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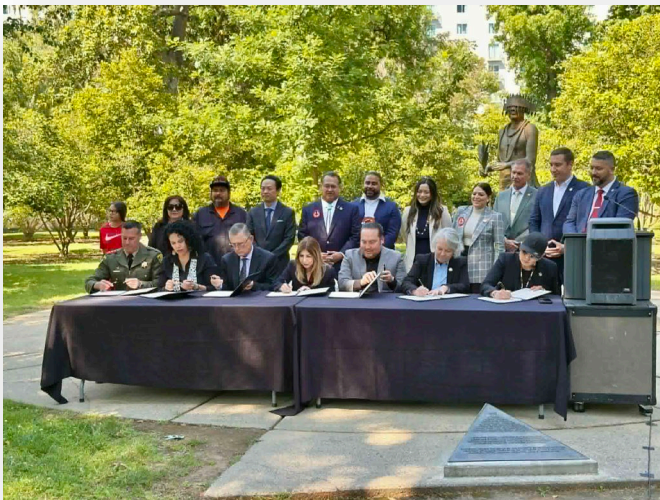
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Tribal Chairpersons, DA, Sheriff Announce Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Collaborative; Sign MOU in Sacramento

Indigenous People Go Missing or Are Murdered at Higher Rates

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#), San Diego County Sheriff Kelly Martinez, Pala Band of Mission Indians Chairman Robert Smith and Jamul Indian Village Chairwoman Erica Pinto announced today the formation of the **San Diego County Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Collaborative (SDMMIPC)** during a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing ceremony in Sacramento, marking a significant step forward in addressing serious and violent crimes impacting Indigenous communities.



The MOU establishes a framework for cooperation and collaboration among participating agencies dedicated to improving criminal justice responses and enhancing public safety within San Diego County. The partnership includes the Pala Band of Mission Indians, Jamul Indian Village of California, Bureau of Indian Affairs, San Diego County Sheriff's Office, and San Diego County District Attorney's Office. The agreement formalizes a shared commitment to work across jurisdictions to investigate and solve cases involving Indigenous victims,

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including murder, missing persons—with a special focus on minors—kidnapping, and human trafficking.

“It is such an honor to sign a historic MOU to advance justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons with Tribal Government Chairpersons devoted to their people,” DA Stephan said. “Together, we are committed to building trust between law enforcement and our tribal partners, while empowering early reporting and strengthening support for victims. Justice for Indigenous victims is not just a goal—it is a shared responsibility we all carry. In honor of MMIP Day, through this MOU we strengthen our commitment to work together to investigate and solve cases of murder, missing persons, kidnapping, and human trafficking involving Indigenous victims. To the survivors here with us and those we hold in our hearts—thank you for your courage, your advocacy, your resilience, and your partnership. This work is for you.”

“The formation of the SDMMIP Collaborative is a commitment to sustained cooperation, regular communication, and aligned investigative practices,” said Sheriff Kelly Martinez. “Our shared goal is simple: to bring people home, to bring families answers, and to ensure that no community feels alone in that search.”

In California, Indigenous people continue to go missing and/or are murdered at disproportionately high rates. The SDMMIPC will focus on strengthening investigative efforts through information-sharing, coordinated responses, and enhanced partnerships among participating entities. The collaboration also prioritizes early reporting, culturally informed victim services, and ongoing education and training to improve outcomes in Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) cases.

“For too long, too many Indigenous families have carried the pain of unanswered questions and loved ones who were never brought home,” said Chairman Robert Smith of the Pala Band of Mission Indians. “This collaboration represents more than an agreement between agencies, it is a commitment to our communities that these cases will not be ignored, and these victims will not be forgotten. When tribal leaders and law enforcement work together with trust and purpose, we give families something they deserve, hope that justice is still possible.”

“As Chairwoman of the Jamul Indian Village, this effort is deeply personal to our community,” said Erica Pinto, Chairwoman of the Jamul Indian Village. “The formation of the SDMMIPC and the MOU reflect our commitment to upholding tribal sovereignty while working together to protect our people and honor those we have lost. For too long, Indigenous families have faced these tragedies without the coordinated response and resources that they deserve. This partnership strengthens collaboration across jurisdictions, builds trust, and ensures that cases involving our communities are handled with urgency, respect, and cultural understanding. Together, we are establishing a path forward that is rooted in accountability and justice for Native communities.”

The participating agencies share several core goals, including:

- Enhancing public safety through coordinated, multi-agency investigations
- Ensuring comprehensive and collaborative casework
- Facilitating the prosecution of offenders and reopening cases when appropriate
- Building trust among law enforcement, tribal partners, and the community
- Promoting awareness and early reporting to law enforcement
- Providing appropriate and supportive victim services in MMIP cases

The MOU recognizes that individual cases may present unique circumstances requiring additional coordination and agreements among partners.

Today's signing ceremony reflects a growing statewide and national effort to address the disproportionate impact of violence against Indigenous people. Through the SDMMIPC, San Diego County is reinforcing its commitment to collaborative action, transparency, and meaningful engagement with tribal communities.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County District Attorney's Office serves nearly 3.3 million residents in San Diego County and is the region's largest law enforcement agency responsible for prosecuting felony crimes. The office also protects the public through specialized units that address consumer protection, environmental crimes, human trafficking, elder abuse, and cybercrime. The District Attorney's Office works every day to pursue justice, protect victims, and ensure that San Diego County remains a safe place to live, work, and raise a family.

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