

# **NCUIH Submits Comments to DOJ on Missing and Murdered Indigenous People**

Category: Policy Blog

written by Alexandra Payan | April 20, 2022

On April 15, 2022, the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) submitted written comments and recommendations in response to the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Dear Tribal Leader [letter](#) seeking stakeholder input on DOJ's efforts to address the unacceptably high rates of violent crime in American Indian and Alaska Native communities and the missing and murdered Indigenous persons (MMIP) crisis. In its comments, NCUIH thanked the DOJ for its commitment to working with Tribes to develop and support Tribally-driven solutions to violent crime and MMIP, while noting the need for the federal government to also work with Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) to address these issues. NCUIH emphasized that working with all AI/AN communities across the United States is required by both Executive Order 14053, Executive Order on Improving Public Safety and Criminal Justice for Native Americans and Addressing the Crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous People ([E.O. 14053](#)), and Deputy Attorney General Monaco's [Memorandum](#) establishing the DOJ's Steering Committee to Address the Crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons. NCUIH further offered to assist DOJ in establishing strong working relationships with UIOs as it works to address these pressing public safety issues.

## **E.O. 14053 and Deputy Attorney General Monaco's Memorandum: Inclusion of Urban AI/AN Communities**

AI/AN people are the [victims of violence](#), murder, and rape at rates higher than the national average. As part of the federal government's response to these issues, President Biden signed E.O. 14053, on November 15, 2021. E.O. 14053 directs the federal government to "to strengthen public safety and criminal justice in Indian Country and beyond, to reduce violence against Native American people, and to ensure swift and effective Federal action that responds to the problem of missing or murdered indigenous people." E.O. 14053 committed the federal government's to "[c]onsistent engagement, commitment, and collaboration," with AI/AN people and communities to "drive long-term improvement to public safety for all Native Americans." E.O. 14053 specifically directed the federal government to "build on existing strategies to identify solutions directed toward the particular needs of urban Native Americans," because "approximately 70 percent of American Indian and Alaska Natives live in urban areas and part of this epidemic of violence is against Native American people in urban areas." In addition, E.O. 14053 directed the federal government to "work closely with Tribal leaders and community members, Urban Indian Organizations, and other interested parties to support prevention and intervention efforts that will make a meaningful and lasting difference on the ground."

With respect to DOJ, Section 4 of E.O. 14053, contained the following directives:

- "The Attorney General, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), as appropriate, shall sustain efforts to improve data collection and information-sharing practices, conduct outreach and training, and promote accurate and timely access to information services regarding crimes or threats against Native Americans, including in urban areas."
- "The Attorney General, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of HHS, shall develop a strategy for ongoing analysis of data collected on violent crime and

missing persons involving Native Americans, including in urban Indian communities, to better understand the extent and causes of this crisis.”

In addition, on November 15, 2021 Deputy Attorney General Monaco signed a [Memorandum](#) establishing a Steering Committee to Address the Crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons. Deputy Attorney General Monaco ordered the Steering Committee to review the Department’s current guidance, policies, and practices with respect to MMIP, recommend any changes necessary to better facilitate the DOJ’s work on MMIP, and to develop a comprehensive plan to strengthen the Department’s work to address the issues of MMIP. Deputy Attorney General Monaco also directed the Steering Committee to seek and consider the views of stakeholders including UIOs.

## **NCUIH’s Comments to DOJ**

In its comments, NCUIH requested that DOJ ensure its compliance with E.O. 14053’s requirement to “work closely with Tribal leaders and community members, Urban Indian Organizations, and other interested parties to support prevention and intervention efforts that will make a meaningful and lasting difference on the ground,” by engaging in consistent and clear communication with UIOs and providing UIOs with notice of future consultations held pursuant to E.O. 14053. NCUIH further urged DOJ to provide specificity regarding its plans to incorporate UIOs into the policies, procedures, and projects set forth in E.O. 14053 and in Deputy Attorney General Monaco’s Memorandum.

NCUIH noted collaboration with UIOs is not only required by E.O. 14053 and Deputy Attorney General’s Memorandum, but it is also sound public policy. AI/AN individuals living in urban areas face many, if not all, of the same violent crime and MMIP issues as AI/ANs living on reservations or trust land. UIOs are active and important partners in combatting crime and promoting violence prevention in urban AI/AN communities. UIOs are also working together to develop innovative partnerships to provide services for victims of crime across jurisdictions. As a result, UIOs are an integral partner to eradicating these pandemics of violent crime and MMIP.

NCUIH also requested that DOJ establish an Urban Confer policy to set the necessary policies and procedures for direct and clear communication with UIOs. An Urban Confer is an established mechanism for dialogue between the federal government and UIOs. Urban Confer policies are a response to decades of deliberate federal efforts (i.e., forced assimilation, termination, relocation) that resulted in seventy percent (70%) of AI/AN people living outside of Tribal jurisdictions, thus making Urban Confer integral to address the care needs of most AI/AN persons.

NCUIH will continue to monitor the DOJ’s work on violent crime in Indian Country and MMIP. NCUIH will also continue to advocate for the inclusion of UIO’s in DOJ’s efforts to ensure that E.O. 14053’s directive to “build on existing strategies to identify solutions directed toward the particular needs of urban Native Americans,” is met.