

# 2018 ANNUAL DATA REPORT:

Sexual & Domestic  
Violence in Whatcom  
County

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**Published:** Nov 2019  
**Data Period:** Jan –Dec 2018\*

\*This is the most recent year for which cross-discipline data is available



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**COMMISSION**  
ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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# Introduction

**Domestic violence (DV)** is “pattern of behavior that one person in a relationship uses to gain power and control over the other. Abuse is not caused by anger, mental problems, alcohol or other drugs, or other common excuses. **It is caused by one person’s belief that they have the right to control their partner.**”<sup>1</sup>

**Sexual assault (SA)** “occurs when a person is forced, coerced, and/or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity. [It] is an umbrella term that includes a wide range of victimizations which may or may not involve force or be illegal.”<sup>2</sup>

Sexual assault or sexual abuse often appears in domestic violence relationships. In fact, it has been estimated that **two-thirds of survivors** experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) **have been sexually assaulted by their abusive partner.**

**In 2018**, as part of our efforts to acknowledge this intersection, the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence (the Commission) changed our name and expanded our mission to include addressing sexual assault.

## Our Mission:

The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence inspires and coordinates our community’s efforts to address domestic and sexual violence. To fulfill this vital mission, we:

- **Foster** safety, justice, and well-being for survivors and communities.
- **Connect** institutions, stakeholders, and communities to collectively increase understanding and effectiveness of community responses for sexual and domestic violence.
- **Transform** systems to ensure best practice prevention and responses for sexual and domestic violence.



<sup>1</sup> <https://wscadv.org/about-domestic-violence/>; infographic from WSCADV.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wcsap.org/help/about-sexual-assault/what-sexual-assault>

# Snapshot Report: Sexual & Domestic Violence in Whatcom County

## Law Enforcement Calls for Service

### Sexual Assault

In 2018 there were **163** reports of **sexual offenses** to Whatcom County’s law enforcement agencies. These calls for service included **75** reports of rape, **9** reports of sodomy,<sup>3</sup> **66** reports of fondling, **4** reports of incest, **7** reports of statutory rape, and **2** reports of peeping Tom (or nonconsensual voyeurism).

Sexual Assault Crime Reports by Jurisdiction

	BPD	Blaine	Ferndale	Lummi	Lynden	WCSO	WWU
Rape	35	0	3	4	5	26	2
Sodomy*	4	0	0	0	2	3	0
Fondling	13	1	6	9	5	30	2
Incest	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
Statutory Rape	6	0	1	0	0	0	0
Peeping Tom	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

### Note:

The data listed in this section comes from the **2018 Crime in Washington Annual Report** released by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC). The names of crimes in WASPC reports are not always consistent with our local police department records. For example, **Bellingham Police Department (BPD) does not use the terms “sodomy” or “peeping Tom”** in their reporting database. In fact, BPD’s records indicate **21** reports of **nonconsensual voyeurism** in 2018 and no reports of sodomy. Differences in recordkeeping may have contributed to the decreased reports of rape discussed below.

<sup>3</sup> In Washington State, the term “sodomy” is used to report sex crimes where the perpetrator is the same gender as the victim. The terminology for crime statistics used by the WASPC is determined by FBI reporting categories. You can visit this resource to learn more about how Washington State RCWs relate to the categories set forth by the FBI: <https://www.waspc.org/assets/CJIS/trainingmanualsandreference/nibrsexoffensegrid.pdf>. The Commission recognizes the historic and current use of “sodomy laws” to criminalize consensual relationships between members of the LGBTQ+ community. To learn more visit: <https://www.aclu.org/other/why-sodomy-laws-matter>

## Rape Reports

**Washington State Criminal Code** defines rape as “**any act of sexual contact between persons**” **without “consent.”** Consent is defined as “actual words or conduct indicating freely given agreement to have sexual intercourse or sexual contact.” The degree of a rape charge is dependent on the use of physical force, damage to property, or other abuses of power by the offender.<sup>4</sup>

Of the **75 reports of rape** throughout Whatcom County in 2018, **20 (27%) resulted in arrest** (see Figure 1).

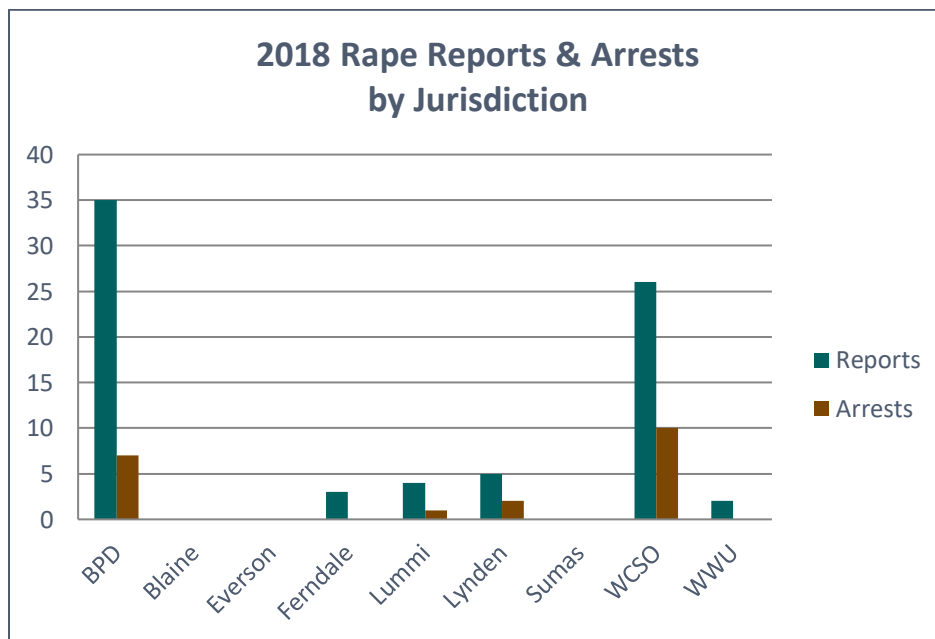


Figure 1

<sup>4</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=9A.44>

**From 2017 to 2018** there was a **36% decrease in reports of rape** across Whatcom County jurisdictions (see Figures 2 and 3). The most significant decrease of rape reports was to the Bellingham Police Department (BPD), with a **40.7% decrease**. In 2017 BPD recorded **59** rape reports; in 2018 they recorded **35**.

It is important to note that **there is no evidence that incidents of rape have decreased in Whatcom County** (see the data on forensic exams below). At this time, we cannot provide a concrete explanation for this rate of change, but there are some identifiable factors discussed below. **The Commission recommends that this data be further analyzed**, especially if the trend continues.

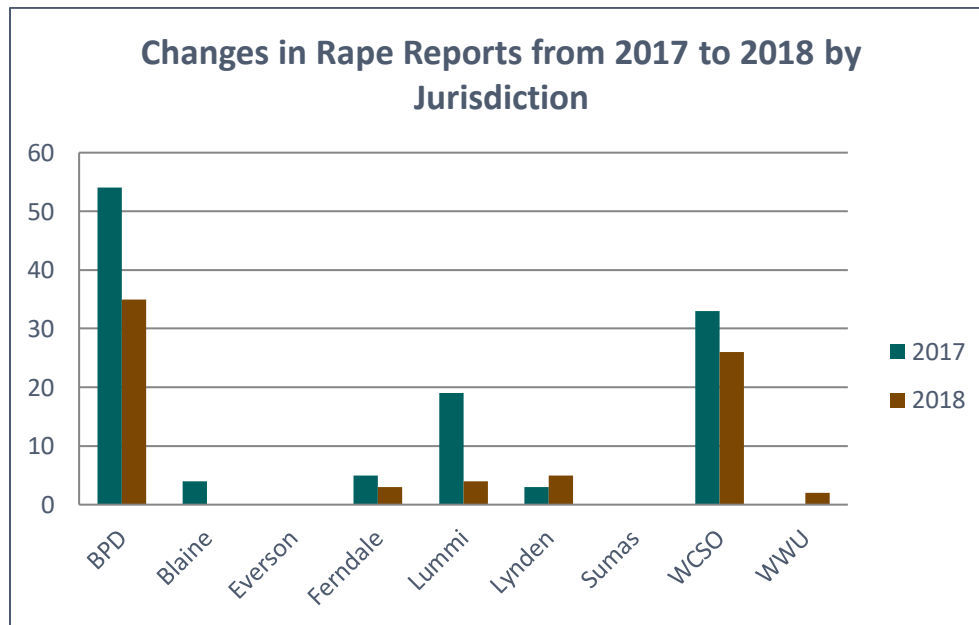


Figure 2

**State-wide rape reports increased** over the last four years, indicating that our community's numbers are not reflective of a larger trend (compare Figures 3 and 4). The total number of rape reports across all counties in Washington State increased by **14%** between 2017 and 2018. Nationally between the same years, rape reports increased by a smaller margin of **2.8%**.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018>



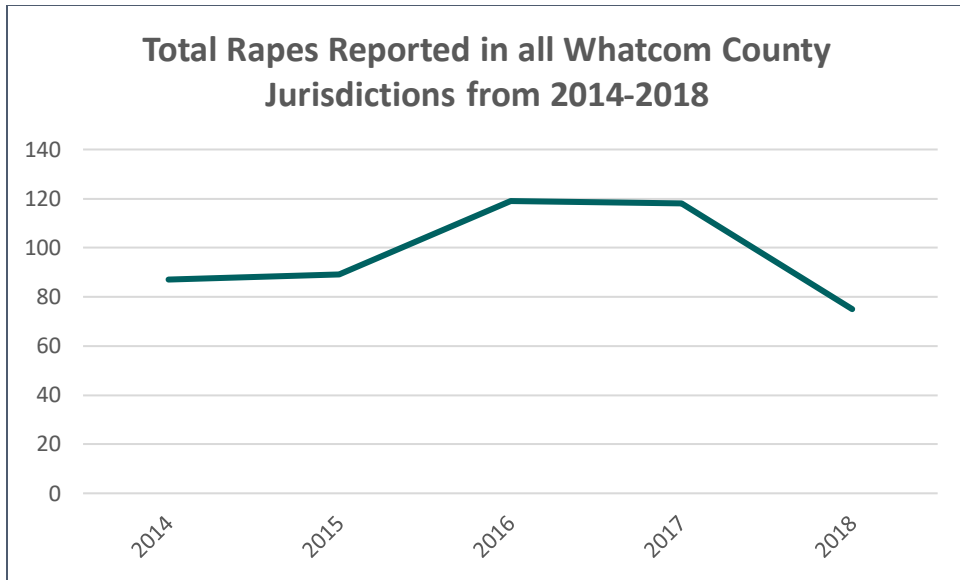


Figure 3

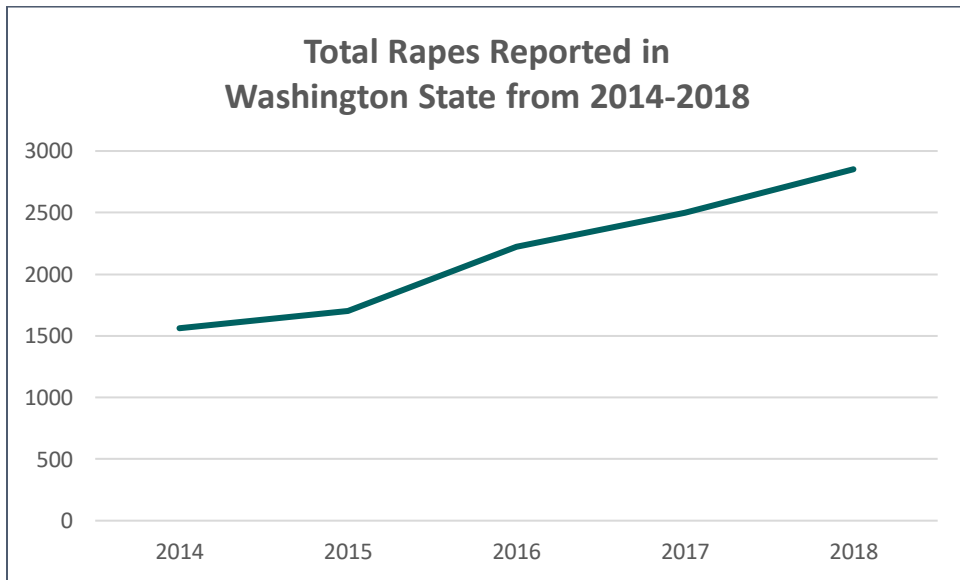


Figure 4

**In May 2018** BPD added a new category to their database called **“sex crime investigations.”** These reports are not included in the numbers recorded by WASPC. This change in recordkeeping **may have contributed to the rate of change** for BPD’s rape reports in the 2018 WASPC report.

Between May and Dec 2018, BPD recorded **56 additional sex crime reports that were not captured** by the WASPC numbers above. According to BPD, this category was created for situations where officers felt they needed more information in order to categorize the report. For example, **anonymous rape kits** (discussed below) now often receive this label. As with any report, the police may decide that a crime did not take place and they may also choose not to investigate beyond the official report, due to lack of evidence or other circumstances.

According to BPD, **15** of those **56** sex crime investigations were **anonymous forensic exams** where the survivor chose not to report the incident to law enforcement but requested that the kit be processed by law enforcement.

## Forensic Exams

**In 2018** PeaceHealth St. Joseph’s Medical Center performed **120 sexual assault forensic exams**. These exams are performed when a survivor comes to the emergency room and requests medical care for a sexual assault. **The survivor has the right to choose** whether they want to make a police report or have evidence collected for a “rape kit” that will be analyzed by the State-run forensic lab. They may choose to have their kit remain anonymous or they may choose to only receive medical care without the collection of any forensic evidence. The State lab prioritizes kits that are part of an ongoing investigation. **Anonymous rape kits may go untested and uninvestigated for long periods of time.**

According to the Forensic Nursing Coordinator, Stephanie Wahlgren, **St. Joseph’s number of exams have been “steadily increasing” each year.** In 2014 St. Joseph’s averaged **60** exams per year.



Of the **120** sexual assaults where St. Joseph's performed a forensic exam:

- **46** occurred in Bellingham
- **29** occurred in unincorporated Whatcom County
- **3** occurred in Everson
- **4** occurred in Lynden
- **4** occurred on the Lummi Reservation
- **3** occurred in Blaine
- **3** occurred in Ferndale

Of the **120** survivors who came to St. Joseph's for a forensic exam:

- **96 chose to have evidence collected**
- **10 chose not to report to police** at the time of the exam
- **2** of those 10 **chose to report at a later date**

# Law Enforcement Calls for Service

## Domestic Violence

In 2018 there were **3,239** *domestic violence* calls for service to Whatcom County’s law enforcement agencies. Of these calls for service, there were **1,823** verbal incidents\* (**56%**) and **1,416** domestic violence offenses (**44%**). The term “**verbals**” refers to incidents where the police have been called, but it has been determined that no physical violence (or offense warranting arrest) has occurred.

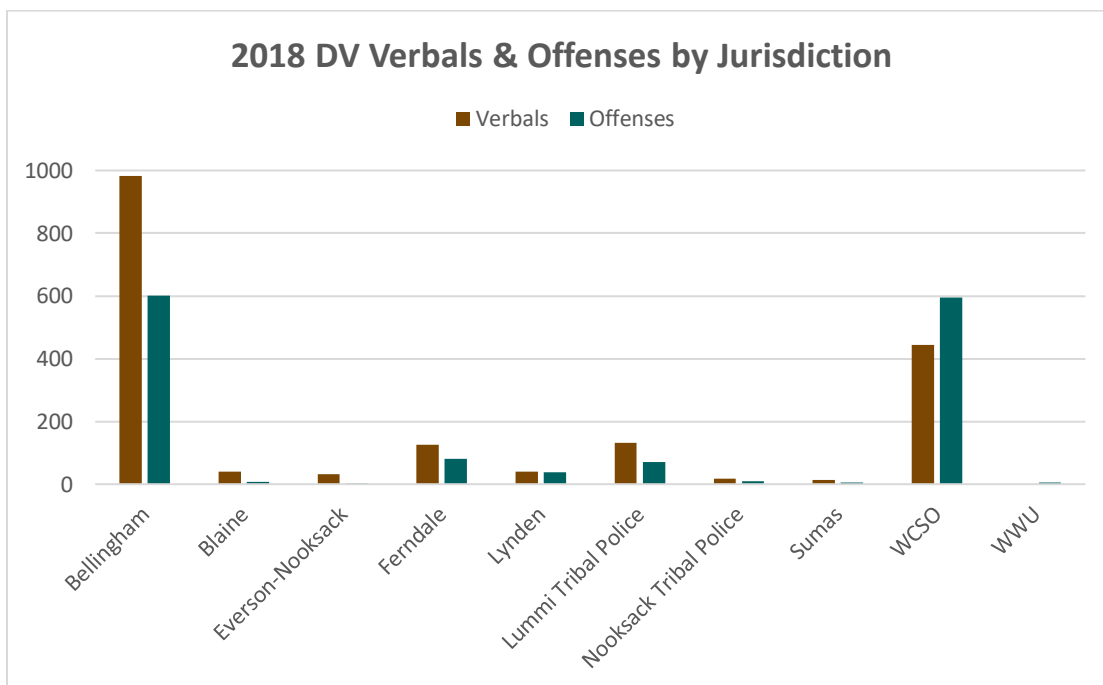


Figure 5

## Protection Orders

In 2018 there were a total of **328 requests for temporary orders** of protection against domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment/stalking in Whatcom County.<sup>6</sup> Of those requests, approximately:

- **48%** were granted
- **33%** became permanent orders

Temporary protection orders prohibit the **respondent** (typically the offender) from contacting or approaching the **petitioner** (typically the survivor) in the two-week period preceding the court hearing for a permanent order. **Permanent orders** typically last one year, although Judicial Officers have the authority to grant protections for shorter or longer periods of time. **Violations** of temporary or permanent orders can result in criminal charges and/or jail time. Reporting violations is the responsibility of the petitioner.

Of the **107 permanent protection orders** granted in Whatcom County in 2018, approximately:<sup>7</sup>

- **92% (98)** were Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs)
- **7% (8)** were Anti-Harassment/Stalking Orders (AHOs)
- **1% (1)** were Sexual Assault Protection Orders (SAPOs)

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<sup>6</sup> Reported by Whatcom County District and Superior Courts, Nooksack Tribal Court, and Lummi Tribal Court. It should be noted that when reporting to the Commission, Lummi Courts do not separate protection orders by type. This number may include vulnerable adult protection orders filed in the Lummi Tribal courts.

<sup>7</sup> These percentages do not include orders from Lummi Tribal Court.

## Intimate Partner Homicides

**In 2018** there was **1** intimate partner homicide and **1** abuser suicide in Whatcom County.<sup>8</sup> On the night of October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, a 32-year-old woman was shot and killed by 37-year-old Alakana Halemano, who then shot and killed himself.<sup>9</sup> The murder-suicide occurred on the Lummi Reservation. By entering the woman’s residence, Halemano was in violation of a domestic violence protection order from 2017. Lummi Communications released a letter about the homicide, which states, in part:

*“We are all entitled to the basic human right to be free of physical and emotional abuse. To lose a mother, sister, daughter, granddaughter, relative and friend at such a young age, in such a tragic way, is something that we will never tolerate as a people.”<sup>10</sup>*

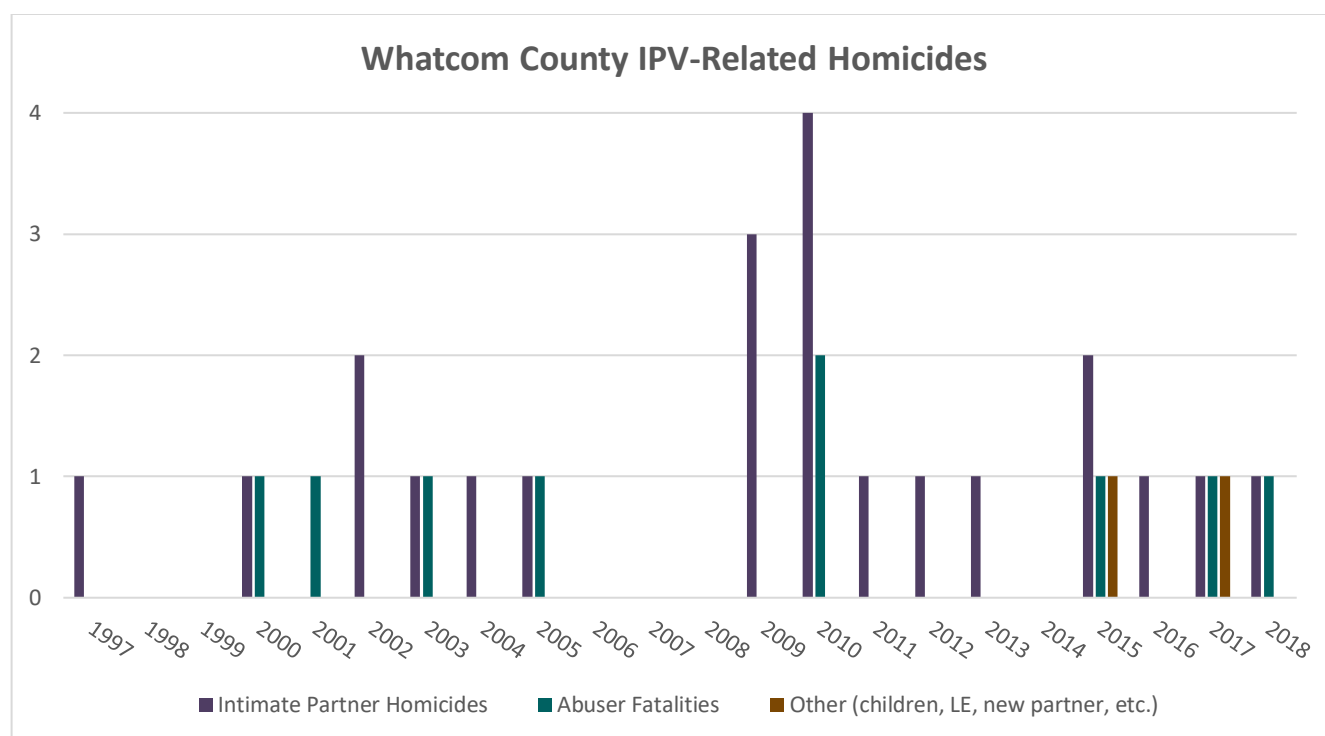


Figure 6

<sup>8</sup> <https://wscadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/fatalities-by-county-through-12-31-2018.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/crime/article220438615.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/lummicommunications/photos/a.120215611327213/2367635076585244/?type=3&theater>

## DV & SA Advocacy Services

### Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Services of Whatcom County

**(DVSAS)** served a total of **2,017** clients. **1,644** of those clients were survivors of domestic violence and **419** survivors of sexual assault or commercial sexual exploitation (SE) in 2018.<sup>11</sup> In the same year, **87** clients utilized DVSAS’s safe shelter services. Additionally, **1,424** students in Whatcom County received education about consent and healthy relationships.

**DVSAS** services are available for anyone impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, or sexual exploitation.<sup>12</sup> **DVSAS services include:**

IMMEDIATE HELP	ONGOING SUPPORT	SAFE HOUSING	EDUCATION PROGRAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24-hour helpline</li> <li>• Support center walk-in services</li> <li>• 24-hour forensic exam support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy counseling</li> <li>• Legal advocacy</li> <li>• Support groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidential shelter</li> <li>• Homelessness prevention services</li> <li>• Housing case management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Empowerment Project: 3-session prevention program for middle &amp; high school students</li> </ul>

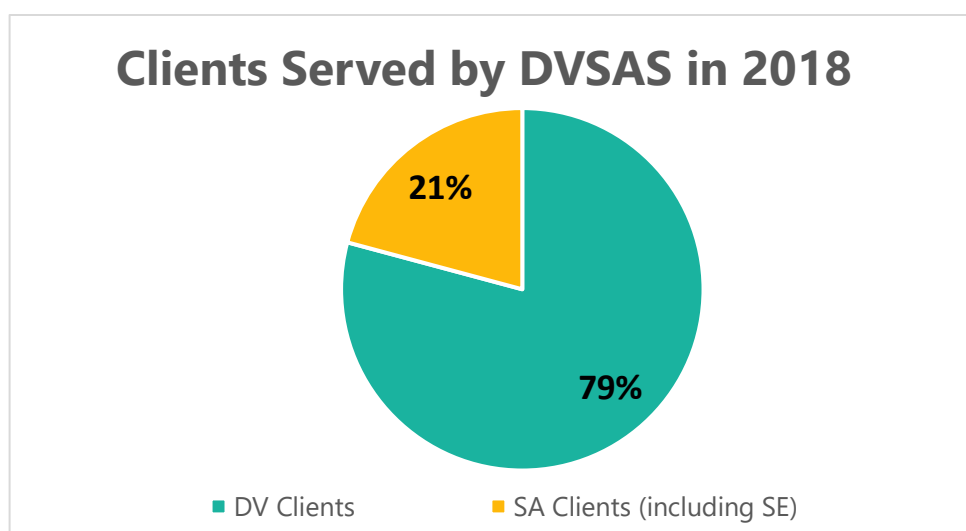


Figure 7

<sup>11</sup> This number includes clients who accessed services for both domestic violence and sexual assault.

<sup>12</sup> DVSAS Demographic Summary 2018.

## Consultation and Sexual Assault Support (CASAS) at Western Washington

University (WWU) served **237** students impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault in 2018.

CASAS helps any college student affected by sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, emotional abuse, or stalking recently or in the past.<sup>13</sup> **CASAS services include:**

ADVOCACY & SUPPORT	REFERRAL & INFORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support groups</li> <li>• Reporting options</li> <li>• Academic support</li> <li>• Confidential 1-on-1 support</li> <li>• Sessions with advocate</li> <li>• Protection orders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical assistance</li> <li>• Legal assistance</li> <li>• Financial aid solutions</li> <li>• Housing solutions</li> <li>• Emergency leave</li> <li>• Counseling referrals</li> </ul>

**Lummi Victims of Crime (LVOC)** provides help to any adult or adolescent who has been affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, assault & battery, survivor of homicide, child abuse, and sexual assault.<sup>14</sup> **LVOC services include:**

CRISIS COUNSELING	LEGAL ADVOCACY	TRANSPORTATION & REFERRALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-person or via telephone</li> <li>• 24-hour hotline</li> <li>• Safety planning and information</li> <li>• On-scene advocacy for DV and SA crimes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court hearings</li> <li>• Protection and restraining orders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapy referrals – sweats, smudges</li> <li>• Traditional healing</li> <li>• Transportation to medical, legal, and therapy appointments</li> </ul>
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTER	EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE	EDUCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ne-Alis Tokw (My Sister's Place)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of house door locks and car windshields, broken due to DV incidents</li> <li>• Boarding up house windows broken due to DV incidents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teen Girls groups</li> <li>• Free annual conferences</li> <li>• Annual Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Awareness Walk</li> </ul>

<sup>13</sup> <https://pws.wvu.edu/consultation-and-sexual-assault-support-casas>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.lummi-nsn.gov/Website.php?PageID=399>

## Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)

**The** Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) was developed by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and is based on the research of **Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell**. Dr. Campbell's work showed that women killed by their intimate partners had very seldom been engaged by advocates.

**When** a law enforcement officer responds to a domestic call, the LAP protocol directs them to:

1. Conduct an **11-item lethality screen** with the victim.
2. If the victim screens in at high risk of lethality, the officer makes **immediate contact** with the local domestic violence advocacy agency (DVSAS).
3. The victim is then encouraged, but not required, to speak with the domestic violence advocate. The responding officer and the domestic violence advocate work as partners to provide the victim with **safety planning** and resource information.<sup>15</sup>

**When** high-risk survivors are connected with on-scene domestic violence advocacy:

- There is a **60%** reduction in risk of severe assault.
- They are almost never the victim of murder or attempted murder.

The LAP program was initiated in all Whatcom County law enforcement jurisdictions in **2014**. Since that time, there has been an overall **downward trend in the percentage of high-risk victims connected with advocacy on-scene** (see Figure 7). At the time of writing, we do not have enough information to identify a specific cause for this decline. **This is an area that deserves further attention and analysis.**

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<sup>15</sup> Lethality Assessment Program: The Maryland Model brochure



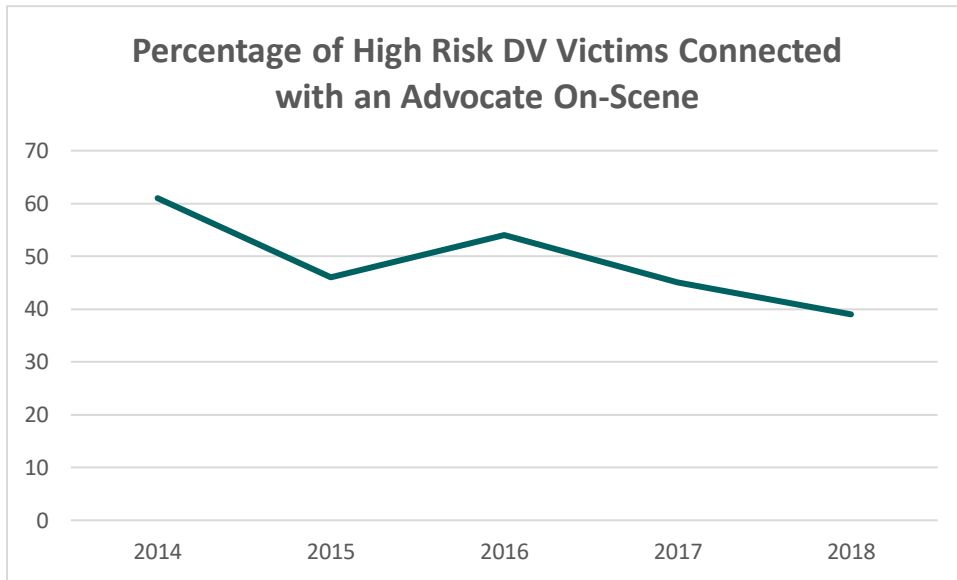


Figure 8

### In 2018:

- **Whatcom County** law enforcement agencies conducted the LAP with **442** survivors of domestic violence.
- **49%** of those survivors screened in as at high-risk for lethality (see Figure 8).
- **39%** of these high-risk survivors spoke to an advocate for safety planning during the initial law enforcement response (see Figure 9).

### DV Victims Screened by Law Enforcement as High Risk in Whatcom County in 2018

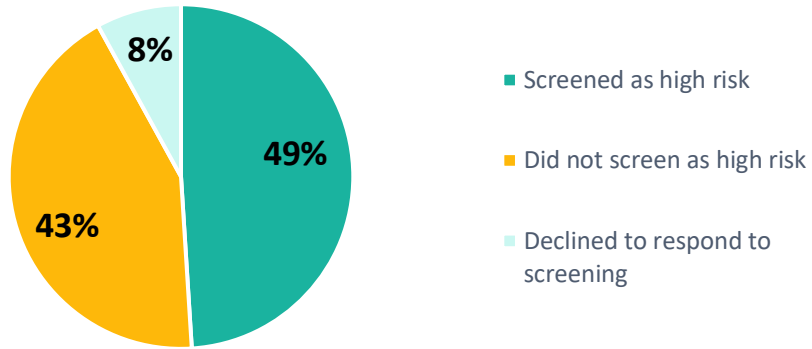


Figure 8

### High Risk DV Victims Connected with On-Scene Advocacy in Whatcom County in 2018

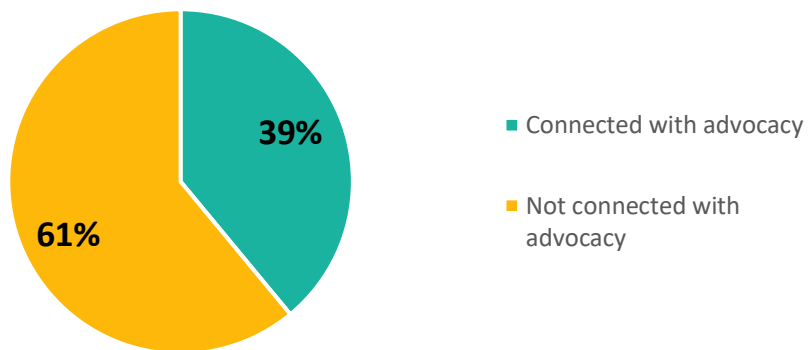


Figure 9

## Domestic Violence High-Risk Team (DVHRT)

**The** Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT) is a multidisciplinary model designed to enhance our community's response to intimate partner violence offenders who pose the greatest risk committing lethal or near-lethal assault.

The DVHRT focuses on examining risk factors and behaviors of offenders, identifying offenders who are at-risk for committing homicide or seriously injuring someone, and creating monitoring plans across disciplines to deter or minimize future assaults.

**The** purpose of the DVHRT is to:

- **Facilitate early identification** of the most dangerous domestic violence offenders through research-based risk assessment.
- **Establish clear channels of communication** across all disciplines involved in responding to domestic violence.
- **Provide coordinated, multi-disciplinary responses** to highly lethal domestic violence cases.

**Core** members of the DVHRT include representatives from:

Law Enforcement

Parole

Prosecution

Batterers' Intervention

Victim Advocacy

Child Protective Services

Probation

Other Community Partners  
(invited to participate, as needed)

**In 2018:**

- **19** domestic violence offenders were accepted for monitoring by the DVHRT.
- **43** domestic violence offenders were actively monitored by the DVHRT for all or part of the year.

## Spotlight Report: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, & Two-Spirit Persons (MMIWG2S)

**Content Advisory:** *This report contains discussion of interpersonal and historical violence. The numbers represent real stories about real people, some of whom are part of our community. There are many reading this who may have been impacted by these harms. We encourage you to do whatever is necessary to take of yourself during and after reading this report.*

# SPOTLIGHT REPORT:

## Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, & Two-Spirit Persons (MMIWG2S)

The lands we refer to in this report as Bellingham and Whatcom County are the ancestral territories of the **Coast Salish people**. The area surrounding Bellingham Bay was historically home to several Indigenous tribes for thousands of years before European settlers occupied its shores. These groups include the **Lummi, Nooksack, Saanich, Samish, Semiahmoo, and Songish tribes**.<sup>16</sup>

Today, Whatcom County neighbors two federally recognized sovereign Indigenous nations, the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Indian Tribe. The City of Bellingham and its neighboring cities throughout Whatcom County are also home to a sizable Indigenous population, which consists of members from both local and non-local tribes. The U.S. Census estimates that **3.4% of Whatcom County's population identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native**.<sup>17</sup> Indigenous people make up around **2%** of the national population.

**In 2018** there were several **significant publications** on the subject of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Persons (MMIWG2S), as well as numerous **legislative changes**, introduced both locally and nationally to address this crisis. The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence (the Commission) has heard from local survivors and stakeholders expressing concern about how Whatcom County and the surrounding tribal nations have been impacted by violence against Native women, girls, and Two-Spirit Persons.

<sup>16</sup> <https://wp.wvu.edu/timeline/coast-salish-inhabitants/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/whatcomcountywashington>

### *Two-Spirit*

“...is a term that encompasses a broad range of sexual and gender identities of [Indigenous] peoples across North America. While some use the term to refer specifically to the cultural roles of individuals who embody both female and male spirits, Two-Spirit is also used to describe [Indigenous] people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). Importantly [Indigenous] LGBTQ people name their identities using diverse terminology, including terms in Indigenous languages as well as terms that are prevalent among LGBTQ communities. **Two-thirds of the 200 Indigenous languages spoken in North America are said to have contained terms to describe individuals who are neither men nor women.**”

— Sarah Hunt, PhD  
(from “An Introduction to the Health of Two-Spirit People”)

It is important to note that many of the studies featured in this report are focused on women and girls, and very little data has been collected by formal sources on the issue of missing and murdered Two-Spirit persons. We would like to draw attention to the **high rates of violence experienced by Indigenous LGBTQ people**, especially those who are non-binary and gender non-conforming.

This report seeks to provide **a brief overview** of the available regional and national data on MMIWG2S, while drawing attention to the barriers and difficulties of gathering accurate numbers. As a part of the research process, Commission staff sat down with several Tribal stakeholders, local Indigenous survivors, and family members of Indigenous survivors in order to reflect the voices of our community members who are directly impacted by this crisis. **Their words are highlighted throughout this Spotlight Report.** Additionally, this report provides a review of significant state and federal legislation addressing data collection and improving services for MMIWG2S, a set of recommendations for local government and other systems, and a list of further education resources.

The Commission would like to extend **gratitude and thanks** to everyone, especially the local Indigenous survivors and family members of MMIWG2S, that gave their time and expertise throughout the creation of this report.

***“I want [the local governments] to go beyond just knowing the existence of this issue – to focus on a response. The system doesn’t prioritize certain people (like if the missing person is in and out of the legal system, or they have a history of drug use, or if the victim is of a low socio-economic status). If this leads to a diminished response, which I believe it does, that’s where we can make the biggest difference. You can’t always prevent bad people from doing bad things, but we can respond with the utmost urgency.”***

— Local Tribal Service Provider

## Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, & Two-Spirit Persons

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>18</sup>:

- Murder is the **third-leading cause of death** for Native women.
- **Over half** of all female homicides **are related to IPV**.
- Non-Hispanic Black women are the only population murdered at a higher rate than Native women.

Native women are targeted for sexual<sup>19</sup> and domestic<sup>20</sup> violence at a rate **2.5** times higher than all other racial groups. The Department of Justice (DOJ) reports that “Native women **living on tribal lands** are murdered at an extremely high rate of more than **10** times the national average.”<sup>21</sup>

The violence experienced by Native women is not limited to reservations. Even though **71%** of American Indian/Alaska Native people **live in urban areas**, little data has been collected about the violence experienced by Indigenous people living outside of reservations.<sup>22</sup> The Urban Indian Health Institute conducted a study in **Seattle** where they interviewed **148** women living in the city. Of those Native women, **94% had been raped or sexually coerced** at some point in their lives.

*“I was at the casino doing my daughter’s make-up for prom. I was so tired and didn’t have a ride home. Someone offered me a ride and I fell asleep in the back of the car. When I woke up, I was in a trap house with a needle in my arm.”*

— Local Indigenous Abduction Survivor

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6628a1.htm>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/mazeofinjustice.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.ncai.org/resources/ncai\\_publications/policy-insights-brief-statistics-on-violence-against-native-women](http://www.ncai.org/resources/ncai_publications/policy-insights-brief-statistics-on-violence-against-native-women)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/223691.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>



There is very little available data specific to violence against Two-Spirit and LGBTQ Native persons, but some research suggests that **“Two-Spirit women are more likely to be sexually and physically assaulted than heterosexual [Native] women and white lesbian women.”**<sup>23</sup> The limited existing research into crimes against transgender people in general suggests that Two-Spirit persons are at even higher risk for violence:

- **50%** of transgender people report experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>24</sup>
- **50%** of transgender people report experiencing domestic/dating violence in their lifetime.<sup>25</sup>
- **The majority of transgender murder victims over the last 5 years have been transgender women of color.**<sup>26</sup>

***“My parents reported me missing, there was no one to come looking for me at all. My boyfriend at the time was abusive, he very well could have killed me, and no one would have ever known. That was in 1979.”***

— Family Member of a Local Indigenous Abduction Survivor

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nccih.ca/docs/emerging/RPT-HealthTwoSpirit-Hunt-EN.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <http://forge-forward.org/wp-content/docs/FAQ-10-2012-rates-of-violence.pdf>

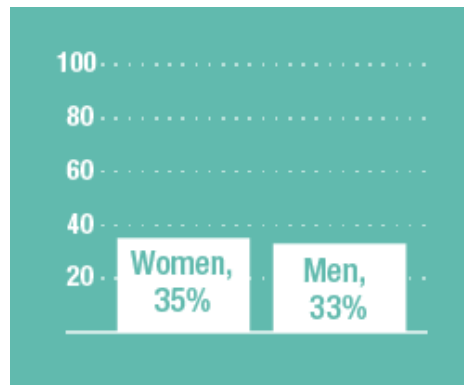
<sup>25</sup> <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Intimate-Partner-Violence-and-Sexual-Abuse-among-LGBT-People.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/toolkit\\_transviolence.pdf](https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/toolkit_transviolence.pdf)

According to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), **“interracial violence is more prevalent than intraracial violence”** for American Indian and Alaska Natives. In other words, most violent crimes against Native people are committed by someone from a different ethnic group. The NIJ states that “this finding offers strong support for **the sovereign right of federally recognized tribes** to criminally prosecute non-Indian perpetrators. Until recently, federally recognized tribes did not have this authority, even for crimes committed on tribal lands. **This gap in jurisdictional authority provided immunity to non-Indian perpetrators** and compromised the safety of tribal communities.”<sup>27</sup>



Percentages of Indigenous victims experiencing violence by **non-Indian perpetrators**



Percentages of Indigenous victims experiencing violence by **American Indian or Alaska Native perpetrators**

The DOJ reports that **86% of recorded rape cases against Native women involved non-Native perpetrators.**<sup>28</sup> When recently conducting the Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit, the Commission heard from local law enforcement about the existence of “local **online message boards that ‘coach’ offenders** on how easy it is to rape Native women on reservations and get away with it by taking advantage of the limits on Tribal jurisdiction in sexual assault cases.”

<sup>27</sup> <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-about-violence-against-american-indian-and-alaska-native-women-and-men#three>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/mazeofinjustice.pdf>

According to the FBI, **hate crimes\* against Native Americans rose by 63%** between 2016 and 2017.<sup>29</sup> In 2017, the FBI recorded **251** hate crimes against American Indians and Alaska Natives, compared to **154** incidents in 2016. The FBI defines a hate crime as a “criminal offense against a person or property **motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias** against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.”<sup>30</sup>

***“People with money are the ones really out there [abducting women]. They have all the power.”***

— Local Indigenous Abduction Survivor

The DOJ also reports **“high rates” of human and sex trafficking** of American Indian and Alaska Natives, indicating that there are significant gaps and barriers to gathering data in this area.<sup>31</sup> A 2011 report from the Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC), *Garden of Truth*, interviewed **105** Native women who had experienced sex trafficking. Of those women:

- **62%** saw a connection between sex trafficking and colonization, explaining that “the devaluation of women in [sex trafficking] was identical to the colonizing devaluation of Native people.”
- **69%** had family members who had attended boarding schools.

The MIWSAC report discusses how Native children who were forcibly relocated to boarding schools by the U.S. government, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century until **1973**, were sexually abused and **“physically assaulted for practicing their spiritual beliefs** or speaking their traditional language.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.indianz.com/News/2018/11/13/antiindian-hate-crimes-rose-dramatically.asp>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/page/file/998081/download>

<sup>32</sup> <http://miwsac.org/images/pdf/Garden%20of%20Truth%20Final%20Project%20WEB.pdf>

## Barriers to Reporting & Collecting Data

In 2019 the Washington State Patrol (WSP) released a report summarizing the outcomes of several community outreach meetings with local Native communities to address this issue within our state. The following are some of the **“unique barriers” to collecting accurate local numbers of MMIWG**, identified by WSP:

- Tribal law enforcement’s **lack of access to national databases**
- Some Tribes do not have any **electronic filing systems**
- **Misclassification of race** (some law enforcement agencies have used the indicator “N” to stand for both “Native” and “Negro,” resulting in confusion around the race of victims)
- Non-Tribal law enforcement’s **lack of education and training** around working with Native people and Indigenous communities
- Historical oppression and stereotypes that have contributed to a **lack of prioritizing cases of MMIWG** by both law enforcement and the media (for example Native girls may be classified as “runaways” rather than “missing,” which does not trigger an active investigation into their whereabouts)
- **Jurisdictional issues** that make it unclear which law enforcement agency is responsible for investigation
- A lack of trust between non-Tribal governments and Indigenous communities due to **historical and ongoing violence** and discrimination
- The exploitation of Indigenous communities by **sex trafficking** operations

***“I do not trust any of the local resources really. Our local communities have no policy on missing persons. There are plenty of reports of missing people, they almost always play it off that the person left on their own and that a teen would have just ran away, or a drug addict just left on their own free will.”***

— Family Member of a Local Indigenous Abduction Survivor

Survivors and stakeholders who spoke with the Commission suggested that **our community's proximity to the Canadian border** could have an additional impact on the local response to MMIWG2S. American and Canadian-born Indigenous people have unique immigration rights that allow for less regulated travel across the border.<sup>33</sup> These treaty rights recognize how the Canadian-American border is not reflective of the historic settlement and migration patterns of Indigenous people. There are some who have speculated that **foreign-born Indigenous persons could be harder for law enforcement to identify** and/or inform relatives or community members. This is an area that deserves more attention – more work can be done to recognize the treaty rights of Indigenous people in the U.S. and Canada, while simultaneously improving communication between law enforcement agencies in both countries.

In June 2019, the Canadian government conducted a National Inquiry into the issue of MMIWG2S. This report concluded that the **“violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people amounts to genocide.”** Despite their best efforts, “to gather all of the truths relating to the missing and murdered, [...] no one knows an exact number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people in Canada.”<sup>34</sup>

***“We need to raise awareness and tighten up security at the border. The people that operate the solicitation groups do not drive trashy old cars, or drive a white van, they are as normal looking as you and me. They know about the reservations and those living in poverty, always searching for ‘a way out.’”***

— Family Member of a Local Indigenous Abduction Survivor

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/resource/the-jay-treaty>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

## Available Numbers on MMIWG2S

The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI), a division of the Seattle Indian Health Board, released a study in 2018 analyzing the “nationwide (data) crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women.” According to this study:

- **5,712 cases of MMIWG** were reported in the United States in 2016.
- **Only 116 (approx. 2%) were logged** into the Department of Justice (DOJ) database.<sup>35</sup>

The UIHI closely studied **506 cases of MMIWG** in the United States.<sup>36</sup> Of those 506 cases:

- **66** were tied to domestic and sexual violence
- **128** were missing
- **280** were murdered
- **98** were “unknown status”
- **71** cases were from Washington state
  - **WA state ranked second highest** for the most cases just after New Mexico
  - **Seattle was the highest-ranking city** with **45** cases

The National Crime Information Center (NCIC) is an electronic database of criminal records maintained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Law enforcement officers can search NCIC to find out if a person has been reported missing. **Tribes in the U.S. do not currently have access to the NCIC database.** As of May 2019, the NCIC had:<sup>37</sup>

- **56 reported cases** of Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) in Washington State.
- **5** of those cases were from Whatcom County.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.wsp.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/WSP\\_2951-SHB-Report.pdf](http://www.wsp.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/WSP_2951-SHB-Report.pdf)

**The Sovereign Bodies Institute** is an independent organization run by Indigenous scholars, which maintains a MMIWG database for U.S. and Canada since 1900. While they do not release detailed information out of respect for the families of the missing and murdered women and girls, **their database contains only 5 recorded cases in Whatcom County.** Anecdotal evidence from Commission staff's conversations with local tribal stakeholders indicates that this number is drastically incomplete. There is **more information at the end of this Spotlight Report** on how to report cases to the Sovereign Bodies Institute.

The Washington State Patrol reports that:<sup>38</sup>

- **7%** of the missing women reported in WA were recorded as American Indian/Alaska Native.
- Native people make up only **2%** of the general WA state population.

*“I find it hard to believe [that there are only five cases in Whatcom County]. I cannot believe that number is accurate over 120 years. It has to be far higher. Any Tribal member could come up with more than five.”*

— Local Tribal Service Provider

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.wsp.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/WSP\\_2951-SHB-Report.pdf](http://www.wsp.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/WSP_2951-SHB-Report.pdf)



## Recent Legislation

### NATIONAL LEGISLATION

- **The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Resolution #PHX-16-077:**
  - Calls upon the Department of Justice to fully implement the VAWA 2005 program of research and specifically provide tribes information regarding the disappearance and murder of Native women.
  - Supports the congressional resolution creating a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.<sup>39</sup>
  - ***Adopted by the NCAI in October 2016.***
- **Savanna’s Act (S. 227 & HR 2733):**
  - This bill would require “the Department of Justice (DOJ) to update the online data entry format for federal databases relevant to cases of missing and murdered Indians to include a new data field for users to input the victim's tribal enrollment information or affiliation.”<sup>40</sup>
  - Named for **Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind**, a member of the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, who was abducted and murdered in Fargo, ND, in August 2017.
  - Passed with bipartisan support in Senate but was blocked in the House of Representatives by Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA).
  - New versions of this bill have been introduced in the House by Rep. Deb Haaland (D-NM), who is an enrolled member of Pueblo of Laguna, and in the Senate by Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK).
  - ***At the time of writing, Congress has yet to pass this bill.***
- **Not Invisible Act (HR 2438):**
  - This bill would establish an advisory committee to address violent crime against Native women. The committee will include representatives from the U.S. and tribal governments, as well as law enforcement, service providers, and survivors.
  - Introduced in May 2019 to the House by Rep. Haaland. A full list of bills introduced by Rep. Haaland to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women can be viewed [here](#).<sup>41</sup>
  - ***At the time of writing, Congress has yet to pass this bill.***

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.ncai.org/resources/resolutions/addressing-crisis-of-missing-and-murdered-native-women>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1942>

<sup>41</sup> <https://haaland.house.gov/media/press-releases/recap-haaland-bills-address-crisis-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women>

- **Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA) of 2019 (HR 1585):**
  - Includes several provisions to increase services for Native survivors and expand information sharing across departments in Indian Country.
  - Expands upon the 2013 decision to allow for tribal jurisdiction in the prosecution of non-Native offenders in DV cases. With some limitations, Tribes would be allowed to prosecute non-Native offenders in cases of SA, child abuse, and homicide of a law enforcement officer.
  - At the time of writing, only the House of Representatives has approved the reauthorization of VAWA. In November 2019 an alternate bill was proposed in the Senate that does not include expansions to tribal jurisdictions.<sup>42</sup>
  - ***At the time of writing, the Senate has not yet voted to reauthorize VAWA.***

## WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATION

- **House Bill 2951:** Ordering a study to determine how to increase reporting and investigation of missing Native American women.<sup>43</sup>
  - Requires Washington State Patrol to work with tribes and Governor’s office to increase resources for identifying and reporting MMIW cases in WA State.<sup>44</sup>
  - ***Went into effect in June 7, 2018.***
- **House Bill 1713:** Improving Law Enforcement Response to Missing and Murdered Native American Women.<sup>45</sup>
  - Requires State Patrol to develop best practices for investigating these crimes.
  - Created 2 state patrol positions specifically to address this epidemic.
  - Requires training for state police on collaborating with tribes.<sup>46</sup>
  - ***Went into effect July 28, 2019.***

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.niwr.org/news/new-senate-vawa-bill-would-leave-native-women-less-protected-and-infringe-tribal-sovereignty>

<sup>43</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2951&Year=2017>

<sup>44</sup> <http://ginamosbrucker.housepublicans.wa.gov/2018/02/07/state-house-approves-mccabe-bill-help-identify-missing-native-american-women/>

<sup>45</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1713&Year=2019&Initiative=false>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/inslee-signs-bill-responding-to-issue-of-murdered-and-missing-indigenous-women/>

## Resiliency & Resistance

Indigenous peoples face **negative stereotypes about their history and culture**, and many non-Natives are led to believe false information about the lives of Indigenous people today. When conducting the *Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit*, the DV Commission found that there are **non-Native stakeholders in our community with false beliefs about Indigenous peoples**. In confidential interviews, statements were made about how “it is important for Native people to ‘get off the reservation’, ‘get an education’, be ‘assimilated’, and ‘talk like us.’” Ideas like this persist throughout the country, even though **only 22% of Native Americans live on reservations**<sup>47</sup> and many reservations include urban areas (such as the Puyallup reservation which covers a significant portion of Tacoma, WA).<sup>48</sup>

*“When I got home, I went to counseling. I learned how to be accountable. I was lucky enough to leave with confidence and a family.”*

— Local Indigenous Abduction Survivor

The increased media coverage and recent legislative responses to the crisis of MMIWG2S are largely the result of **persistent efforts by Native women and Two-Spirit people**. There have been many grassroots and formalized efforts by Indigenous people to bring awareness and find solutions to this crisis. Every community member that we spoke to for this report referenced **Indigenous-led social media groups, blogs, and YouTube channels** dedicated to tracking cases and bringing together families and communities to find survivors. Most of the research and data throughout this report was published by **Indigenous activists, researchers, and academics** who are continuously working to track the data and close the gaps that prevent these cases from being recorded and responded to.

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<sup>47</sup> <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=62>

<sup>48</sup> You can listen to Episode 3 of “This Land” podcast for more information about the truths and misconceptions surrounding reservations: <https://crooked.com/podcast-series/this-land/>

The **“Resources for Further Education”** portion of this report (on pages 35-36) features just a small fraction of the existing organizations, publications, and media created by Indigenous peoples to address this issue. The DV Commission acknowledges that **Native communities are more than the injustices they have faced or the structural inequities that impact their nations today.** Both locally and across the nation, Indigenous tribes and communities are working and collaborating with non-tribal groups to improve the jurisdictional and data-collecting systems that have contributed to low reporting and the lack of offender accountability.

In May 2019, **The Lummi Nation received a grant for more than \$500,000** from the Department of Justice (DOJ) to maintain the LVOC safe shelter and other domestic violence and sexual assault services. **The Nooksack Tribe received a grant for over \$600,000** to expand services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and elder abuse.<sup>49</sup>

Additionally, the Office of Violence Against Women awarded Lummi Nation with a \$450,000 grant to assist the tribe in “planning, implementing, and exercising **‘special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction’** to hold accountable non-Indians who commit crimes of domestic violence or dating violence or violate certain protection orders in Indian country.”<sup>50</sup> We are hopeful that these projects will make a significant impact on our local community’s response to the crisis of MMIWG2S.

***“I would like to see further communication across organizations, like between LVOC and DVSAS. Those relationships are being built. They need to continue that kind of work. Each agency can be informed by the experience of the other.”***

— Local Tribal Service Provider

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article229860404.html>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/awards/fy-2019-ovw-grant-awards-by-state#WA>

## Recommendations

### All Practitioners and Agencies:

- Review the provided resources for further education (see pages 35-36)
- Attend the Lummi Victims of Crime annual conference and MMIWG Honor Walk
- Access training on cultural competency/humility specific to working with Tribal communities
- Build and/or improve relationships with Tribal agencies and communities by attending events
- Develop policies and procedures for assisting families of missing persons
- Collaborate with Tribal partners to develop programming to recognize the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (May 5<sup>th</sup>)

### Service Providers and Advocates:

- Access training on crime reporting and tribal jurisdictions
- Provide training to all staff and volunteers on the crisis of MMIWG2S with specific emphasis on the connection to colonial genocide
- Become familiar with available databases for documenting MMIWG2S cases (see page 37), in order to inform and better assist clients in accessing these tools
- Increase awareness of services available to secondary survivors
- Explore opportunities for funding family advocacy groups to support families of survivors

### Law Enforcement:

- Address issues of racial misclassification (as addressed in the 2016 UIHI report & 2019 WA State Patrol Report)
- Include an entry for tribal classification on all missing person's reports
- Engage in a thorough audit of law enforcement records (including case files, interview records) with patrol, investigative, and leadership staff
- Engage in policy and procedure reviews around protocols for missing person cases
- Provide comprehensive and culturally relevant packets for families of missing persons, outlining follow-up processes and steps that can be taken for raising awareness (such as a template for missing persons posters)

### Elected Officials:

- Explore opportunities for funding a County-wide research study using scientific methodologies to better understand the crisis in our state (including data on strengths and resiliencies)
- Explore opportunities for funding Tribal liaisons between law enforcement and Indigenous communities

- Explore opportunities for collecting data specific to missing and murdered Two-Spirit persons

#### **Commission on Sexual and Domestic Violence:**

- Offer increased learning opportunities for Commission members and staff on the crisis of MMIWG2S and the history of colonization in Whatcom County
- Maintain commitment to the recommendations made in the 2018 Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit:<sup>51</sup>
  - Explore and research the development of an equity and diversity advisory board for receiving guidance for Commission-led projects, and for members and their agencies to receive guidance on their work, with special attention given to the ways that Native partners are equitably represented in grant and project-development phases.
  - Seek training for Commission members and partner agencies on the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and its implications for Tribal sovereignty and jurisdictions and justice for Native survivors.
  - Promote and support Lummi Victims of Crime’s Annual Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Conference.
  - Collaborate with Lummi Victims of Crime to collect and highlight data about local missing and murdered Indigenous women.

***“I would like for all local and tribal law enforcement to sit down together to figure out how to share information using existing systems. Our community would be collectively safer. To not share suggests you don’t care if [the perpetrator] does it again elsewhere. This goes both ways, on both sides.”***

**— Local Tribal Service Provider**

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<sup>51</sup> *Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit: Examining Our Community’s Criminal Legal Response to Sexual Assault*, <https://www.dvcommission.org/reports>.

## Resources for Further Education

### Local Training Opportunities:

- Lummi Victims of Crime (LVOC) annual DV/SA conference<sup>52</sup>
- De-colonizing Bellingham Walking Tour<sup>53</sup>

### Webinars & Online Resources:

- National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center Special Collection<sup>54</sup>
  - Tribal Community Response When a Woman Is Missing: A Toolkit for Action<sup>55</sup>
  - “Effective Use of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUS) for Case Resolution” Webinar<sup>56</sup>
  - “Tribal Access Project (TAP) for National Crime Information” Webinar<sup>57</sup>
  - “Missing and Murdered Native Women-Public Awareness Efforts” Webinar<sup>58</sup>
- Two Spirit Journal<sup>59</sup>

### Books & Other Resources on the History of Colonization in Whatcom County:

- Bellingham Racial History Timeline<sup>60</sup>
- *The History of Lummi Fishing Rights* by Ann Nugent<sup>61</sup>
- *To Fish in Common: The Ethnohistory of Lummi Indian Salmon Fishing* by Daniel L. Boxberger<sup>62</sup>
- *Indians of the Pacific Northwest: From the Coming of the White Man to Present Day* by Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux)<sup>63</sup>

***“The root causes are generational poverty and trauma. It goes back to colonization.”***

### — Local Family Member of an Indigenous Abduction Survivor

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<sup>52</sup> Check or like on Facebook for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/Lummi-Victims-of-Crime-224307844249144/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://wp.wvu.edu/timeline/walking-tour/>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.niwrc.org/resources/special-collection-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-girls>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.niwrc.org/resources/tribal-community-response-when-woman-missing-toolkit-action>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.niwrc.org/resources/effective-use-national-missing-and-unidentified-persons-system-namus-case-resolution>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.niwrc.org/resources/tribal-access-project-tap-national-crime-information>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.niwrc.org/resources/missing-and-murdered-native-women-%E2%80%93-public-awareness-efforts>

<sup>59</sup> <https://twospiritjournal.com/>

<sup>60</sup> <https://wp.wvu.edu/timeline/>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.washingtonruralheritage.org/digital/collection/lummi/id/806/>

<sup>62</sup> <https://uwapress.uw.edu/book/9780295978482/to-fish-in-common/>

<sup>63</sup> [https://fulcrum.bookstore.ipgbook.com/indians-of-the-pacific-northwest-products-9781555916886.php?page\\_id=21](https://fulcrum.bookstore.ipgbook.com/indians-of-the-pacific-northwest-products-9781555916886.php?page_id=21)



## Media on MMIWG:

- *The Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women*, video by Bellingham-based media group Children of the Setting Sun Productions<sup>64</sup>
- *Why are Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Cases Being Ignored?* Video by HuffPost<sup>65</sup>
- *The Search: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women*, video by Fault Lines<sup>66</sup>
- CBC Radio's *Missing and Murdered*, podcast hosted by journalist, Connie Walker (Cree)<sup>67</sup>
- *Jensen & Holes: The Murder Squad*, Episode 28: "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women," podcast hosted by Billy Jensen and Paul Holes<sup>68</sup>

## Social Media Pages & Awareness Campaigns:

- "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Washington" Facebook page<sup>69</sup>
- "Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and Families" Facebook page<sup>70</sup>
- Global Indigenous Council's Billboard Campaign<sup>71</sup>
- National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (May 5<sup>th</sup>)<sup>72</sup>
- The REDress Project<sup>73</sup>
- Annual Lummi Victims of Crime Journey to Healing Walk/Marathon (held in September)<sup>74</sup>
- Annual LVOC MMIWG Honor Walk (held in May)

## Further Reading:

- *An Introduction to the Health of Two-Spirit People: Historical, contemporary, and emergent issues*, by Sarah Hunt, PhD<sup>75</sup>
- *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*<sup>76</sup>
- *Not An Indian Tradition: The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples* by Andrea Smith<sup>77</sup>
- *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* by Kim Anderson<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KMYi-2BMsI>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOXyGJuRMmo>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdPv0NDfMbA>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/podcasts/missing-murdered-who-killed-alberta-williams/>

<sup>68</sup> <http://themurdersquad.com/episodes/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women/>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/MMIWWashington/>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/MMIPandFamilies/>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.globalindigenouscouncil.com/missing-murdered-p1>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.niwrc.org/news/may-5th-national-day-awareness-missing-and-murdered-native-women-and-girls>

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.theredressproject.org/>

<sup>74</sup> Check or like on Facebook for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/Lummi-Victims-of-Crime-224307844249144/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.nccih.ca/docs/emerging/RPT-HealthTwoSpirit-Hunt-EN.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/NotIndianTradition.pdf>

## Resources for Data Collection

- MMIW database at the Sovereign Bodies Institute: <https://www.sovereign-bodies.org/mmiw-database>.
  - Sovereign Bodies is a non-profit organization operated by Indigenous scholars in the United States. Created as central database to “log cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people from 1900 to the present.” The database has recently expanded to include cases globally.
  - Submit online by emailing: [mmiwdatabase@sovereign-bodies.org](mailto:mmiwdatabase@sovereign-bodies.org).
  - Phone and skype conversations can be scheduled by request.
- [Washington State Native American Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault](#) (WomenSpirit Coalition)
  - Washington State MMIWG database
  - Missing Persons Form (with option to request assistance reporting to law enforcement)
  - MMIW Demographics Survey
  - Experiences with Law Enforcement Survey

***“Every day and every night I pray for you. I love and am with you, sister. Come home. Please God, bring her home.”***

— From the song “The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women” by Antone George

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<sup>78</sup> [https://books.google.com/books/about/A\\_Recognition\\_of\\_Being.html?id=WL8QDAAAQBAJ](https://books.google.com/books/about/A_Recognition_of_Being.html?id=WL8QDAAAQBAJ)

## **Updates on 2017 Spotlight Reports: Immigration & Homelessness**

In the previous data report released by the Commission, “Domestic and Sexual Violence in Whatcom County: 2017 Annual Data Report,” we highlighted two areas of interest to our community. The first Spotlight Report looked at national and local data on **the impact of federal immigration policy** on the reporting of domestic and sexual violence. The second Spotlight Report addressed the connections between **homelessness/housing instability** and sexual and domestic violence.

- Since releasing the report in January 2019, Commission staff have **presented the data report to:**
  - DV Commission members
  - Whatcom County Council
  - Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, and Sumas City Councils
  - Northwest Justice Project’s “Project Safer”
  - Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness
  - Whatcom County Health Protections for Immigrant Families Task Force
  
- Commission staff have also **participated in:**
  - Whatcom County Health Department’s input session on the **5-year Plan to End Homelessness** in April 2019
  - Whatcom County Human Right’s Task Force’s **“Housing the Human Family Summit”** in August 2019 (as well as the follow-up session in October 2019)

Over the last year, our community has made several important efforts to address both issues highlighted in the Commission’s 2017 report. We have highlighted some of those efforts below.

## **Impact of Federal Immigration Policy on Survivors:**

- Washington State Legislature passed [SB 5497](#), also known as the [“Keep WA Working”](#) bill went into effect on May 21, 2019:
  - Requires the Attorney General to create model policies for limiting immigration enforcement in public schools, state-run health facilities, courthouses, and shelters
    - In the Commission’s report, the presence of immigration enforcement at courthouses was shown to negatively impact a survivor’s desire to report a crime or seek a civil protection order.

- Prohibits the use of border patrol and other federal immigration agencies for interpretation services.
  - In the Commission’s report, the use of border patrol for 911 dispatch was pointed out by local service providers as a deterrent for undocumented survivors.
- [The Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network](#) created a set of proposed protocols for Washington State courts concerning civil arrests in and around courthouses.
  - These interim policies were created to be amendable once the Attorney General’s Office have released their protocols as a part of the Keep WA Working bill.
  - “The protocols seek to make Washington courts open, safe, and neutral places where litigants, witnesses, jurors, staff and others can participate in court proceedings and conduct other business in the courthouse free from threats to their security or freedom.”

## Homelessness and Housing Instability:

- The Whatcom County Health Department has worked to increase the community’s capacity for emergency severe weather shelters.
  - This winter (Dec 2019-Feb2020) there will be a hotline with updates on emergency shelters: (360) 788-7983 and a map (available in print and [online](#)) of emergency shelter locations.
- The Bellingham-based organization, Homes NOW! Not Later, collaborated with the City of Bellingham to open a tiny home village, called Unity Village, for people experiencing homelessness.
  - Starting in August 2018, groups of volunteers came together to build 20 tiny homes on a piece of property owned by the City in the Fairhaven neighborhood.
  - The community is alcohol and drug free and all residents are required to participate in the operating and managing of the community and its facilities.
  - People experiencing homelessness can apply to live at Unity Village on the [HomesNOW website](#).
- Washington State Legislature passed the following bills to preemptively address circumstances that could lead to homelessness for Washington residents:
  - [SB 5600](#) – extends the period for pay-or-evict notices from 3 to 14 days
  - [HB 1440](#) – extends the period for rent increase notices from 30 to 60 days
  - [HB 1603](#) – revises economic assistance program requirements to allow for more opportunities for people experiencing homelessness

## Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence

December 2019

### Community Appointments:

Alan Artman  
*Faithlife Corp*

Riannon Bardsley  
*Washington State Office of Homeless Youth*

Beth Boyd  
*PeaceHealth Medical Center*

Christina Kobdich  
*Unity Care Northwest*

Ken Levinson  
*Tulalip Tribes*

Byron Mannering  
*Brigid Collins Family Support Center*

Michael Parker  
*Whatcom Homeless Service Center*

Katie Plewa Olvera  
*Licensed Psychologist*

Chris Roselli  
*Western Washington University*

Sharon Rutherford  
*St. Joseph Hospital*

Garret Shelsta  
*Christ the King Church-Bellingham*

Mary Welch  
*Northwest Justice Project*

Michele Zlotek  
*Whatcom Transportation Authority*

Moonwater  
*Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center*

Raquel Vernola  
*Whatcom Community College*

### Government Representatives:

Regina Delahunt  
*Whatcom County Health Department Director*

David Doll  
*Bellingham Police Chief*

William Elfo  
*Whatcom County Sheriff*

Starck Follis  
*Whatcom County Public Defender*

Jon Mutchler  
*Mayor, City of Ferndale*

Darlene Peterson  
*Bellingham Municipal Court Administrator*

Linda Quinn  
*Ferndale School Districts*

Dave Reynolds  
*Whatcom County Superior Court Administrator*

Mike Riber  
*DSHS/Community Service Office*

Eric Richey  
*Whatcom County Prosecutor*

Katrice Rodriguez  
*Nooksack Tribe*

Peter Ruffatto  
*Bellingham City Attorney*

Kevin Turner  
*Ferndale Police Chief*

Bruce Van Glubt  
*Whatcom County Probation Administrator*

Visit [www.dvcommission.org](http://www.dvcommission.org) for more data about domestic violence in Whatcom County and nationally; information about projects of the Commission Against Domestic Violence; and resources for addressing domestic violence.