



2023 AG REQUEST LEGISLATION

ESTABLISHING THE MISSING OR MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND PEOPLE COLD CASE INVESTIGATION UNIT WITHIN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

What's the problem?

American Indian and Alaskan Native women and people experience violence at much higher rates than other populations. The National Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reports that homicide is the sixth-leading cause of death for Indigenous women and girls and the third-leading cause of death for Indigenous men.¹ A recent federal study reported that Native American women are murdered at rates ten times the national average in some jurisdictions.²

According to data from the Homicide Investigation Tracking System in the Attorney General's Office, Indigenous victims are 5% of the unresolved cases throughout the state, while making up less than 2% of the population. Due to reporting practices, racial misclassification, data collection, and jurisdictional issues the actual disproportionality is likely even more significant.

Most law enforcement agencies in Washington State do not have dedicated cold case units, and can benefit from assistance from the Attorney General's Office. In 2018, the AGO conducted a survey asking local law enforcement agencies about their cold case needs. Fifty-six law enforcement agencies responded by indicating they would benefit from cold case assistance from the AGO.

What's the solution? **SB 5137 / HB 1177**

The Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force unanimously recommended the Legislature establish and fully fund a Cold Case Investigations Unit (CCIU) in the Attorney General's Office.

This legislation will create a CCIU within the Office of the Attorney General for the primary purpose of assisting local and tribal law enforcement agencies to solve cold cases involving missing and murdered indigenous women and people.

The CCIU will include investigators and a case navigator whose primary function is to work with and maintain regular, consistent communication with families of missing and murdered indigenous women and people, and to convey information between the investigators and families using culturally appropriate and trauma informed practices.

Prime Sponsor:

Rep. Lekanoff (D-40)
Sen. Dhingra (D-45)

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1: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *CDC Works to Address Violence Against American Indian and Alaskan Native People* (Report No. D2020-016). <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/pdfs/tribal/Violence-Against-Native-Peoples-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

2: Bachman, R., Zaykowski, H., Kallymer, R., Poteyeva, M., & Lanier, C. (2008). *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and the Criminal Justice Response: What is Known*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/223691.pdf>