



Chairman Timothy Davis, Blackfeet Nation
Mr. Rain Bear Stands Last, Executive Director, Global Indigenous Council

Thank you, Chairman Davis and Mr. Stands Last for extending me an invitation to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Tribunal. I regret that I could not join you in person. Please accept this letter as a thank you for your work and advocacy and a strong statement of my commitment to lifting up this work to address the issue as President.

One of the principles that guides me is my belief in security. Our nation is not secure unless women are safe from harm and exploitation. This is especially true for Native women, who unfortunately are killed at a rate 10 times that of non-Native women. And the fact that we do not know for certain the extent of the issue, simply because we don't collect data, compounds the injustice.

As a man, aware of the privileges that come with this fact even today, I believe that it is all the more critical for me to support the equality and security of all women. As president, I am committed to addressing this issue with resources and urgency.

Within my first 100 days in office I will appoint a commission dedicated to the study of the crisis on murdered and missing indigenous women. This commission will be tasked with collecting data and analyzing trends in violence against Native women and developing recommendations for my administration to comprehensively address the issue. I am supportive of laws like Savanna's Law, strengthening the protocols and reporting standards surrounding the documentation and investigation of the crisis. Most sexual violence against women committed on tribal lands is committed by non-Natives. Unfortunately, a combination of bad law and Supreme Court precedent has deprived tribes of full control over their lands to deal with these matters as sovereign nations deem appropriate. I will work with Congress to develop a legislative fix to address *Oliphant v. Suquamish* and restore to tribes the jurisdiction to handle all civil and criminal matters arising on tribal lands.

I also believe that in order to address this crisis, we need to get to the root causes. We must invest in the well-being of Native women. My administration will be committed to addressing violence against women, including by investing in prevention. I plan to partner with Congress to make sure that the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act that crosses my desk will go beyond domestic violence. We also need to begin addressing obstacles that survivors face, particularly to housing and employment, and investing in education and prevention efforts that ensure all women can live safely without the threat of violence.

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To address this problem, I realize that I cannot do it alone. I will work with tribal leaders and collaborate with community partners. My administration will collaborate with community organizations, such as the Global Indigenous Council, to lift up the years of organizing and advocacy, and raise the profile of the issue. I emphatically believe that those closest to the problem are closest to the solution, and am committed to partnering to develop and implement local policies and solutions with community partners, as well as tribes and tribal leadership.

This crisis did not begin overnight, and we must act swiftly and intentionally if we are going to combat it. Only by elevating this issue and putting resources to address it can we truly secure the safety of indigenous women and girls. When I am elected, you will have a strong ally in this fight in the White House.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this issue and I look forward to engaging with you further.

Sincerely,

Pete Buttigieg