



**GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION TO PREVENT INTIMATE PARTNER AND  
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
MAY 6, 2025, 10:00 AM  
ARIZONA PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS' ADVISORY COUNCIL (APAAC)  
3838 N. CENTRAL AVE, PHOENIX, AZ 85012**

A general meeting of the Governor's Commission to Prevent Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence convened on May 6, 2025, with notice duly given.

MEMBERS PRESENT (7)	MEMBERS ABSENT (3)
Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair	Jenna Panas, Co-Chair
Teresa Manygoats (proxy for Sheila Sjolander)	Dr. Neil Websdale
Kirstin Flores	Beth Hoel
Jessica Wood (proxy for Tene D Marion)	
Samantha Mendez-Dominguez	
Lindsey Ashworth	
Donna Bartos	
STAFF AND GUESTS PRESENT (3)	
Sandra Mucino, Staff	Katherine Lewis, Presenter
Emily Uline-Olmstead, Staff	

**CALL TO ORDER**

- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, called the Governor's Commission to Prevent Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence meeting to order at **10:04 AM** with **seven** members and **three** staff/guests present.

**WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS**

- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, welcomed everyone, conducted the roll call, and did not reach a quorum.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Due to not reaching a quorum, the Commission postponed the approval of the draft minutes from the previous meeting and all agenda items.

**MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE: SYSTEMIC BARRIERS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, welcomed and introduced **Katherine Lewis**, the director of the Gila River Indian Community Victim Services Department.
  - **Katherine Lewis** is an enrolled member of the Gila River Indian Community and the daughter of Rodney B. and Willardene Lewis. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, with a minor in American Indian Studies, from Arizona State University (ASU). Additionally, she obtained a Master's degree in Social Welfare

from the University of California, Berkeley. Most recently, she completed an Executive Program at Harvard Business School. For the past 15 years, Ms. Lewis has worked extensively in the healthcare field in California and Arizona. She has served on the Board of Directors for Gila River Health Care, the healthcare entity of the Gila River Indian Community. Currently, she is the director of the Victim Services Department.

- **Katherine Lewis** thanked Joy Martin from Gila River Health Care for connecting her with the Commission and recognized Joy Martin as an essential community resource.
- **Katherine Lewis** began her presentation by mentioning that the Victim Services Department has operated for two and a half years. Initially part of Tribal Social Services, it separated to become an independent department due to the identified need for specialized services. The Victim Services Department includes a Domestic Violence Shelter, Transitional Housing, and a Family Advocacy Center.
- **Katherine Lewis** noted a growing need for male victims' support. Additionally, there has been an overall increase in crime within the community.
- **Katherine Lewis** highlighted the significance of May 5, recognized as the national Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP) Day, a designation officially established in 2023 by the previous administration. The Governor of the Gila River Indian Community has also supported this recognition through subsequent proclamations. She emphasized that while the MMIP program has always been a priority, a grant from the Department of Justice (DOJ) has allowed them to allocate dedicated staff to focus specifically on MMIP initiatives. Acknowledging the crisis that MMIP represents for Tribal, Native Alaskan, and other Indigenous communities across the nation, the organization is making considerable progress to tackle this urgent issue.
- **Katherine Lewis** discussed the emergence of a movement in Canada sparked by the alarming rates of missing or abducted Indigenous women, which escalated into a crisis. Many victims' families felt that law enforcement often ignored their concerns. The conversation gained momentum after the tragic discovery of a 21-year-old woman of Northern Cheyenne descent, who had been sexually assaulted and murdered in Montana.
- **Katherine Lewis** identified that the insufficient law enforcement resources in Tribal Communities lead to delays in investigating cases. Although they have tried collaborating with neighboring law enforcement agencies, these partnerships have failed due to dismissive attitudes toward cases outside their jurisdiction.
- **Katherine Lewis** discussed a documentary, "Navajo Police," available on HBO. The film showcases the inadequate resources provided to a large geographic area.
- **Katherine Lewis** shifted her presentation to highlight the Tribal youth population, emphasizing the importance of considering family structure and environmental factors in shaping their decisions. As part of the organization's action plan, they intend to explore strategies aimed at helping children, ultimately enhancing their prospects for leading nonviolent lives.
- **Katherine Lewis** discussed the challenges facing the youth in her community, noting that violence, gang recruitment, and drug-related activities often seep in from outside sources. She highlighted troubling instances where women have been lured away from the reservation, only to be abducted and tragically murdered.
- **Katherine Lewis** recounted a family incident involving the unexplained disappearance of her maternal uncle in Alaska, a case that has remained unresolved for over 60 years. When her family sought assistance from law enforcement, law enforcement seemed to respond with dismissiveness, including the suggestion that the individual may have been intoxicated, which led to a lack of further investigation. As a result, her mother, now 82 years old, has not found closure. Lewis presented this account to emphasize the importance of proactive and thorough measures in addressing cases involving victims and their families.

- **Katherine Lewis** highlighted that a grant from the DOJ has enabled the Gila River Indian Community to recruit a dedicated Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (MMIP) Liaison. This liaison plays a crucial role in working alongside law enforcement agencies, sexual assault nurse examiners, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to locate missing individuals currently placed in a cold case unit. Presently, the Gila River Indian Community is facing the challenge of 11 missing individuals classified as a cold case status.
- **Katherine Lewis** discussed the challenges involved in creating a response team. Despite these obstacles, she emphasized that building mutual trust among team members and their respective agencies has played a crucial role in unifying their efforts and aligning them toward a shared mission.
- **Katherine Lewis** shared two success stories about the recovery of two adolescent girls who had faced trafficking situations.
  - In the first case, a young woman was lured away from her reservation by someone she met online. This individual deceitfully persuaded her to go home and retrieve money along with all her identification documents. Trusting this person, she fled to Iowa to meet them, only to discover that they had become her trafficker. Fortunately, authorities rescued her, and she safely returned to the Gila River Indian Community.
  - In the second case, traffickers exploited another adolescent girl on Skid Row in Los Angeles, California, where they sold her to multiple individuals. Despite her attempts to escape, her traffickers relentlessly pursued her, pretending to be her guardians.
- **Katherine Lewis** highlighted that during both retrievals, the young girls strongly trusted the MMIP Liaison, who resembled them and shared a Tribal connection to their home.
- **Katherine Lewis** announced that the Arizona Legislature has enacted the Turquoise Alert, a notification system similar to the Silver or Amber Alerts, specifically designed to meet the needs of indigenous individuals. This alert applies to adults aged 18 and older. She also mentioned that they are working to extend the alert to include children and youth.
- **Katherine Lewis** mentioned that Emily Pike of the San Carlos Apache Tribe went missing, was brutally murdered, and sexually assaulted. She explained that this case sparked a resurgence of MMIP and united the Tribal community to push for solutions.
- **Katherine Lewis** reported that the Gila River Indian Community hosted an MMIP event last year, attracting 300 attendees. This year, she enthusiastically shared that they have successfully doubled their attendance.
- **Katherine Lewis** concluded her presentation by emphasizing that much work still needs to be done. Perpetrators of offenses committed within their jurisdiction may face a maximum sentence of seven years. The emphasis is on improving the prosecution of crimes within their communities. She thanked the commissioners for the opportunity to discuss this critical topic.
- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, thanked **Katherine Lewis** and inquired if the Commissioners had any questions.
- **Donna Bartos** asked how members can support and help Tribal Communities.
  - **Katherine Lewis** emphasized the importance of involving Tribal Communities in the planning process by giving them a voice and integrating their perspectives into strategies. She pointed out that this inclusion benefits their communities. Lewis praised Governor Hobbs' MMIP Task Force for strengthening the relationship between the community and the state government. Reflecting on her high school experience, she recalled that many of her classmates were unaware of the current population of Indigenous individuals. She expressed satisfaction in seeing ongoing improvements in this area. Additionally, she shared that the average lifespan of a Tribal member now ranges from the late 50s to early 60s, a situation rooted in the boarding school era, which harmed their health and deepened

trauma within the community.

- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, asked how the Gila River Indian Community is working on building trust with men who may have been victimized.
  - **Katherine Lewis** stated that they have male advocates who have improved their trust-building initiatives. Additionally, they have noticed a significant increase in the number of transgender men seeking services. She emphasized that conversations about domestic violence and sexual assault have only recently become normalized. As a result, training has helped advocates and staff better understand the challenges faced by survivors.
- Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair, provided details about an [Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council \(APAAC\)](#) conference on human trafficking. She invited **Katherine Lewis** and her team of advocates to participate at no cost.
- **Samantha Mendez-Dominguez** inquired about the ongoing support for the two rescued teenage girls.
  - **Katherine Lewis** responded that they are working with various departments to provide housing, health services, financial assistance, and clothing. She highlighted the importance of having accessible behavioral health services, recounting an incident where a family experienced an emotional breakdown during a court hearing when they learned the details of a violent crime involving their relative.
- **Donna Bartos** inquired how many young adults are served.
  - **Katherine Lewis** responded that the main age demographic for services is between 25 and 45. The organization is acquiring additional resources to improve support for young adults, older adults, and other vulnerable populations.
- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, thanked **Katherine Lewis** for her presentation.
- To view **Katherine Lewis'** presentation, [click here](#).

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSION

- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, invited any commission that could not complete the pre-strategic planning survey to mention specific points; no comments were provided.
- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, invited **Sandra Mucino** to provide an update on the logistics for the upcoming strategic planning session.
- **Sandra Mucino** announced that the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family (GOYFF), in collaboration with the Arizona Government Transformation Office (GTO), has set up a Doodle Poll with available dates for the Commissioners. She requested that any Commissioners with scheduling conflicts contact her to arrange accommodations.

#### UPCOMING MEETING(S)

- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, stated that the next meeting will occur on **August 12, 2025**, at **10:00 AM**.

#### ADJOURN

- **Elizabeth Ortiz, Co-Chair**, adjourned the meeting at **11:01 AM** due to the absence of a quorum, preventing any official business from being conducted.

Dated May 7, 2025  
Governor's Commission to Prevent Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence  
Respectfully Submitted By:  
Sandra M. Mucino  
Program Administrator