



A100 America Since Wounded Knee: Contextual Vulnerabilities in the Ongoing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Crisis

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will begin to understand some of the compounding societal circumstances impacting communities designated as hotspots for the MMIW crisis in the United States. Through a deeper, more localized approach to understanding this crisis, forensic practitioners will gain knowledge relating to societal trends that often lead to higher MMIW rates, certain factors to take into consideration when working on MMIW-related cases, as well as gaining a general understanding of the crisis at large and current efforts being made to help mitigate the crisis.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by raising awareness about the ongoing MMIW crisis through focusing on the differential societal structures involved, local tensions between populations, and community-based efforts to help indigenous populations.

For centuries, indigenous women have faced ongoing genocidal actions, attempted slavery, many thefts of land through forced relocations, disease warfare, attempted cultural annihilation, the kidnapping, abuse, and death of their children, famine, poverty, violence, and racism, among other things. While some may like to view these tragedies as having occurred only in the past, many of these practices continue to represent the reality facing many indigenous women across the United States today. Previous research conducted for this study revealed a total of 23 locations determined to be hotspots for MMIW cases in the United States.

The purpose of the present study has been to investigate a broad range of shared societal factors for the 23 MMIW hotspots in the United States in order to identify any specific trends that may contribute to the perpetuation of the MMIW crisis. Across the 23 hotspot locations, several factors were determined to be significantly ($p < 0.001$) higher than the national average, including: the total number of Native Americans living there, the number of individuals who do not have health insurance, the rate of poverty, the rate of homelessness, the violent crime rate, the property crime rate, and the number of individuals with substance abuse problems (i.e., alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine). Other factors present across the 23 hotspots that likely contribute to the MMIW crisis include: human trafficking, racial tensions, each location's proximity to military bases, major highways, and resource extraction sites (i.e., hydraulic fracking, oil drilling, coal mining).

The massacre of Native Americans at Wounded Knee by the United States Army in 1890 is known for being the last massacre against indigenous people in the United States; however, the ongoing MMIW crisis could be described as merely a more silent type of massacre. Indigenous people are one of the most vulnerable racial demographics in the United States presently, due to the lasting effects of over 500 years of colonization, oppression, systemic discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. By situating this crisis in the roots of oppression and systemic discrimination in the United States, we capture a more complex view of the particular needs and vulnerabilities of indigenous communities.

MMIW Crisis, Racial Violence, Homicide