

July 23, 2026

Dr. Grace Bulltail

Answers to Questions For the Record

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

Innovative Technologies and Initiatives to Tackle the MMIP Crisis in Indian Country

1. **Have you observed any impact on the MMIP crisis from the recent increase of tribal casinos and gaming revenue?**
 - a. **Answer:** In my role as an MMIP family member, I do not have data or knowledge about the increase in tribal gaming revenue and how that relates to the MMIP crisis. I do know that public safety in Indian Country is underfunded by about 87%, and so any increase in funding to tribal governments will help address the MMIP crisis when those funds go to tribal governments and our governments use the funds for public safety purposes.
2. **In February, human remains were found in mass graves near Akron Stadium in Mexico. But this is not new; it has been ongoing crisis for years.**
 - a. **Have you examined any mass graves in Mexico for tribal remains?**
 - i. **Answer:** No, I have not.
 - b. **Has Mexico contacted you for assistance identifying remains in these mass graves?**
 - i. **Answer:** No, no one from Mexico has contacted me concerning the mass graves found there.
3. **Over the past decade, the other side of the aisle has defunded, or called to defund, law enforcement. Does defunding local, state, tribal, or federal law enforcement help or harm tribal communities?**
 - a. **Answer:** Reducing resources to law enforcement harms tribal communities. The Trump Administration's DOGE policies have dramatically undermined tribal safety in tribal communities. Because of DOGE and other policies within the current administration promoted to "lower costs," BIA OJS has been restricted from hiring new law enforcement officers and the Missing and Murdered Unit (MMU) is dramatically understaffed. These policies are incredibly harmful and are the reason that many criminals walk free despite having committed horrifically violent crimes.
4. **What are the first steps you would take to address the MMIP crisis?**
 - a. **Answer:** I would pass legislation dramatically increasing the funding for the MMU, and I would ensure the legislation requires sufficient staffing to investigate MMIP cases such that the current administration cannot fire more federal law enforcement workers under the pretext of "cutting costs." I would also grant the MMU jurisdiction to investigate any and all homicides of a Native person within the United States, regardless of where that crime occurs, so that local county law enforcement agencies and the FBI cannot continue to cut MMU out and refuse to cooperate with the MMU. I would also pass legislation to restore the inherent criminal jurisdiction of tribes to prosecute any crimes committed on tribal lands,

regardless of *who* commits them. These steps would not solve the entire MMIP crisis, but they would certainly result in progress—a lot more progress than we’ve seen to date.

i. **Who would you choose to lead the coalition, and which roles would you outline?**

1. **Answer:** I would choose a non-profit dedicated to addressing this crisis like the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center. They have significant experience working on this crisis and would lead the coalition in a bi-partisan manner. There is a role for Congress in passing legislation, there are roles for our tribal leaders in exercising the restored jurisdiction to protect our communities and make them safe, and there is also a role for the BIA and MMU to play in amplifying their investigative efforts in response to homicides of Native people.

ii. **Can you outline a preferred solution for the Committee?**

1. **Answer:** Yes, the last two answers outline my preferred solution. I will also say that increased funding to tribal law enforcement agencies is also necessary. As your third question suggests, when law enforcement is underfunded, no one is safe.

5. **In addition to lidar detection and DNA identification, are there any other emerging technologies that may improve MMIP reporting, response, and recovery?**

- a. **Answer:** Yes. I was shocked and appalled to learn that Ella Mae Begay has been missing on the Navajo Reservation for five years and the FBI never used a drone to search for her because “they can’t afford one.” Drones are not *that* expensive and they are an incredibly effective tool when law enforcement needs to search for one of our missing relatives on a reservation like Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Blackfeet, Navajo, etc, where the terrain is remote and vast, and searches cannot adequately be conducted solely on foot. Why this technology is not currently being used by the federal government to search for our missing loved ones is bewildering, to say the least.

I have tried to find satellite imagery of Big Horn County, Montana in a resolution that would allow for the detection of a body in a back yard for August 24 through August 29, 2019. This imagery with adequate resolution is available on most Google Earth type platforms, although, for a specific date. I have not been able to find this imagery on publicly available databases within the time frame outlined. Law enforcement and the federal governments may be able to access more databases with this imagery. I can think of many other MMIP cases where this data, if available, would be extremely helpful in the investigation and recovery of missing persons on or adjacent to tribal lands.

6. **Are there cultural practices or traditions that improve or complicate federal MMIP reporting, response, and recovery?**

- a. **Answer:** Yes, our cultures are resilient and have imbedded healing practices that date back millenia. However, many in our communities are disconnected from their cultures and so we have a lot of work to do to heal and restore our communities’ connections to their own cultures.

7. **Are there cultural practices or traditions that the federal government has misunderstood that affect MMIP reporting, response, and recovery?**
 - a. **Answer:** I've heard examples of FBI agents showing up at a victim's funeral (Lindsay Whiteman) to interview witnesses, and then later refusing to investigate her homicide on the pretext that the relevant witnesses refused to talk to the FBI—which demonstrates a misunderstanding of the Blackfeet community's cultural practices. I think similar scenarios happen throughout Indian country, which is why FBI agents need more training, and we need more Native FBI agents.
8. **Are there any proactive steps (education, digital campaigns, Amber alerts, etc) to warn vulnerable populations and improve response?**
 - a. **Answer:** Yes, the Not Invisible Act Commission's report addresses these exact issues and provides specific recommendations. I uphold and recommend the report's recommendations.
9. **Is there anything that the hearing did not address regarding the MMIP crisis that you would like to address?**
 - a. **Answer:** I wish everyone working for the federal government would treat Native victims and their families with more respect. Even though most FBI offices and United States' Attorney's Offices (and the MMU) have "victim advocates," most of those advocates do not advocate for victims, and even if they do, the fact that no officer or detective within the federal agency will even communicate with the victim's family is so incredibly disheartening. Our people deserve to be treated with the same respect non-Native families receive when their loved ones are murdered or go missing. I would like to see our people treated with respect, instead of disrespect, humiliation, and neglect.