2019**. It was the **4th leading cause** of AI/AN women 25yrs-34yrs in same year (Heron, 2021).
- ▶ **Murder** rate for AI/AN women is nearly **3x** higher than non-Hispanic White women (Petrosky et al., **2017**). Study of 16 states found that AI/AN women who were victims of intimate partner violence lost an average of **38.3 potential years of life per death** (Graham et al., 2021).

Responses to Stress/Trauma

Fight



Flight



Freeze



Fawn



Assimilation



- ▶ Traditional
- ▶ Speaks language
- ▶ Knows cultural knowledge
- ▶ May live on Reservation
- ▶ Attends ceremonies

- ▶ Assimilated
- ▶ Speaks English
- ▶ Very little or no cultural knowledge
- ▶ Lives off Reservation
- ▶ Does not attend ceremonies

Ceremonies went underground until 1978
Some older are ashamed to be native

3 Rules of Families with Dysfunction continues culture of Silence



1. DON'T TALK
ABOUT IT



2. DON'T TRUST



3. DON'T FEEL



"Without griefwork—without a voice—trauma is passed from one generation to the next." –Jane Middleton-Moz, MSCP

Things to know

6 Tribes-5 reservations

Ponca Tribe - 5 Service Areas Offices- Niobrara, Norfolk, Omaha, Lincoln, Sioux City

Always ask if a person is Native American

Indian Status is a political one not racial

Majority 60% - 70% live off Reservation

Historical distrust

Indian Law is complex-

Over 300 Treaties made

It's complicated

European contact

- Women held positions of power-
some don't know this
- Low DV rates-Dawes Act
- Moatoka most famous MMIW
- Lack of Justice & accountability
- Jurisdiction-can't hold non-Natives
- Movement to raise awareness





14 yrs old,
dismembered, found
in trash bags,
reported missing late
Jan 2025, Mesa AZ

Challenges

Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Crisis | Indian Affairs

Native American & Alaska Native rates of murder, rape, & violent crime are all higher than the national averages



Intergenerational Trauma,
Jurisdiction issues,
Human Trafficking,
need for more
accurate data &
Investigative
Resources



MMIP Crisis

Understanding Sovereignty



TRIBAL NATIONS ARE
SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENTS



FEDERAL VS. STATE VS. TRIBAL



IMPORTANT TO RESPECT
TRIBAL JURISDICTIONS

Nebraska breakdown

- ▶ 3 Sovereigns
 - ▶ Federal
 - ▶ State
 - ▶ Tribal
- ▶ No easy answer and complicated Checkerboard jurisdiction- County/State/NSP, Tribal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) office in Winnebago, Federal (FBI)
- ▶ Tribal cops can arrest to prevent harm and remove from Reservation-can't hold not enough facilities most cant arrest non-natives

[Tribal reservations jurisdictional lines - Search \(bing.com\)](#)

[A Guide to Understanding Tribal-State Jurisdiction - Native American Rights Fund \(narf.org\)](#)

Nebraska Tribes

- ▶ Reservations-Winnebago, Omaha & Santee, Iowa Tribe of Kansas & Nebraska, Sac & Fox
 - ▶ Land-Ponca Tribe
- ▶ Book- American Indian Law in a Nutshell
- ▶ Ponca Tribe -State Jurisdiction, service areas, 12 counties-Boyd, Burt, Douglas, Hall, Holt, Knox, Lancaster, Madison, Platte, Sarpy, Stanton, Wayne

LB1288 (2024)

Created ability for the use of tribal enrollment cards for proof of age and identity for certain firearm and alcohol laws



Provided recognition of tribal mental health and dangerous sex offender commitment orders as prescribed




Provided tribal law enforcement officers ability to take a subject into emergency protective custody, to transport and commit that persons under tribal law. Also covered payment of related costs.

Tribal Court Protection Orders

Nebraska Enforcement of Tribal Court Protection Orders



- Tribal courts have full jurisdiction to issue protection orders, and the law requires Nebraska to recognize and enforce tribal protection orders. 18 U.S.C. § 2265; Neb. Rev. Stat. § 42-391.
 - If a law enforcement officer determines there is probable cause to believe a valid tribal protection order exists and has been violated, the officer “shall” arrest the violator. Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 42-935(a), 42-928.
 - If the officer is shown a paper or electronic copy of a current tribal protection order, the officer has probable cause to believe a valid tribal protection order exists. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 42-935(a).
-
- Many tribal protection orders are registered in the Nebraska Foreign Protection Order Registry, and can be seen in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database.



➤ LB 154 (2019)

- ▶ Statement and Report
 - ▶ Scope of the problem-misclassification
 - ▶ Identify barriers
 - ▶ Create partnerships to reporting & investigation of missing Native American women
- ▶ Section NSP website for Native American
 - ▶ less than 1% of pop, NE missing at rate 3x of NE population

[LB 154 Statement and Report | NCIA](#)

LB 154 Report

What did LB 154 create?

- ▶ LB154 passed in 2019:
 - ▶ https://www.nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=37356
 - ▶ Led to the creation of the LB154 Report
- ▶ Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs Statement on LB 154 Report: Statement-and-Report.pdf
 - ▶ “Seek funding for a new, full-time staff position to manage the Task Force operations. This staffer will report to the Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs.
 - ▶ Led to the drafting of LB328
- ▶ LB328:
 - ▶ https://www.nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=50280&docnum=LB328&leg=108
 - ▶ Did not pass but AG's Office agreed to house a position (MMIP Liaison) in our office that addressed the efforts.

What does MMIP look like in Nebraska?

2024, Nebraska has reported 43 active cases of MMIP, nearly doubling from 23 cases in 2020. Increase due to improved data collection & awareness, rather than a surge in disappearances.

Key Statistics:

- Disproportionate Representation: Native Americans constitute approximately 1.5% of Nebraska's population but account for about 4.6% of the state's missing persons cases.
- Youth Impact: A significant majority of missing Native Americans in Nebraska are males under the age of 17.
- **Resolution Rates**: Many missing Native individuals are found; for instance, a study noted that 68.4% of Native American missing persons cases identified on January 20 were no longer listed as missing just over two months later, on March 31.



Cultural Competence in Legal Practice

Understanding historical
trauma and distrust

Respect tribal customs,
languages and protocols

Work with cultural liaison
and advocates

How can MMIP Liaison help you?

- ▶ Jurisdictional Coordination
 - ▶ Helps navigate tribal, state, and federal legal systems in MMIP cases.
- ▶ Improved Case Outcomes
- ▶ Enhances investigations through cultural understanding and community trust.
- ▶ Community Engagement-Bridge
 - ▶ Builds credibility with Indigenous communities and encourages cooperation.
- ▶ Ethical Commitment to Justice
 - ▶ Addresses disparities in violence and disappearance affecting Indigenous people.

MMIP LIAISON NE AGO

MMIP | Nebraska Attorney General
Mike Hilgers



First Steps for Families:

- Immediately call 911 - there is no waiting period to report.
- When you call 911, let them know the missing person is native and be prepared to provide them with a detailed description of your loved one, including:
 - Name
 - Date of Birth
 - Height
 - Weight
 - Scars/tattoos
 - Tribal affiliation
 - Recent, unfiltered photo
 - Last known location
 - Last seen wearing

Next:

- Keep records of your report, including the report taker, case number, investigator, phone number, and contact information.
- Choose a spokesperson from your family who will communicate any updates in the case.
- Reach out to family and friends to help raise awareness.
- Make a flyer with information about your loved one. A template is available at AGO.Nebraska.gov/MMIP.

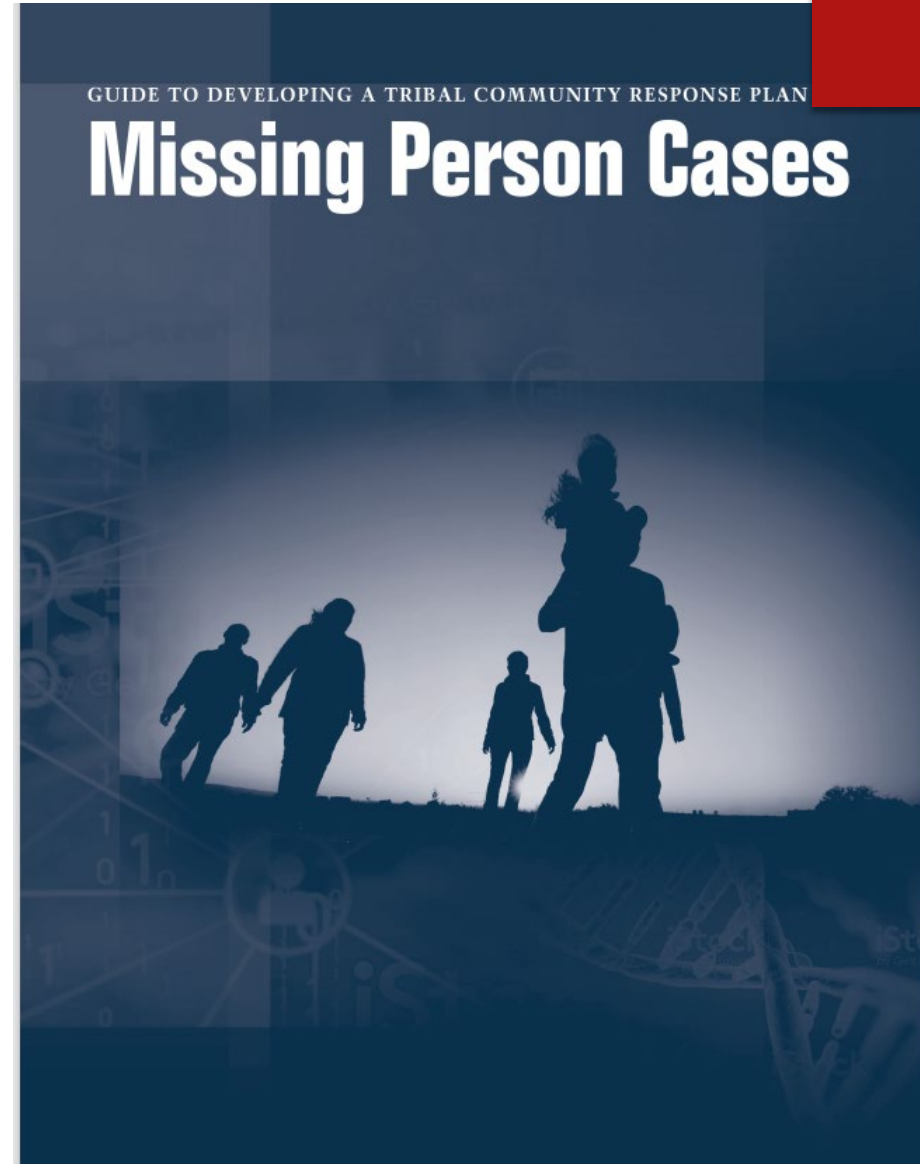
Additional Resources:

- If you have additional questions and concerns, you can contact the Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons, Grace Johnson, at the Nebraska Attorney General's Office by emailing AGO.Info.Help@Nebraska.gov. She can connect you with additional resources and assist with law enforcement interactions.



DOJ Template

- Guide for tribes to create response plans
 - Made up of 4 Sections
 - Law Enforcement
 - Victim Services
 - Outreach Public
 - Media Communications
- Can have 1 Tribal working group or multiple working groups.



Helpful tips for you working with Native Communities

01

Build Relationships
with tribal law
enforcement and
governments

02

Use trauma-
informed and
culturally sensitive
approaches,
HUMOR

03

Include Native
voices in case
decisions as much
as possible

Community & Breaking the Cycle of violence

- ▶ Support Gathering of Nations (GONA) events-
- ▶ Support community Healing from Historical Trauma and unresolved Grief, provide a safe place to share, heal and plan for action
- ▶ Incorporate Native Language- maximize existing healthy social structures/supports though schools etc.,
- ▶ Programming that meets community needs:
 - ▶ Culturally & Spiritually based program,
 - ▶ Reentry programming
 - ▶ Treat Mental and Substance Use D/O as Chronic Medical Conditions
 - ▶ Suicide prevention
 - ▶ Promote Tribal healing to Wellness courts, recovery vs punishing

Community & Breaking the Cycle of violence

- ▶ Promote Traditional Parenting
- ▶ Parenting classes- Native Focused such as MIS/FIS Positive Indian Parenting Teach on Post-partem Depression
- Empower the Women
- ▶ Trauma focused Therapies, EMDR, DBT, TF-CBT

Tribal Boarding School Toolkit for Healing

- ▶ Most Comprehensive Guide to addressing Historical Trauma
- ▶ Past, Present and Future
- ▶ Discussion Guides
- ▶ Moves beyond trauma informed to being Healing Centered
- ▶ Trauma Impacts, Brain Development, Schools & classrooms
- ▶ Activities & Reflection Questions
- ▶ Later Life issues- Substance Use, Suicide, Helplines
- ▶ Future- Resilience and Brilliance-Culture Activities
- ▶ Framework for Healing-Traditional medicine
- ▶ Trauma Informed Leader & Community Level advocacy



What if I don't have tribes in my area

- May still have cases involving those of indigenous communities
- Happy to collaborate with you and assist as needed
- Still may have resources appropriate for cases across state.
- Majority 60%-70% live off Reservation





MMIP Liaison

Grace Johnson MS, LIMHP, LaDC

Grace.L.Johnson@nebraska.gov

402-646-8899

QUESTIONS?



► REFERENCES

- Graham, L. M., Macy, R. J., Eckhardt, I., Kupper, L. L., & Martin, S. L. (2021). Intimate partner homicide among American Indian and Alaska Native women: A 20-year national case-control study. *Journal of Women's Health, 30*(5), 711–718.
- Heron, M. (2021). *Deaths: Leading causes for 2019* (National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 70, No. 9). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics.
- Petrosky, E., Blair, J. M., Betz, C. J., Fowler, K. A., Jack, S. P., & Lyons, B. H. (2017). Racial and ethnic differences in homicides of adult women and the role of intimate partner violence — United States, 2003–2014. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 66*(28), 741–746.