

# Noem and Heitkamp give bipartisan support for national Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women campaign launching in South Dakota

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



*SD Governor Kristi Noem & GPTCA Executive Director Gay Kingman.*



*Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND).*

## **Press Conference - Thursday, January 17 - 11 a.m. Holiday Inn Rushmore Plaza, Rapid City, SD**

A national campaign to raise awareness and keep the pressure on lawmakers to impact the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) tragedy will launch in South Dakota this week. Governor Kristi Noem, the state's first female governor, has offered her full support for the campaign initiated by the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association, the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council, and the Global Indigenous Council. Noem's statement will be shared with the media at a press conference on Thursday, January 17, at the Holiday Inn Rushmore Plaza in Rapid City. Governor Noem's backing for the joint-tribal organizations' campaign mirrors that of North Dakota's former-Senator, Heidi Heitkamp, who describes the MMIW billboard campaign as "one of the most powerful and important things" to undertake while legislation awaits passage. The alignment of Noem, a Republican, and Heitkamp, a Democratic, reflects the bipartisan support that exists for meaningful action on the MMIW issue.

The Global Indigenous Council (GIC), an international advocacy organization representing tribal nations and indigenous rights across the hemispheres, introduced the MMIW campaign to the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (RMTLC) and the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association (GPTCA) last summer, since when the allied-organizations that represent tribal nations across a vast swathe of the western US have been lobbying on Capitol Hill for a legislative response to the MMIW crisis. Savanna's Act, introduced by Senator Heitkamp, was blocked from passage in the House Judiciary Committee by former Virginia Congressman and Chairman Bob Goodlatte. The GPTCA-RMTLC-GIC alliance is pushing for amendments to strengthen and expand Savanna's Act from data sharing, the tenets of which can be found here: [www.mmiw-gic.com](http://www.mmiw-gic.com)

In the US Senate, Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, Senator Tom Udall, and prospective 2020 Democratic Presidential candidate, Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), have committed to work on the MMIW legislation. In Congress, the House Natural Resources Committee/Subcommittee

on Indian Affairs, under the Chairmanship of Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), are working on legislation in the House. Congresswoman Deb Haaland (D-NM), one of the first Native American women in history to be elected to Congress, actively supports the introduction of MMIW legislation and the billboard campaign.

Conceptualized for the GPTCA-RMTLC-GIC alliance by Alter-Native Media, the first MMIW billboards will appear in Rapid City, South Dakota, this week, before the campaign expands to Montana, Alaska, Washington State, Arizona and New Mexico through the spring. The locations parallel those identified in the recent Urban Indian Health Institute report as having the highest incidences of MMIW cases. South Dakota was selected as the start point as the state's Lakota-Dakota Nations are in the eye of the human trafficking storm, on the I-90 corridor between Billings, Montana, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Both cities are known as hubs from which Native women and minors are trafficked to the Bakken fracking fields and beyond. Tribes in South Dakota are bracing for two 1,400-man extractive industry "man camps" to be raised by summer 2019 in proximity to reservation boundaries. With the occupation of "man camps" in the Bakken, sexual assaults on the neighboring Fort Berthold Indian Reservation of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara escalated at an alarming rate. "We've had violence against women increase by 168%, particularly in the area of rape," reported Kandi Mossett, an MHA tribal member and leader of the Indigenous Environmental Network.

**WHEN: Thursday, January 17 – 11 a.m.**

**WHERE: Holiday Inn Rushmore Plaza (Atrium)**

**Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association/Global Indigenous Council  
MMIW Campaign Press Conference**

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*Congresswoman Deb Haaland (D-NM).*