



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls

A Literature Review

National Council of Urban Indian Health

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Introduction

American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) women and girls living in urban United States are at great risk for abuse and disappearance. However, their cases have a significantly low investigation rate from the federal government, despite roughly 71% of the AI/AN population living in urban areas (Lucchesi, 2018). In 2018, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) released a report titled, “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls” as the second part of their *Our Bodies, Our Stories* series. This report shed light on the great disparity between the 5,712 missing AI/AN women and girls cases in 2016, and the mere 116 cases actually logged with the US Department of Justice (Lucchesi, 2018). According to the Center for Disease Control & Prevention, murder is the third leading cause of death among AI/AN women, yet data on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls is inaccurate, difficult to obtain, or lacking altogether (Stumblingbear-Riddle, 2018). The cases are made complicated by matters of jurisdiction, which rely on that missing or incomplete data. Legislation, including the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, 2013 has been passed which defines the legal boundaries by which a Tribe, state, or the federal government can pursue and prosecute a criminal case; this is often determined and enforces limitations by where the crime took place and who was involved (i.e. Tribal member versus a non-Tribal member as perpetrator) (Congress.gov, 2013).

The Freedom of Information Act amendment (FOIA) allows organizations and individuals to seize opportunities to access data and statistics from law enforcement offices for cases such as this. This information helped to piece together trends and events that led to the disappearances of thousands of AI/AN women and girls across the urban United States. Yet, the cost of obtaining information sets, poor cooperation from the individual data institutions, and sometimes an essential absence of data, stand as obstacles (cite UIHI report). For the missing and murdered women, this data on the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) in the urban United States helps to develop interventions key to curbing this crisis through awareness.

Objective

The purpose of this work is to explore and understand the reasons behind the high number of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, including how the social determinants of health compound this. Secondly, this paper will evaluate the data that exists and the reasons why what little does exist is difficult to obtain, as well as evaluating Indigenous Data Sovereignty and the impact that involving the Tribes can have. Lastly, this literature review will explore the implications of the data shortcomings and need for further intervention in this subject matter, including legislative measures such as Savanna's Act and Hanna's Act.

Literature Review

Materials and Methods

In reviewing current studies examining the high occurrence/low response rate for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), a search was conducted in the PMC and JSTOR library databases. Search queries were executed using key terms including “American Indian,” “Alaskan Native,” “Native American,” “Native Alaskan,” “AI/AN,” “Indigenous women and girls,” “Native American women,” in combination with, “missing,” “murdered,” “missing and murdered,” “human trafficking,” “missing persons,” “reports,” “homeless data,” “urban setting,” “Department of Justice,” “statistics.” Specific searches were made for “Indigenous Data Sovereignty,” “Social Determinants of Health,” “Freedom of Information Act (2016),” “Savanna’s Act,” and “Hanna’s Act”. Search results were limited to a time frame of five years old or less for publication, as of summer 2019, with the exception of foundational sources. Sources were also restricted to incidents within the United States and its territories; this topic is also highly relevant in Canada and New Zealand, pertaining to Aboriginal women and girls, and those who belong to the First Nations, however, while important, it is beyond the scope of this particular literature review.

Articles that fell within the given time frame and search terms were evaluated for relevance and credibility; only sources that fell within the given parameters have been used. The sources were assessed in two categories:

- **Historical Trauma and Modern Obstacles:** Historically relevant information and account of violence against AI/AN women and girls, and the modern day difficulties they face in different contexts, to health and education.
- **Response:** The subsequent actions taken, or not, by local and federal law enforcement, and current efforts to address the topic.

Remaining sources are addressed in the discussion section of this paper, which further elaborates on points brought up from either of the two primary categories. The urban populations evaluated in this paper are those with the highest prevalence of cases involving MMIWG. Also not to be overlooked are the high rates of victimization against AI/AN men and the LGBTQ2+. Although not covered in this study, they are not forgotten.

Results

Despite the high volume of reports regarding missing AI/AN women and girls, historically and up until recently, there have been limited interventions from local or federal law enforcement, and there is scarce existing data with minimal information being actively added by state law enforcement.

Historical Trauma and Modern Obstacles

The topic of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) is a harsh reality that has contributed to historical trauma across the AI/AN population. Historical trauma refers to the cumulative emotional harm of an individual or generation caused by traumatic experiences and events (Ball & O'Neil, 2016). In the case of AI/AN individuals, who are culturally connected to their ancestors, historical trauma spans hundreds of years and touches the entire AI/AN population, each Tribe living with and recovering from their own regional and chronological sufferings (Ball & O'Neil, 2016). Current studies and datasets reveal the harsh reality that AI/AN women and girls have known for generations; this is nothing new. American Indian/Alaska Native women and girls have been subject to human trafficking since the 1600s, seen as a commodity by settlers from various foreign countries, as outlined by a foundational piece of research by Sarah Deer in 2010. The paper, written while at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law, is based on over one hundred primary and secondary sources ranging from personal accounts to writings that explored the treatment of AI/AN women by the French, Spanish, Dutch, British etc. While the United States is no longer a colony, and has ushered in the twenty-first century, descriptions of historical traumas and modern obstacles for AI/AN women in urban areas are eerily similar. In her dissertation, Deer cites, "[T]hese [Native] women had very few economic choices... They lived mean existences in seedy brothels, second-story rented rooms, and alley basements," (2010).

Historically, termination and relocation policies from the United States government in the 1940s sought to place AI/AN people in preselected cities, but provided limited-if-any housing and employment assistance, which has carried challenges into the current day (Yuan et al., 2014). While today, many AI/AN relocations to urban areas are in the hope of better opportunities, there is still poverty, loneliness, and physical and cultural isolation (Yuan et al., 2014). Based on estimates from the 2010 census, as of 2018 there are approximately 6.9 million American Indian/Alaska Natives in the United States; 3.5 million of them are women. As covered in the beginning of this paper, roughly 70% of AI/AN men and women live in urban areas, making the at-risk population roughly 2.4 million women and girls (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

In urban settings, modern day traumas for AI/AN women and girls may arise from social and economic vulnerabilities that force them to turn to alternative avenues to earn the means to live. Such vulnerabilities can arise from a lack of education, economic disparities, a lack of health-care, etc. (NCAI, 2016). According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research and based on data from 2013 and 2015, AI/AN women are one of the two lowest-earning demographics, with only 64% of them covered by health insurance (2019). Today, to get a higher paying job, the most common hurdle is higher education, and only 15.4% of AI/AN women have a bachelor's degree (IWPR, 2019). While there are a few avenues high-achieving minorities can take, such as special

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scholarships and Affirmative Action to gain admittance to colleges and universities, 37% of AI/AN students attend a high-poverty public school which often cannot provide a curricula that enables them to achieve the escalating standards that college admissions councils set (DOE, 2019).

Polaris, an organization whose chief aim is tackling human trafficking, identified twenty-five types of modern slavery, to include domestic work, commercial front brothels, hotels and hospitality, commercial cleaning services, and recreational facilities (Polaris, 2017). In the United States, AI/AN women make up 0.9% of all low wage jobs that are reported (NWLC, 2014). To clarify, the jobs Polaris identified in their report are vocations that provide human traffickers with the best opportunities to abuse their employees; these are jobs that move their employees around and can make them difficult to track, and give little protection to the employee. These are also jobs that do not require a high level of education for entry-level positions, making it easy for an individual with little means to qualify for such jobs; this will be further explored in the discussion.

Regarding physical abuse and harassment, reported violence against AI/AN women and girls is considerably higher than other demographics; in comparison to non-Hispanic, white-only women; AI/AN women and girls are 1.20 times as likely to have experienced violence in their lifetime, and 1.7 times as likely to have experienced

violence in the last year (Rosay, 2016). According to a report on ‘Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men’, 84.3%, or 4 out of 5 of AI/AN women have experienced violence against them in their lifetime, to include physical violence, stalking, and sexual violence (Rosay, 2016). The report also states that 92.6% of women who were victims of violence, stalking, and sexual violence spoke with someone about what the perpetrators did to them; that is to say, the offences were reported to someone, though the dataset does not identify the women’s discussants (Rosay, 2016). To further emphasize the point, even while the statistics themselves are already incomparable to other demographics, the majority of scholars on this topic believe the data considerably underestimates true prevalence (Logan, 2015).

When it comes to the care for these women and girls, emotionally, physically, and mentally, there is little in the way of research and literature to show that this high rate of assault and battery is being met with appropriate treatment and attention. A report from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reveals that for adults aged 18 and older, 6.3% of AI/AN individuals reported serious mental illness (SMI) (SAMHSA, 2017). This is in comparison with the next highest demographic, where only 4.5% of white people reported SMI (SAMHSA, 2017). With high reported rates of SMI and low rates of response to the need for mental health services, the discussion of mental health begins to mirror the unmet needs of MMIWG.

Mental health issues cannot be reliably addressed and treated by the individuals themselves, or anyone else that is not specifically trained in psychology, psychiatry, or other fields of psychotherapy (McGinty et al., 2018). Unfortunately, without culturally-competent mental health resources, and poor community outreach due to considerable social stigma about mental illness and substance abuse, AI/AN individuals must search out alternative solutions to their problems; this increases their risk of engaging in activities with low levels of security and higher levels of potential harm (McGinty et al., 2018). For example, an individual with untreated depression may be unable to hold a regular job, meaning they can only get a low-security, high-risk job like the ones listed in the 2017 Polaris report to pay the rent and support their families. One such high-risk job involves the transaction of sex for money, whether it be the individual sex worker, or a group working for an employer.

AI/AN women and girls are a highly vulnerable demographic for sex trafficking, as outlined by a report from Alexandra Pierce in 2012. When the report was written, there was very little collected data on the commercial sexual exploitation of AI/AN women and girls beyond anecdotal evidence from AI/AN women and girls in Minnesota and Alaska, but that alone was telling. The following information presented is from more than ten years ago, however, considering the scarcity of relevant data, it is a valuable window into the topic at hand. In 2007, 24% of the Hennepin County Corrections' arrests for prostitution consisted of AI/AN women; this was more than

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twelve times the percentage they represented in the population (Pierce, 2012). In Minnesota, American Indian (AI) women and girls were being trafficked from their communities into prostitution, pornography, and strip shows. This pattern was also found in Alaska, with one third of sex-worker arrests being Alaskan Native (AN) women, despite them only representing 16% of the state population (Pierce, 2012). In addition, in 2010 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released a notification to Tribal leaders that Alaska Federation of Natives events were targeted to lure away young AN women and girls to, as in Minnesota, exploit them for commercial sex work, transporting them across state lines and international borders, including Canada and Mexico (Pierce, 2012). Past tense terms are used in this analysis since up-to-date data is not presently available to assess, but there is no evidence to support that such trafficking practices have ceased or slowed in any way.

Under United States law, “sex trafficking” is defined in the H.R.3244 - Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. ‘Severe forms of trafficking in persons’ means sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion... or the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery” (NCAI, 2016; Congress.gov, 2019).

Certain researchers have challenged data collection on sex trafficking in general, as forms of trafficking involve coercive control, and in these cases, adult AI/AN women are consenting adults who engage in illicit activity, such as prostitution (NCAI, 2016). This has, unfortunately, partially skewed what little data has been collected, however it does not belittle the fact that the presence of trafficking within a demographic is an indication of high vulnerability factors, exploitation, and coercion (NCAI, 2016).

Response

_____ According to a study by the Murder Accountability Project (MAP), law enforcement agencies have failed to notify the FBI of approximately half of the homicides of AI/AN peoples from 1999 to 2017 (MAP, 2019). The FBI Supplementary Homicide Report also showed that AI/AN homicides are least likely to be reported (MAP, 2019). This can be, in part, the result of high rates of racial misclassification of AI/AN post mortem. Especially in the case of AI/AN women and girls found in urban settings, without physical evidence of their Tribal heritage, they can be incorrectly classified in the wrong Tribe, wrong race, or just classified as “unknown” (Jim et al., 2014). Unfortunately, AI/AN children are not spared from this disparity in the rate of reports versus response. In a study about the racial and gender differences in missing child recovery cases, it was found that girls were more likely to remain missing than boys, and children of color were more likely to remain missing than white children (van

de Rijt et al., 2018). Another factor is the location of the incident, which dictates what governing body and law enforcement agency has jurisdiction to pursue the case.

Reporting has improved as several Tribes' police forces, such as the Navajo Tribal Police, have begun reporting directly to the FBI, but these reported cases occurred on Tribal land, not in urban areas; Tribal police forces are physically disconnected from their kin in these cases and hold no jurisdiction. (MAP, 2019).

Even when Tribes do have the legal right to pursue a case about their Tribal members, they may face further roadblocks as local and regional law enforcement agencies have refused to release what information they have available (Lucchesi, 2018). The process of collecting data does involve technical difficulties, but as with many other cases involving the acquisition of information, many challenges come from people. Be it by human error, unwillingness to respond to requests for information, or a general sense of apathy, Tribes are often unable to receive credible information to facilitate investigating the whereabouts and fate of their kinsmen (Rodriguez-Lonebear, 2016). This poses the question of "Indigenous Data Sovereignty", as each of the 573 federally recognized Tribes in the United States are technically sovereign nations within the country's borders, which includes ownership of that nation's data. It is important to clarify here that the term "nation" is used to describe a group of people that are bound together by common values, tradition, culture, etc. "Nations" are not bound by borders as "states" are. If a foreign sovereign state wishes to legally subpoena one of their

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citizens, or information about their citizens, while they are in the United States, there are laws put in place to retrieve that data (LII, 2019). They are a sovereign state and their citizens are under their jurisdiction for investigation and prosecution.

However, should a Tribe wish to subpoena law enforcement agencies for data regarding their MMIWG, there are no laws in place to legally back their claims to the data, despite the 31 treaties in place since the late 1770s (Avalon Project, 2019).

Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Tribal jurisdiction over the information regarding their Tribal members is crucial in a time when only 116 cases out of 5,712 were pursued by the United States Department of Justice (Lucchesi, 2017). AI/AN Tribes are institutions that function like any other government organization, and need data to inform their decisions (Rodriguez-Lonebear, 2016). However, the data that exists is collected and processed by other institutions, such as the federal, state, and local United States government entities. As noted earlier, retrieving that information is a challenge that takes a considerable amount of time, if it happens at all, and time is a valuable resource that their missing Tribal members do not have (Rodriguez-Lonebear, 2016). In many cases, AI/AN women are reported missing, but their cases are not taken up in a timely manner, which can change a missing case to a murder case, and/or have so much time pass that it impedes the investigation of the cause of death. These were the cases for Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind and Hanna Harris.

Both Savanna and Hanna, in North Dakota and Montana respectively, were reported missing, but their cases were not pursued in a timely manner. Both brutally murdered, their bodies were so badly decomposed by the time they were found that most standard routes of forensic evidence investigation were not usable. Their tragedies have served as an example of the statistics of AI/AN women and girls who have gone missing and murdered, but had little action to address their crisis. In December 2018, the United States federal government passed bill S.227, nicknamed "Savanna's Act," which reforms the protocols for law enforcement and the justice system for handling cases of missing and murdered indigenous women cases; Montana passed a state law in April 2019 for the same purpose, and nicknamed it "Hanna's Act," (Congress.gov, Montana State Legislature, 2019).

Discussion

The current health care situation for AI/AN urban populations, 71% of the total AI/AN population, is that they, as a whole, lack adequate access to resources. *Healthy People 2020* released an assessment on the social determinants of health (SDH), with the most recent report in 2010, and a subsequent edition expected in 2020. The five main SDH components are:

- Health and health care (access to health care, access to primary care, health literacy)

- Education (early childhood education and development, enrollment in higher education, high school graduation, language and literacy)
- Economic stability (employment, food insecurity, housing instability, poverty)
- Neighborhood and built environment (access to foods that support healthy eating patterns, crime and violence, environmental conditions, quality of housing)
- Social and community context (civic participation, discrimination, incarceration, social cohesion)

Deficits for AI/AN women and girls in all five categories exacerbate the prevalence of cases where they are missing or murdered.

Health and Health Care

The AI/AN population were among the first to have an unambiguous, state-conferred right to health, however the urban AI/AN population have frequent reports of poor health and limited health care options (Trout et al., 2018). There are currently 573 federally recognized Tribal nations, and these federally recognized Tribes are provided health and educational assistance through the Indian Health Service (IHS), which is a part of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (DHHS, 2018). The IHS provides a health delivery service for approximately two million AI/AN people, typically urban clientele that has limited access to hospital services. However,

as mentioned, as of 2018, there are roughly 6.9 million AI/AN people. SAMHSA reports that AI/AN youth (ages 12-17), as one of the smaller demographics, has either the highest or second highest percentage of substance use for marijuana (highest, 7.4% of AI/AN youth) and cigarettes (second highest, 4.8% AI/AN youth). For AI/AN adults, (ages 18+), again as one of the smaller demographics, the AI/AN population leads, or has the second-highest percentage-value, in alcohol abuse disorders (9.7% AI/AN adults) and illicit drug use disorders (4.1% AI/AN adults) (SAMHSA, 2017).

Education

When looking up data on education, even the United States Department of Education stated in their 2018 report, “The Condition of Education,” that “Data on American Indians/Alaska Natives are often subject to inconsistencies in how respondents identify their race/ethnicity,” (2018). However, this begs the question as to whether AI/AN individuals are misclassifying themselves, or they do not have the proper options in surveys to correctly identify themselves in their corresponding Tribal affiliation.

As of the 2015-2016 school year, 37% of AI/AN children enrolled in public schools attend high-poverty schools, as compared to 8% of white students, and 24% overall (DOE, 2018). 72% of AI/AN students graduate from high school, but when searching for survey data on the availability of resources for early childhood

development and care, as reported by AI/AN parents, the 2018 report stated that the AI/AN population reporting standards were not met for many of the tables, and therefore that data was not included, leaving large gaps in the narrative (DOE, 2018). There is a legal duty to accurately enumerate school aged youth especially as they may qualify for needed services. AI/AN youth are disproportionately classified as children with disabilities in public schools. AI/AN students make up 1.2% of public school students nationally (The National Indian Education Association, 2008), yet they are 17% of students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. While being the lowest percentage group in most demographic data, AI/AN youth also suffer from a “digital divide”. Only 49% of AI/AN children have access to internet services at home, and only 74% of AI/AN children have access to internet services at all; according to the report, AI/AN students mostly use the internet while at school.

Economic Stability

In 2016, the poverty rate was highest among black and AI/AN children; 34% each (DOE, 2018). Black, AI/AN, and Hispanic children had higher poverty rates than the national average (19%) (DOE, 2018). The poverty rate among AI/AN children was highest for those in households without a parent who had completed high school (62%) and lowest for those in households where at least one parent attained a bachelor’s or higher degree (12%). 37% of AI/AN students are eligible for free school lunches; this

means 37% of AI/AN households with children are 130% or more below the poverty line (DOE, 2018). AI/AN student economic population distribution: 9% low poverty, 21% mid-to-low poverty, 30% mid-to-high poverty, 37% high poverty, 3% data not available.

Neighborhood and Built Environment

_____Based on the 2018 Homelessness Report, over 15,000 AI/AN individuals are homeless in the United States (OCPD, 2018). When assessing the housing situation for the AI/AN population for those who are living off-reservation and in urban locations, they occupy disproportionate levels of poverty, with three times more people living in poverty than their white counterparts (Comenote et al., 2013). With such large numbers of AI/AN individuals living in high poverty, as discussed in the portion about education, many also have considerable issues finding housing. As noted in Deer's work with the redistribution of AI/AN populations to urban areas, but little to no help with employment or housing, there has been a trend of intergenerational poverty (Comenote et al., 2013). While the number of homeless families is decreasing thanks to Continuum of Care programs throughout the urban United States, there is another issue regarding the difference between a home and a house for the AI/AN community, which relates to the social and community context of SDH (OCPD, 2018; Comenote et al., 2013).

Social and Community Context

AI/AN women and girls in urban areas are physically, socially, and spiritually detached from their Tribe; even Tribal leaders often do not know where their kinsmen are. Many AI/AN individuals feel a sense of dissociation; they are either not part of the major popular culture, with an emphasis on their Tribal roots, or they're disconnected from their Tribal heritage from growing up in urban areas, disconnected from their ancestral homelands (Liebler et al., 2016) As technology advances, urban AI/AN individuals find their connection to their Tribes in Indian Country is left behind. A study titled "History, Place, and Racial Self-Representation" published in 2017 describes the influence of one's ethnic history and geographic location on their life story. The data from the study established strong connections between cohorts, or age groups, in the same location, where there is some social cohesion and a cultural connection between individuals; this also goes for individuals in different locations but that still have some way to connect with their community (Liebler & Zachler, 2016). While there are AI/AN-based media outlets and news sources, there is a distinct lack of internet access for Tribal communities to be able to reach out to their members in urban areas (LaPoe & LaPoe, 2017). Further issues arise with the misclassification of AI/AN individuals who may not even know what Tribe they are a part of due to generations of disconnectedness (Liebler et al., 2016). Coming from a culture of rich tradition and connections between the generations, AI/AN women and girls are far removed from

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their heritage in urban communities. It's important to note that while there may be AI/AN communities and organizations in larger urban areas, many of them are a conglomerate of many AI/AN individuals rather than those that are based on individual Tribal groups (Liebler & Zachler, 2016).

The lack of full accounting for the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls is referred to as a "data crisis." The crisis is attributable to several factors including a lack of clear protocols for law enforcement and the judicial system, complicated jurisdictional issues, and difficulty for Tribal law enforcement, Tribal leaders, and victim's families to access the vast resources that should be available to them to aid in their search for their missing persons (Spamer et al., 2019). There are recommendations that have been proposed to improve the collection and redistribution of data pertaining to AI/AN women and girls, and the urban AI/AN population as a whole. These have included involving the Tribal law enforcement agencies in the primary collection of data, reforming protocols that handle cases such as these, and the broad sweeping statement of "improving urban health," (Pierce, 2012). However, any interventions that are implemented cannot be one-sided; the AI/AN population should be involved and given every consideration for their culture, their values and belief

systems, and their identities as a whole. The AI/AN population is not a monolith and must not be regarded as one.

There is a deep mistrust from many AI/AN individuals and Tribes towards local, state, and federal organizations and agencies, given their tumultuous past over the past generations (Lopez & Marley, 2018). There are different sources for the mistrust based on different regions, Tribes, and periods of time, but key factors include historical trauma and current disregard by data collectors for culture and values of those they are studying (Lopez & Marley, 2018). To add to the challenge, where little data has been collected, it unfortunately has been accepted by a few sources that some data is better than no data, and in some cases, the partial view that is presented creates more confusion than there was before. This is the case with the most recent *Condition of Education* report; data on AI/AN populations was collected, but it was considered too small to include in the datasets (DOE, 2018; Lopez & Marley, 2018). This is also the case with missing and murdered reports regarding sex trafficking, as there must be a distinct categorization of data to reliably understand what leads these AI/AN women and girls to go missing. There is no substitute for reliable, verifiable data. One bright light of reliable research data, is through the free web-based National Missing and Unidentified Persons System tool, NamUs, which accounts for not only investigator information, but also is amassed from records of family members and friends of the missing. Prior to the

NamUs launch in 2009, families with missing loved ones had few places to turn in their quest for answers.

Concluding Thoughts

American Indian/Alaska Native women and girls living in urban areas of the United States are faced with deficits in all five categories that Healthy People 2020 considers key to a healthy life. With such shortcomings, arise vulnerabilities that these women and girls must learn how to overcome, which puts them in positions that are more easily exploited. Considerable difficulty comes from the limited data that exists, and that it is distributed between different sources. Unlike other underserved communities in urban areas of the United States, the AI/AN population has a history of eradication and forced relocation to these urban areas (Yuan et al., 2014). Without a comprehensive report on the causes and effects, it is next to impossible to see how this crisis is happening and how it can be prevented in the future.

A paper released in 2014 titled, "Promoting Ethical Research with American Indian and Alaska Native People Living in Urban Areas," outlines some strong recommendations for improving the collection of data for AI/AN populations, many of which involve the populations themselves, and providing better funding. Thus far, money for research infrastructure is extremely limited, with only 1% of the entire IHS budget allocated to Urban Indian Organizations, which provide the needed health and

social services to those AI/AN living in urban areas through contracts, and are further restricted due to stringent rules that state that money from IHS urban grant and contract programs cannot be used for research (Yuan et al., 2014). Much responsibility can be allocated to the Tribal leaders of the 573 recognized Tribes within the United States, as the Tribes take the initiative to connect, or re-connect, with their Tribal members living in urban areas, off-reservation. Frequently, this proves to be a difficult task as many Tribes have limited resources and AI/AN's poor access to internet services to look up and reach out to their members, and those that have been removed and forced to relocate may not know their Tribal affiliation. For further ethical research, and accurate survey data, forms and documents that individuals add their information to must have the most accurate options for their racial and Tribal classification to address the rampant misclassification of indigenous women and girls in healthcare, and in missing and murder cases. In short, when electronic records have inadequate drop down menus, the information technology itself exacerbates the "data crisis". Such clearinghouse tools as NamUs, empowers and provides families with a way to remain vigilant and search among unidentified or missing cases across the nation, to enhance case matching through DNA of 'cold cases'. This literature review is in no way exhaustive, however, readers will benefit from examining all of the cited sources in their entirety, as this piece merely provides a glimpse into the world of research on this crisis.

This population lives with considerable risk factors, but it is clear that the high rate of reports for MMIWG must be met with higher rates of response to bring them home safely, or bring them the justice their memory deserves.

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