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**Big Horn County, Montana:** On February 23, 2020, Sovereign Bodies Institute (“SBI”) will hold a Vigil calling for Justice for Allison HighWolf at the Rodeway Inn, in Hardin, MT, where Allison was murdered five years ago. The Vigil will begin at noon MST and conclude at 4pm MST. The Rodeway Inn is located at 1324 North Crawford Avenue, Hardin, Montana 59034.

Allison was a beautiful Northern Cheyenne mother who was murdered at the age of 26. Her perpetrator was never held accountable and her family is still fighting for justice. Please join SBI and Allison’s family in honoring her on the 5-year anniversary of her death at the Rodeway Inn in Hardin, where her life was tragically stolen due to domestic violence.

“Allison was our light, love, and laughter, and in one selfish act of murderous cruelty her young life was extinguished. No light, no love, no laughter, and no justice,” says Elijah Wallowing, Allison’s brother.

The Vigil commemorating the five-year anniversary of Allison’s murder comes on the heels of a series of recent murders of Native women and girls—none of which have been adequately or thoroughly investigated. “With the recent injustices to the families of Selena NotAfraid, Kaysera StopsPrettyPlaces, and Henny Scott, we have seen a serious lack of meaningful law enforcement and justice system response to cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in southeastern Montana,” states Annita Lucchesi, SBI’s Executive Director. “These miscarriages of justice have been occurring for decades, and it is all too frequent to see law enforcement dismiss cases, not take reports properly, treat families with insensitivity, and misclassify victims of violence as deceased due to hypothermia or simply as undetermined.”

Since 1977, at least 32 Native women or girls have been murdered or have gone missing in Big Horn County, and 26 of those cases occurred in the last 20 years. This gives the County one of the highest rates of MMIWG in the United States. Overall, SBI has documented 60 MMIWG cases in Big Horn, Rosebud, and Yellowstone counties combined. These cases range from 1972 to 2020, though nearly 80% of the cases occurred since 2000. Additionally, SBI is assisting families with at least ten cases of missing and murdered Indigenous men and boys in the area as well. Very few, if any, of these murders have been sufficiently investigated or solved.

With the knowledge that Big Horn County is home to some of the highest rates of murdered and missing Indigenous people, and the knowledge that neighboring counties likewise have horribly high rates, SBI is working with families of missing and murdered Indigenous people in Big Horn, Rosebud, and Yellowstone counties, to fight for justice for their loved ones and to hold the law enforcement and justice system in the region accountable for their negligence and corruption. This work includes gathering comprehensive data, raising awareness on the severity of violence and the multitude of cases in the region, and active efforts to bring cases to justice by demanding that law enforcement pursue investigations to the fullest extent.



On February 24, 2020, SBI will host a rally outside the Big Horn county courthouse, in Hardin, MT. The rally will have drop-in hours from 2 to 4pm, with speakers at 4pm. After the rally, SBI will host a free community dinner at the Big Horn county fairgrounds, with doors opening at 5pm and dinner beginning at 5:30pm. To date, over 20 families have stated they will attend and speak on the pain and suffering families endure when law enforcement fails to investigate and families are left to do the investigative work to bring justice for their loved one on their own. This is an unprecedented gathering of families in the United States, and a critical moment in the collective organizing on this issue locally and nationally.

“This is an important opportunity for the families of victims to share their stories,” stated Grace Bulltail, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places’ aunt. “Kaysera was murdered this past August, and six months later, Big Horn County still hasn’t taken basic steps to gather critical evidence and interview obvious witnesses. Instead, the County insists on telling us that she died of natural causes or exposure. Healthy teenage girls do not lay down in a suburban neighborhood in the middle of August and die of ‘natural causes’ or ‘exposure.’”

“Both the federal and local governments have abdicated their lawful obligations and duties to investigate these cases,” stated Mary Kathryn Nagle, attorney for Kaysera Stops Pretty Places’ family. “The FBI has refused to investigate Kaysera’s murder on the basis that her body was discovered five miles off the reservation, without undertaking any factual investigation to determine whether criminal acts that led to her death took place on the reservation—a factual scenario that is likely in a reservation border town. The federal government has a federal trust duty and responsibility to ensure safety for tribal citizens, and in particular Native women and girls. It is time for Congress to remove the FBI’s discretion so the agency can no longer abdicate its trust duty to investigate these cases.”

Ultimately, these events highlight a collective call for justice and recognition of the humanity of Indigenous people who have gone missing or been killed. In the words of Paula Stops, who lost her teenage daughter Henny Scott to murder in Big Horn County in late 2018, “I want justice for my beautiful daughter. She was loved beyond measure, and for them to take her away from us is wrong...and why is it that we’re the only ones that see that?”

For more information related to SBI’s ongoing efforts to bring about justice for families of victims in Southeastern Montana, please visit: <https://www.sovereign-bodies.org/overcoming-barriers-to-justice?fbclid=IwAR2zBTfC7AknQPxuoetsE-Io1IRV3afbYoeBRhAjl5vGbZrxHiYc2gnI>

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### **About Sovereign Bodies Institute**

SBI is a home for generating new knowledge and understandings of how Indigenous nations and communities are impacted by gender and sexual violence, and how they may continue to work towards healing and freedom from such violence.

### **About the Families**

We highly encourage press to research individual cases before they speak with their families. It can be retraumatizing for families to have to share the same information about their missing or murdered loved one over and over, and it is a better use of journalists' time to come prepared with original, thoughtful questions. Families representing the following missing and murdered Indigenous people are participating in SBI's work and may be available for interviews.

#### *Women and Girls*

Iris Whistling Elk (20) – Rosebud County (1978)  
Toy Parker (21) – Big Horn County (2002)  
Koren Diebert (26) – Big Horn County (2003)  
Juliet Little Light (25) – Big Horn County (2008)  
Rosella WoodenThigh (32) – Rosebud County (2008)  
Tenielle Big Day (3) – Big Horn County (2013)  
Hanna Harris (21) – Big Horn County (2013)  
Allison HighWolf (26) – Big Horn County (2015)  
Bonnie Three Irons (35) – Big Horn County (2017)  
Teishia Wolfname-BigBack (43) – Yellowstone County (2017)  
Henny Scott (14) – Big Horn County (2018)  
Tristan Grey (22) – Yellowstone County (2018)  
Kaysera Stops Pretty Places (18) – Big Horn County (2019)  
Selena NotAfraid (16) – Big Horn County (2020)

#### *Men and Boys*

Richard Whistling Elk (28) – Big Horn County (1997)  
Robert "Bugsy" Springfield (48) – Big Horn County (2004)  
Jordan Blacksmith (17) – Big Horn County (2007)  
Teddy Little Light (30) – Big Horn County (2008)  
Wyatt Little Light (infant) – Big Horn County (2008)  
Troy Small (35) – Big Horn County (2008)  
Freman Bends (38) – Big Horn County (2016)  
Preston Bell (24) – Yellowstone County (2017)  
Hub Williamson (34) – Big Horn County (2019)