



# MMIR in Alaska and Data Sovereignty



Charlene Aqpik Apok, Iñupiaq  
PhD, MA

Executive Director, Data for Indigenous Justice





How familiar are you with the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous relatives (MMIR)?

- A. Very familiar
- B. Somewhat familiar
- C. Not at all familiar
- D. Other (please type in chat)

## Understanding the Crisis: MMIR in Alaska

---



## Data for Indigenous Justice

---



## Data Sovereignty in Action

---







# **Understanding the Crisis: MMIR in Alaska**





UvaNa Charlene Apok,  
Inupiaqsisga Aqqik



ChinikmiuguruNa, suli  
NatcharvikmuiguruNa.



AakaGa Sandra 'Baby Lu' Apok



Igniga Evan  
Lukluan



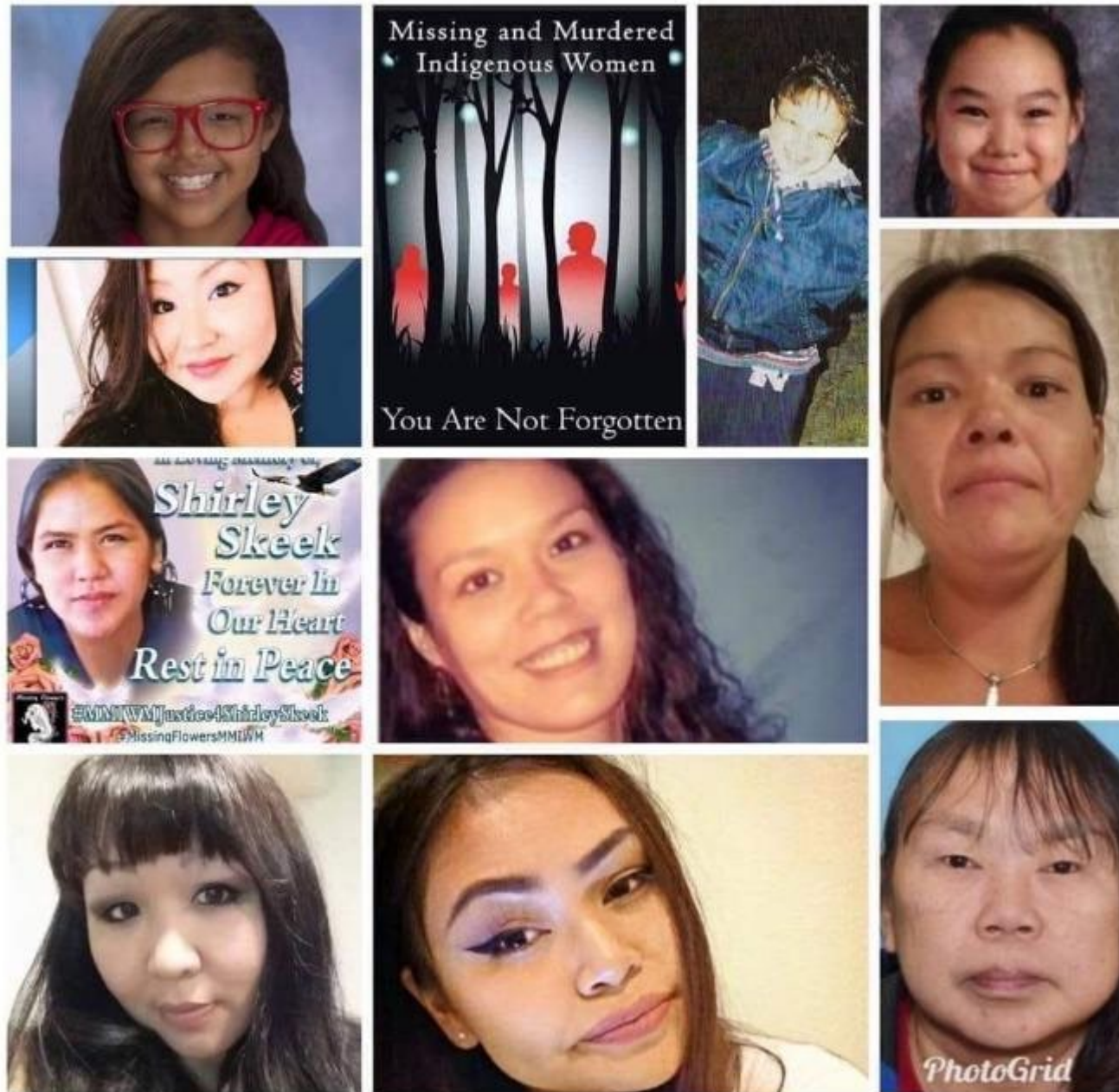
Uqautilunga  
Inupiatun!



Iñuuruna savaktunalu  
Dena'ina-t nunananni  
Kisagvigmun.



# Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women



# Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives



## They are MISSED

**Debbie Nictune**



Last seen on the evening of Aug. 18, 2020 at the Northward Building in Fairbanks, Alaska. She was 59 at the time, with brown eyes, and graying black hair. She was wearing a black jacket, a green shirt, and loose fitting jeans.

Contact: Fairbanks Police Department at 907-450-6500, or [investigations@fairbanks.us](mailto:investigations@fairbanks.us).

Use the anonymous text tip line. Text to 847411 and then type AKTIPS

**Doren Sanford**



Last seen Aug. 28, 2020 in Fairbanks, Alaska. He was looking for his dog Groot. He was 34 years old, 5'10" and about 140-160 lbs. He has brown hair, and blue or hazel eyes.

Last seen in Fairbanks, but may be in the North Pole/Fairbanks Area.

Contact: Alaska State Troopers at 907-451-5100.

**Frank Minano, Jr.**



Last known whereabouts was Standard Creek Road on Aug. 17, 2020. At the time he was 69 years old, 5'10" and about 140-160 lbs. He has black hair, and brown eyes.

Contact: Alaska State Troopers at 907-451-5100.

**Willis Derendoff**



Last seen in Fairbanks on Nov. 10, 2020, and was staying at Extended Stay. He was 34 years old, 5'7"-5'10" and about 160 lbs. He has brown/black hair, and brown eyes.

Contact: Alaska State Troopers at 907-451-5100.



Tanana Chiefs Conference



FAIRBANKS NATIVE ASSOCIATION



A photograph of a park with several red dresses hanging from the branches of large trees. The dresses are bright red and appear to be of various styles, some with lace or polka dots. The trees have dense green foliage. In the background, a person with long dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and a backpack, is walking away from the camera. The scene is outdoors, and the lighting suggests it might be late afternoon or early morning.

## Data for Indigenous Justice





- VISION: Indigenous Peoples thriving in strong, vibrant communities steeped in ancestral power, justice, and love.
- MISSION: Equip Indigenous peoples across Alaska through self-determined actions on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2 spirit peoples (MMIWG2S).



**Dr. Jessica Black**



**Abigail Echo-Hawk**



**Dr. Malia Villegas**





**Tatiana Ticknor**  
Project Coordinator



**Sabrina Dunphrey**  
Administrative Coordinator





**Antonia Commack**  
Resource Coordinator



**Maka Monture**  
Communications





- To serve our Indigenous communities by working for and with them towards justice and healing through systemic change and advocacy regarding missing and murdered Indigenous persons
- To protect and care for our stories through stewarding qualitative and quantitative data with respect
- To strategically utilize our stories found in qualitative and quantitative data to benefit the wellbeing of our Indigenous people through efforts that educate and advocate for systematic change
- To honor our ancestors' past and future with guidance from Indigenous values and teachings; applied through respectful, self-determined, and sovereign research and reporting





## Top 10 States with Highest Number of MMIWG Cases

New Mexico (78)

Washington (71)

Arizona (54)

Alaska (52)

Montana (41)

California (40)

Nebraska (33)

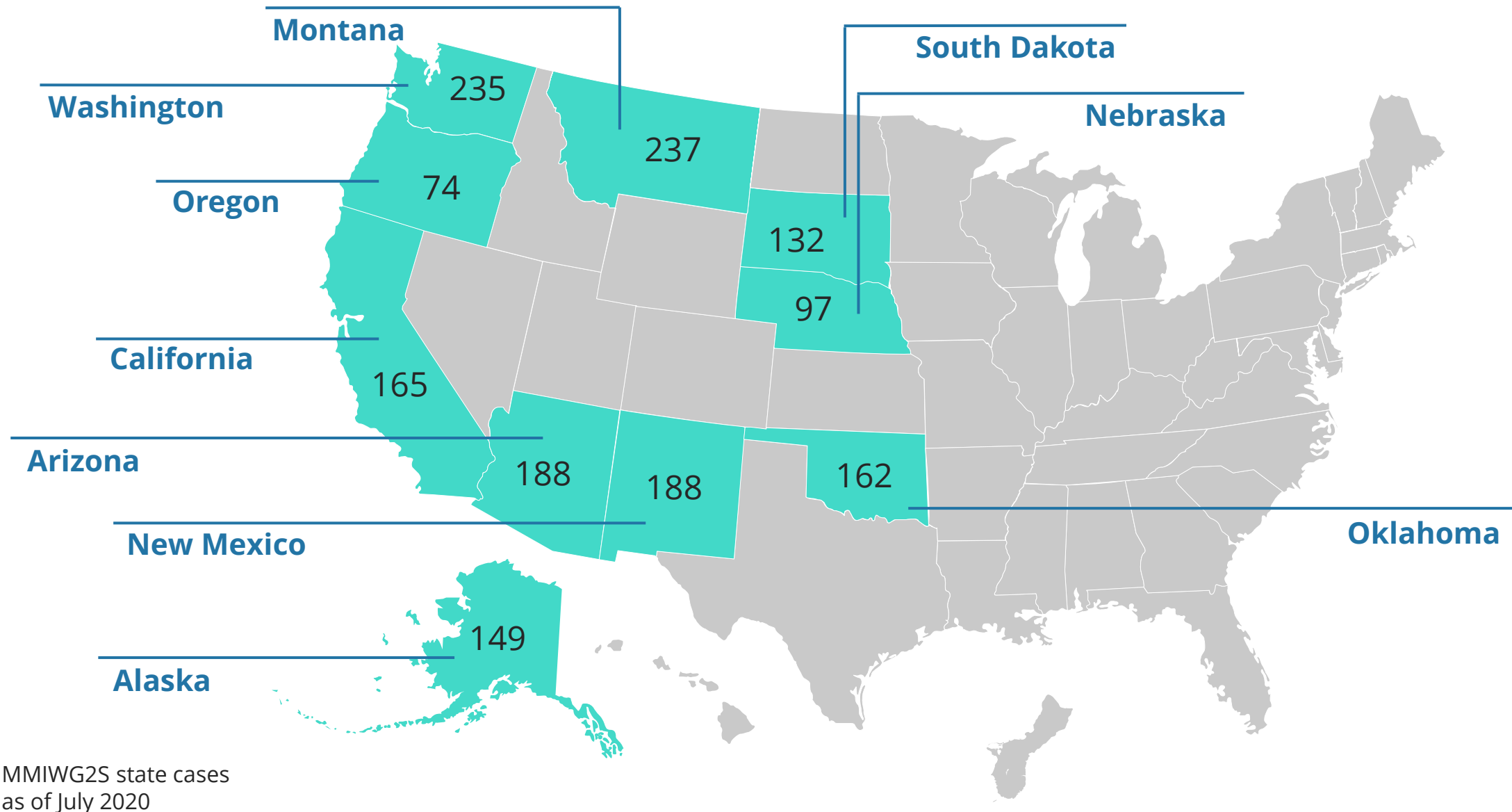
Utah (24)

Minnesota (20)

Oklahoma (18)



# What Do Cases Look Like Across States?







February 2021





What are some ways you can  
support data sovereignty efforts  
in your community?  
(type answers in chat)





## Data Sovereignty in Action



# Reclaiming Data



Missing and Murdered Indigenous People In Alaska with Reported Location Information



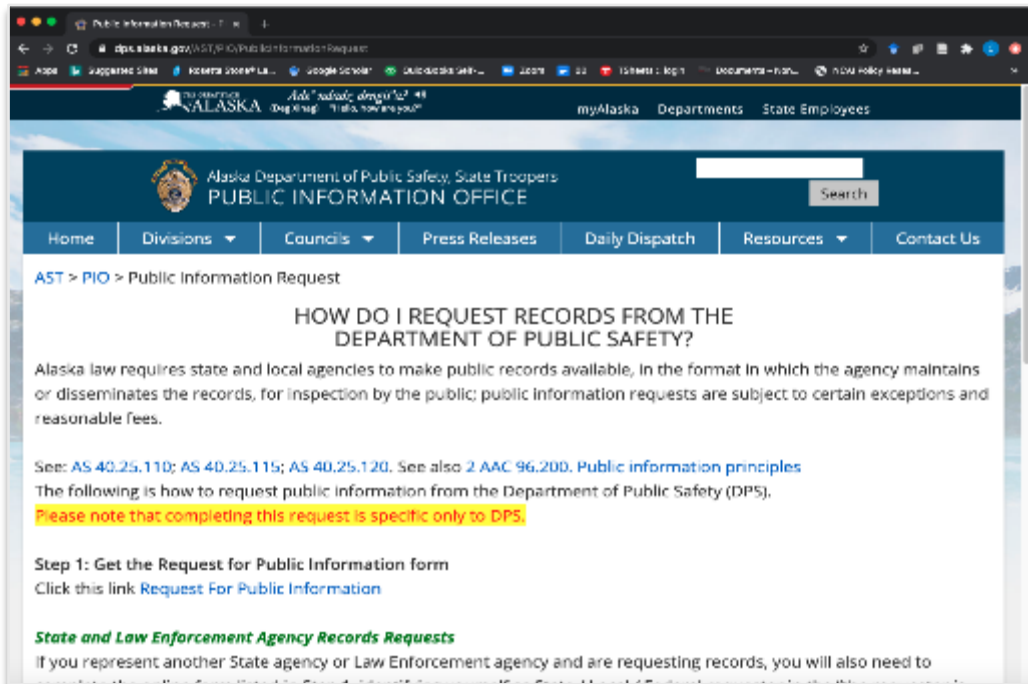
© 2025 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Data source: Data for Indigenous Justice

[Data for Indigenous Justice \(DIJ\)](#) is an Alaska Native-led non-profit which homes a database for missing and murdered Indigenous womxn, girls and relatives data. This organization is led by Alaska Native womxn with great intention, care and love for our community.



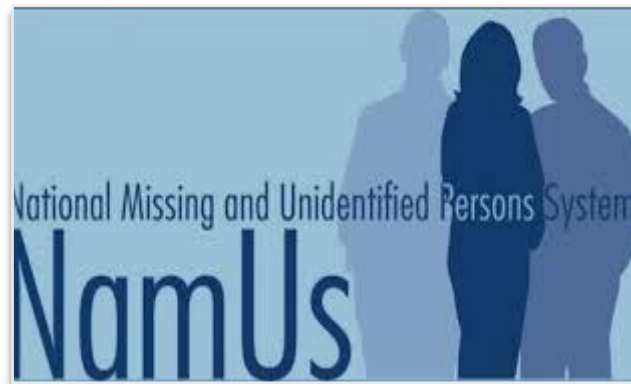
# Reclaiming Data



What is your race? \*

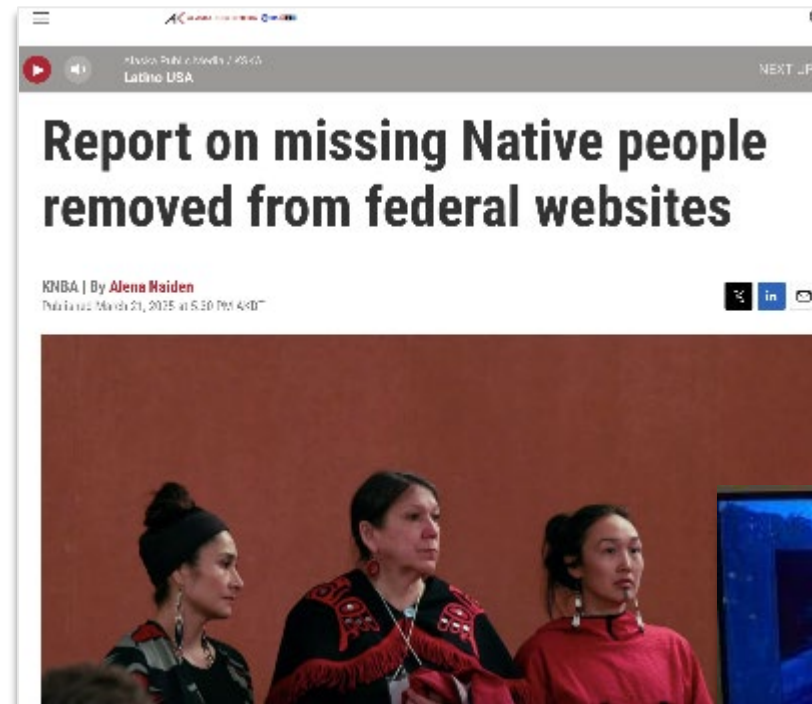
Please check all that apply.

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African-American
- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian



DIJ report outlined specific actions including:

- Called on Department of Public Safety to track data and release information (DPS is now sending out quarterly reports)
- Mandatory reporting to NAMUS (this provision was included in SB151 MMIP that passed in 2024)
- Updated Data fields: Missing Category (implemented at DPS)
- Centralized data systems (still working on)

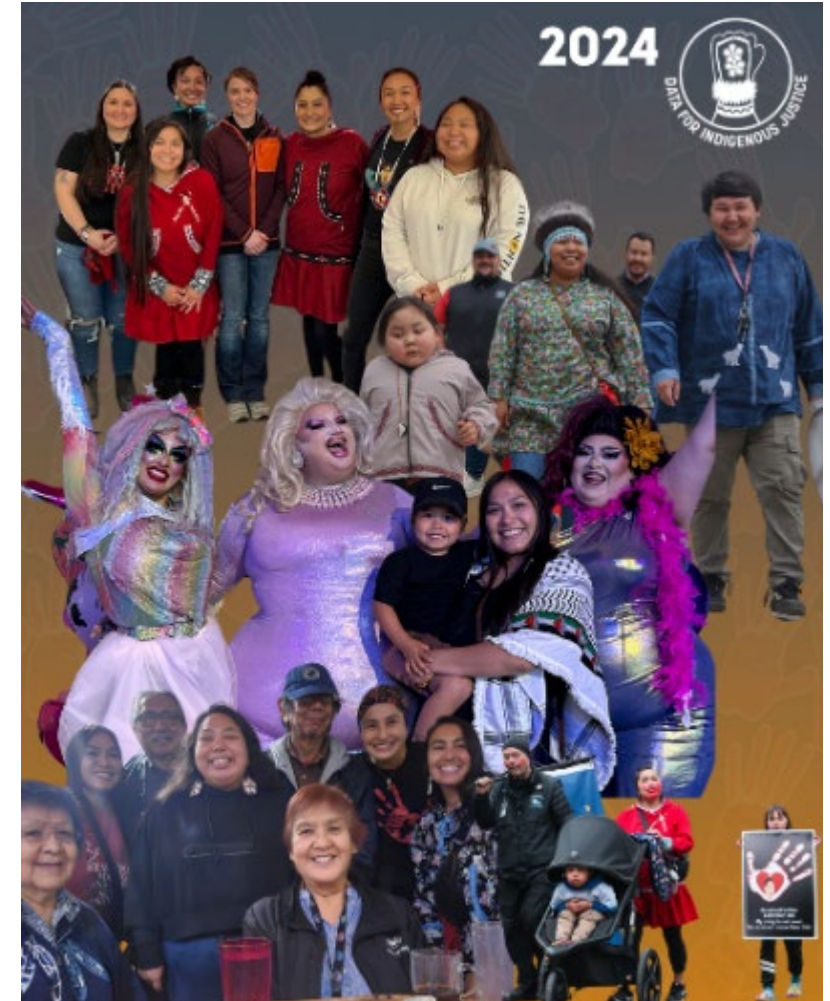




## Circumstance Determinations per the Involved Police Agencies

- **Environment:** Wilderness, waterways, ocean, aircraft crashes, other non-suspicious outdoor deaths where human remains were not located by search and rescue teams, or another related event
- **Suspicious:** Suspected criminal activity surrounding the event
- **Not Suspicious:** No indication of criminal activity or environmental factor
- **Unknown:** Unable to determine circumstance

# Community Building





## How They Lived:

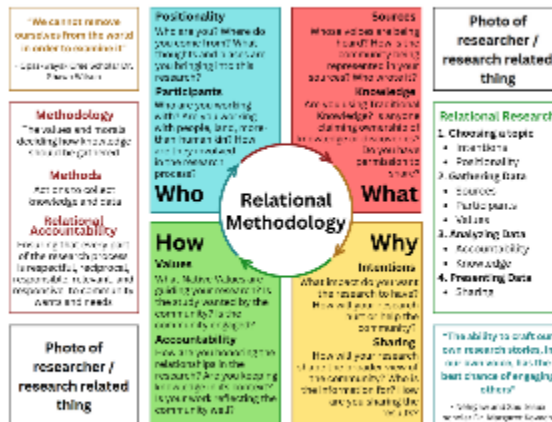
Ashley Kelly Mae Robyn Johnson Barr | Sanmigan  
"A child of the community"  
Kotzebue, Alaska

How They Lived is a special series that focuses on the joyful parts of the lives of Alaskan MMIWG.



Very Mainland

### Introduction to Indigenous Methodologies of Research



#### References

Rowley, V. (2009). Indigenous methodologies: Conversations and contexts. University of Toronto Press.

Smith, L. T. (2008). Decolonizing methodologies. University of Georgia Press.

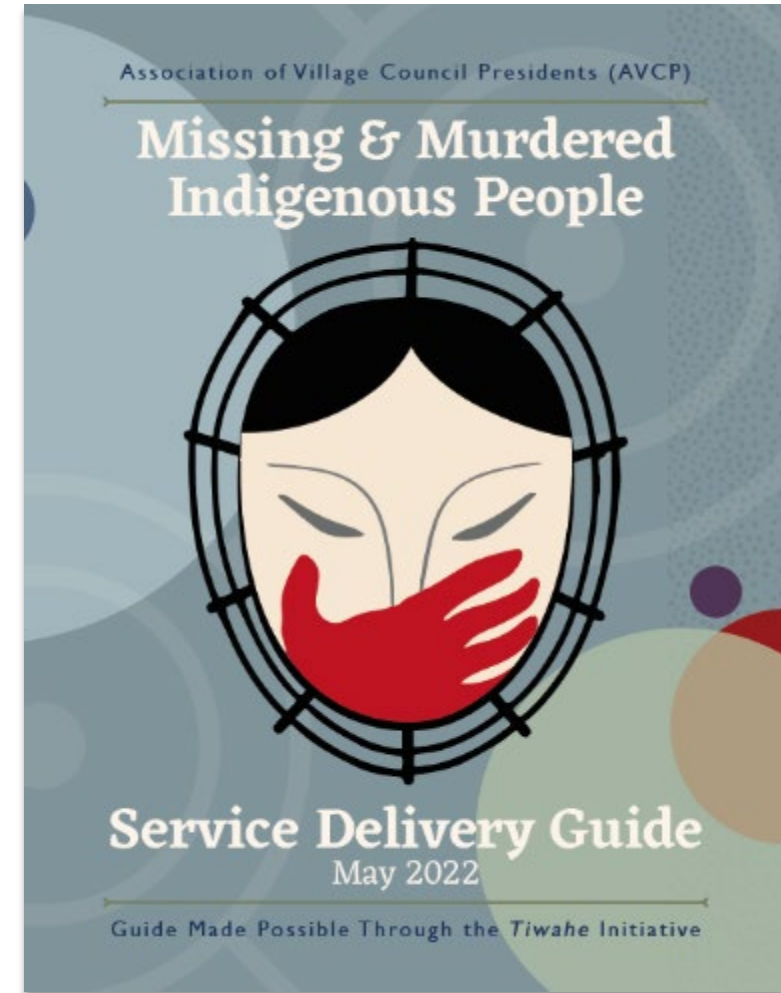
Woods, S. (2008). Researching community: Indigenous research methods. Forward Thinking.







Map of missing and murdered Unangax̣ from 1741-2020.





# Decolonizing Data and Data Sovereignty



Artwork: Dustin Newman



# About the MMIWG2S AK Working Group



The MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group works in collaboration to share initiatives that impacts MMIWG2S/MMIP work, share and create strategies for change, and host healing centered community events. With partnership from statewide organizations, we leverage our collective resources and skills to analyze local, state, and federal policies, have a unified voice on advocacy, and create meaningful out-facing events for the community.







## State Policies

- Passage of SB151 - first MMIP Bill in Alaska
  - Mandated Cultural training, NamUs Entry, 2 secured positions, Commission
- Four designated MMIP Investigators at DPS
- One MMIP AAG at Dept of Law
- VPSO legislation and funding increased

## Federal Policies

- Passage of Savanna's Act
- Passage of Not Invisible Act
- VAWA Reauthorization

# Systemic Issues Need Systemic Solutions



We address MMIWG from a place of healing with our community.  
We demand justice on all fronts.





Everyone is a part of the solution



Betty  
Bekemeier



Charlene Aqpik  
Apok



**To ask a question, please click the Q&A icon in your Zoom toolbar!**



Tell us what you think about today's webinar:



# Quyanaqpak!

Feel free to reach out with further questions.



**Charlene Aqpik Apok**

INFO@DATAFORINDIGENOUSJUSTICE.ORG  
WWW.DATAFORINDIGENOUSJUSTICE.ORG





# Resources & Further Reading



Data for Indigenous Justice

Resources

<https://www.dataforindigenousjustice.org/resources-1>

Data for Indigenous Justice

Report, 2021

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/650a3ad1f4ccde7d793b6f02/t/65a85dab2441ae379b833205/1705532855762/Web-DIJReport.pdf>

Not Invisible Act Commission

Final Report, November 2023

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cl4UX1zWKENGZh28fmBI4\\_9At\\_ZwXnCE/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cl4UX1zWKENGZh28fmBI4_9At_ZwXnCE/view?usp=drive_link)

MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group

<https://mmiwg2salaska.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MMIWG2SAlaska>