

PRESS RELEASE: NCUIH Welcomes Not Invisible Act Commission Report to Congress and Administration

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Commission Urges Immediate Action to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons and Human Trafficking Crises

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 17, 2023) - At the start of National Native American Heritage Month, the Not Invisible Act Commission released its report entitled "[Not One More](#)" urging Congress and the Biden Administration to take immediate action to address the related crises of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) and human trafficking of Indigenous persons (HT). The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) endorsed and advocated for the passage of the legislation which created the Commission and NCUIH's Board President, Sonya Tetnowski (Makah), served on the Commission.

"It was an honor to serve on this commission with so many tribal leaders from across Indian Country. We as a commission heard from over 260 survivors, families, advocates, government agencies, and law enforcement to understand the impact from as many perspectives as possible. This 200-plus page report should be the beginning of this process as we know that each recommendation will require specific work to accomplish," said Ms. Tetnowski.

The Commission's report is a resounding call to the United States to fulfill its trust responsibility to American Indians and Alaska Natives and address the public health and public safety in Native communities caused by centuries of policies designed to attack Tribal Nations and Native ways of living. The Commission specifically recognized the impact of federal policies on Native people living in urban areas, highlighting the testimony of one witness who told the Commission "We can't forget the urban relocation programs in the 50s; I hope this Commission doesn't forget those relatives that are living off rez."

Background

NCUIH along with other National Native Organizations worked in support of the *Not Invisible Act* legislation, which was enacted in October 2020. The Act required the Secretary of the Interior, in coordination with the Attorney General to establish and appoint a joint commission on violent crime against American Indians and Alaska Natives. Secretary of the Interior Haaland was the lead sponsor of the *Not Invisible Act* when she served in Congress. The bill was passed unanimously by voice vote in both chambers of Congress.

Commissioner Sonya Tetnowski is a citizen of the Makah Tribe and CEO of the Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley. She currently serves as the president of both NCUIH and the California Consortium of Urban Indian Health (CCUIH). Ms. Tetnowski works daily in support of the health and wellness services to American Indians and Alaska Natives living in urban areas. Violence against

American Indians and Alaska Natives is a public health crisis and is considered a social determinant of health (SDOH). Both NCUIH and CCUIH are committed to the reduction of violence impacting Native communities.

Next Steps

The Not Invisible Act requires the Secretary of the Interior and the Attorney General to make publicly available and submit a written response to the recommendations within 90 days to the Commission and Congress. NCUIH will continue to uplift the work of the Commission and analyze the federal government's response for further action once released.