



Arizona Human Trafficking Council
October 18, 2023, 9:00 AM
Virtual Meeting

A general meeting of the Arizona Human Trafficking Council convened on **October 18, 2023**, with notice duly given.

Members Present (16)	Members Absent (6)
Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair	Nathaniel Brown
Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair	Sarah Chung
Lt. Nicholas Alamshaw	Sophia Philis-Ortiz
Dr. Angela Salomon (Proxy for Dr. Sarah Beaumont)	Senator T.J. Shope
Doug Coleman	Brian Steele
Maj. Jennifer Borquez (Proxy for Col. Jeffrey Glover)	Jim Waring
Tonya Hamilton	
Joseph Kelroy	
Lt. Rick Leyvas	
Lois Lucas	
David Lujan	
Rachelle Lumpp	
Sara Micflikier (Proxy for Rachel Mitchell)	
Capt. Andrew Orozco	
Jill Rable	
Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz	
Staff and Guests Present (6)	
Amy Peep, GOYFF	Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya, Speaker
Emily Uline-Olmstead, GOYFF	Mary Descheeny Reyna, Speaker
	Captain Diana Mondragon, Speaker
	Captain Paul Etnire, Speaker

Call to Order

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, called the Arizona Human Trafficking Council meeting to order at **09:05 AM** with 16 members and six staff/guests present. She reviewed meeting procedures, welcomed all those joining via Zoom, and thanked them for their flexibility.

Approval of Minutes

- With the quorum met, **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, requested a review of the **September 20, 2023** meeting minutes.
 - **Joseph Kelroy** moved to accept the **September 20, 2023** minutes.
 - **Doug Coleman** seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes at **9:09 AM**.

Anti-Human Trafficking Fund Update

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, updated the Council regarding the 2024 Anti-Human Trafficking Funds. The Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) will administer the funds, and more information regarding

the solicitation will be forthcoming; the Co-Chairs will inform the Council of updates as they become available.

Task Force on Missing and Murder Indigenous People

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, introduced **Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya** to give a presentation regarding [Governor Hobbs' Task Force on Missing and Murdered Indigenous People \(MMIP\)](#).
 - **Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya** of the Hopi Tribe is the Arizona MMIP Coordinator within [Governor Hobbs' Office on Tribal Relations](#).
 - Founder and Executive Director of [Honwungsi Consulting Services](#).
 - Previous Director of Community Engagement at Arizona State University (ASU) Research on Violent Victimization, Associate with the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College, and Study Coordinator for the ASU MMIP Task Force.
 - She is a subject matter expert, educator, and trainer on victim service implementation for human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual violence, MMIP, and other related topics.
- **Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya** began her presentation by briefly explaining the task force's creation. From 2020 to 2023, the [Arizona Missing and Murdered Women Ad Hoc Committee](#) conducted several research studies. One of the main challenges they experienced was that the interviewers could not go onto tribal land due to COVID-19. The interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom or other platforms available to them.
 - The study included women and men victims/survivors and their families, including two transgender survivors.
 - Collecting data has been historically difficult because the systems do not communicate and cannot comprehensively collect accurate data on any crime, particularly human trafficking.
 - The findings of the study:
 - Most victims, survivors, and their families want more interaction with law enforcement.
 - Some victims and survivors were unaware they were victims of trafficking.
 - Between 1976 and 2018, there were 160 women and girls murdered.
 - Indigenous women and girls of all ages, including infants and elders, are affected.
 - The Committee created a [report](#) with recommendations on how to proceed. A few included:
 - Provide additional law enforcement training for missing persons, homicide, and human trafficking.
 - Implement law enforcement protocol, policy, and system changes that support timely and consistent reporting.
 - Continue to improve and enhance services provided by victim advocates.
 - Ensure adequate law enforcement resources for training, technology, and awareness relating to missing persons, homicide, and human trafficking.
 - Enhance communication and multi-agency/multi-disciplinary approaches to missing persons, homicide, and human trafficking.
 - Continue to collect additional data and information to enhance further decision-making.
 - Continue coordinating with Tribal members to ensure perspectives and voices are proposed solutions.
- **Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya** explained that from the recommendations, Governor Katie Hobbs created the 15-member Task Force on Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) in March of 2023 to address the crisis through a culturally sensitive and trauma-informed process.
 - The objective is to collect data, review policies, and make recommendations to address the crisis of MMIP through health, judicial, policy, and tribal working groups.
 - Health working group charges:
 - Examine the practices of licensed and unlicensed public and private rehabilitation and sober living homes to propose recommendations.
 - Gather information to understand the lived experiences among Indigenous People surrounding MMIP to ensure that policy recommendations are culturally accurate.
 - Judicial working group charges:
 - Evaluate prosecutorial trends and practices related to crimes of gender violence against

- Indigenous People.
 - Work with law enforcement and tribal governments to continue to track and collect data on violence against Indigenous People, including data on MMIP.
 - Work with the Arizona Attorney General's Office and other relevant entities to formulate effective programs and identify sustainable funding sources.
 - Policy working group charges:
 - Collaborate with State, Federal, and Tribal agencies to address the recommendations of the MMIP Study Committee.
 - Review policies and practices that impact violence against Indigenous People, such as child welfare policies and procedures.
 - Tribal working group charges:
 - Consult with tribal governments on the scope and the nature of the issues associated with MMIP and gather data on the prevalence and contextual characteristics of violence against Indigenous People.
 - Recommend measures to ensure access to culturally appropriate victim services for Indigenous People who have been victims of violence.
 - The Task Force meets every six weeks and will provide a progress report to Governor Hobbs at the end of the calendar year.
- **Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya** explained the recent Arizona Sober Living Crisis and how it intersects with elements of human trafficking. Some examples are below:
 - Act:
 - Recruited or kidnapped off the reservation.
 - Transported across county lines.
 - Transferred members between intensive outpatient programs (IOP).
 - Means:
 - Individuals coerced to enroll in the [American Indian Health Program \(AIHP\)](#).
 - Individuals received no benefits or services from IOP/sober living homes (SLH).
 - Non-native enrolling in AIHP.
 - Purpose:
 - Exploitation of Native American and Arizona Health Care Cost Contain System (AHCCCS) Medicaid.
 - Forced labor work.
 - Abuse.
 - **Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya** explained patient brokering is a range of activities in which a "consultant" is paid kickbacks by a substance use treatment center or sober living home to recruit patients to their services. Below is a list of different methods used:
 - Lead selling.
 - Lead buying.
 - Patient enticement.
 - She emphasized that this can be very dynamic and gave examples of what this may look like as essential.
 - Theft.
 - Patient Privacy.
 - Misrepresentation of services.
 - Sex Trafficking:
 - Brokers may demand sex for services. Alternatively, the broker may offer sex as an enticement to enter treatment.
 - Brokers will prey on sex workers, who have a disproportionately higher rate of substance use and may be less likely to report the crime, fearing their arrest.
 - Labor Trafficking:
 - Brokers may find it easy to recruit individuals at agencies that use free labor in exchange for recovery services, as it mimics their values and practices.

- Brokers may demand free labor from individuals for placing them in a sober living home (unpaid House Managers are only sometimes brokered, but the set-up heightens the risk).
- In response to the sober living crisis, **Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya** stated there needs to be a humanitarian and law enforcement response. She mentioned that they have a partnership with [2-1-1 Arizona](#). Together, they provide transportation, shelter, assistance seeking the appropriate services, and making referrals to law enforcement for victims/survivors and their families if desired.
 - In total, the 2-1-1 line has received over 16,000 calls; the majority were seeking housing assistance. However, there were 80 missing people found.
- **Joseph Kelroy** asked if the MMIP task force is working with the local coalitions to collaborate efforts.
 - **Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya** answered yes, they work with two local coalitions: the [Hopi-Tewa Women's Coalition To End Abuse](#) and the [Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition](#).
- To view Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya's presentation, click [here](#).

Private Rehabilitation and Sober Living Homes

- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, introduced **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** from [Operation Rainbow Bridge](#) to present the emerging topic of private rehabilitation and sober living homes affecting indigenous peoples.
 - **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** works with the [Navajo Nation Division of Social Services](#) within the Office of the Executive Director Thomas Cody. Since the inception of Operation Rainbow Bridge, she has been an active member of the Navajo Nation's Incident Command Post in response to the AHCCCS' fraudulent billing scheme that affected hundreds of Indigenous People in Arizona.
 - The AHCCCS [website](#) has more information regarding provider suspensions and terminations and the [fact sheet](#).
- **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** began her presentation by providing a brief history of the sober living crisis in Arizona as it pertains to the Navajo Nation. In May of 2023, Governor Hobbs notified the Navajo Nation that the State of Arizona intended to take enforcement action against several rehab/sober living facilities that were committing. Approximately 5,000 to 7,000 tribal members, over 900 Navajo relatives specifically, were affected by this scheme.
 - In fiscal year (FY) 2019, AHCCCS made payments for outpatient behavioral health services totaling approximately \$3 million. In FY22, AHCCCS made payments totaling \$668 million, a difference of \$610 million.
 - To date, 322 providers have received suspensions since May.
 - **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** explained that enticed individuals attended these facilities using drugs, alcohol, money, or gifts. Others have reported rent and mortgage payments also promised.
- **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** explained that Operation Rainbow Bridge's advocacy efforts include but are not limited to providing safe, fair, and adequate treatment for native relatives. They encourage the successful completion of the rehab services they initially sought or assist in returning individuals to their tribal land. They also offer services through their support line (call 2-1-1 (press 7) for immediate transportation and housing support) and their [website](#).
 - When Operation Rainbow Bridge first started, they had four mobile units composed of the [Navajo Nation Police Department](#) and the [Navajo Nation Division of Transportation](#), who canvassed the cities looking for displaced relatives with Navajo practitioners and intake workers also on site.
 - They were able to provide transportation back to the Navajo Nation.
 - They often encounter individuals from other tribes, sometimes from other states (e.g., Alaska, Wyoming, and California). The mobile units made the connection and assisted them in getting back to their nation.
 - They frequently have information-sharing meetings with tribal partners to provide updates.
 - They created a provider directory to include trusted and vetted tribal facilities only tribes can access.
 - **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** also mentioned that Operation Rainbow Bridge is not the only incident command post (ICP). [Phoenix Indian Medical Center](#) and [Native Health](#) both have their own ICP.
 - Precise facility locations still need to be discovered; initial data suggested Maricopa County, but further research indicated that there are facilities Arizona-wide.

- **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** discussed Operation Rainbow Bridge's public information efforts. In May, they held a public forum and press conference with approximately 400 individuals in attendance. Additionally, they regularly attend and participate in AHCCCS' tribal consultation meetings to stay current on this issue.
 - Operation Rainbow Bridge established a support line (**1-855-HELP-ORB**) that goes directly to tribal service providers to support victims/survivors and their families.
 - A downloadable app is available and active on their social media accounts.
 - They also provide testimony at the [Not Invisible Act Commission](#), specifically on MMIP.
- **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** explained the current collaborations and partnerships Operation Rainbow Bridge has, particularly from fellow native communities (e.g., [Native American Connections](#), Native Health, [Phoenix Indian Center](#), Phoenix Indian Medical Center). They are working with other states in which the Navajo Nation's land is within (e.g., Texas, Colorado, New Mexico).
- **Mary Descheeny-Reyna** mentioned the challenges currently facing:
 - Displaced tribal members without identification or phone make returning them to their homeland more difficult.
 - If a facility has closed, any personal belongings (accumulating while in the facility or brought from the nation) are tricky to retrieve.
 - Eligibility requirements. Some individuals may not be eligible for services if a long period has occurred since they were displaced.
 - Medications are not readily available to them (before or after displacement).
 - For individuals who died in these facilities, it is common for them to be cremated once returned (if at all).
 - A lack of tribal facilities to care for their own has become apparent.
 - Children and families are being affected. See the [Indian Child Welfare Act \(ICWA\)](#).
 - There need to be more housing resources for urban relatives. Rent and mortgage payments are being promised, and eventually displaced.
 - Exploitation of employees and transportation drivers as workers were likely unaware that these facilities were acting unethically.
- For more information about Operation Rainbow Bridge, click [here](#).

Department of Public Safety and Arizona Tribes

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, introduced **Captain Diana Mondragon** and **Captain Paul Etnire** to present the [Arizona Department of Public Safety's \(DPS\)](#) roles and responsibilities concerning human trafficking and Arizona Tribes.
 - **Captain Diana Mondragon** began her law enforcement career with the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR) after graduating with her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from New Mexico State University in 2001. In 2003, she continued her law enforcement career as a sworn peace officer with the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS).
 - During the last 20 years, her assignments included Highway Patrol as a state trooper and Organized Crime and Narcotics as a detective.
 - In 2019, she was promoted to captain and assigned to the Intelligence District at the Arizona Counter-Terrorism Information Center (ACTIC) in Phoenix. She currently serves as ACTIC's Deputy Director.
 - **Captain Paul Etnire** is the assigned commander of DPS' Operations District at the ACTIC.
 - In addition, **Captain Etnire** serves as the department's Tribal Liaison, working to develop and implement the Department's tribal consultation policies and collaborating with each of Arizona's 22 tribes. **Captain Etnire** served as a member of two Arizona Legislative Study Committees on the issue of MMIP in Arizona.
 - Appointed in 2022, **Captain Etnire** serves on the Not Invisible Act Commission, a federal cross-jurisdictional advisory committee to identify and combat violent crime within Indian lands and MMIP. In 2023, he joined Arizona's Task Force on MMIP.
- **Captain Paul Etnire** started the presentation by explaining one of the biggest challenges DPS experiences are jurisdictional issues. Three different sovereignties are interested in [Indian Country](#): the tribes, the federal

government/law enforcement, and the state. He explained that the state must enforce the law on non-Indians in Indian Country. However, state agencies (non-tribal/non-federal) do not have jurisdiction over Indians in Indian Country.

- Another factor that may make the situation more difficult is that some tribes do not have laws or ordinances to address human trafficking.
- Under the [Constitution, Article 1 Section 8](#), Congress is the only entity establishing relationships with the tribes.
- **Captain Paul Etnire** explained he had worked closely on the sober living issue. DPS became aware of the problem in the Spring of 2023. As a result, the ACTIC requested information from law enforcement, the fire department, the Department of Revenue, etc., about their interactions with sober living facilities and what those interactions were. Following that outreach, DPS developed a database of suspected facilities with 500 properties currently listed, approximately 100 cases tied to the facility (e.g., assault, etc.).
 - Arizona has 157 different law enforcement agencies (non-tribal and non-federal). Most of these sober living facilities are in Maricopa County (as of now); however, they are all around the state.
 - **Captain Paul Etnire** stated this needs to be addressed holistically, not just from a criminal aspect. For example, treatment, housing, etc., must be addressed first.
 - DPS meets weekly with key stakeholders ([Solari](#), AHCCCS) to discuss the evolution of the sober living issue and bi-weekly with first responders to relay updates and discuss different trends.
 - DPS created a Tribal Community Response Plan (TCRP) in collaboration with tribes that outlines who has what responsibilities and what protocols to follow.
 - He also explained that the data they have needs to be more accurate. One reason is that some agencies need to report correctly. Another is that some agencies need to communicate with each other.
- **Captain Diana Mondragon** explained that regarding anti-human trafficking efforts, the ACTIC has the [Arizona Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse](#). Any runaways or missing juveniles (if reported go into that database. The ACTIC also has the Human Trafficking Hotline (**1-877-1AZ-TIPS**), created in partnership with the ASU [Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research \(ASU STIR\)](#). If someone calls needing services, they go to ASU STIR, and law enforcement involvement is not required.
 - Individuals can submit an anonymous tip to the hotline [here](#).
 - Since the hotline's inception (February 2023), they have received 71 calls, provided services in Yavapai, Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima Counties, and trained 1,391 individuals in the community about human trafficking.
- **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** noted her delight in the partnership and looks forward to continuing work.

Workgroup Updates

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, introduced the Data and Research Workgroup Chair, **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz**, to share any updates with the Council.
 - **Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz** reported the following:
 - The Arizona Human Trafficking Summit with the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office occurred on September 25 and 26, 2023.
 - Three hundred attendees.
 - Coconino County is interested in hosting another summit.
 - Pima County Sex Trafficking Summit on Monday, October 23, 2023.
 - Two hundred registrants, the majority being service providers.
 - Phoenix Starfish Place is transitioning from a federal permanent supportive housing facility to a program with more expectations while residents live there.
 - Part of the program takes residents' rent payments and saves them toward future down payments or rent once they leave Starfish Place.
 - Begin to plan for Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January 2024.
- **Maria Cristina Fuentes, Co-Chair**, introduced the Victim Services Workgroup Co-Chair, **Dr. Angela Saloman**, to share any updates with the Council as **Dr. Sarah Beaumont** could not attend the meeting.

- **Dr. Angela Saloman** reported the following:
 - The next workgroup meeting is December 15, 2023
 - The workgroup is beginning to identify appropriate additions to the workgroup for more diversity and representative of the demographics of the victims and survivors served.
 - They are looking into additional resources for victim services providers and identifying platforms that house this information.
- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, asked if **Dr. Angela Saloman** could give a brief update regarding the recent changes at [StreetLightUSA](#).
 - Historically, StreetLight has had two programs: a group home and a behavioral health residential facility. In July 2023, the group home was retired to focus on the residential facility, where they saw the most impact on the community.
 - Able to provide financial assistance if the child or their family has difficulty getting the payments approved through their providers.

Upcoming Meeting

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, reminded members to mark their calendars for the next meeting on **November 29, 2023, at 09:00 AM**. The meeting will be in a hybrid format, in person at the Executive Tower, and available via Zoom for Council Members and the public to join virtually.
 - She stated Amy would send out meeting dates for the 2024 calendar year to Council members to plan accordingly.

Adjournment

- **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, thanked everyone for being part of the meeting and asked for a motion to adjourn.
 - **Sara Micflikier** moved to accept the motion.
 - **Claire Sechler Merkel, Co-Chair**, seconded the motion.
- The motion passed with no dissenting votes at **10:35 AM**.

Dated 19 of October 2023
Arizona Human Trafficking Council
Respectfully Submitted By:
Amy Peep
GOYFF