

December 6, 2018

Governor Mike Dunleavy
Alaska State Capitol, 3rd Floor
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

We are reaching out about an important issue that has been ignored for far too long that needs your strong leadership and partnership to protect our Alaska Native women and girls.

There is a nationwide crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that murder is the third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women and that rates of violence on reservations and rural areas can be up to ten times higher than the national average.

In a recent study by the Urban Indian Health Institute, Anchorage was listed as having the third highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the state, and Alaska ranks fourth in the nation for the highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls cases. This is disturbing and heart breaking on so many levels.

Most recently, the community of Kotzebue laid to rest Ashley Johnson Barr, an Alaska Native girl of just ten years old after being brutally raped and murdered. This tragedy was felt all across our state. Unfortunately, Ashley is among too many women and girls to face these horrible acts of violence and if we do nothing, this will continue.

One of the main goals of all the organizations and individuals who are listed below, is to advocate for the wellness and protection of Alaska Native peoples. We need partners across the state from the Governor's office to troopers and police, to non-profits and communities to come together and be the voice for those who are being silenced through these acts of violence. We are reaching out to seek your assistance and leadership in helping us to address these tragedies, to stand up for Alaska Native women and children, and to send a clear message that this will not be the norm anymore.

We are urging your support to include funding in the state operating budget to investigate missing and murdered Indigenous women and to continue this funding as long as it is needed. We need the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Law to have the resources and the ability to work together to address this crisis – the lack of data and the need for special investigations is dire.

The National Crime Information Center reports that, in 2016, there were 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls, though the US Department of Justice's federal missing persons database (NamUs) only logged 116 cases. Furthermore, no research has been done on rates of such violence among American Indian and Alaska Native women living in urban areas despite the fact that approximately 71% of American Indian and Alaska Natives live in urban areas.

It is imperative that we have a collective effort to address the safety of our people. It is not just the responsibility of our government, but of our tribes, organizations and individuals to work together.

We appreciate your consideration and hope that we can work together to solve this crisis. Please do not hesitate to contact us, we stand ready and able to help in any way possible.

Gunalchéesh/Háw'aa/Quyana/Mahsi'/Baassee'/Maasee'/Dogedinh/Thank you,



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FAIRBANKS NATIVE
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Elizabeth Medicine Crow
President & CEO
First Alaskans Institute



KAWERAK, INC.

Melanie Bahnke
President & CEO
Kawerak, Inc.

PATHWAYS TO PREVENTION



WORKING TOGETHER TO END VIOLENCE

Rae Romberg
Statewide Steering Committee
Coordinator
Pathways for Prevention Statewide
Steering Committee