



SOVEREIGN BODIES
INSTITUTE

**Public Testimony for the Section 904 Task Force on Research on Violence Against
American Indian and Alaska Native Women**
October 22, 2020

My name is Michaela Madrid and I am the Operations Manager for the Sovereign Bodies Institute. I am grateful to be with you today. We are an Indigenous non-profit addressing gender-based violence against Indigenous peoples through research and direct services. We are the caretakers of a database containing over 4,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit relatives.

When reviewing the limited information available regarding the Section 904 Taskforce, it is unclear to what degree MMIW families and survivors are empowered. It is great to see the level of Tribal consultation that goes into the development of this work--but how much family and survivor consultation is conducted? At SBI, we do not engage on projects without families and survivors in leadership positions and we always offer long-term support services to those involved.

Too many times, families and survivors feel their voices and needs are not heard in government, in research, in their tribal communities, and even in the MMIW movement. They feel used and left without sufficient support needed to enable healing. A packet of numbers to call is not proactive support because it puts the onus on the triggered person to reach out. Indigenous researchers have a responsibility to practice reciprocity by actively supporting the wellbeing of the individuals we are learning from. We urge this task force to strengthen NIJ's use of culturally-grounded community based participatory research methodologies, the use of Indigenous researchers, and proactive support services.

We also urge the task force to promote localized, region-specific research as opposed to sweeping national studies. Each native community has a distinct culture and circumstances and the solutions look different in every community--national studies ignore this nuance and propose one-size-fits-all solutions that are not helpful on the ground.

We recognize that today's meeting is to provide an introduction to the new task force members. Our hope is that you all have stepped into this role with similar concerns and are working on solutions. Thank you.