

Research in brief

Findings from the Arizona Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP) Study

Project background



An Arizona MMIP Survivor Advisory Group was established to act as knowledgeable advisors, offering guidance across all facets of the research project



This project involved a two-day event focused on healing and supporting Indigenous survivors and families who have lost a relative to homicide or missing persons



A total of 29 MMIP survivors and family members gathered in Phoenix Arizona and shared their stories



Indigenous ways of gathering stories were used, including using traditional healing and cultural practices



Key recommendations were developed by the survivors and family members to address MMIP

What are the MMIP challenges that families and survivors face when interacting with the criminal justice system?

- Unable to report adult loved ones as missing
- Delayed investigations
- Ineffective or absent communication
- Lack of law enforcement support
- Inconsiderate homicide disclosures

What are the ways survivors and families heal from MMIP?

- Share MMIP experience
- Practice spiritual or traditional beliefs
- Build a strong support system
- Engage in cultural activities
- Help others in your community
- Connect with the natural world, land, and animals

"I don't want to forget my sister, so of course I'm going to talk about her."

"If I can help other people, that's what I'm going to do, because I'm still here. I'm a survivor."

What are the needs of MMIP families and survivors?

- Implement accessible services for grieving and healing
- Address maladaptive coping and unresolved trauma
- Connect people who share similar experiences
- Have supportive listeners
- Ensure cultural healing methods within services and responses to MMIP
- Increase awareness of MMIP

What are the challenges to mental health that MMIP survivors and families face after losing a loved one?

- Regret
- Uncertainty
- Anger
- Experiencing frequent deaths
- Guilt
- Frustration
- Balancing culture and grief
- Injustice
- Shame
- Fear
- Helplessness
- Confusion
- Hurt
- Sadness

"I stay angry inside because I feel like the people need to answer for what they've done."

"I've had some guilt to cope with."

"It's complicated because in our way of our healing, when somebody passes away we don't talk about it a lot of time."

"I can't really start healing until I know the truth."

How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact Indigenous families and survivors dealing with MMIP?

- Services were stripped from families and individuals
- Prosocial support necessary for healing and coping was extremely limited or restricted
- Cultural ceremonies were not allowed due to social distancing and lock downs
- Fear was increased, limiting the support for missing persons searches
- The pandemic hindered ability to deal with grief and loss
- COVID-19 impacted the pursuit of justice for families and survivors

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