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Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women: Updates to the Frank LaMere Native American Presidential Forum

MISSION, SD – August 2, 2019 – Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women will be Key Topic, and Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council and Global Indigenous Council sign on as additional co-hosts.

Four Directions Co-Executive Director O.J. Semans said the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women must be addressed by the candidates appearing at the Frank LaMere Native American Presidential Forum in Sioux City on August 19 – 20, 2019.

The Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (RMTLC) has also joined as co-host. The RMTLC represents tribes in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. The Global Indigenous Council (GIC) was formed by a Resolution of the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association (GPTCA). In addition to GPTCA and RMTLC, co-hosts include the National Congress of American Indians, Native American Rights Fund, Coalition of Large Tribes, Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes, United South and Eastern Tribes, and Seeding Sovereignty.

The forum will feature panels of tribal leaders and Native American youth who will question presidential candidates making individual appearances over the two-day event.

“We’re working to ensure the next President of the United States understands and is committed to addressing the issue of violence against Native American women,” said Semans. “We’re hopeful candidates will also add their voice to revoke the Medals of Honor wrongfully awarded to 7th Cavalry soldiers for the murders of Native women and children at the December 29, 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre. For as long as these medals remain unrevoked, the United States of America officially provides support to those who commit violence against Native women,” Semans said.

Many Native American women who are tribal and community leaders will be among the panelists, including Gay Kingman, the executive director of the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association.

The National Crime Information Center estimates there were nearly 6,000 cases of murdered or missing Native American women in the year 2016 alone, eclipsing the death toll for U.S. forces in the Iraq War. One in three Native American women will be raped in their lifetimes. The

Department of Justice estimates indigenous women are about two and a half times more likely to be victims of sexual assault. Semans said it's important to note the Department of Justice reports 86 percent of all reported sex crimes against Native women are perpetrated by non-Natives.

Violence against Native American women is significantly more frequent than in the general population, and the high incidence has led to bi-partisan efforts in Congress. The Justice for Native Survivors of Sexual Violence Act, the Native Youth and Tribal Officer Protection Act, and the Studying the Missing and Murdered Indian Crisis Act sponsors included Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Sen. Tom Udall, (D-NM), Sen. Tina Smith (D-MN), and Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT).

“From the highest political offices, politicians and their surrogates continue to launch infantile and racist attacks invoking the name of Pocahontas. Ironically, Matoaka, known historically as Pocahontas, suffered the same traumas experienced by missing and murdered indigenous victims. The MMIW issue is older than America, but 243 years after the colonists' Declaration of Independence we're still waiting for the United States Government to address the epidemic. Recently, our legislative recommendations received bipartisan support from prominent members of the House and Senate, yet we are still waiting for meaningful legislation to be passed, said Lynnette Grey Bull, Senior Vice President – Global Indigenous Council (GIC).

<https://nativenewsonline.net/opinion/invisible-no-more-spotlight-on-the-once-silent-mmiw-crisis/>

“Fifty federally recognized Indian tribes from the frontlines of the MMIW tragedy signed-off on our Savanna's Act amendments but they appear no closer to making it into the final bill. We lobbied hard for the Native Articles in the VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2019 and given the critical role of some 2020 candidates in formulating VAWA, it would be good to hear how they would move not only VAWA but other MMIW-related legislation out of Mitch McConnell's vault and into law,” Grey Bull said.

“Senator McConnell has reveled in his self-given moniker, the Grim Reaper. All MMIW legislation goes through him. If he won't bring the bills to the floor the death rate among the most vulnerable in our communities, our women and children, will continue to rise. At that point, he might not be so proud of his nickname and we need to know which 2020 presidential candidates are going to act and not just talk about saving lives,” stated Tom Rodgers, President (Acting), Global Indigenous Council, Blackfeet Tribal member and Jack Abramoff Whistle-blower.

“We encourage presidential candidates to also attend the first-ever MMIW Tribunal in the US, scheduled for September 6 and 7 on the Blackfeet Nation in Montana,” said OJ Semans, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Co-Executive Director, Four Directions.

Photos of elected leaders endorsing the efforts of GPTCA, RMTLC, and GIC regarding MMIW attached to this media release.

"Members of Congress photos © Alter-Native Media. Courtesy of Global Indigenous Council."

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Background

For an in-depth discussion of issues in Indian Country, see this Washington Post story, which includes input from Four Directions:

www.washingtonpost.com/news/magazine/wp/2019/05/13/feature/what-do-native-americans-want-from-a-president

To learn more about the Frank LaMere Presidential Candidate Forum hosts and co-hosts, please follow these links:

Hosts

Four Directions, Inc. – www.fourdirectionsvote.com

Native Organizers Alliance – www.nativeorganizing.org

Co-Hosts

National Congress of American Indians – www.ncai.org

Coalition of Large Tribes – www.largetribes.org

Native American Rights Fund – www.narf.org

Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association – www.gptca.net

Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes – www.m-a-s-t.org

United South and Eastern Tribes – www.usetinc.org

Seeding Sovereignty - <https://seedingsovereignty.org>

Global Indigenous Council - <https://www.globalindigenouscouncil.com>

Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council - <https://www.rmtlc.org>

Sponsors

Lead Premier Sponsor: Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana - <http://www.koasatiheritage.org>

Lead Underwriting Sponsor: NDN Collective – www.ndncollective.org

Underwriting Sponsor: Movement Voter Project: <https://movement.vote>

Lead Stage Sponsor Tom Rodgers of Carlyle Consulting: <http://carlyleconsult.com>