Wyoming
Division of Victim Services

WY SAC Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center
University of Wyoming

Rural Realities: Addressing Missing & Murdered Indigenous People in Wyoming and the Mountain West

NATIONAL JOINT TRAINING CONFERENCE FOR VOCA VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND COMPENSATION ADMINISTRATORS 2023

Missing & Murdered Indigenous People Movement

- MMIP represents a call to action to address the systemic issues and societal factors that contribute to the vulnerability of Indigenous women, raise awareness about their disproportionate victimization, advocate for justice, and support the affected families and communities.
- #MMIW #MMIWG #MMIWG2S #MMIP #MMIR

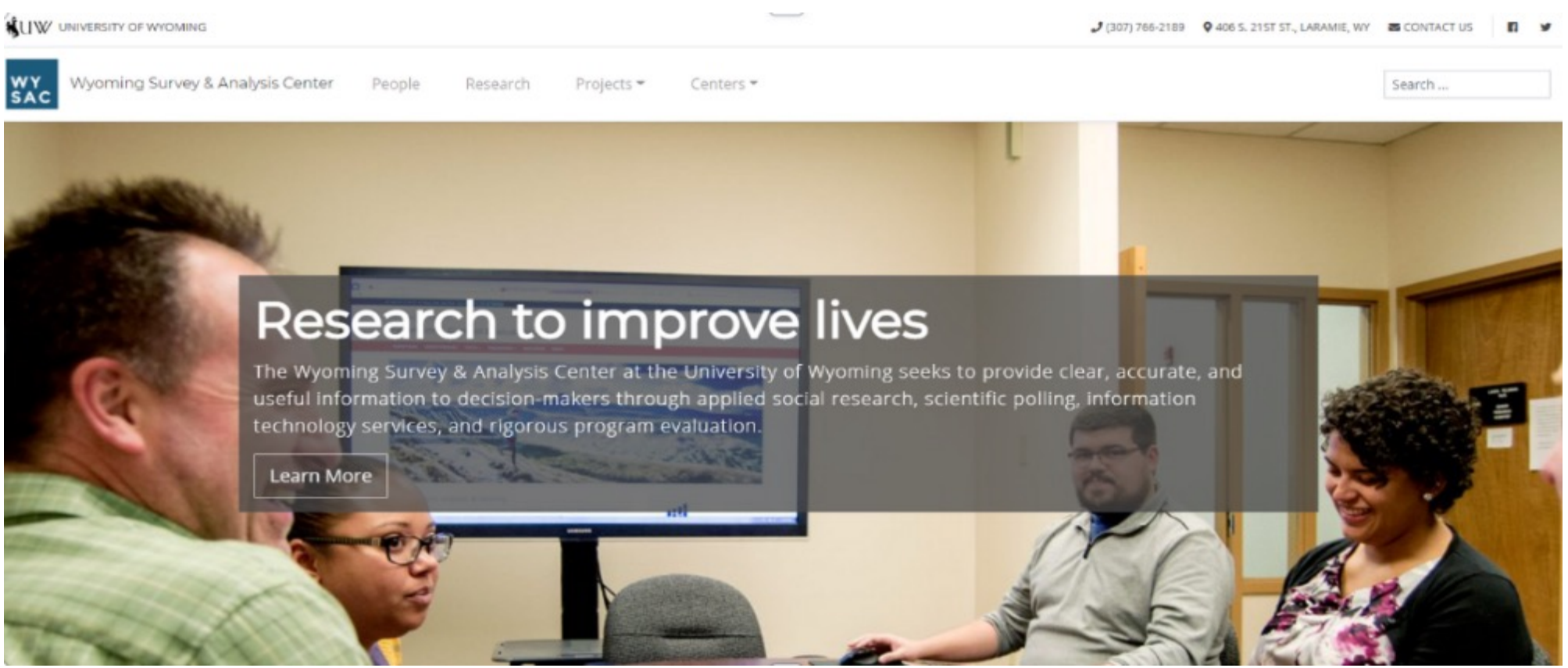
March for Justice
MMIWG
JUSTICE FOR TWO SPIRIT WOMEN
JUSTICE
No More Stolen Sisters
NO MORE STOLEN SISTERS
WOMEN ARE SACRED
MOTHER EARTH IS SACRED
PROTECT OUR SACRED
ENGINEERING HALL
JUSTICE
FOR MISSING & MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

DAWN
DAY
MICHEL

Jocelyn Cherese Watt

Wyoming MMIP Task Force

Director of the Division of Victim Services (Chair)	Wyoming Attorney General	Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation	Wyoming Highway Patrol (AMBER Alert program)
Tribal Liaison for Northern Arapaho	Tribal Liaison for Eastern Shoshone	Bureau of Indian Affairs Chief of Police	Non-Profit Organizations
Governor's Policy Staff	Red Paint Alliance, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault program on the Wind River Indian Reservation	Keepers of the Fire, UW student organization	Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Assault



Contracting with Research Specialists

Data-Driven Decision Making

- Uses data to gain insights, identify patterns, and make evidence-based decisions.

- WYSAC's Approach
  - Archival Data Analysis
  - Stakeholder Interviews
  - Media Coverage Analysis

HOMICIDE

Between 2000-2020

105

Indigenous people were victims of homicide

34 Female

71 Male

Indigenous People Make Up

21%

Of Homicide Victims (2000-2020)

BUT ARE ONLY

3%

Of Wyoming's Population

Indigenous Homicide

8x Higher than for White people

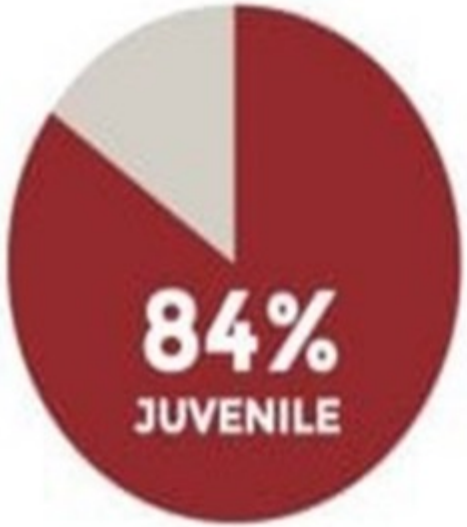
Female Indigenous Homicide

6x Higher than for White women

MISSING

Between 2011 and September 2020

710 Indigenous persons were reported missing



AND

1,254 Missing persons records for Indigenous people were on file

11% Are found within one day

50% Are found within one week

21% Were missing for 30 or more days

Between 2011 and September 2020

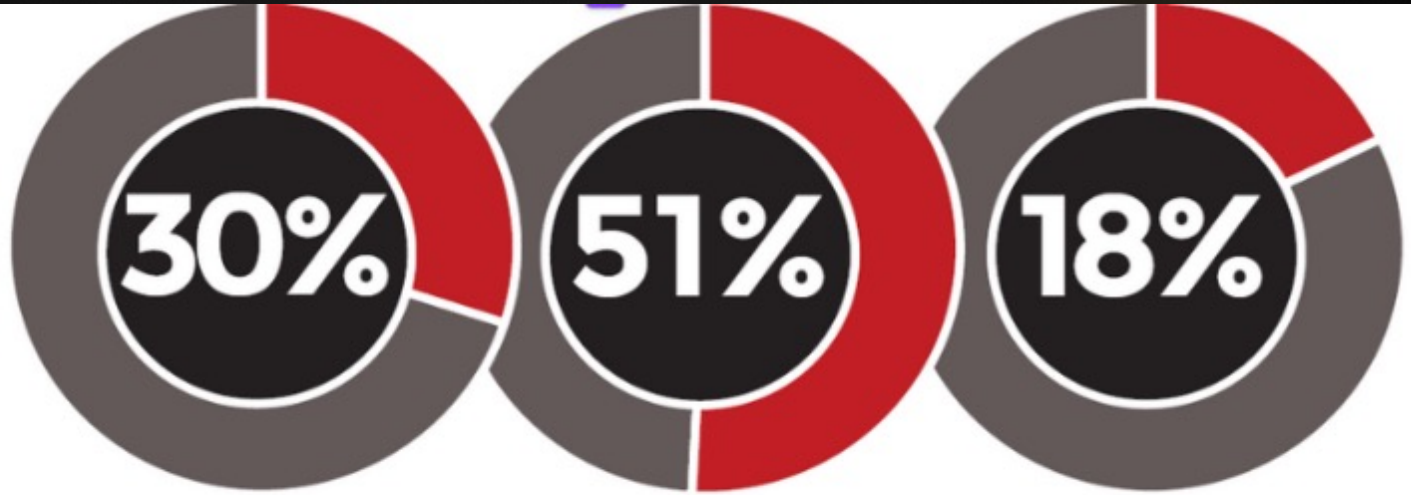
Indigenous people were listed as missing in

Currently, 10 Indigenous people are listed as missing

3 Female

7 Male

Only **30%** of **Indigenous homicide victims** had newspaper media coverage, as compared to **51%** of White homicide victims.



Indigenous Female victims had the least, with only **18%** coverage

THEMES IN MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS

Indigenous victims were more likely to have . . .

- Negative character framing
- Violent language
- General location of incident
- Essentialism

White victims were more likely to have . . .

- Positive character framing
- Articles focused on them
- Exact location of incident

THEMES IN MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF MISSING PERSONS

Indigenous missing persons were more likely to have . . .

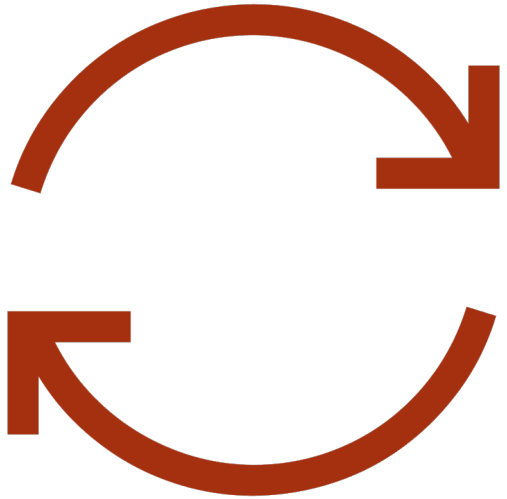
- Negative character framing
- Article only after found dead
- No article while missing

White missing persons were more likely to have . . .

- Articles while still missing
- Articles stating they were found safe

Qualitative Data Collection

- Interviews with Key Stakeholders
  - Families, Law Enforcement, Service Providers
- Barriers
  - Lack of trust in the justice system
  - No single point of contact
  - Lack of information regarding investigations
- Recommendations
  - Improve data protocols
  - Indigenous advocacy/response team
  - Raise community awareness



Improvements to Protocols and Data Systems

Publicly Accessible Missing Person Web Page

Law Enforcement Protocol Survey

Missing Person Alert System

MMIP Advocate

Community Awareness

- MMIP Task Force
- *Who She Is* Documentary
- Coverage of the 2021 Statewide Report
- National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Missing People of Wyoming Facebook Group
- Missing Person Community Resource List

Community-Based Participatory Research

Active collaboration between researchers and community members in all stages of the research process. It aims to address community concerns and promote social change by combining scientific inquiry with community engagement and action.

- Culturally appropriate
- Relevant
- Responsive to the needs and priorities of the community

CBPR Key Principles

Equity and Power Sharing

Co-learning and Capacity Building

Collaborative and Participatory Approach

Contextual Relevance

Action-oriented

Sustainable

Engaging Marginalized Populations

- Establish Trust and Build Rapport
- Recognize and Respect Community Expertise
- Address Power Imbalances
- Collaborate on Research Design
- Build Capacity
- Ensure Cultural Sensitivity
- Prioritize Ethical Considerations
- Communicate Findings Effectively
- Promote Action and Impact
- Maintain Long-Term Relationships

Qualitative Data Collection & Analysis

- **In-Depth Interviews**
  - Gathers rich narratives, provides insight into complex contributing factors
- **Focus Groups**
  - Generate shared knowledge, reveal common themes, foster solidarity
- **Storytelling and Oral History**
  - Indigenous knowledge and intergenerational experiences, explore historical context, cultural factors, and systemic challenges
- **Participatory Mapping**
  - Visual representation to identify patterns and geographical factors
- **Thematic Analysis**
  - Identify reoccurring themes, root causes, impacts, and potential solutions

Program Evaluation

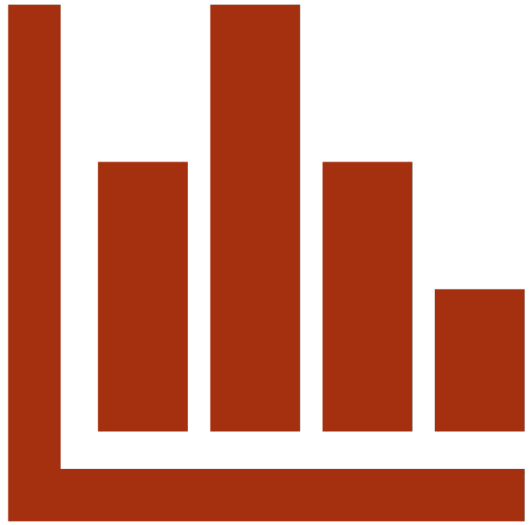
- **Assessing Program Outcomes**
  - Evaluate outcomes of programs and interventions, measure changes
- **Identifying Best Practices**
  - Identify successful program models from different communities
- **Gap Analysis**
  - Determine areas where resources, coordination, or policy improvements are needed
- **Community Needs Assessments**
  - Understand unique needs and challenges, identify contributing factors
- **Create Recommendations for Action**
  - Advocate for systemic reforms, evidence-based policy recommendations, program improvements, and resource allocations

Survey Development

- Clear, concise, easy-to-understand questions clearly tied to your research objective
- Culturally appropriate and sensitive
- Pilot the survey
- Collaborate with partners to facilitate data collection
- Analyze the data to identify trends, patterns, and key findings
  - Disaggregate the data by gender, age, tribal affiliation, etc.
- Inform policies and Interventions

Quantitative Data Collection & Analysis

- Establishing Baseline Data
  - Number of incidents
- Identifying Patterns and Trends
  - Common risk factors, vulnerable populations, geographic hotspots
- Assessing Disparities
  - Age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic factors
- Evaluating Interventions
  - Changes in reporting rates, case resolution rates, compensation claims



Centering Indigenous Voices

- Ensuring Authentic Representation
- Building Trust and Collaboration
- Respecting Cultural Protocols
- Co-creating Solutions
- Supporting Indigenous-led Initiatives
- Elevating Indigenous Narratives
- Continuous Learning and Reflection

JUSTICE
FOR JOCELYN AND JADE
JUSTICE!
JUSTICE!
MMIP
WIND RIVER
MMIW
MEDICINE WHEEL RIDE
NO MORE
STOLEN SISTERS

Questions

Thank You!

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