

Blackfeet Missing Murdered Indigenous People

SAFE SEARCH PROTOCOLS by Rhonda Connelly

When a loved one has disappeared, it's important to act quickly as you set your search in motion. Blackfeet MMIP SAR has coordinators who help community members communicate with tribal law enforcement. First you should report the missing person's case as quickly as possible in the jurisdiction where they were last seen. You can increase the chances of finding your loved one by sharing a missing person's poster on social media and communicating with law enforcement or case workers. The following steps are recommended by MMIPMT.com when looking for your loved one in larger metropolitan areas:

- 1) Creating an MMIP Poster that can be used in the area they went missing and on social media outlets. To make your poster, you will need recent photos Name Height, weight, age Hair, eye color, build, etc. Vehicle license plate number and photo of car Hometown, plus state Place last seen at Phone number of police station or investigator Recent picture and specific information about the missing person, include clothing last seen wearing, physical description, age and information about glasses, tattoos etc. Where they were last seen and where they like to hang out. Upload a missing person poster as a PDF so it can easily be shared and printed out. Disclosing if the person has mental health conditions. If you need help creating the poster simply send two recent pictures to your Blackfeet MMIP coordinator (the person who received your report can request a poster from us.
- 2) Forward this poster to media outlets in the city where your loved one is missing.
- 3) Prepare a search team to visit areas where your loved one may be located. This may require travel expenses, lodging, food and a comprehensive plan. Use this information to prepare a budget and submit it to the Blackfeet MMIP they can help find resources.
- 4) Your plan should include printing flyers for distribution, searching at last known locations (when they are safe to visit), and staying in contact with law enforcement. Your search may include homeless shelters, tent cities. Crisis centers, treatment centers, correctional facilities and hospitals. Law enforcement can work with hospitals and correctional facilities
- 5) Map out your route and build your team, wear clothing that lets persons know what you represent and why you are there. We believe that you should always be aware of your surroundings and use the buddy system on your search. If locations you plan to visit have a contact number or are on social media, post or forward your flier to these places and follow up with a phone call. Map out your search route according to the probability that they are in the vicinity.
- 6) Create a written log of contacts that have created productive leads or may be beneficial in future search efforts.
- 7) As you visit locations on your search you may also want to inquire about hanging flyers in gas stations, post offices, churches, libraries, hospitals, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, along hiking trails, in parks and other locations frequented by the local population.
- 8) Mark off locations that you and your team have searched. This means using a physical map you have printed up and coordinating with your team.

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9) Keep in contact with law enforcement. Let them know of your plans to visit places where you may not have a phone signal or locations, such as homeless camps where you may feel vulnerable.

10) Once you have completed your initial search combine maps completed by all team members, note any sightings according to date & location. Share this information with Law Enforcement or Case Worker.

11) If there are individuals that have been helpful in local areas with fliers, sharing information, or searches please forward that information to Blackfeet MMIP for future reference.

12) If you are mentally and physically exhausted. Regroup and strategize your next plan and start over!
Phase Two.

Revisit social media posts and contact local media with posters and search for information updates. Forward any leads gathered to law enforcement. Create a contact list of places you have visited for weekly follow up. Decide if you have the resources and capacity to continue the search. This means you may decide it is not effective to continue the physical search, but distributing more flyers in certain areas would be more helpful.

Recourses:

The Blackfeet MMIP work directly with supporters that help Native families in Montana conducting community searches in urban and reservation areas by providing direct assistance to individuals leading the search for their missing loved ones.

Direct payments will be made to individuals to help provide the resources required to conduct a thorough community search such as:

- Gas money, meals, and hotel stays as they search across the state
- Tools, like metal detectors and drones
- Conducting a targeted awareness campaign

Montana Missing Persons database - Phone: (406) 444-1526 E-mail: MNCMEC@mt.gov BIA Missing Persons Unit OJS_MMU@bia.gov

Searching for a Loved One

Blackfeet MMIP - When a family loved one goes missing, it's often confusing and extremely stressful for the family.

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You Are Not Alone:

National hotlines can offer support over the phone and via chat services. Conversations are confidential and anonymous. National hotlines may refer you to state or local resources for support.

Resources For Victims

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children:
800-843-5678

Teen Dating Abuse Helpline:
866-331-9474
TTY: 866-331-8453

National Runway Safe line:
Hotline: 800-786-2929
800-799-7233 www.1800runway.org.
www.thehotline.org

National Human Trafficking
Hotline: Lifeline:
888-373-7888
TTY 711
www.humantaffickinghotline.org

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
www.suiciderpreventionlifeline.org

Sexual Assault Hotline:
800-656-4673

StrongHearts Native Helpline
(domestic violence, dating and sexual violence)
844-762-8483

Unidentified Person System 844-762-8433
(NamUs): www.storngheratshelpline.org
833-872-5176

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The First Days After a Disappearance:

When a loved one goes missing, time is critical. Once you have determined a loved one, regardless of their age, is missing, contact local law enforcement as soon as possible to file a report. This is especially important if the person has any health issues, disabilities, impairments, or medication requirements.

Again, time is critical;

Local law enforcement immediately.

Browning Blackfeet Police Department:

406-338-6351

Cut Bank Sheriff Department:

406-873-2711

Federal Bureau of Investigation:

202-324-3000

(FBI): Browning & Shelby, MT Billings,

406-424-8411 406-248-8487

Missoula, MT Bozeman, MT

406-549-7696 406-994-0927

Kalispell, MT Helena, MT

406-755-8131 406-443-3617

Great Falls, MT Havre, MT

406-453-9619 406-265-7181

Butte, MT Glasgow, MT

406-782-2304 406-228-2533

Non-Emergency

Contact the law enforcement non-emergency number in the location where the individual went missing.

If the loved one went missing on Tribal land, contact the Tribal police department, if there is one, or your local police department and ask to report a missing person. If the loved one lives or went missing outside of the territorial boundaries of Tribal land, contact the police department in that area. If you are unsure who to contact, call the local police department or county Sheriff's office and ask for assistance. Filing a Missing Person Report

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Contact law enforcement in person, over the phone, or online to file a missing person report. Provide as much information as possible about the missing loved one. This includes their last known whereabouts, places they like to go, and friends or relatives who may have been in contact with them. It's OK if you don't have all the information right away.

If you are concerned about sharing negative information, remember that every missing person is more than the sum of their experiences. Keeping the missing loved one's importance to you, your family, and your community at the forefront can help build trust between you and the investigators when you file a report and during the search. Take notes when you talk with law enforcement. During any emotional time, it can be easy to forget information. Write down the date, time, who you spoke with, and what you talked about to help you remember the discussions about the missing loved one.

local law enforcement is not willing to assist or seems confused about the jurisdiction responsible for investigating, file a complaint with the supervisor or supervising entity. For example, for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) police, the supervising entity is the local BIA superintendent. For Tribal police, contact the police chief or the Tribal judicial committee. For county police, contact the sheriff; for city police officers, contact the police chief. Information to gather and share with law enforcement.

- Recent photo
- Full name, nickname, and aliases
- Tribal affiliation(s)
- Home address
- Date of birth and age at the time of disappearance
- Gender and biological sex (include both if they are different)
- Detailed description: height and weight; hair and eye color; unique scars, marks, and tattoos
- Date and time of disappearance
- Description of clothing or accessories worn at the time of disappearance
- Last known location
- Who they were last seen with before they went missing
- Any likely destinations such as favorite places, work, or study locations
- Information on any previous missing episodes and how those were resolved
- Medical conditions or behavioral health information
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Vehicle registration number, make, model, or other transportation methods
- Personal items left behind such as their purse, wallet, phone, or keys
- Social media account usernames/handles, email addresses, and cellphone numbers

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After reporting your loved one missing, the law enforcement response will vary depending on the circumstances. People who are older adults/elders or those with a physical or mental disability are considered particularly vulnerable; law enforcement will take quick action in these cases when there is suspicion or evidence that someone is a victim of a crime.

Individuals who are not possible crime victims or who don't fall within a vulnerable category may not receive as much urgent law enforcement attention. Legally speaking, adults have the right to be left alone. It's possible there may be limited police involvement after a report is filed.

Please keep in mind when you file your report with the Tribal Police or the Sheriff department, please make sure you are given a case number. This number is very helpful when requesting financial support. When in need of assistance in searching. Collecting and Sharing Information with Law Enforcement. As the investigation begins, families can support the search by —
-talking with family, friends, and others who may know something.

-sharing the individual's social media account usernames/handles (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, etc.) to determine who may know the missing loved one and have some information about them.

-writing down information in a notebook, phone, or tablet and sharing new information or details with law enforcement.

- gathering recent photos of the missing loved one, securing areas such as a bedroom or a bathroom; law enforcement may need to collect certain items to support their search. Law enforcement will use the information you provide to aid in the search of your loved one and will provide information, when possible, on what is being done. Understand that law enforcement is often unable to disclose all the steps taken in a case, as it could jeopardize the investigation.

If you are concerned that law enforcement is not doing enough, first speak with supervisory staff, the police chief, or the sheriff where the loved one was reported missing. If further help is needed, contact local media to tell your story; reach out to elected Tribal, state, or federal representatives; or consult with a civil attorney.

While publicizing a case in the media or with elected officials may increase awareness and attention, it might also impact the investigation and divert law enforcement staff time and resources.

Supporting the Search

Families have a right to search for their missing loved one. If you do search on your own, it is helpful to maintain open communication with law enforcement throughout the search process (at the beginning, during, and after the loved one is located), especially if evidence needs to be preserved. Families can support the search by identifying individuals who can —

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coordinate with law enforcement, manage and communicate with volunteers, food and shelter arrangements, work with victim service providers

Searches on some terrain may require specialized equipment and volunteers such as horse and rider teams, volunteers for foot searches, ATVs, boats, divers, sonar equipment, planes, helicopters, and drones. Work with law enforcement to connect with a professional search team or search online to find an organization in your area. Some organizations provide their time and expertise for free to families searching for a loved one.

During the search, law enforcement may contact hospitals, jails, and medical examiners or coroners' offices.

While health care organizations may not be able to share personal information (even with family) because of confidentiality laws, law enforcement is exempt when there's a safety threat. Law enforcement may enter details about the missing person into a national database — the National Crime Information Center — to connect with other local, state, Tribal, and federal law enforcement officers across the country.

Creating a Missing Person Flyer

A missing person flyer can increase awareness and support, both online and in the community. Sharing a digital flyer on social media can reach people across a large geographic area quickly. To spread awareness, ask others to share the flyer on their social media accounts. If distributing paper flyers, post them in the location where the missing person was last seen and in places they normally frequent, such as shopping centers, bus stops, parks, Tribal centers, gyms, or restaurants.

If you need assistance with printing costs for missing person flyers, local businesses may discount the cost or print them for free.

When creating a flyer, include the following information:

- Name
- Recent photo
- Date of disappearance
- Gender and biological sex (if different)
- Detailed description (height, weight, build, hair, eye color)
- Identifying marks or scars, especially tattoos and other unique marks

Don't include personal contact information (i.e., home address, personal phone number, or personal email address) on the flyer.

Instead, use the law enforcement agency's preferred contact number.

Consider creating an email address specifically for the search effort.

A missing person flyer template is in the appendix. You can also create a "printable poster" for missing person cases published in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System

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NamUs). Contact 833-872-5176 or namus@usdoj.gov for assistance with printing posters.

Using Social Media

Posting the missing person's photo and flyer on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and asking others to share it immediately spreads awareness and increases community involvement.

Steps to consider when using social media:

- 1) Coordinate with law enforcement before using social media when they are assisting with the case; there may be considerations about what details to share publicly on social media.
- 2) Determine what to share publicly; keep sensitive details about the loved one private.
- 3) Think about creating a new social media account for the missing person separate from your personal accounts.
- 4) Share the law enforcement non-emergency number or hotline to call with tips; avoid sharing personal contact information online.
- 5) Designate a family member or friend to update and manage posts.
- 6) Include a direct ask in social media posts, such as asking others to share the post or call with information.
- 7) Share photos just of the missing person; photos should not include other people (to protect their privacy and avoid confusion).
- 8) Identify relevant hashtags, or create a new hashtag for your search, to include in the social media posts to potentially reach more people and make it easier to find related online posts.
- 9) Look for online groups highlighting missing persons in your area; ask them to share information about your missing loved one.

When a Loved One Goes Missing

Be aware if you post on social media: You may receive negative comments on social media posts. These comments may shame or blame the missing loved one for their own disappearance. You don't need to reply and can delete negative comments. Also, the FBI warns families to beware of scammers exploiting the disappearance of a loved one for money. Learn more at the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (www.IC3.gov or www.fbi.gov).

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Contacting the Media

Contacting local media about your missing loved one can help raise awareness, especially early in the search.

You can share the missing person flyer and ask if the information be shared on the air or in a story.

Steps to consider when contacting media outlets:

- 1) Coordinate with law enforcement before contacting media outlets, if possible; there may be considerations about what case details to share publicly depending on each individual situation.
- 2) Determine what to share publicly; keep sensitive details private.
- 3) Share the law enforcement non-emergency number or hotline to call with tips, avoid sharing personal contact information.
- 4) Designate one person as the media contact/spokesperson so consistent information is shared.
- 5) Include a direct ask for reporters to convey to the public, such as asking people to call the police with any information.

When looking for your loved one in larger metropolitan area

When a loved one has disappeared, it is important to act quickly as you set your search in motion. MMIPmt.com has LINC coordinators who help community members communicate with tribal law enforcement. First you should report the missing person's case as quickly as possible in the jurisdiction where they were last seen. You can increase the chances of finding your loved one by sharing a missing person's poster on social media and communicating with law enforcement or case workers. The following steps are recommended.

Metropolitan areas:

- 1) Creating a MMIP Poster that can be used in the area they went missing and on social media outlets. To make your poster, you will need recent photos, Name, Height, weight, age, hair color, eye color, build, etc. Vehicle license plate number and photo of car, hometown, plus state, place last seen at, phone number of police station or investigator. Recent pictures and specific information about the missing person, include clothing last seen wearing, physical description, age and information about glasses, tattoos etc. Where they were last seen and where they like to hang out. Upload a missing person poster as a PDF so it can easily be shared and printed out.

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Disclosing if the person has mental health conditions. If you need help creating the poster simply send two recent pictures to your LINC coordinator (the person who received your report at blackfeetmmip.com and request a poster from us.

2) Forward this poster to media outlets in the city where your loved one is missing.

3) Prepare a search team to visit areas where your loved one may be located. This may require travel expenses, lodging, food and a comprehensive plan. Use this information to prepare a budget.

4) Your plan should include printing flyers for distribution, searching at last known locations when they are safe to visit, and staying in contact with law enforcement. Your search may include homeless shelters, tent cities, crisis centers, treatment centers, correctional facilities and hospitals. Law enforcement can work with hospitals and correctional facilities

5) Map out your route and build your team, wear clothing that lets persons know what you represent and why you are there. We believe that you should always be aware of your surroundings and use the buddy system on your search. If locations you plan to visit have a contact number or are on social media, post or forward your

Understanding Intentional Disappearance and Confidentiality

A loved one may intentionally leave home without telling family or friends their location. There are many reasons a person may disappear, including personal choice or to escape a volatile or abusive relationship. Regardless of the reason, the missing person has a right to leave and may not want to share where they are going and the reasons for leaving.

An individual may intentionally go missing to escape domestic or sexual violence. In these cases, confidentiality is more than just an issue of privacy: It can be one of survival. Domestic violence shelters offer a safe haven and cannot share any information with families or law.

Law enforcement officials and service providers have confidentiality obligations to the missing individual that may prevent disclosure of their location to family members. For instance, when a missing adult is located alive, the missing person must consent for law enforcement to share their location. Family members can request that law enforcement relay a message, asking the missing loved one to contact their searching family. The individual, however, is under no obligation to contact family members and, in some cases, may have well-justified fears about contacting those who reported them missing.

Many local service provider programs, such as domestic violence shelters, have a privileged or confidential relationship with their clients, with limited exceptions. Unless the individual gives consent through a waiver of confidentiality or privilege, the counselor, therapist, shelter worker, or service provider program volunteer cannot disclose the individual's location.

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Cold Cases (liaison) It is devastating to think of how many unsolved murders we have here alone on the Blackfeet Reservation, and way too many families devastated and destroyed by the loss and missing of a loved one. Experience has shown that cold case programs can solve a substantial number of violent crime cold cases, including homicides and sexual assaults. Advances in DNA technologies have substantially increased the successful DNA analysis of aged, degraded, limited, or otherwise compromised biological evidence. As a result, crime scene samples once thought to be unsuitable for testing may now yield DNA profiles. Additionally, samples that previously generated inconclusive DNA results may now be successfully analyzed. To this end, the National Institute of Justice seeks to assist law enforcement agencies by developing their knowledge base, affording them opportunities to use forensic laboratories for the DNA analysis of cold case evidence, and aiding in the subsequent investigation to solve cold cases.

The following is to reinsure the family members and to help families seek appropriate professional advice and services. The following recommendations for best practices are designed primarily to assist law enforcement administrators and command staff.

Recommendations fall into five categories:

1. Determining the needs and scope of a cold case unit
2. Designing a cold case unit
3. Implementing a cold case unit
4. Operating a cold case unit
5. Identifying support for a cold case unit (including law enforcement and academic partnerships).

Awareness

When holding the following awareness events, invite all other neighboring reservations (allies), these events will bring revenue to the Blackfeet Nation, and will help empower the BLKFT BC involvement with the MMIP and stay connected with the families of the murdered and missing here on the Blackfeet reservation.

These events will tell the stories of Native community members who have gone missing/murdered and the obstacles Native communities have faced in seeking justice.

MMIWP 5K/1-Mile Run

Honor the victims of the missing and murder.

BLKFT BC MMIP Event

This event will raise awareness about and encourage discussion of MMIP. BLKFTBC in hosting a panel discussion bringing together women working to eliminate human trafficking and violence against all persons.