

Bill to help protect Native women

Native American women have gone missing or been killed at much higher rates than non-Native women.

An estimate is that the rate of Native women going missing or being killed is ten times that of non-Native women.

One problem is the confusion by law enforcement over who has jurisdiction to pursue these cases, leading to lax pursuit and insufficient data.

Oregon is home to nine federally recognized tribes or confederations of tribes.

The state has now joined a movement to account for and solve more of the crimes.

Gov. Kate Brown, meeting with tribal leaders, including from Warm Springs, recently signed a bill directing state police to study how to increase and improve criminal justice resources on these cases.

For the past few decades, Patricia Whitefoot of the Yakama Nation has been a

main advocate of reform to address the problem.

At the signing ceremony, Ms. Whitefoot said that her sister, Daisy Mae Heath Tallman, was 29 when she went missing.

She was Whitefoot's youngest sister and lived with her in Washington state.

She would be gone for long periods, fishing for salmon in traditional spots along the Columbia River, and visiting relatives on the Warm Springs Reservation.

Then in the autumn of 1987, she never returned to her home in White Swan.

The case was never solved. Patricia was involved in the effort to pass the bill in Oregon, and a similar one in Washington state earlier.

Travis Hampton, superintendent of the Oregon State Police, told attendees, many of them Native American women, that he was emotionally invested in bringing results.

He said he had been concerned about a lack of state police jurisdiction in Indian country, but that it would be compensated for with collaboration among federal, state and local law enforcement.



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