

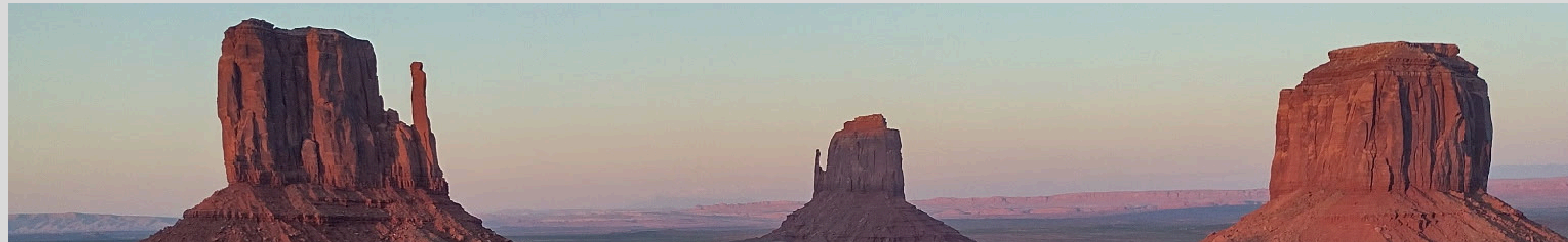


Statistics and Stolen Sisters: Challenging the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Epidemic Through Indigenous Research Methodology

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Abstract

- This project evaluates the 2018 study *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls: A Snapshot of Data from 71 Urban Cities in the United States* by Lucchesi and Echo-Hawk
- Findings demonstrate the need for a **comprehensive study**
- This project proposes a national study guided by Indigenous epistemology
- Aiming to transform fragmented data systems into visible, systemic change



Issues

What is MMIW?

- Tribes are not often authorized to prosecute criminals in their courts
- Non-Native officials are often dismissive
- Criminals commit crimes with impunity in Indian Country
- Murder is the third leading cause of death among American Indian/Alaska Native women (Urban Indian Health Institute [UIHI], 2018)

Why Research?

- Murders are misclassified or go unreported
- Impossible to ensure accountability without data
- Gaps in data obscure the true scale of the epidemic

“Collecting data is the **gifting** of another’s **story** to a researcher” (Kovach, 2021).

Indigenous women “**disappear not once, but three times: in life, in the media, and in the data**” (UIHI, 2018).

“**If there is no data on us, we don’t exist**” (Small-Rodriguez, 2021).

“**No agency has comprehensive data on the true number of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls**” (UIHI, 2018).

Background

What is Indigenous methodology?

- “... to be identified as an Indigenous methodology, it must be anchored in Indigenous epistemology, theory, ethics, story, and community” (Kovach, 2021).
 - Values self-relationality
- ### Why should it matter?
- “government-sponsored criminological research rarely focuses on the lived experiences of Indigenous women and ... **lacks critical understanding of the impact of gendered, colonialist policies**” (Stubbs, 2011; Tauri, 2012).

- “Digital sovereignty is essential for ... the priorities of Tribal Nations and their cultural integrity in the digital age” (Macarro, 2024).

Objective

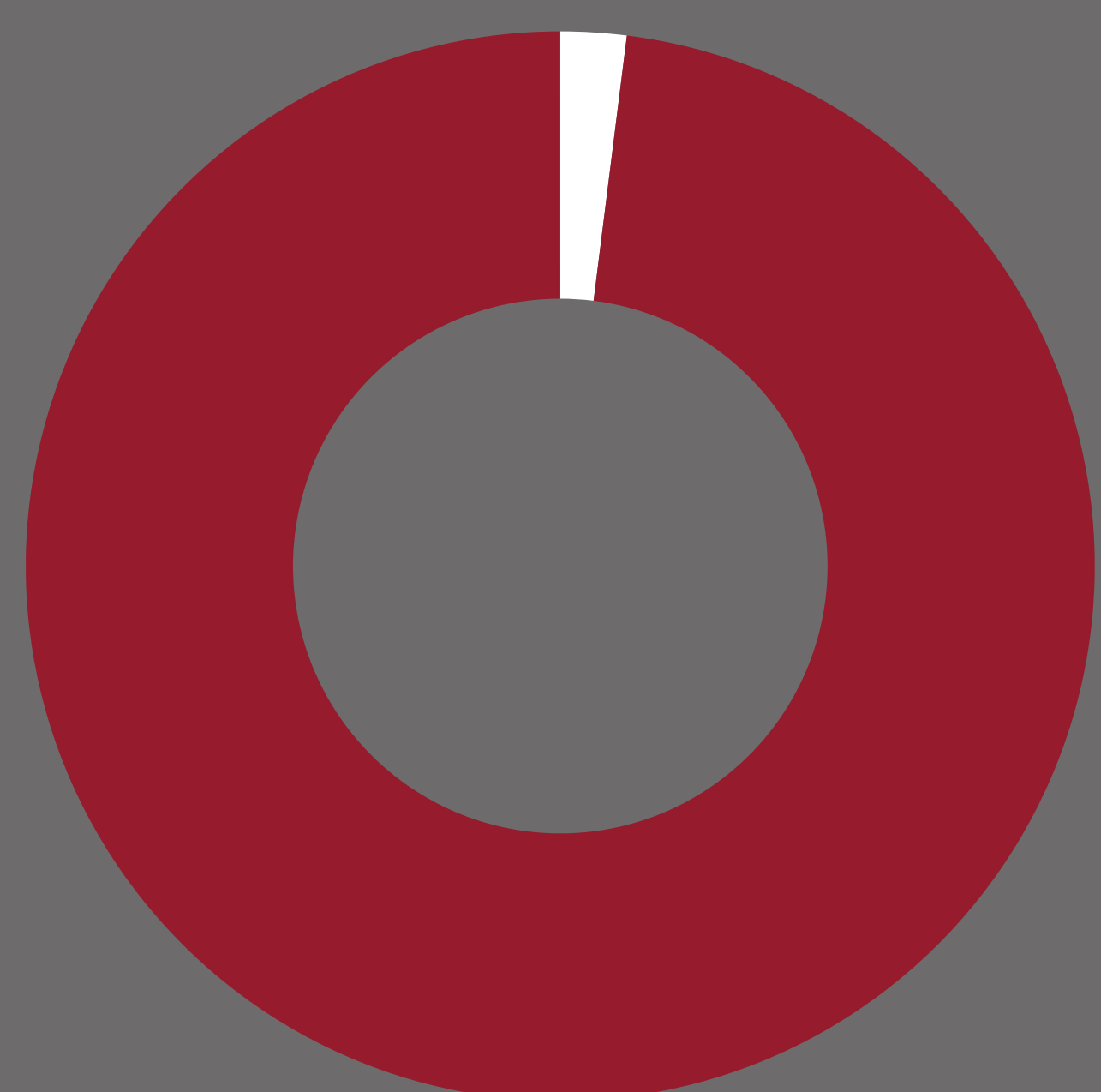
Calls for a national study

- “Despite calls to action from tribal leadership, federal agencies have **not been able to conduct a comprehensive study**” (UIHI, 2018).
- “This study shows the importance of ... a **continuation of this work** by the Indigenous institutions who are equipped to take it on” (UIHI, 2018).

Apply Indigenous methods

- Answer to **all of our relations** (Kovach, 2021)
- **Address gaps** in federal reporting systems
- Advocate for Indigenous-led data **sovereignty**
- **Collaborate** with Native nations’ law enforcement

- 116 MMIW cases logged into the DOJ
- 5,712 MMIW cases reported in 2016



NICS Report on MMIW Cases

National Crime Information Center (2018). Federal Bureau of Investigation.



We Are Resilient: A MMIW True Crime Podcast. (2022). [Photograph from “We Will Not Be Silenced” exhibition] [Photograph]. Western Carolina University, Bardo Arts Center

References

