

February 20, 2018

The Honorable Representative Jennifer Williamson

Chair, Oregon House Committee on Judiciary

Good afternoon, my name is Patricia Whitefoot and I'm a life-long resident of White Swan, WA. As a citizen of the Yakama Nation, my family has lived and traveled the vast Columbia River Basin where family roots are deeply embedded.

This testimony is to support HB 2625, ***"Relating to missing Native American women; declaring an emergency"***. In early fall of 1987, my youngest sister, **Daisy Mae Heath Tallman, age 29, (Yakama Nation/Warm Springs Tribe)** was reported missing. Daisy was the youngest of six sisters, who was raised by our maternal grandparents in our early years. As a ranching family, we were especially cultivated in our indigenous way of life. Daisy and a sister, Beverly, who later passed away, lived with me and helped to raise my children.

As a young vibrant woman, it wasn't unusual for Daisy to leave for extended periods of time to spend time with nearby friends or family on the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. Daisy would travel to the Columbia River, bordering Washington and Oregon to fish with family. Or she would travel to play basketball in the Northwest, where she excelled as an All-Star and MVP player. As an energetic and determined young woman, Daisy was able to fend for herself, if needed. On **October 29, 1987**, Daisy Mae was reported missing. She has been missing over 31 years.

As children, we were also impacted by historical trauma, grief and loss of loved ones due to war or foster homes, forced assimilation, bias in schools, and inadequate health care. In August 1986, our beloved grandmother passed on and previously, Daisy's infant daughter succumbed to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Years earlier, our mother passed away when we were children.

Over time, there have been other Indian women from the Yakama reservation area who were reported missing and/or murdered. Some of these women were Yakama descent and may have been citizens of other tribes. This also includes a relative of the Warm Springs Tribe of Oregon, whose case has never been resolved.

HB 2625 directs Department of State Police to study how to increase criminal justice resources relating to missing Native American women in Oregon and report to the appropriate committee. As the study moves forward, the study needs to consider the diverse issues of our communities, whether reservation, rural or urban. There are long standing issues concerning legal and jurisdictional complexities, which dedicated resources can help to address the impact of violence against women.

According to a 2016 National Institute of Justice report, more than 85.3% or 4 in 5 American Indian/Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime; i.e.,

- 56.1% have experienced sexual violence
- 55.5% have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner
- 48.4% have experienced stalking
- 66.4% have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner

As this legislation is considered, it will be imperative that our cultural protocols are respected, particularly as it pertains to our families and loved ones. As families, we simply seek some sense of justice and healing of the heart. As the state takes steps to study and seek common solutions, my prayers are for open communication, collaboration and cooperation.

I appreciate steps being taken in Washington state to address this same issue in our Native communities with similar legislation. On behalf of our younger sister, I truly appreciate you for considering our plea to honor the lives of our Native sisters in approving HB 2625.

With Gratitude:

Patricia Whitefoot