

A report on efforts to improve reporting and
reduce missing Indigenous persons in
Montana

Looping in Native Communities

Report to the State-Tribal
Relations Interim Committee

Montana Department of Justice
September 1, 2020



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**This report is dedicated to the Indigenous people of Montana who have gone missing.
May we find ways to improve response and bring loved ones home.**



Members of the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force
Billings Community Listening Session, February 6, 2020
Left to Right: Theresa Small, Valerie Falls Down, Patt Iron Cloud Runs Through,
Iris Kill Eagle, Jared Cobell, LeEllen McLeod, Derek Werner
Photo Credit: Billings Gazette

The Montana Attorney General and staff at the Montana Department of Justice are grateful to the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force members for their willingness to participate during the many meetings and community listening sessions throughout the year. Their work is the hallmark of collaboration and communication needed to improve response to missing Indigenous persons in Montana.

Executive Summary

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement has garnered significant media attention over the past five years. The term itself indicates that the majority of missing and murdered are female adults. A Montana Department of Justice data analysis project conducted in the spring of 2020 provides several key observations: Males go missing at a rate almost equal to females, Native Americans are disproportionately represented among the missing, and nearly 80% of the individuals that went missing between 2017-2019 were juveniles under the age of 18.

Montana is the sacred home for eight federally recognized tribes. Each tribal community, including those in urban areas, has suffered the loss of tribal members who have gone missing and never been found. Although 97.7% of Montanans are located, the remaining 2.3% represent children, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, aunties and uncles, grandparents and great-grandparents, elders, and friends.

The Montana State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee began studying the MMIW issue in 2017 and successfully presented bills to the state legislature that were passed in 2019. This report will provide an overview of national and state legislation, the work of the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force and the Montana Department of Justice staff that support them, as well as results of analysis of Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse data from 2017-2019.

Passage and implementation of Montana Senate Bill (SB) 312 has resulted in the following:

- Selection of the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force (MMIP Task Force)
- MMIP Task Force meetings held between June 2019 to August 2020
- Meetings with tribal law enforcement and tribal leaders
- Community listening sessions with tribal communities including urban Indian areas
- Collaboration with the Montana Missing Persons Specialist
- Collaboration with the National MMIP Coordinator for Montana
- Identification of barriers to reporting and responding to missing persons
- Recommendation of strategies to improve response
- Development of a reporting system within Native communities
- Analysis of missing persons data from 2017-2019
- Report of findings and recommendations to the Committee by September 1, 2020

Background

Montana covers 145,552 square miles, with a 2019 estimated population of 1,068,778 people – 694,966 living in rural Montana (USDA-ERS).¹ There are eight federally recognized tribes and the reservations include some of the largest in the United States. Approximately 78,000 Native Americans, or 6.5% of the state’s total population, live in Montana. Information about each tribes’ land and population, shown below, was found in the report “Montana Indians - Their History and Location” released in 2016 by the Montana Office of Public Instruction, Division of Indian Education.² Estimates of population are based on the 2010 U.S. Census.

Montana Reservations

- The Crow Reservation is home to the Crow Tribe of Indians in southeastern Montana. The tribe has almost 3.5 million acres, making it the largest in Montana. The reservation is located near Billings.
 - Tribal members living on or near the Crow Reservation 10,000
 - Tribal members living off the Crow Reservation 5,000
 - Total number of enrolled Tribal Members 14,500** (not all members have enrolled)
 - Communities include Crow Agency, Lodge Grass, Pryor, Wyola, St. Xavier
 - The reservation lies within the counties of Big Horn, Yellowstone, and Treasure
- The Fort Peck Indian Reservation has just over 2.0 million acres spreading across four counties. The Sioux and the Assiniboiné bands live in the extreme northeast corner of the state on tribal land that is 110 miles long and 40 miles wide.
 - Enrolled Sioux Members living on or near the Fort Peck Reservation 8,814
 - Enrolled Assiniboiné Members on or near the Fort Peck Reservation 4,668
 - Total number of enrolled Tribal Members 13,382
 - Another 1,000 members of other tribes live on Fort Peck Reservation
 - Communities include Wolf Point, Poplar, Frazer, Oswego, Brockton, Riverside and Ft. Kipp
 - The reservation lies within the counties of Roosevelt, Daniels, Sheridan, and Valley
- The Blackfeet Indian Reservation, located in northwestern Montana, is home to members of the Blackfeet Nation, one of the 10 largest tribes in the United States. The reservation spans 1.5 million acres.
 - Enrolled Members living on or near the Blackfeet Reservation 9,585
 - Enrolled Members living off the Blackfeet Reservation 7,665
 - Total number of enrolled Tribal Members 17,250
 - Communities include Browning, East Glacier, Babb, St. Mary, Starr School, Heart Butte, and Seville
 - The reservation lies within the counties of Glacier and Pondera
- The Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation is located in southeastern Montana and is 444,000 acres/690 square miles in size.

¹ Rural Health Information Hub. State Guides, Montana, accessed June 19, 2020
<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/states/montana>

² <https://www.visitmt.com/binaries/content/assets/mtot/pdfs/indian-country/montana-indians-their-history-and-location.pdf>

- Enrolled Members living on or near the Northern Cheyenne Reservation 4,939
- Enrolled Members living off the Northern Cheyenne Reservation 5,901
- Total number of enrolled Tribal Members 10,840
- Communities include Busby, Lame Deer, Ashland, Birney, and Muddy
- The reservation lies within the counties of Big Horn and Rosebud
- The Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation is 171 square miles and is located in north central Montana.
 - Enrolled Tribal Members living on or near the Rocky Boy's Reservation 3,750
 - Total number of residents 5,000
 - The community is Rocky Boy's Agency. The nearest town to the reservation is Box Elder.
 - The reservation lies within the counties of Hill and Choteau
- The Fort Belknap Reservation is located in north central Montana and is home to the Assiniboiné (Nakoda) and the Gros Ventre (A'aninin) tribes. The reservation covers just over 1,000 square miles and 697,000 acres.
 - Enrolled Members living on or near the Fort Belknap Reservation 4,546
 - Enrolled Members living off the Fort Belknap Reservation 2,826
 - Total number of enrolled Tribal Members 7,402
 - Communities include Lodge Pole, Hays, Fort Belknap Agency
 - The reservation lies within the counties of Blaine and Phillips
- The Flathead Reservation is home to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The reservation in northwest Montana is over 1.3 million acres in size.
 - Enrolled Members living on or near the Flathead Reservation 5,000
 - Enrolled Members living off the Flathead Reservation 2,920
 - Total number of enrolled Tribal Members 7,920
 - Communities include Ronan, Pablo, Arlee, St. Ignatius, Charlo, Moiese, and Ravalli
 - The reservation lies within the counties of Lake, Sanders, Missoula, and Flathead
- The Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians is newly recognized by the federal government (2019) and owns 3 acres of land near Great Falls, Montana.
 - Enrolled Members living throughout Montana and Canada 6,400
 - Great Falls is located in Cascade County

Montana Urban Native Americans

Across the United States, according to the 2010 Census, almost 78% of American Indian and Alaska Natives lived outside of American Indian and Alaska Native areas.³ In Montana, the majority live on-reservation though many live in Missoula, Billings, Great Falls, Butte, Helena and smaller communities throughout the state. The Montana OPI report also included the following information: In 2015, approximately 47% of American Indians in Montana lived off the reservation. As found in the 2010 Census:

- 989,415 - Montana total population

³ U.S. Census Bureau, January 25, 2012, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-cn06.html

- 78,601 - Montana American Indian/Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) population (alone or in combination with other races)
- 41,140 - AI/AN individuals lived within a reservation or trust land on April 1, 2010
- 37,461 - AI/AN individuals resided off-reservation

Given more recent population numbers, the number living off-reservation is now estimated to be over 45,000.

Missing in Montana

Although Indigenous people make up 6.5% of the overall state population, they are four times more likely to go missing in Montana. An average of 26% of the missing persons entered in the Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse are Native American.⁴ From 2017-2019, there were 830 missing Indigenous persons entered in the Clearinghouse, 491 of them female. Some of them are still actively missing like Ashley Loring HeavyRunner and Jermain Charlo. Montana is known to be among the top 5 states for missing and murdered Indigenous women.⁵ Awareness of the MMIW movement in the state has increased significantly over the past three years but young women from Indian reservations continue to disappear, often with no answers as to how, why, or where they went.



Ashley Loring HeavyRunner

Montana law enforcement have located or recovered almost 98% of those who went missing statewide during the 3-year period. However, there are many young Native American women who went missing and were found deceased. Henny Scott was 14 years old when she was found deceased in December 2018, two weeks after going missing. Kaysera Stops Pretty Places was reported missing by her family; her body was found two days later. Selena Not Afraid was left at a rest area on January 1, 2020 and wasn't found until January 20. The families are frustrated by confusing jurisdictional systems, lack of timely response, and what they consider to be inadequate autopsy results. The New York Times reported about Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, 18 years old, missing in August 2019, indicating that her family believes she was murdered.⁶

⁴ <https://dojmt.gov/missing-persons/data-project/>

⁵ Urban Indian Health Institute, "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report", page 11. <http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>

⁶ Jack Healy, "Rural Montana Had Already Lost Too Many Native Women. Then Salena Disappeared," New York Times, Jan 20, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/20/us/selena-not-afraid-missing-montana.html>

The New York Times article is one of several national stories that bring into question the evidence of young women who are found outdoors and who have died from exposure or hypothermia and their deaths characterized as accidental. Their families are not convinced. Selena Not Afraid went missing January 1, 2020 and was later found deceased, less than a mile from where she was left by friends at a rest area off Interstate-90, a busy highway between Billings and Hardin near the Crow Reservation. Olivia Reingold, a reporter for Montana Public Radio, wrote of Selena: “She was found 19 days later less than a mile from where she was last seen and classified as having died of hypothermia... Other cases include Kaysera Stops Pretty Places and Allison Highwolf, two Native American women who also died off of reservations in Big Horn County under circumstances that some activists consider suspicious.”⁷ Selena was 16 years old.



Selena Not Afraid

History of Legislation

National Legislation

In November 2019, President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order creating the *Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives*. The task force, designated *Operation Lady Justice*, will convene listening sessions and consultations with tribal leaders and citizens on the scope and nature of the issues; develop model protocols and procedures to apply to new and unsolved cases; establish a multi-disciplinary, multi-jurisdictional team to review cold cases; and address the need for greater clarity regarding roles, authorities, and jurisdiction throughout the life cycle of cases.⁸

During a visit to the Flathead Reservation in Montana, Attorney General Barr announced that he was launching a national strategy to address missing and murdered Native Americans. The strategy provides \$1.5 million in funding to place Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) coordinators in U.S. Attorney’s Offices in 11 states including Alaska, Arizona, Montana, Oklahoma, Michigan, Utah, Nevada, Minnesota, Oregon, New Mexico, and Washington State. These coordinators will develop protocols for a more coordinated law enforcement response to missing cases. The plan also includes deploying the FBI’s most

⁷ Olivia Reingold, “Montana MMIW Case Highlights Limitations of Federal Task Force,” Montana Public Radio, January 30, 2020, <https://www.mtpr.org/post/montana-mmiw-case-highlights-limitations-federal-task-force>

⁸ “Executive Order on Establishing the Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives,” WhiteHouse.gov, November 26, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-establishing-task-force-missing-murdered-american-indians-alaska-natives/>.

advanced response capabilities when requested, improved data collection and analysis, and training to support local response efforts.

The Task Force is required to develop and submit a report to the President by November 26, 2020 that will include:

1. Activities and accomplishments of the Task Force,
2. Status of projects the Task Force has not yet completed, and
3. Specific recommendations for future action of the Task Force.

A final written report to the President regarding activities and accomplishments of the Task Force is due by November 26, 2021.⁹

House Resolution 2733, *Savannah's Act*, named after Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind who was murdered in 2017, directs the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to review, revise, and develop law enforcement and criminal justice protocols to address missing and murdered Native Americans.¹⁰ The bill requires DOJ to take the following actions:

- Provide training to law enforcement agencies on how to record tribal enrollment for victims in federal databases
- Develop and implement a strategy to notify the public of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System
- Conduct specific outreach to tribes regarding the ability to publicly enter information through the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System or other non-law enforcement sensitive portal
- Develop regionally appropriate guidelines for response to cases of missing and murdered Native Americans
- Provide training and technical assistance to tribes and law enforcement agencies for implementation of the developed guidelines
- Report statistics on missing and murdered Native Americans

The bill authorizes DOJ to provide grants for the purposes of:

1. Developing and implementing policies and protocols for law enforcement regarding cases of missing and murdered Native Americans, and
2. Compiling and reporting data relating to missing and murdered Native Americans. Federal law enforcement agencies must modify their guidelines to incorporate the guidelines developed by DOJ. The Federal Bureau of Investigation shall include gender in its annual statistics on missing and unidentified persons published on its website.

⁹ "Attorney General William P. Barr Launches National Strategy to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons, "United States Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, November 22, 2019, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-william-p-barr-launches-national-strategy-address-missing-and-murdered>.

¹⁰ House Resolution 2733 Savannah's Act, 116th Congress (2019-2020), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2733/text>

Montana Legislation

The state of Montana began focusing on missing and murdered Indigenous women during the 2017-2018 legislative interim when the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee requested information on human trafficking, violence against women, and missing persons. Throughout the interim session, the Committee received information on these interrelated topics, including available data from state and national databases and studies. The Montana Department of Justice provided a report titled *Montana's Missing and Endangered Response Summary: A Review of Existing Programs and Services* that included an overview of current state and federal programs, databases, and services provided for missing persons. Response programs available through the Montana Department of Justice included:¹¹

1. Criminal Justice Information Network (CJIN) - the state's link to the FBI's National Criminal Information Center
2. Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse (MMPC) - the database of missing persons in Montana
3. Montana Missing Person System (MMPS) - a searchable website providing information on Montana's missing persons
4. AMBER Alert - a national public alert system that provides notification of the abduction of a child under life-threatening circumstances
5. MEPA - a statewide alert system that provides notification of a missing person in danger
6. DOJ Office of the Child and Family Ombudsman - an entity to which the state Department of Public Health and Human Services, Child and Family Services Division is required to report missing children who are in the custody of the state
7. DOJ Human Trafficking Project - providing statewide training to law enforcement

The report also identified gaps where improvements could be made. Many of those were implemented under Montana Department of Justice recommendations, such as a database to access school photos for use in missing child posters and Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse entries in the event a child went missing.

Subject matter experts, stakeholders, and interested public testified to communication challenges with law enforcement, timely and accurate information from reporting parties which create delays, inadequate resources, and jurisdictional challenges that prevented successful response to missing persons. The disappearance of tribal members over previous years enforced the Committee's desire to address and increase resources and improve policies and practice. The Committee developed several proposals for the upcoming 2019 legislative session and adopted the following:¹²

¹¹ <https://leg.mt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2017-2018/State-Tribal-Relations/Meetings/Sept-2017/state-missing-persons-overview.pdf>

¹² <https://leg.mt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2017-2018/State-Tribal-Relations/Committee-Topics/strc-addressing-an-epidemic-2018.pdf>

- ❖ LC 322, 2019 - “Hanna’s Act” named after Hanna Harris, a young Northern Cheyenne woman, who went missing in July 2013 and was subsequently found murdered four days later. Hanna’s family felt they experienced an inadequate response to their report of Hanna going missing by local law enforcement and tribal police. *Hanna’s Act* would authorize the Department of Justice to assist with all missing persons cases. This proposal also included the creation of a missing persons specialist at the DOJ, whose responsibilities include working with all law enforcement authorities and families, overseeing entries into



Hanna Harris

- the National Crime Information Center database, managing the state database and website, and providing public outreach and education. The specialist would be required to complete cultural competency training.
- ❖ LC 320, 2019 – requiring all law enforcement authorities to accept a missing persons report and revising requirements for the report of missing children. The proposal included exceptions for extenuating circumstances.
- ❖ LC 321, 2019 – a resolution requesting an interim study of options to break the cycle of youth who run away from home.
- ❖ LC 317, 2019 – requiring a missing child report to be filed in custodial interference cases when the whereabouts of the child are unknown.
- ❖ LC 319, 2019 – requiring the Office of Public Instruction to establish an electronic repository for school photos of children whose parents give permission for the photo to be held and shared with law enforcement if the child goes missing.

The resulting bills were passed at the end of the 2019 session:

- ❖ House Bill (HB) 54 - requires all law enforcement agencies in the state to immediately accept reports of missing persons, regardless of who reports or where the report is issued. The bill also establishes that minimum information about the missing person must be collected by the agency and anyone under the age of 21 must be added to the nationwide database of missing persons within two hours of a report being made. Reports for those 21 and older must be added to the nationwide database within eight hours of a report being made.
- ❖ House Bill 20 - revises laws related to the reporting of missing children and requires reports to be filed in certain custodial interference cases.
- ❖ House Bill 21- *Hanna’s Act* authorizes the Department of Justice to assist with the investigation of all missing persons cases, and allows the employment of a Missing Persons Specialist position within the Montana Department of Justice’s Division of Criminal Investigation to work with tribal, local, state, and federal officials to improve

training and response on missing persons cases. The Specialist will also manage the state's missing persons database.

- ❖ Senate Bill 312 - a companion bill to *Hanna's Act*, creates the Looping in Native Communities Network Grant Program and the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force. The bill provides a competitive grant for a tribal college to develop and maintain a central location for collecting, storing, and securing missing indigenous persons data, providing grant funds to tribal agencies to establish access to the network, and requiring the task force to administer the grant program.
- ❖ Senate Bill 40 – requires the Office of Public Instruction to create and maintain an electronic directory photograph repository to be used only if a student is identified as a missing child, allowing a parent or guardian to opt in to participate in the repository, requiring school districts to send an annual notice with opt in provisions to parents and guardians, and authorizing Department of Justice staff access the repository.

The passage of these bills by the Montana Legislature was a testament to the work of Montana Department of Justice and lawmakers' efforts to build on missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) awareness and the need to address these issues in native communities and statewide.

Signing MMIW Legislation



Governor Bullock is joined by the Montana American Indian Caucus member Rep. Rae Peppers who sponsored several bills as he signs a legislative package that addresses MMIW. Melissa Schlichting, Deputy Attorney General, and family members affected by the MMIW crisis stand behind them.

Photo Credit: State of Montana

Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force

Table 1: Montana MMIP Task Force Members

Montana Attorney General's Office	Melissa Schlichting, Presiding Officer
Blackfeet Nation	Mark Pollock, Councilman
Chippewa Cree Tribe	Joe Demontiney, Councilman
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes	LeEllen McLeod, Councilwoman
Crow Nation	Valerie Falls Down
Fort Belknap Reservation	Vacant
Fort Peck Assiniboiné & Sioux Tribes	Patt Iron Cloud Runs Through, Councilwoman
Little Shell Chippewa Tribe	Iris Kill Eagle, Councilwoman
Northern Cheyenne Tribe	Brandi Beckman; Theresa Small, Alternate
Montana Highway Patrol	Sgt. Derek Werner
U.S. Attorney's Office, MT District *	Jared Cobell, Tribal Liaison Coordinator
Indian Health Services *	Dr. Steve Williamson
U.S. Department of Justice	Ernst Weyand, Murdered and Missing Persons Coordinator
Montana Department of Justice	Brian Frost, Missing Persons Specialist
Montana Department of Justice	Tina Chamberlain, LINC Coordinator
* added upon recommendation of Task Force members	

Montana Senate Bill 312 required the formation of a statewide missing Indigenous persons task force including representatives from each of the state's eight federally recognized tribes, a representative from the Attorney General's Office, a representative from the Montana Department of Justice who has expertise in the subject of missing persons, and the Montana Highway Patrol. Task Force members were appointed in June 2019 by Montana Attorney General Tim Fox.

“We can and must do more to work together to bring home missing persons from Indian Country. I’m confident the members of the Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force will make positive strides in determining the scope of this issue as well as bring forward good recommendations to increase cooperation among public safety agencies and tribal governments” – Tim Fox, Montana Attorney General¹³

During the Task Force's first meeting, members identified the need to include representatives from the U.S. Attorney General's Office (Montana District) and Indian Health Services. The Task Force met throughout the following year to discuss the many issues that arise when community members go missing. Topics included:

- Increasing numbers of missing indigenous persons
- Factors that prevent timely reporting – fear of law enforcement involvement, bias, stigma

¹³ Montana Department of Justice, “Members of Legislature’s Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force Appointed,” [Press Release] June 6, 2019, <https://dojmt.gov/legislature-missing-indigenous-persons-task-force-appointed/>

- Jurisdictional issues between local law enforcement, tribal police, federal law enforcement and the FBI
- Lack of personnel to respond, particularly on larger reservations like Fort Peck, Northern Cheyenne, and Crow
- Lack of financial resources for response when a case starts: food, shelter, gas for searchers and volunteers
- Inadequate advocacy for families in communicating with law enforcement
- Inadequate social services in responding to mental health, substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, and domestic violence
- Media and social media influence
- Impacts of drug use and trafficking, primarily marijuana and methamphetamine
- Impacts of human trafficking along interstate corridors and in the Bakken oil region



MMIP Task Force Meeting, Billings, Feb.7, 2020

Task Force Activities

Dates and Locations of MMIP Task Force Meetings

Melissa Schlichting, MMIP Task Force Presiding Officer, coordinated with the Missing Persons Specialist and the LINC Coordinator to schedule frequent meetings of the MMIP Task Force throughout the first year, including the following in-person meetings:

- June 11, 2019 – Helena - Initial Task Force Meeting
- August 10, 2019 – Great Falls – Task Force Meeting
- September 27, 2019 – Billings - Task Force Meeting
- October 10, 2019 – Task Force Conference Call
- November 15, 2019 – Great Falls – Task Force Meeting
- December 19, 2019 – Task Force Conference Call

- February 6-7, 2020 – Billings – Task Force Meeting

Meetings with the Task Force were slightly delayed after the COVID-19 pandemic struck but meetings resumed in April via conference calls and online video conferences.

- April 22, 2020 – conference call
- June 3, 2020 – online video conference
- July 22, 2020 – online video conference
- August 13, 2020 – online video conference

The meetings were posted in advance in accordance with state of Montana public meeting laws and allowed for public comment. Agenda items for each meeting can be found in Appendix A.

[Dates and Locations of Community Listening Sessions](#)

The Task Force determined the best way to understand how families are impacted when a loved one goes missing is to have public opportunities for personal accounts and feedback. Community meetings and listening sessions provided concerned community members, involved agencies, and families an avenue to inform members about the difficulties faced when reporting or responding.

The Looping in Native Communities Coordinator and the Missing Persons Specialist traveled to tribal reservations and urban Indian areas to build relationships with the local law enforcement and community members. When possible, meetings were coordinated with training events to educate the public about state and national databases and current available resources.

Community listening sessions were conducted in the following tribal areas:

- October 15, 2019 – Crow Agency – Crow Tribe
- November 12, 2019 – Crow Agency – Crow Tribe
- November 20, 2019 – Northern Cheyenne, Lane Deer – Northern Cheyenne Tribe
- December 3, 2019 – Blackfeet Nation – Blackfeet Tribe
- December 5, 2019 – Great Falls – Little Shell Chippewa Tribe
- January 15, 2020 – Flathead Reservation – Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
- January 22, 2020 – Missoula Urban Indian Center/Payne Center
- February 6, 2020 – Billings City College
- March 12, 2020 – Helena Indian Alliance
- July 16, 2020 – Harlem Public Library



Community Listening Session with the Little Shell Tribe and members of the public in Great Falls, December 5, 2019

The team also provided education and outreach about missing persons during the following events:

- June 12, 2019 – Helena – Missing Persons Training
- October 16, 2019 – Billings – Missing Persons Training
- October 24, 2019 – American Indian Tribal Education Consortium Meeting – Great Falls
- November 6, 2019 – Diverse U/University of Montana - Tabled MMIW event
- November 20, 2019 – Gallatin County Human Trafficking Task Force Meeting – Bozeman

Additional training and outreach events had been scheduled but were postponed due to the COVID-19 epidemic and state of Montana restrictions.

“A unified approach amongst our communities is long overdue – and it may be the only way to keep our children safe. Let us work together at every level, to bring closure and justice to our Region. We are the voice of the MMIP, those who are no longer with us, to bring justice to the family and friends affected.” – Alvin Not Afraid, Jr. Chairman, Crow Tribe of Indians

Process

Task Force members coordinated with Montana Department of Justice and the LINC Coordinator to arrange listening sessions with the community, law enforcement, and tribal leaders. These sessions were planned to provide supportive and safe places for community members to share their thoughts about their experiences with missing family members or with law enforcement. Meetings with Tribal leaders and law enforcement were scheduled separately to ensure that everyone felt secure in talking to the Task Force members and each other. Separate meetings also ensured that law enforcement could speak to their current efforts, including any current or recent missing person cases, without divulging sensitive information to the public. Note that BIA Law Enforcement was unable to participate due to federal agency rules.

During each community listening session, the Missing Persons Specialist provided a presentation or update on the current missing persons list with special attention to the status of missing Indigenous persons. The LINC Coordinator provided a short presentation or overview on the legislation that created the Task Force and the requirements of the members. Cultural sensitivity was acknowledged in every forum with the intent to provide attendees a space within which to speak freely and without judgement. Those who attended were asked to voluntarily provide their name on a sign-in sheet to validate that a community listening session had taken place.

During these meetings, staff did not use a formal recording process for feedback therefore the themes and key takeaways are qualitative in nature rather than quantitative. In future phases of LINC, the addition of a research component would provide strong data in recording community and stakeholder responses.

Four general questions were presented to each community:

1. What do you see as barriers to reporting missing persons in your area?
2. What do you see as successes to reporting missing persons in your area?
3. What are the most significant issues that lead to people going missing?
4. Do tribal support services collaborate well with law enforcement?

Responses

Community members provided the following responses during listening sessions across the state:

Table 2: Barriers to Reporting

Barriers to Reporting
• Not sure if there's a waiting period before it's ok to report
• Don't know who to call to report
• Report to law enforcement may not be taken seriously: "they're out partying" or kids are "looking for attention"
• Missing person reports are too long to fill out; may not be able to finish forms with all the required information; some law enforcement won't begin until the forms are complete
• There aren't enough law enforcement officers to respond on the larger reservations
• Lack of street signs and addresses makes it difficult for officers new to the area
• Lack of trust in law enforcement; some people fear reporting to law enforcement because of active warrants, bias, or stigma
• When families do report, they don't get regular updates on the case; in long-term missing cases families don't know if their case is still being worked
• Families feel law enforcement needs training on mandatory reporting protocol and response
• Families feel like there's no one to advocate for them or act as a liaison to explain the process

- Families feel there's no accountability for law enforcement agencies who don't take reports, when a missing person is found deceased, or when families are unsatisfied with the case and its outcomes

Table 3: Successes in local areas

Successes in local areas
• Law enforcement seems to be stepping up in response in some communities
• Domestic violence programs are gaining awareness
• Local law enforcement is looped in with Disaster and Emergency Services
• Police are out and about building relationships with community members
• Sharing information on Facebook – gets people involved quickly
• Search and rescue groups are being created in communities

Table 4: Issues that lead to people going missing

Issues that lead to people going missing
• Not enough law enforcement to respond in a timely manner
• Lack of manpower and resources
• Poverty, depression, anger, hatred, lack of food, discrimination against their own
• Traditional values no longer meaningful to younger generation
• Community members need to be educated to know how to work with law enforcement that has jurisdiction
• Everyone needs to know how different systems (social services; schools; mental health; substance abuse) work on the reservation
• Need more adults caring about kids
• Neighbors don't help out or report when they see something suspicious
• Generational trauma leads to substance abuse, child abuse

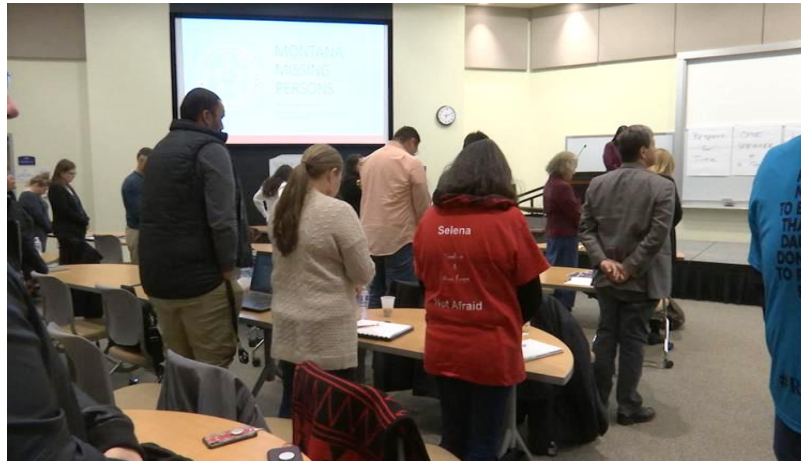
“Specific to missing persons, there is a nexus to all of it. Drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, child abduction — it's not just one thing. They are all connected,” said Misty LaPlant, former Montana Department of Justice Missing Persons Specialist.¹⁴

Table 5: Collaboration

Collaboration
• Community members don't know what agencies exist, what services they provide, how they can help in a missing persons case or to prevent someone going missing

¹⁴ Juliana Sukut, “Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force Holds Meeting in Billings,” Billings Gazette, September 27, 2019, https://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/mmiw/montana-missing-indigenous-persons-task-force-holds-meeting-in-billings/article_47b59f1c-b425-5ff5-897a-a73d4152813a.html

- Communities need to be educated to know how to work with law enforcement
- Need to understand what jurisdiction means and who has it
- Want law enforcement to be watching out for the community rather than just out arresting people; want to see them as part of the solution



Billings Community Listening Session, February 6, 2020

Melissa Schlichting, Presiding Officer of the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force, said "Missing people affect us all...for those who have missing people from their families... it's vitally important that we examine the issues and we look at the scope of the problem and determine why people go missing and then also address issues that arise when people go missing and how law enforcement and other agencies respond to those cases."¹⁵

Looping in Native Communities Grant Program

Senate Bill 312 also established the Looping in Native Communities Grant Program to create a network in support of efforts by Montana tribes to identify, report, and find Native American persons who are missing. The grant program is administered by the Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force.

The grant program includes the ability for a competitive grant to be awarded to a tribal college to create and administer a central administration point for the Looping in Native Communities network. The grant from the Montana Department of Justice is a match of \$25,000 to a single tribal college. Staff at the Montana Department of Justice created the application and criteria; the Task Force approved the application on October 15, 2019. Notification of the application was

¹⁵ Audrey Mayer, "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force Holds Community Meeting," Montana Right Now, February 6, 2020, https://www.montanarightnow.com/regional/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-task-force-holds-community-meeting/article_132b293d-41d1-5e2c-8ceb-b6ba0013534e.html

sent to all Montana Tribal College Presidents, including a presentation at the American Indian Tribal Education Consortium Meeting in Great Falls on October 24, 2019.

The application period opened on November 1, 2019 with a deadline of December 13, 2019. There were no responses to the application during that time. Tribal colleges had already established annual budgets for the 2019-2020 school year; finding available funds, developing a project, and getting stakeholders on board in a short time period with little advanced notice were challenges for most of the colleges. The Task force met on December 19, 2019 and approved extending the deadline to January 25, 2020.

Blackfeet Community College submitted a proposal during the application period to implement the following:

Phase 1:

Develop a website with an online portal containing information about missing persons, resources, and a form to complete if families choose not to report directly to law enforcement.

1. Develop a standard reporting form that will allow a data specialist to enter information about the missing Indigenous person including, but not limited to the missing person's:
 - a. Name and any aliases or nicknames
 - b. Gender, age, height, weight, and other physical descriptive characteristics
 - c. Last known location and related information, including the date of last contact with the missing Indigenous person and the person with whom the missing Indigenous person last made contact
 - d. Photographs, including photographs obtained from an online or social media profile
2. Develop a notification protocol to law enforcement, tribal, and community organizations when a missing Indigenous person report is made
3. Determine which law enforcement agency will receive the alert
4. Send the investigating agency the completed missing person form and any pictures of the person
5. Provide support to the person completing the form, understanding that there may be computer literacy issues, questions about the process, questions about what the family can expect for next steps, etc.
6. Compile all data that comes into the website in a database
7. Develop agreements with local law enforcement agencies to ensure the information will be accepted by law enforcement and a case will be opened
8. Implement the website and database, protocols, and support within the Blackfeet Reservation
9. Provide outreach and education within the community about the system so that community members will utilize it

Phase 2:

1. Contact the other seven tribes and help facilitate the technology, maintenance, and support needed to create the network

Phase 3:

1. Ensure full implementation of the system within all tribal reservations
2. Develop an application that will push notifications to the public when a person is entered into the system; provide ability for the public to see at a glance who is currently missing, give tips, link to social media

The Task Force members reviewed and scored the Blackfeet Community College application using pre-determined criteria. The Task Force voted to award grant funds to the applicant on February 7, 2020. The Montana Department of Justice developed the grant award, special conditions, and reporting requirements; the award was signed by the Tribal College and the Montana Department of Justice, and the funds were released to the college on March 15, 2020 in accordance with statutory requirements.

The LINC Coordinator and the Missing Persons Specialist traveled to the Blackfeet Reservation to meet with project staff at Blackfeet Community College on February 25, 2020 to provide technical assistance on the grant project. In March 2020, travel restrictions and work from home orders for state employees were put into place in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Tribal college employees were subject to the Blackfeet tribe's restrictions in response to the pandemic. Work on the project was delayed until mid-July as the college closed for the remainder of the spring semester. As of this report, development of the website, form, and database system are underway. A data specialist has been hired as well as a missing person family liaison; they will begin work when the college resumes activity. The project team will meet with area law enforcement and tribal leaders to ensure success upon completion of the system. Implementation of Phases 2 and 3 are dependent on passage of legislation to extend the work of the Task Force and of LINC through June 2023.

MMIP Task Force Recommendations to the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee

When reviewing the community listening session responses, the Task Force identified four themes that seemed common among Native American communities regardless of whether they were urban Indian areas or reservations:

1. Limited law enforcement resources – lack of adequate personnel
2. Lack of standardized protocols when a person is reported missing
3. Lack of communication:
 - a. Between law enforcement and families
 - b. Between agencies – Tribal law enforcement, BIA, Montana Highway Patrol, Child Protective Services, FBI, police and sheriff departments

4. Lack of accountability of system-based agencies

The Task Force discussed feedback and key observations from each listening session to identify additional questions: How do jurisdictions work and are they meeting the needs of families? Are there areas where significant gaps remain? How can agency responses and services to families be improved within and across jurisdictions? What resources do communities need?

In March 2020, after discussions and presentations by Montana DOJ staff and experts in the field throughout the year, the Task Force identified four strategies to recommend to the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee for possible legislation during the next session:

1. Missing Persons Response Teams – similar to child abduction response teams
 - a. Team Coordinator – understands the tribal/non-tribal agencies involved; connection to law enforcement with ability to determine scope of how the person went missing and when to call in appropriate resources
 - b. Family Liaison – acts as buffer with media, communicates any information from law enforcement, provides resources and referrals (i.e. mental health services, tribal healer, spiritual leader)
 - c. Search and Rescue
 - i. Volunteer Search Coordinator
 - ii. Mobile Command Unit
 - iii. Resources: ATVs, drones, dogs, helicopters, safety officers, thermal imaging equipment
 - iv. Food and lodging, clothing and gear
2. Implement Missing Persons Investigators to assist on the ground
3. Implement Missing Indigenous Person Review Team – based on Montana Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission and Native American Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission
 - a. Identify gaps in Montana’s state and tribal systems for finding missing Native Americans
 - b. Identify ways to improve multi-agency coordination
 - c. Identify recommendations to the Legislature to improve results in missing person cases
4. Continue the work of the MMIP Task Force and continued funding for the LINC program

Members of the Task Force and DOJ staff attended the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee meetings over the summer to provide guidance and help clarify ways in which the recommendations could be developed and implemented. The State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee will review the Task Force recommendations for potential consideration in the 2021 Legislature:

1. Establish a Missing Persons Review Commission – the Commission will examine the trends and patterns of missing Indigenous persons in Montana; educate the public, law enforcement, and policymakers about missing Indigenous persons and strategies for investigation and prevention; and recommend policies and practices that may encourage jurisdictional collaboration and coordination and reduce the incidence of missing persons.
2. Establish a Missing Person Response Team Training Grant Program – the grant program will help fund training opportunities for community-based missing persons response teams. Eligible teams may be multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional and include other community entities and volunteers. Eligible teams shall establish memorandums of understanding between the involved entities; develop operational procedures and criteria under which a team activation can occur; and participate in a community action planning effort conducted in accordance with department guidelines. Eligible training expenses include but are not limited to the licensing costs of a training program, facilitator and conference location fees, and travel expenses for training staff and trainees.
3. Extend the Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force – the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force will be extended to June 30, 2023.
4. Extend the Looping in Native Communities Act and grant program – the LINC grant program will be extended to June 30, 2023; the Looping in Native Communities grant will be extended and open to all tribal entities and will allow costs for the technology, maintenance, and fees for online access to the web-based reporting/database system for missing Indigenous persons.

"It has been an absolute honor and privilege to be able to work with this task force. I have so many mixed emotions. On one hand, I am deeply saddened that there is even a need for a committee such as this. On the other hand, I am so proud of this team and the members who have stepped up to advocate for change as needed to ensure that the voices of our indigenous women, children, people, are being heard. My heart aches for the families who have missing loved ones and it aches for the ones who are missing. I humbly ask that if you have the opportunity to help in any way please, please do so. These are not just numbers...they are our daughters, our sisters, our aunts, our mothers, our friends...and they need you. We need you!"

- LeEllen Bundy McLeod, MMIP Task Force Member, CSKT Tribal Council

Data Analysis

A 2016 report from the National Crime Information Center stated 5,712 reports of missing AI/AN women and girls were entered¹⁶ yet only 116 of those cases were entered into NamUs,¹⁷ the U.S. Department of Justice's federal missing persons database. Data surrounding missing indigenous women became a growing concern both nationally and within Montana.

According to a 2018 report by the Associated Press "...nobody knows precisely how cases of missing and murdered Native American women happen nationwide because many cases go unreported, others aren't well-documented and no government database specifically tracks them."¹⁸

In 2017, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI), a tribal epidemiology center, began studying cases of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women and girls. To understand the lack of data within some national systems, UIHI sought to collect data from urban American Indian communities across the United States, including cities in Montana. The result of searches from law enforcement records, state and national databases, media coverage, social media and accounts from community and family members indicated 506 unique cases of MMIW across 71 select cities. 128 were missing, 280 were murdered, 98 were listed as unknown status, and an additional 153 cases were not present within law enforcement records. Montana was the fifth highest state with number of total cases (41).¹⁹

Members from the Montana Attorney General's Office and the Department of Justice began an in-depth review of missing persons in February 2020 with the intent to help law enforcement agencies locate missing persons, inform policymakers to craft better solutions, and help communities prevent people from going missing. The data included every missing person entry over a three-year period, 2017-2019, from the Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse. Additional records from the Department of Public Health and Human Services' Child and Family Services Division (CFSD), and autopsy reports from the state crime laboratory were reviewed. Reports of missing persons were entered by 100 law enforcement agencies including sheriff's offices, police departments, 911 centers, tribal police departments, and US BIA law enforcement. See Appendix B. The data analysis revealed the following key observations:

1. 5,570 missing person entries were made to the Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse (3 entries had coding errors, therefore the number of entries in the analysis is **5,567**)
2. There were **3,254** unique individuals
3. 80.5% of the individuals were under the age of 18

¹⁶ Kaylen Howard and Tilly Marlatt, "Murdered and Missing Native American Women Challenge Police and Courts," The Center for Public Integrity, August 27, 2018, <https://publicintegrity.org/politics/murdered-and-missing-native-american-women-challenge-police-and-courts/>

¹⁷ Department of Justice (2018). NamUs. Retrieved from <https://www.namus.gov/MissingPersons/Search>

¹⁸ Associated Press, "Task Force on Missing Native Americans Resumes Sessions," June 2, 2020, <https://www.nhnews.com/news/2020/jun/02/task-force-missing-native-americans-resumes-sessio/>

¹⁹ <http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>

4. Little significant difference between the number of females and males who go missing
5. 60% of the entries were tied to juveniles who went missing more than once
6. Juveniles went missing up to 21 times over the three-year period
7. Most people reported missing are found - 97.7%
8. Of the top 10 counties with missing persons per capita, three included reservations

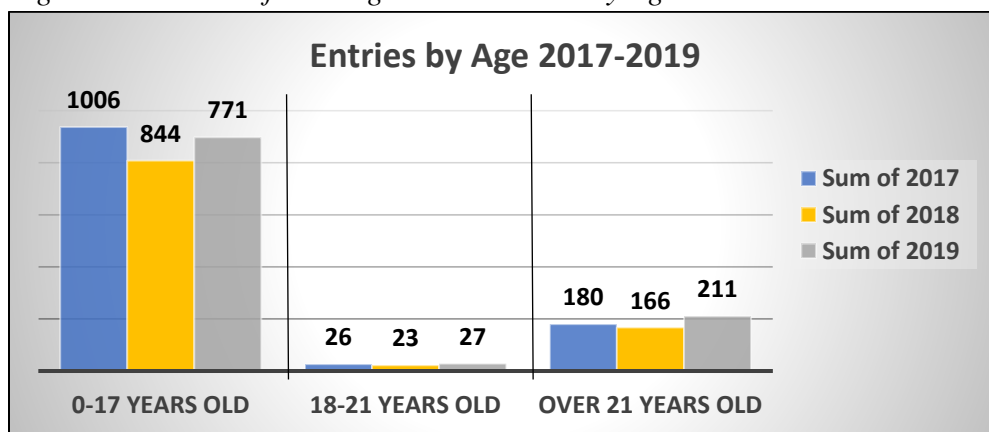
Data analysis was conducted by DOJ staff for Phase 1 of a potential multi-phase project. Although key points were observed and are listed above, no other conclusions were drawn that would lead one to identify causal issues leading to a missing person (i.e. social services, poverty, intersections with domestic and sexual violence, etc.). Additional phases of data review could include data from the Office of Public Instruction, Office of the Court Administrator, CFSD, juvenile and probation records, and tribal court records.

The Montana State University Statistical Consulting and Research Services group provided validation and analysis of the Montana Department of Justice data project. See Appendix D for methodology and further information on the data analysis.

Age

Juveniles under the age of 18 make up approximately one quarter of Montana's population (229,434)²⁰ with slightly more males than females (m=117,651; f=111,783). Of 5,500+ entries in the Missing Persons Clearinghouse, there were 3,254 unique individuals. More than 80% of those individuals (2,621) were under the age of 18. See Appendix C. The age groups were divided into the following categories to align with state and federal definitions for juveniles: 0-17, 18-21, and over 21. The number of juveniles fluctuated somewhat over the three-year period but was markedly consistent, as were the age groups 18-21 and those over 21 years of age.

Figure 1: Number of Missing Person Entries by Age and Year

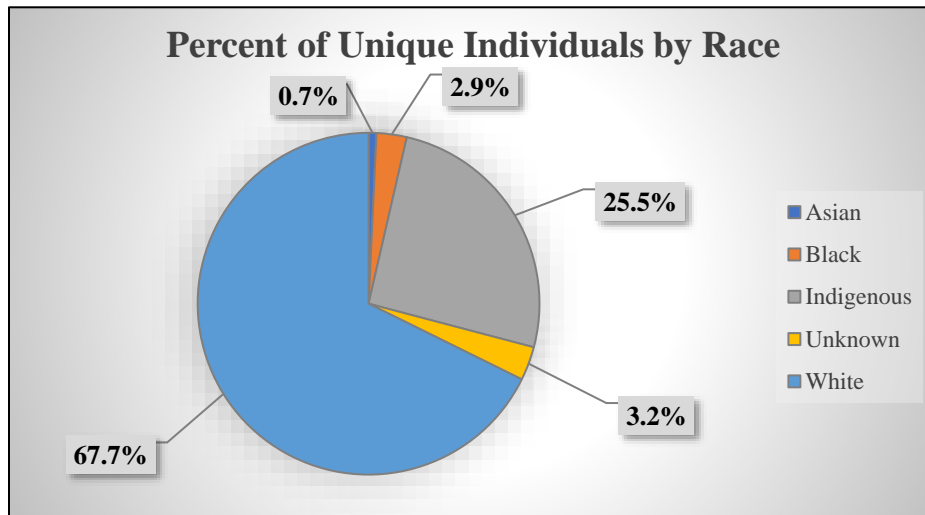


²⁰ Easy Access to Juvenile Populations 1990-2018, Population Profiles, Montana, accessed June 19, 2020. https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/asp/profile_selection.asp

Race

According to the U.S. Census, 2019, the estimated population in Montana was 1,068,778.²¹ 89% of the population is White, 6.6% is Native American, 0.6% is Black, and 0.9% is Asian. As seen in Figure 2 the majority of Montana's missing persons were white ($n=2,203$, 68%) compared to Native American ($n=830$, 26%), Black ($n=93$, 3%), Asian ($n=24$, <1%) and Unknown ($n=104$, 3%). A disproportionate number of Montana's reported missing persons are Native American (3.9 times their population) and Black (5 times their population).

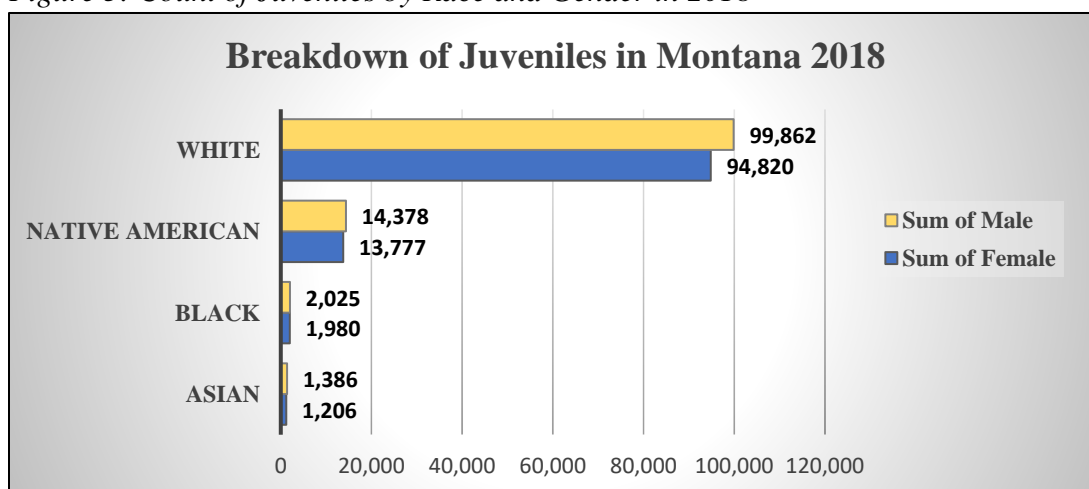
Figure 2: Percent of Unique Individuals by Race



Native Americans are 4 times more likely to go missing than Whites

Race groups are not Hispanic. Hispanic persons can be any race and account for 6.3% of Montana's juvenile population. Juvenile Whites make up 80.4%, American Indian 10.7%, Black 1.5%, and Asian 1%.²² The breakdown of juveniles by race in Montana as of 2018 is shown.

Figure 3: Count of Juveniles by Race and Gender in 2018



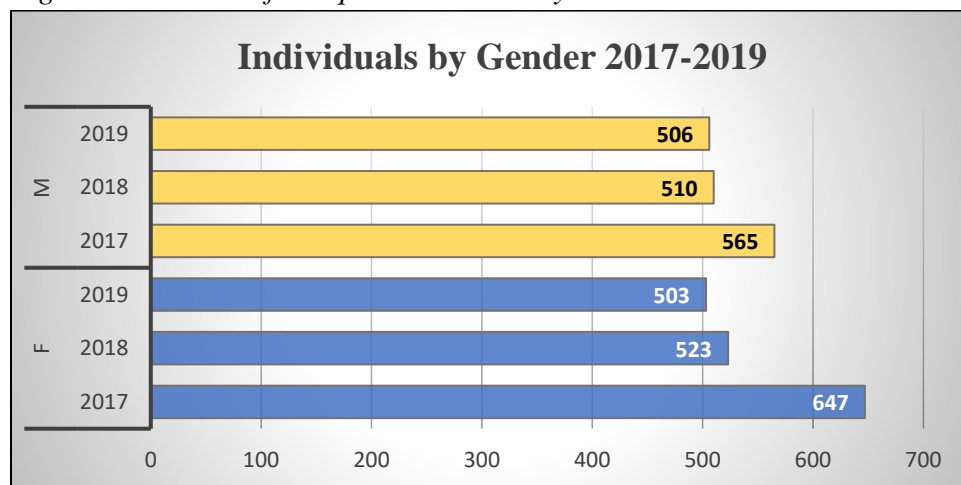
²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts, Montana, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/MT/PST045219>

²² Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Juvenile Population Characteristics, Montana, accessed June 19, 2020. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/population/qa01103.asp?qaDate=2017&text=no&maplink=link3>

Gender

In Montana, males are estimated to make up 50.3% of the population with females at 49.7%. The number of females that went missing compared to males was just slightly higher over the three-year time period (f=1,673, 51.4%; m=1,581, 48.6%). See Appendix D. *Note -Missing Person Clearinghouse entries are not identified as two-spirit or trans-individual.*

Figure 4: Number of Unique Individuals by Gender and Year



However, there were a disproportionate number of Indigenous females as compared to males among Clearinghouse individuals (830 total Indigenous missing: f=491; m=339).

Figure 5: Percentage of Indigenous Individuals by Gender

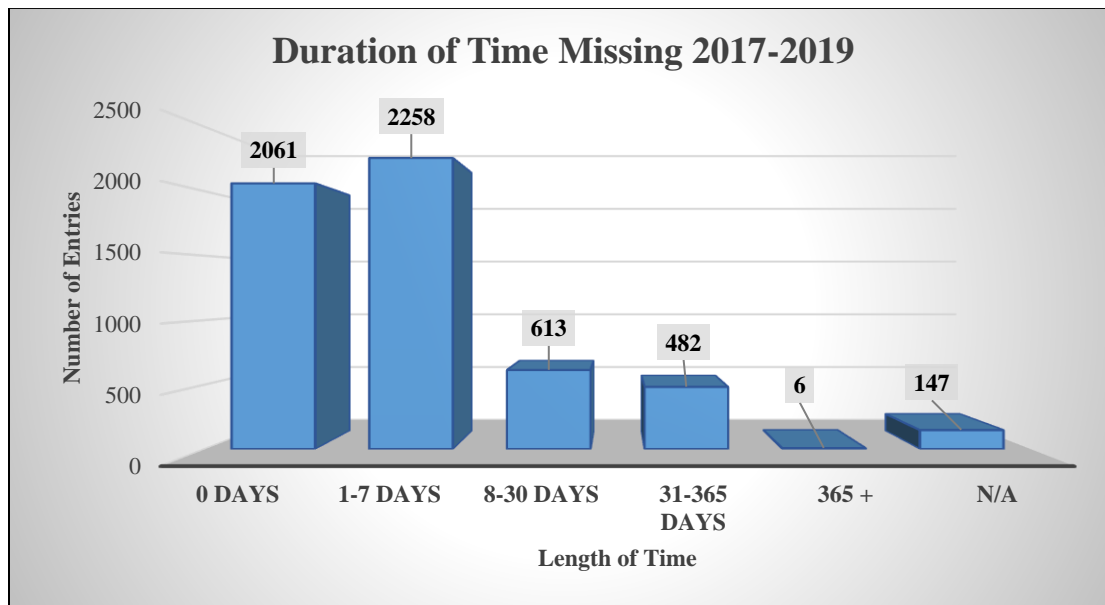


Duration of Time Missing

The length of time that individuals were missing varied widely over the three-year period. Duration of time was measured beginning with the date and time the record was entered by law enforcement into the database. All entries had a beginning date of at least January 1, 2107 (when the record was created) and an end date if they had been found as of 12/31/2019. If a person was found after 12/31/19 or was considered actively missing as of 1/1/20, they were not included in

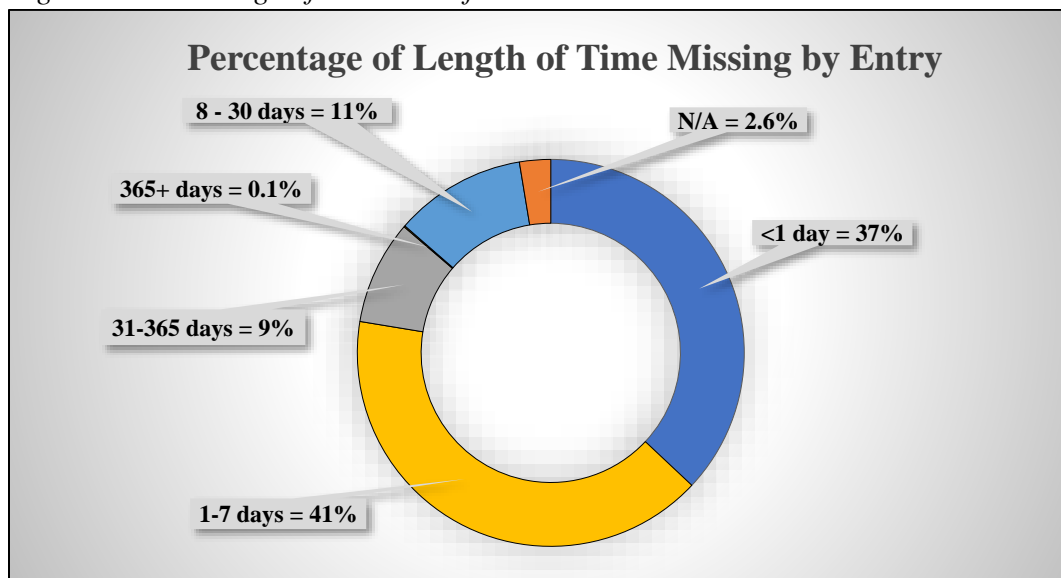
this count ($n=147$). The majority of people are missing anywhere from 0-7 days ($n=4,319$ or 78%) meaning that the highest percentage of cases are resolved within either the same day or within seven days.

Figure 6: Duration of Time Missing



Most people who were entered in the clearinghouse were missing 1-7 days ($n=41\%$) followed by less than 1 day ($n=37\%$).

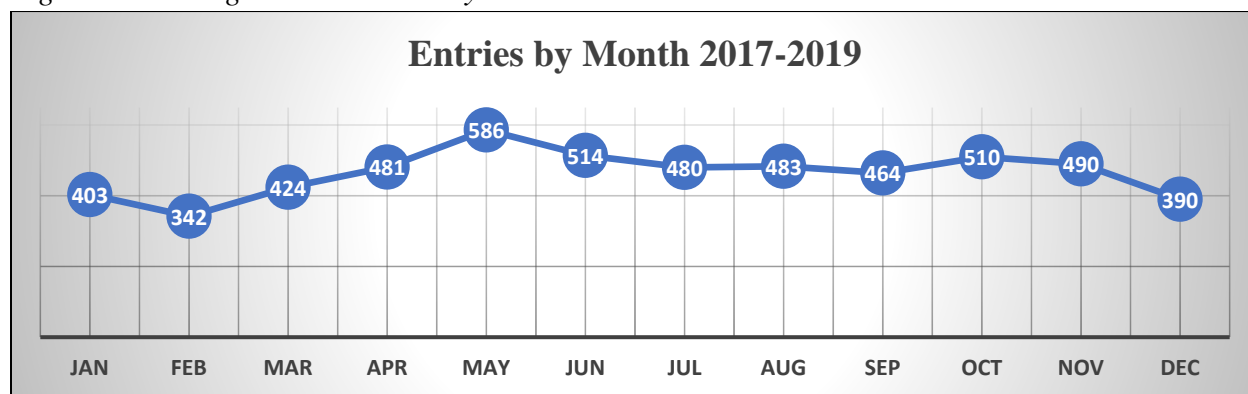
Figure 7: Percentage of Duration of Entries



Entries by Month

The month that people went missing was also analyzed. Analysis in future phases could include dates of events in communities (i.e. fairs, pow wows, sports tournaments, etc.) and could be cross-examined, with the location of where a person went missing and where the person was located, to determine if travel to other communities/regions is an element that contributes to going missing. In Montana, the number of people missing is lowest in February and increases by 70% to its peak in May. The numbers decrease slightly and remain fairly steady until they begin to further decline in winter.

Figure 8: Missing Person Entries by Month



Status

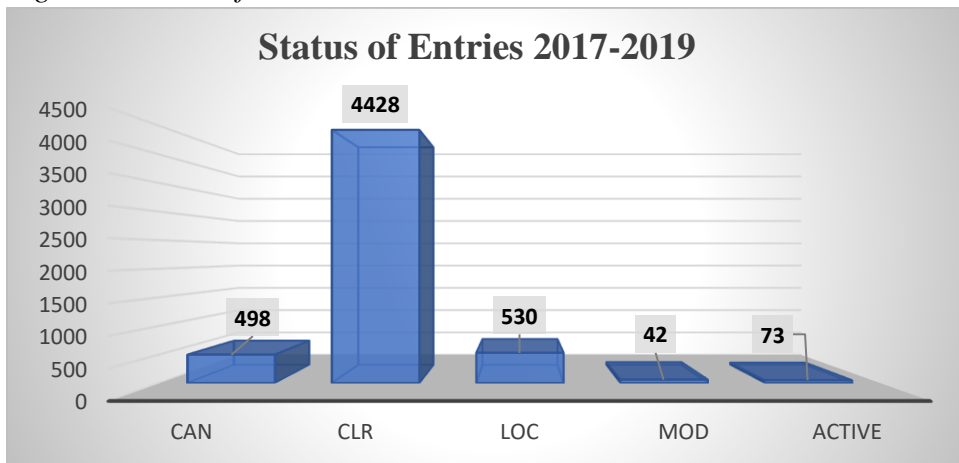
The Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse data analysis included looking at whether law enforcement took action, the person was found, or the person was still actively missing. There are four types of categories for records: cleared, cancelled, located, and modified. Active entries do not generally have a category entered (they may be left blank) but are indicated in the chart below. Examples for these categories are:

1. **Cancelled:** A family member goes missing and is reported to law enforcement. The family calls law enforcement back to report that the person returned home and is fine. The record would be considered invalid and should be *cancelled* as no law enforcement action is taken.
2. **Cleared:** A runaway juvenile is reported missing to law enforcement by his/her parents. The parents call back 2 hours later to say the youth came back home. Many agencies would still send an officer to speak to the missing youth to make sure there are no signs of abuse, distress, etc. Because law enforcement made contact with the missing person, the record would be *cleared*.
3. **Located:** A person is reported missing in Helena, Montana. The Helena Police Department takes the report. The missing person is found by Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. Jefferson County Sheriff's Office would update the record to *located*. Either Helena Police Department or Jefferson County Sheriff's Office would call the family to let them know the missing loved one is safe.

4. Modified: An existing record is changed in some way. If the initial entry had an incorrect date of birth or the law enforcement agency found a more accurate height/weight compare to what was first entered, the agency that entered the missing person would *modify* the record to reflect the changes.
5. Active: The missing person has not been located or recovered by the 12/31/19 end date for this data analysis project.

The vast majority of cases in Montana are cleared by law enforcement as shown below.

Figure 9: Status of Entries



Missing More Than Once

There were 2,297 individuals who were entered only one time over the three-year period; 957 individuals went missing more than one time. The average age of those who went missing multiple times was 15 years old.

Figure 10: Age Groups of Those Missing More than Once

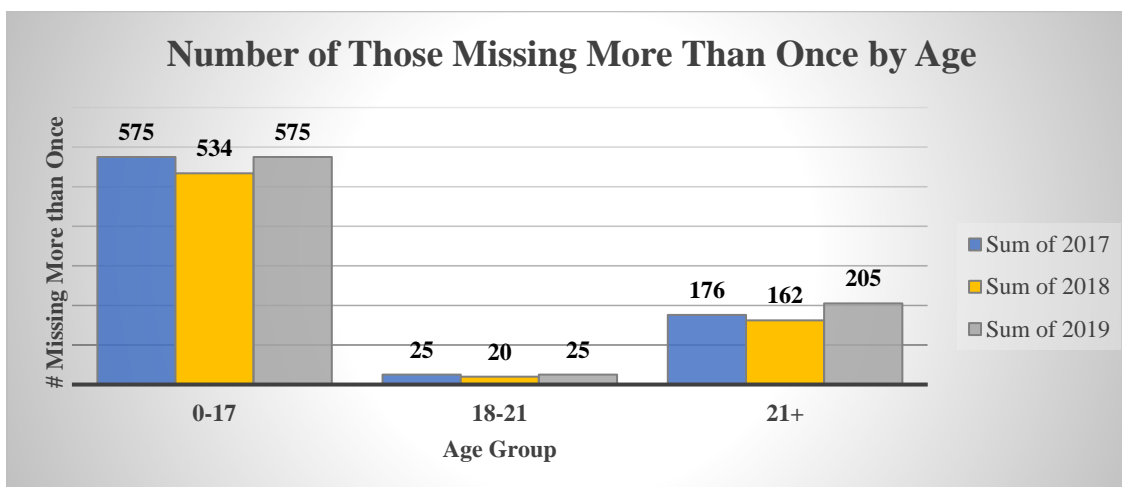
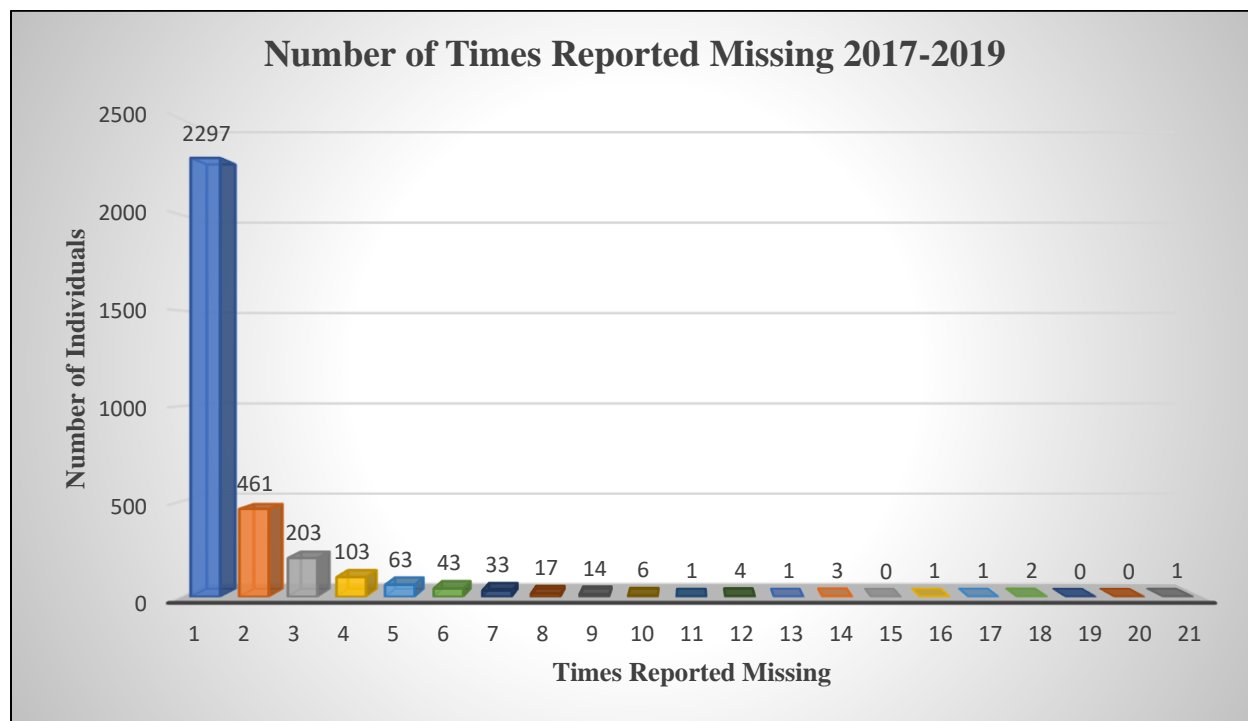


Figure 11: Number of Individuals and Count of Number of Times Reported



The average number of entries was 3.44 times with 2 being the fewest and 21 being the most times one individual was entered over the three years.

“What we found surprising in the data analysis is that 81% of the individuals are under the age of 18, but they represent only 21% of our state’s population. Of additional concern is the number of people who have gone missing multiple times. We know that Montana needs a multi-faceted approach when it comes to addressing missing persons, especially for youth and those who go missing more than once in their lifetime.”

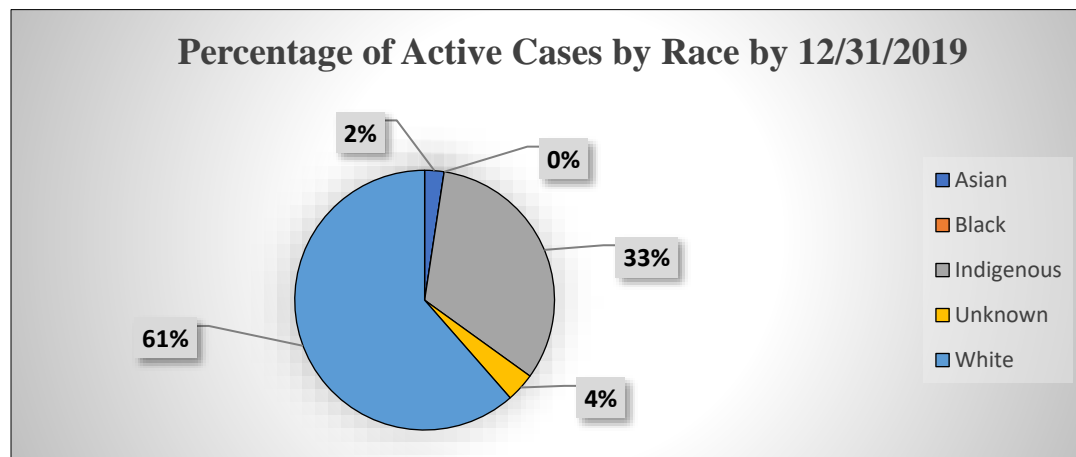
- Jon Bennion, Chief Deputy Attorney General

Actively Missing

At the end of 2019, there were 110 listed as active missing persons in the Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse. For the purposes of this data analysis, anyone not found by 12/31/19 or with no date entered as resolved in the database was considered active. The percentage of those actively missing by race shows that Native Americans were disproportionately represented at 33%, exceeding the percentage of missing individuals by race over the three-year period. One significant departure from Figure 2 is that no persons who were identified as Black were actively missing at the end of the three-year period. Many of those may not have been long-term missing as most cases were resolved in 2020. At the end of 2019, of the active entries, ten had been missing 3-25 days (5 were Indigenous, 50%), 20 were missing 31-365 days (7 were Indigenous,

35%), 70 were missing between one to two years (18 were Indigenous, 26%), and ten had been missing between two to three years (3 were Indigenous, 30%). See Figure 12.

Figure 12: Actively Missing as of 12/31/2019

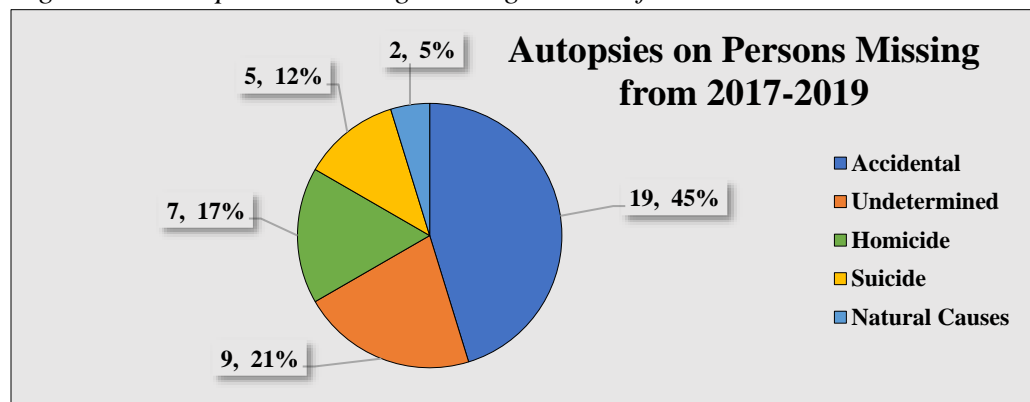


As of June 22, 2020, there were 11 active long-term missing Indigenous persons who went missing within the 2017-2019 time period. However, there were at least nine additional Indigenous persons who went missing prior to 2017 for a total of at least 20 long-term missing Indigenous persons.

Autopsies

The Montana Department of Justice houses the Forensic Sciences Division, also known as the Montana State Crime Lab. When comparing the list of deceased that had been autopsied to the missing persons list for the three-year period, it was found that 42 had been examined by the State Crime Lab. In stark contrast to the average person on the missing persons list (juvenile female), adult males were found to be deceased more often. Nearly half of those found deceased had been designated as accidental deaths ($n=19$; 45%), almost 20% were considered homicide ($n=7$), and 12% were due to suicides ($n=5$). Of significant importance, and particularly frustrating for Indigenous family members, were the number of deaths found to be undetermined ($n=9$; 21%).

Figure 13: Autopsies Matching Missing Persons from 2017-2019



Most autopsied persons were male (35 of 42 autopsied missing persons - 83%)

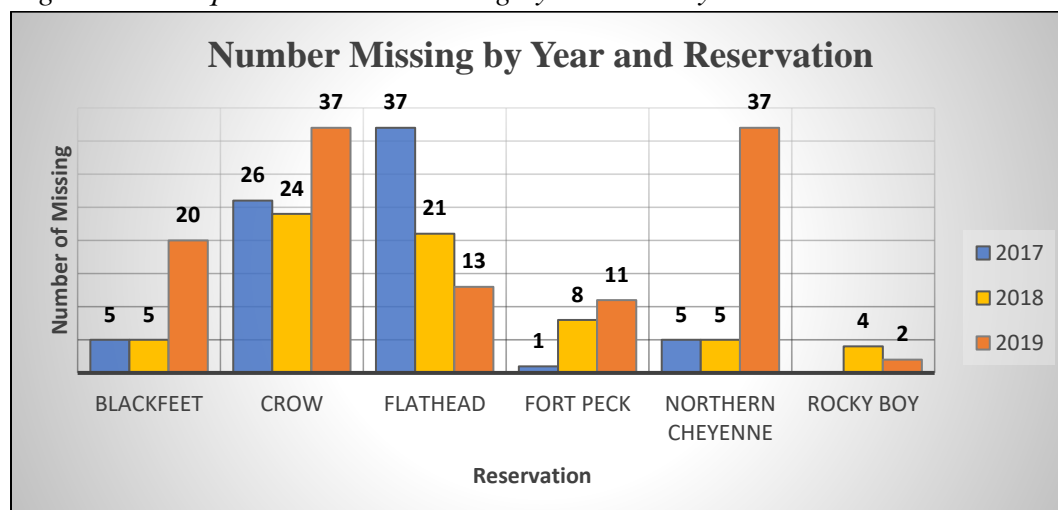
Tribal Reporting

There are eight federally recognized tribes in Montana. Local, county, and tribal law enforcement may all be involved in missing person reports depending upon the reservation, with two exceptions:

1. The Little Shell Tribe does not have their own tribal law enforcement and any calls of missing tribal members would go to other law enforcement agencies (i.e. Great Falls Police or Cascade County Sheriff).
2. Fort Belknap does not have a criminal justice information network terminal and works with Blaine County Sheriff's Office for reports.

When looking at the number of missing person reports by reservation and year there are clear indications that reports have increased from 2018-2019. On the Blackfeet, Crow, Fort Peck, and Northern Cheyenne reservations, BIA reporting increased in 2019.

Figure 14: Unique Individuals Missing by Year and by Reservation 2017-2019



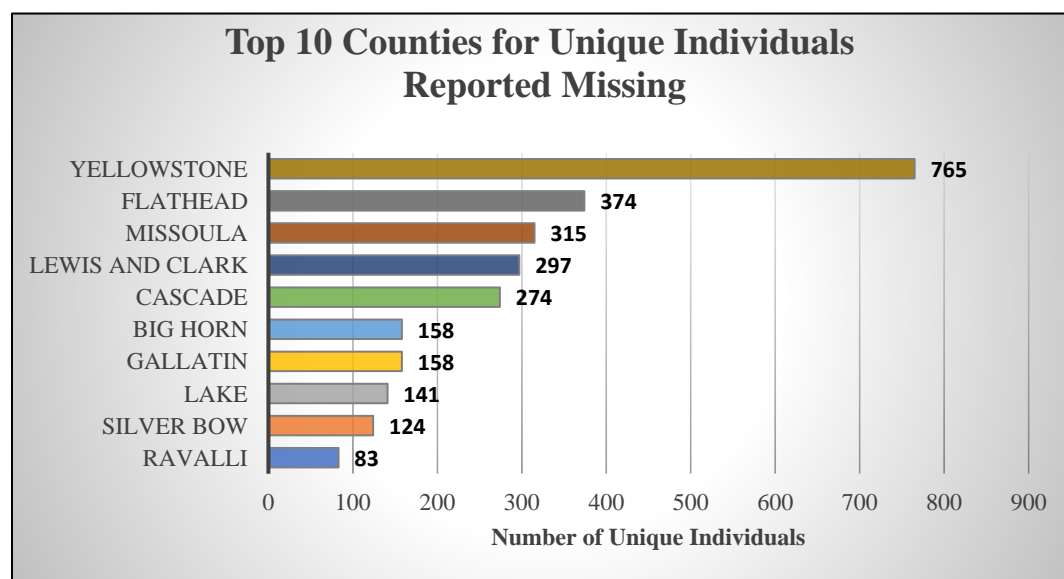
Tribal reporting (BIA) increased significantly in 2019. Chart does not represent all native Americans missing, just those reported to Tribal Police or BIA.

Landscape Across Montana

Geographically, Montana ranks as the fourth largest state in area, although it is the 8th least populated state, and the third-least densely populated of the 50 states.²³ Billings, the largest urban area in the state with almost 110,000 residents, is located in Yellowstone County and contains the highest number of unique individuals missing ($n=765$) over the three-year period.

Missoula County (Missoula), Cascade County (Great Falls), Gallatin County (Bozeman), Silver Bow County (Butte), and Lewis and Clark County (Helena) are the next largest in the state and are also among the top 10 counties for entries. There are also relatively small population counties that include reservation communities like Flathead, Lake, Big Horn, and Roosevelt Counties.

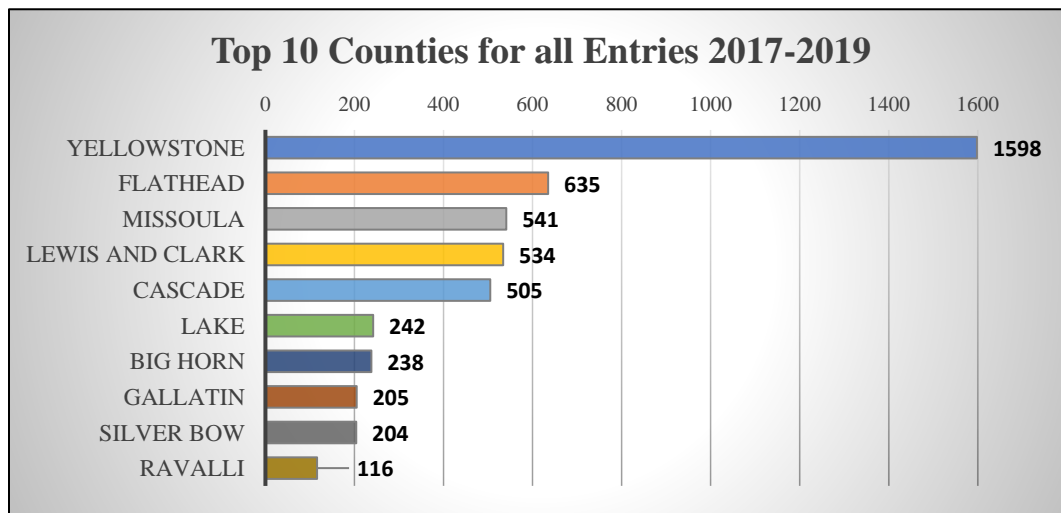
Figure 15: Top 10 Counties for Unique Individuals Reported Missing



The number of unique individuals who were reported missing from the 10 top counties for entries totaled 2,689. This number accounts for 82.6% of the total individuals in the Missing Persons Clearinghouse.

²³ Wikipedia, "Montana" accessed July 8, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montana>

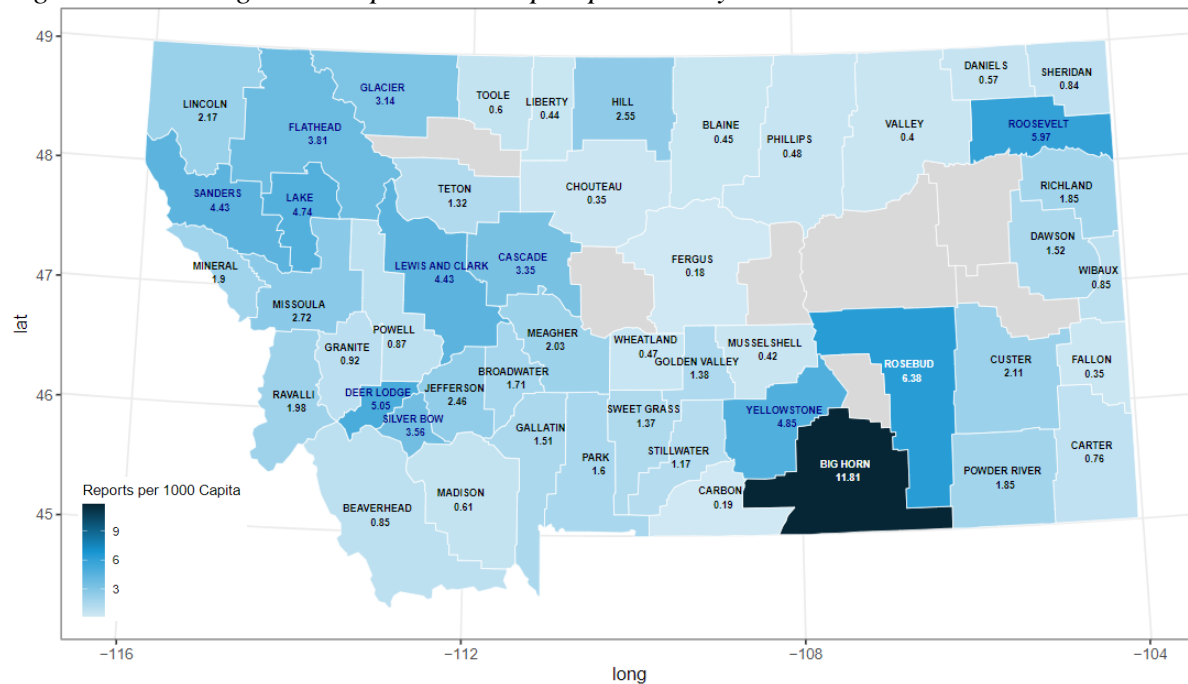
Figure 16: Top 10 Counties for Total Missing Person Entries



The number of total entries reported from the top 10 counties totaled 4,818, approximately 86.5% of the total 5,567 missing person entries from 2017-2019.

To account for the varying population sizes of counties across Montana, the number of first time missing reports per county is divided by the county's population and scaled to be equivalent to the number of first time missing person reports (per 1000 people per county) as shown in the map below.

Figure 17: Missing Persons per 1000 Capita per County in Montana

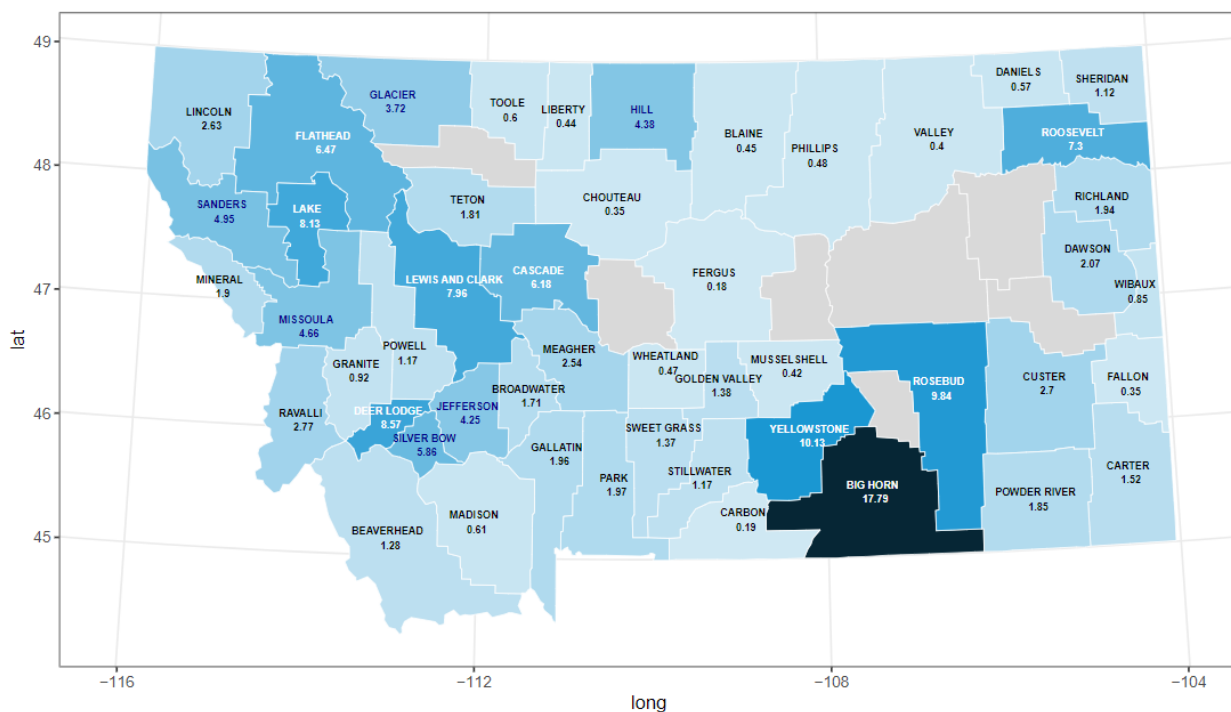


Of particular concern are the counties containing reservations such as Big Horn (largely containing the Crow Indian Reservation), Rosebud (Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation), and Roosevelt (Fort Peck Indian Reservation). Big Horn's per capita rate ($n=11.81$) is nearly three

times higher than Yellowstone County. Rosebud County ($n=6.38$) is the second highest per capita, closely followed by Roosevelt ($n=5.97$). These areas stand out as concerning and worthy of additional analysis in future phases. When considering that 81% of missing persons are juveniles and 26% overall are Indigenous, looking deeper into other data sources may help reveal why these factors exist in Montana.

For non-reservation counties, Yellowstone County leads the top 10 counties per capita ($n=4.85$) for missing persons. Missoula ($n=2.72$) and Gallatin ($n=1.51$) counties have a lower-age population due to their large state universities and would be expected to have higher per capita rates for missing person reports than other counties. Lewis and Clark County ($n=4.43$) and Deer Lodge County ($n=5.05$) have approximately the same per capita rate as Yellowstone but are 3 times higher than Gallatin County. Figure 18 contains all missing person reports from 2017-2019, including reports for individuals who went missing more than once, divided by each county's population size scaled to 1,000 capita. The counties with higher missing person reports per capita follow similar scales as demonstrated in Figure 17.

Figure 18: Missing Person Reports per 1000 Capita per County in Montana



Staff from the Montana Attorney General's Office and the Montana Department of Justice provided presentations of the data analysis project to the following policy makers and tribal governments:

- May 5, 2020 – Press Briefing
- May 7, 2020 – State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee
- May 11, 2020 – Montana Governor's Office
- June 18, 2020 – Little Shell Chippewa Cree Executive Board

- June 23, 2020 – Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribal Council
- July 15, 2020 – Northern Cheyenne Tribal Council

Additional presentations were delayed by state and tribal restrictions for COVID-19. Presentations will be scheduled for remaining tribal governments and other stakeholders in Montana in August and September 2020.

The analysis of missing persons data from 2017-2019 represents the most comprehensive inquiry in Montana to date. The Montana Department of Justice will use this information as the basis for determining future data analysis. Looking deeper into active cases from the past three years, education records, youth court records, as well as looking at how social factors like crime, poverty, substance abuse, and mental health contribute to the issue will be essential in understanding not only WHO is going missing but WHY they are going missing.

Resources

- NCIC – National Criminal Information Center - <https://fbi.gov/services/cjis/ncic>
- NamUs – National Missing and Unidentified Persons System - <https://namus.gov/>
- BJA – Bureau of Justice Assistance - <https://bja.ojp.gov/>
- BJS – Bureau of Justice Statistics - <https://bjs.gov/>
- OJP – Office of Justice Programs - <https://ojp.gov/>
- MMPC – Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse <https://dojmt.gov/missing-persons/>; <https://app.doj.mt.gov/enforcement/missingpersons/>
- NCMEC – National Center for Missing & Exploited Children - <https://missingkids.org/>
- AMBER Alert – America’s Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response - <https://amberalert.ojp.gov/>

More Than A Dozen Indigenous Women Went Missing In Montana In 2018

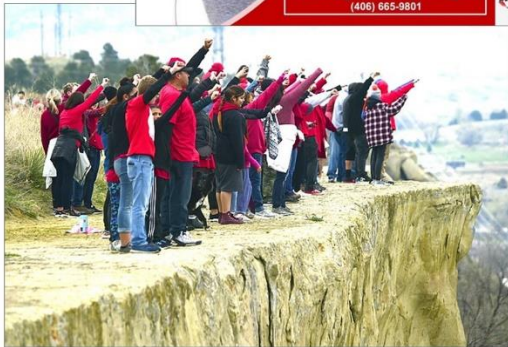
By NATE HEGYI • JUL 20, 2018



Nick Martin / January 22, 2020

The Cyclical Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

The headlines will mourn Selena Not Afraid until another case comes along. Then what?



Line The Rims Draws Attention To Missing, Murdered Native Men

By KARLA DESROCHES • MAY 6, 2019



The New York Times

Rural Montana Had Already Lost Too Many Native Women. Then Selena Disappeared.

For decades, with little public notice, Native women have gone missing or been found murdered. The search for Selena Not Afraid showed how much things had changed.

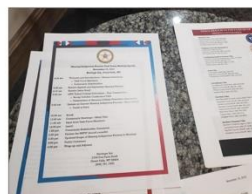


Shacaiah Harding, shown with her mother, Tamera Bearcomesout, went missing last summer from Billings.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women of Montana

An effort to combat an epidemic of violence against indigenous women through awareness and education.

By Ann Kladler | October 5, 2019



MISSING FROM MONTANA SELENA NOTAFRAID

Selena is 59 and weighs 133 pounds. She has black hair and brown eyes, and she was last seen wearing a black coat, gray sweater, blue jeans, and gray ankle boots. She has a scar near her mouth and a tattoo of a cross on her middle finger. She was last seen at the eastbound I-90 rest area between Billings and Hardin near mile marker 474 near the Fly Creek Exit on 1/120 around 2 pm. Please call in all tips to Big Horn County Sheriff's Office at 406-665-9780.

#MMIWG

Bring Selena Home SHE IS NOT INVISIBLE

MMIP Taskforce holds virtual community listening session over Zoom Thursday

By Patrick Johnston
July 17, 2020

Appendices

Appendix A: Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force Meeting Agendas

June 11, 2019 - Helena

- Welcome by Montana Attorney General Tim Fox
- Overview of Senate Bill 312
- Primary Duties of Task Force
- Scope of Missing Indigenous Persons Problem in Montana
- Work Process and Next Steps
- Public Comment

August 10, 2019 – Great Falls

- Task Force Organization
 - Structure and rules of meetings
 - Presiding Officer and roles
- Task Force Membership
 - Alternates for task force members
 - Additional members needed for the Task Force
- LINC Act and Mandates for Request for Proposals
- Timelines and Meeting Dates
- Scope of the MMIP problem
 - Presentation of the Montana Missing Persons Clearinghouse
 - Current missing Indigenous persons
- Public Comment

September 27, 2019 – Billings

- Welcome by U.S. Attorney Montana District, Kurt Alme
- Update on Current Missing Indigenous Persons
- Introduction of Missing Persons Specialist
- Introduction of LINC Coordinator
- LINC Grant Application
- Task Force Planning
 - Timelines for LINC Act Requirements
 - Community Listening Sessions
- Community Stakeholder Comments
 - Factors the MMIP Task Force Should Consider
 - Agency Perspective on the Scope of MMIP
- Public Comment

October 15, 2019 – Task Force Conference Call

- Review of LINC Grant Application
- Timeline of LINC Grant Process
- Public Comment

November 15, 2019 – Great Falls

- Review of Tribal College Solicitations for LINC Grant Application
- Update on Current Missing Indigenous Persons
 - Youth in Care
 - Partnership with Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
- Community Listening Sessions

- Input from Task Force Members
- Community Stakeholder Comments
 - Factors the MMIP Task Force should consider
 - Agency perspective on the scope of MMIP
- Updated Scope of MMIP
- Public Comment

December 19, 2019 – Task Force Conference Call

- Update on LINC Grant Applications
- Social Media
- Upcoming Community Listening Sessions
- Public Comment

February 6-7, 2020 – Billings – Task Force Meeting

Day 1

- Federal Update
- Update on Current Missing Indigenous Persons
- Role of US DOJ in Active Missing Person Cases
- Role of MT DOJ in Active Missing Person Cases
- Role of MMIP Task Force in Active Missing Person Cases
- Recap of Community Listening Sessions by Task Force Members
- How to Develop a Missing Indigenous Persons Workgroup for Communities
- Resources Available in Tribal Communities

Billings Community Listening Session – evening event

Day 2

- Review of LINC Request for Proposal
- Review of LINC Application(s)
- Scoring
- Public Comment on LINC Application
- Task Force Funding Recommendation and Vote
- Recap of Community Listening Session
- Public Comment
 - Community Listening Sessions
 - Recommendations to the Task Force
- Task Force Recommendations for Legislative Committee

April 22, 2020 – Task Force Conference Call

- Update on LINC Grant Project
- Missing Persons Data Analysis
- State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee Update
- Public Comment

June 3, 2020 – Task Force Online Video Conference

- Introduction of New Missing Persons Specialist
- Update on Current Missing Indigenous Persons
- Missing Persons Data Analysis Presentation
- State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee Update
- LINC Grant Project Update
- Legislative Report

- Public Comment

July 22, 2020 - Task Force Online Video Conference

- Update on Current Missing Indigenous Persons
- LINC Update – Blackfeet Community College
- MMIP Task Force Logo
- Legislative Report Review Process
- MMIP Task Force Meeting – August 13
- State-Tribal Relations Committee – August 24
- Public Comment

August 13, 2020 – Task Force Online Video Conference

- Update on Current Missing Indigenous Persons
- Task Force Membership
- State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee Update
- Legislative Report Approval
- Public Comment



Appendix B: List of Reporting/Investigating Agencies That Reported a Missing Person in the Montana Missing Person Clearinghouse from 2017-2019

MISSOULA CO SHERIFF	LAKE CO SHERIFF
ANACONDA-DEER LODGE LEA	LAUREL POLICE
BEAVERHEAD CO SHERIFF	LEWIS AND CLARK CO SHERIFF
BELGRADE POLICE	LEWISTOWN POLICE
BIG HORN CO SHERIFF	LIBERTY CO SHERIFF
BILLINGS POLICE	LINCOLN CO SHERIFF
BLACKFEET LAW ENFORCEMENT	LIVINGSTON POLICE
BLAINE CO SHERIFF	MADISON CO SHERIFF
BOZEMAN POLICE	MANHATTAN POLICE
BROADWATER CO SHERIFF	MEAGHER CO SHERIFF
BUTTE SILVER BOW LEA	MILES CITY POLICE
CARBON CO SHERIFF	MINERAL CO SHERIFF
CARTER CO SHERIFF	MISSOULA POLICE
CASCADE CO SHERIFF	MISSOULA POLICE DRUG TASK FORCE
CHOUTEAU CO SHERIFF	MT DOJ CJIN SERVICES CONTROL TERMINAL
COLSTRIP POLICE	MT STATE UNIVERSITY POLICE
COLUMBIA FALLS POLICE	MUSSELSHELL CO SHERIFF
CUSTER CO SHERIFF	PARK CO 911
CUT BANK CITY COURT	PARK CO SHERIFF
CUT BANK POLICE	PHILLIPS CO SHERIFF
DANIELS CO SHERIFF	PLAINS POLICE
DAWSON CO SHERIFF	POWDER RIVER CO SHERIFF
DILLON POLICE	POWELL CO SHERIFF
EAST HELENA POLICE	RAVALLI CO SHERIFF
EUREKA POLICE	RAVALLI CO SHERIFF
FAIRVIEW POLICE	RICHLAND CO SHERIFF
FALLON CO SHERIFF	ROCKY BOY POLICE DEPARTMENT
FERGUS CO SHERIFF	ROOSEVELT CO SHERIFF
FLATHEAD CO 911 CENTER	ROSEBUD CO SHERIFF
FLATHEAD CO 911 CENTER	SANDERS CO SHERIFF
FLATHEAD CO SHERIFF	SHERIDAN CO SHERIFF
FLATHEAD TRIBAL POLICE	SIDNEY POLICE
FORT BENTON POLICE	STILLWATER CO SHERIFF
GALLATIN CO BOZEMAN 911	SWEET GRASS CO SHERIFF
GALLATIN CO BOZEMAN 911	TETON CO SHERIFF
GALLATIN CO SHERIFF	TOOLE CO SHERIFF
GLACIER CO SHERIFF	TROY POLICE
GLENDDIVE POLICE	UNIV OF MT OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY
GOLDEN VALLEY SHERIFF	US BIA CROW AGENCY LAW ENFORCEMENT
GRANITE CO SHERIFF	US BIA FORT PECK LAW ENFORCEMENT

GREAT FALLS POLICE	US BIA NORTHERN CHEYENNE
HAVRE POLICE	VALLEY CO SHERIFF
HAVRE POLICE	VALLEY CO SHERIFF
HELENA FIRE DEPT INVESTIGATION BUREAU	WEST YELLOWSTONE POLICE
HELENA POLICE	WHEATLAND CO SHERIFF
HELENA POLICE SHERIFF SSD	WHITEFISH POLICE
HILL CO SHERIFF	WIBAUX CO SHERIFF
JEFFERSON CO SHERIFF	WOLF POINT POLICE
KALISPELL POLICE	YELLOWSTONE CO SHERIFF
LAKE CO 911	

Appendix C: Unique Individuals by Year, Race and Age

	2017-2019	2017	2018	2019
TOTAL Unique Individuals	3254	1212	1033	1009
0-17	2621	1006	844	771
18-21 years old	76	26	23	27
Over 21 years old	557	180	166	211
RACE		2017	2018	2019
Asian	24	9	4	11
Black	93	52	20	21
Indigenous	830	292	245	293
Unknown	104	24	38	42
White	2203	835	726	642
BY AGE	2017-2019	2017	2018	2019
0-17 years old - Asian	21	8	4	9
18-21 years old- Asian	0	0	0	0
Over 21 years old- Asian	3	1	0	2
0-17 years old - Black	80	47	16	17
18-21 years old - Black	5	2	2	1
Over 21 years old - Black	8	3	2	3
0-17 years old - Indigenous	708	269	215	224
18-21 years old - Indigenous	23	5	8	10
Over 21 years old - Indigenous	99	18	22	59
0-17 years old - Unknown	80	16	32	32
18-21 years old - Unknown	2	1	1	0
Over 21 years old - Unknown	22	7	5	10
0-17 years old - White	1832	666	577	589
18-21 years old - White	46	18	12	16
Over 21 years old - White	425	151	137	137

Appendix D: Total Entries by Year, Race and Gender

	2017-2019	2017	2018	2019				
Total Female Individuals	1673	647	523	503				
Total Male Individuals	1581	565	510	506				
Females:								
0-17	1391	549	447	395				
18-21 years old	38	14	11	13				
Over 21 years old	244	84	65	95				
Males:								
0-17	1230	457	397	376				
18-21 years old	38	12	12	14				
Over 21 years old	313	96	101	116				
	2017-2019 - F	2017 - F	2018 - F	2019 - F	2017-2019 - M	2017 - M	2018 - M	2019 - M
Asian								
0-17 years old	9	5	2	2	12	3	2	7
18-21 years old	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Over 21 years old	2	0	0	2	1	1	0	0
Black								
0-17 years old	30	16	8	6	50	31	8	11
18-21 years old	1	1	0	0	4	1	2	1
Over 21 years old	4	1	1	2	4	2	1	1
Indigenous								
0-17 years old	425	168	126	131	283	101	89	93
18-21 years old	17	4	4	9	6	1	4	1
Over 21 years old	49	13	12	24	50	5	10	35
Unknown								
0-17 years old	41	7	16	18	39	9	16	14
18-21 years old	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Over 21 years old	14	4	3	7	8	3	2	3
White								
0-17 years old	886	353	295	238	846	313	282	251
18-21 years old	18	8	6	4	28	10	6	12
Over 21 years old	175	66	49	60	250	85	88	77

Appendix E: Methodology for Data Analysis

Dr. Mark Greenwood, Director, Greta Linse, Assistant Director, and graduate students with the Montana State University (MSU) Statistical Consulting & Research Services (SCRS) provided data validation and duplication detection for this project.

A multi-phase approach was taken to identify individuals in the database that had entries with an alternate spelling of their name. Special characters and spaces were removed before identifying similar names. The first phase split individuals by reported gender and then binned by birth date with (-Inf, 1990], (1985, 1998], (1998, 2000], (2000, 2002], (2002, 2004], (2004, 2006], (2006, 2008], (2008, 2010], (2010, 2020]. Within these groups, all pairwise comparisons on the names were formed and string comparisons of Jaccard and Jaro-Winkler distances were used to identify if a name was likely to be similar. The lists were then reviewed by hand and identified whether or not the names were likely misspellings of each other and thus the same individual. These alternate spellings were recorded in a separate spreadsheet.

To account for data entry errors the same process was repeated with different splits for the birth years. The years were split based on (-Inf, 1985], (1985, 1995], (1995, 1999], (1999, 2001], (2001, 2003], (2003, 2005], (2005, 2007], (2007, 2009], (2009, 2020]. In addition, names were checked to see if they were exact substrings of one another, *i.e.*, “SMITH,BOB” is an exact substring of “SMITH,BOB M.”.

Again, these lists were checked by hand to confirm identification of duplicate/alternate spellings of names.

The results are only as good as the data going into the analysis. There are two potential issues with the data quality that cannot be addressed here. There may be records that should have been included and were not incorporated, are missing the data sources, or encountered database issues. The records here could be inaccurately reported, especially for the detailed times of events since these are times of reporting and might not match the time of the actual events (both in the start of a missing event being at or before the reported time and the end being at or possibly before the reported clearing of the event), and the information could be inaccurately entered/transferred across databases. One of the main tasks here was to assess data quality; some minor coding errors were encountered across all fields including the time of events, but other issues and errors with reporting could easily have been missed.

The estimates provided then only apply to the records that were included in the database, so would not generalize to any events that were not in the database as these could be systematically different from these. And these only pertain to events in the three-year period being assessed and do not extend to other time periods or locations that were not part of the reporting process to generate this database.

Finally, the list was checked against the list provided by the Montana Department of Justice and further names were identified at this pass. In the end, there were 3,254 unique names.

As birth dates were misspelled, at this time, only the birth date for the first entry (earliest entry) was recorded as the birth date. Further work can take the consensus birth date: if there are more than two entries, selection of the birth date recorded most often can be used. Most of the time, it is the month and day that was entered incorrectly and only a couple instances had different birth years.

To review the full report from MSU SCRS containing additional methodology, analysis, and research, visit www.dojmt.gov/missing-persons/data-project/.

The Looping in Native Communities
Legislative Report to the State-Tribal Relations Interim Committee
was approved for release by the Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force
on August 13, 2020

