

Date of Hearing: June 9, 2026
Counsel: Dustin Weber

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
Nick Schultz, Chair

SB 891 (Cervantes) – As Amended May 14, 2026

SUMMARY: Establishes a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Justice Program (MMIPJP) within the Department of Justice (DOJ) that would impose certain responsibilities, including facilitating collaboration and acting as a liaison between tribal entities and federal, tribal, state, and out-of-state law enforcement agencies. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes MMIPJP and states the program shall have all of the following responsibilities:
 - a) Facilitate collaboration and act as a liaison between tribal victims' families, tribal governments, and federal, tribal, state, and out-of-state law enforcement agencies, where appropriate, regarding active and inactive cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, including cases involving human trafficking;
 - b) Provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies already engaged in investigating cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, including cases of human trafficking; and,
 - c) Publish data on the number of, and facts about, cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, where appropriate.
- 2) Publications of facts as required above shall include all of the following information, as applicable, about the missing or murdered indigenous person:
 - a) General demographic information, including the age, gender, race, and ethnicity of the person;
 - b) Any tribal affiliation; and,
 - c) Any history in the foster care system.
- 3) Requires submission of an annual report to both houses of the Legislature containing all of the following:
 - a) The cases DOJ acted as a liaison and provided technical assistance to law enforcement, as defined;
 - b) The information published on cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, as defined; and,

- c) An analysis of all appropriate data, and any recommendations to assist or improve upon necessary collaboration and coordination between local, state, and tribal governments in addressing missing and murdered indigenous persons in California.
- 4) Provides that the requirement for submitting a report is inoperative on and after January 1, 2029.

EXISTING FEDERAL LAW:

- 1) Provides concurrent California and Tribal jurisdiction over criminal offenses committed by or against Indians in the areas of Indian country, as specified. Provides that the Indian Country affected within California includes all Indian Country within the state. (18 U.S.C. § 1162.)
- 2) Defines “Indian country” as:
 - a) All land within the limits of any Indian reservation under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Government, notwithstanding the issuance of any patent, and including rights-of-way running through the reservation.
 - b) All dependent Indian communities within the borders of the U.S. whether within the original or subsequently acquired territory thereof, and whether within or without the limits of a state.
 - c) All Indian allotments, the Indian titles to which have not been extinguished, including rights-of-way running through the same. (18 U.S.C. § 1151.)

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the Attorney General to establish and maintain the Violent Crime Information Center to assist in the identification and the apprehension of persons responsible for specific violent crimes and for the disappearance and exploitation of persons, particularly children and at-risk adults. (Pen. Code, § 14200, subd. (a).)
- 2) Requires all local police and sheriffs’ departments to accept any report, by any party, including any telephonic report, of a missing person, including runaways, without delay and to give priority to the handling of these reports over the handling of reports relating to crimes involving property. (Pen. Code, § 14211, subd. (a).)
- 3) Requires the local police or sheriff’s department, in cases of reports involving missing persons, including, but not limited to, runaways, to immediately take the report and make an assessment of reasonable steps to be taken to locate the person by using the required report forms, checklists, and guidelines. (Pen. Code, § 14211, subd. (c).)
- 4) Establishes the “feather alert,” a notification system designed to issue and coordinate alerts with respect to endangered indigenous people, specifically indigenous women or indigenous people, who are reported missing. (Gov. Code, § 8594.13, subd. (a).)

- 5) Provides that a law enforcement agency or Tribe of California may directly request the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to activate a Feather Alert. (Gov. Code, § 8594.13, subd. (c)(1).)
- 6) Specifies that a law enforcement agency may request that a Feather Alert be activated if that agency determines a Feather Alert would be an effective tool in the investigation of missing and murdered indigenous persons, including young women or girls. (Gov. Code, § 8594.13, subd. (e).)
- 7) Requires the law enforcement agency to consider the following factors to make a Feather Alert determination:
 - a) The missing person is an indigenous woman or an indigenous person.
 - b) The investigating law enforcement agency has utilized available local and tribal resources.
 - c) The law enforcement agency determines that the person is missing.
 - d) The law enforcement agency or tribe believes that the person is in danger and is missing under circumstances that indicate that the missing person's physical safety may be endangered; the missing person may be subject to trafficking; or the missing person suffers from a mental or physical disability, or a substance use disorder.
 - e) There is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the missing person. (Gov. Code, § 8594.13, subd. (e).)
- 8) Establishes the Rural Indian Crime Prevention Program within the Office of Emergency Services, the purpose of which is to provide financial and technical assistance for local law enforcement. (Pen. Code, § 13847, subd. (a).)
- 9) Requires the program to target the relationship between law enforcement and Native American communities to encourage and to strengthen cooperative efforts and to implement crime suppression and prevention programs. (Pen. Code, § 13847, subd. (a).)
- 10) Provides that murder is the unlawful killing of a human being, or a fetus, with malice aforethought. (Pen. Code, § 187, subd. (a).)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Sponsor:** Yurok Tribe.
- 2) **Author's Statement:** According to the author, "It is an unfortunate truth that across the United States, including in California, there is an ongoing crisis of persistent violence levied committed against Indigenous people, especially women and girls. The Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI) began tracking the number of murdered and missing Indigenous people (MMIP) in California in 2015 and found that there are approximately 18 new MMIP cases documented per year. Cases were documented in 42 of California's 58 counties. According

to SBI, 91 percent of murdered and missing Indigenous children in Southern California are girls, and the lack of thematic issues among these cases suggests these girls are targeted because they are both Indigenous and girls.”

“Senate Bill 891, a reintroduction of my Senate Bill 4 from 2025 and Assembly Bill 2279 from 2024, will continue this effort by establishing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Justice Program within the Department of Justice. The Program would be empowered to facilitate collaboration and act as a liaison between tribal victims’ families; tribal governments; and state, federal, and out-of-state law enforcement agencies. The Program would also provide technical advice to law enforcement agencies investigating MMIP cases in California when appropriate. Finally, to further improve transparency regarding the ongoing MMIP crisis, the Program would be required to publish data on the number of MMIP cases and facts about those cases, as well as submit an annual report to the Legislature. This bill will help provide a coordinated state response to MMIP cases, as well as shine a light on a crisis affecting our Indigenous communities that has not received nearly the attention it deserves.”

- 3) **Effect of the Bill:** This bill would establish the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Justice Program “within and under the discretion” of DOJ. Assuming a fully operational program, this bill would also include additional responsibilities for DOJ to facilitate collaboration with law enforcement agencies and tribal entities regarding active and inactive cases of missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, provide technical assistance to law enforcement agencies already investigating cases of missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, publish data about missing and murdered indigenous persons in California, and submit an annual report to both houses of the California legislature.

While the goals of SB 1208 appear to align with some of the gaps in justice for missing and murdered indigenous persons detailed in the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) report (see below), due to the existence of state and federal programs already in this space there could be some risk of creating duplicative remedial efforts.

- 4) **Background:** In 2018, UIHI published a report “aimed at assessing the number and dynamics of cases of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls in cities across the United States.”¹ In its report, UIHI cited National Crime Information Center data that noted 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls made in 2016, although the United States Department of Justice’s (U.S. DOJ) federal missing persons database only had 116 cases.² That discrepancy as well as the lack of research on rates of violence among American Indian and Alaska Native women living in urban areas—where nearly three quarters of the Indigenous population lives—led UIHI to conduct its study.³

In describing its methodology to collect data on cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the UIHI stated:

¹ Urban Indian Health Institute, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls: A snapshot of date from 71 urban cities in the United States (2018) p. 2 <<https://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>> [as of May 26, 2026].

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

As demonstrated by the findings of this study, reasons for the lack of quality data include underreporting, racial misclassification, poor relationships between law enforcement and American Indian and Alaska Native communities, poor record-keeping protocols, institutional racism in the media, and a lack of substantive relationships between journalists and American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In an effort to collect as much case data as possible and to be able to compare the five data sources used, UIHI collected data from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to law enforcement agencies, state and national missing persons databases, searches of local and regional news media online archives, public social media posts, and direct contact with family and community members who volunteered information on missing or murdered loved ones.⁴

The report concluded:

UIHI discovered a striking level of inconsistency between community, law enforcement, and media understandings of the magnitude of this violence. If this report demonstrates one powerful conclusion, it is that if we rely solely on law enforcement or media for an awareness or understanding of the issue, we will have a deeply inaccurate picture of the realities, minimizing the extent to which our urban American Indian and Alaska Native sisters experience this violence. This inaccurate picture limits our ability to address this issue at policy, programing, and advocacy levels.⁵

SB 1208 seeks to address some of the issues outlined in the report.

- 5) **Existing Efforts to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons:** At the federal level, Public Law 116-165, known as “Savanna’s Law,” was enacted to direct the U.S. DOJ to review, revise, and develop law enforcement and justice protocols to address missing or murdered Native Americans. (25 U.S.C. § 5701 et seq.)

Savanna’s Law requires the U.S. DOJ to 1) provide training to law enforcement agencies on how to record tribal enrollment for victims in federal databases, 2) develop and implement a strategy to educate the public on the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, 3) conduct specific outreach to tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations regarding the ability to publicly enter information through the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System or other non-law enforcement sensitive portal, 4) develop regionally appropriate guidelines for response to cases of missing or murdered Native Americans, 5) provide training and technical assistance to tribes and law enforcement agencies for implementation of the developed guidelines, and 6) report statistics on missing or murdered Native Americans. (*Ibid.*)

Tribes may submit their own guidelines to U.S. DOJ that respond to cases of missing or murdered Native Americans. (*Ibid.*) Additionally, the law authorizes U.S. DOJ to provide

⁴ *Id.* at p. 4.

⁵ *Id.* at p. 20

grants for the purposes of developing and implementing policies and protocols for law enforcement regarding cases of missing or murdered Native Americans and annually reporting data relating to missing or murdered Native Americans. (*Ibid.*)

At the state level, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Grant Program provides funding through competitive grants to federally recognized tribes “to support efforts to identify, collect case-level data, publicize, and investigate and solve cases involving missing and murdered indigenous people.”⁶ Grants should focus on activities including, but not limited to, developing culturally based prevention strategies, strengthening responses to human trafficking, and improving cooperation and communication on jurisdictional issues between state, local, federal, and tribal law enforcement in order to investigate and solve cases involving missing and murdered indigenous people.”⁷

SB 1208 is substantially similar to other bills, including AB 2279 (Cervantes) of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session and SB 4 (Cervantes) of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session. AB 2279 was vetoed. SB 4 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. In addition to the requirements of this bill, AB 2279 would have required the program to provide grants to local and tribal law enforcement agencies to support investigatory activities.

In his AB 2279 veto message, Governor Newsom wrote:

I appreciate the author’s commitment to addressing the ongoing MMIP crisis. My administration continues to prioritize policies that increase collaboration between law enforcement and tribal communities to bring justice to those impacted. In partnership with the Legislature, we increased funding in this year’s budget for the MMIP Grant Program, which has awarded millions of dollars to support tribes’ efforts to identify, publicize, investigate, and solve MMIP cases.

This measure is duplicative of those efforts and creates a new, unfunded grant program not included in the 2024 Budget Act. In partnership with the Legislature this year, my Administration has enacted a balanced budget that avoids deep program cuts to vital services and protected investments in education, health care, climate, public safety, housing, and social service programs that millions of Californians rely on. It is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications that are not included in the budget, such as this measure.⁸

The Cohort 3 cycle for this grant program is expected to commence on August 1, 2025, with funding in the amount of \$12.9 million dollars to be distributed throughout the cycle.⁹ With federal and state programs already in place, it is not clear to what extent this bill will provide additional, useful resources to further aid the problem of under-resourced cases involving missing and murdered indigenous persons. Given the Governor’s previous veto message, and

⁶ Board of State and Community Corrections, Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Grant <<https://www.bscc.ca.gov/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-people-grant-program/>> [as of May 26, 2026].

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Governor’s veto message to Assem. on Assem. Bill No. 2279 (Sep. 28, 2024) <<https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/AB-2279-Veto-Message.pdf>> [as of May 26, 2026].

⁹ *Ibid.*

the limited modifications to this bill relative to earlier iterations, SB 891 also may fail to be signed into law.

- 6) **Argument in Support:** According to the *Yurok Tribe*, “We wish to express our strong support and sponsorship for your Senate Bill 891. This important bill will establish a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Justice Program within the Department of Justice. This bill is a necessary and overdue step toward addressing the persistent crisis of violence against Indigenous people and ensuring justice for missing and murdered Indigenous persons.

“Indigenous communities across California continue to face disproportionately high rates of violence. More than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime, and California ranks fifth in the nation for MMIP cases. Systemic failures—ranging from chronic underfunding to gaps in jurisdictional coordination—have left too many cases unresolved and too many families without answers.

“Currently, California has the largest Native American population in the country with nearly 109 federally recognized tribes. Specifically, California is home to over 700,000 Native American and Alaska Native people. Unfortunately, among the states, California also ranks fifth in terms of the number of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people (MMIP).

“SB 891 provides a critical framework for addressing these challenges. By creating a dedicated MMIP Justice Program, this bill will improve coordination between tribal, state, and federal law enforcement agencies; enhance data collection and case tracking; and serve as a crucial resource for victims' families. The Program would also assist in investigating MMIP cases in California when appropriate, including human trafficking cases. Finally, to further improve transparency regarding the ongoing MMIP crisis, the Program would be required to publish data on the number of MMIP cases and facts about those cases, as well as submit an annual report to the Legislature.

“SB 891 will help provide a coordinated state response to MMIP cases, as well as shine a light on a crisis affecting our Indigenous communities that has not received nearly the attention it deserves. For this reason, we stand in strong support and sponsorship of your Senate Bill 891. We thank you for working to further address the ongoing MMIP crisis affecting Indigenous communities across California.”

- 7) **Argument in Opposition:** None submitted.

8) **Prior Legislation:**

- a) AB 977 (Ramos), Chapter 131, Statutes of 2025, would require, as part of the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 2001, the California State University, in consultation with tribes, to identify California State University-owned land for the burial of Native American human remains and designate three burial sites statewide.
- b) AB 1321 (Castillo), of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session, would have required the Attorney General to establish, in consultation with specified groups, agencies, and organizations, an electronic database and support system, as specified, for the public to report and search for missing children. AB 1321 died in the Assembly Public Safety

Committee.

- c) SB 4 (Cervantes), of the 2025-2026 Legislative Session, was substantially similar to this bill. SB 4 was held on suspense in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- d) AB 2279 (Cervantes), of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, was substantially similar to this bill. The Governor vetoed AB 2279.
- e) AB 2944 (Waldron), of the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, would have authorized the Governor to appoint a Red Ribbon Panel to address the murdered or missing indigenous persons crisis, consisting of specified members. AB 2944 was held in suspense in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- f) AB 1314 (Ramos), Chapter 476, Statutes of 2022, authorizes a law enforcement agency to request CHP to activate a “Feather Alert,” as defined, if specified criteria are satisfied with respect to an endangered indigenous person who has been reported missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances.
- g) AB 3099 (Ramos), Chapter 170, Statutes of 2020, requires DOJ to provide technical assistance to local law enforcement agencies, as specified, and tribal governments with Indian lands, relating to tribal issues, including providing guidance for law enforcement education and training on policing and criminal investigations on Indian lands, and facilitating and supporting improved communication between local law enforcement agencies and tribal governments.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Yurok Tribe (Sponsor)
 Arcadia Police Officers' Association
 Brea Police Association
 Burbank Police Officers' Association
 CA Commission on the Status of Women and Girls
 California Association of School Police Chiefs
 California Coalition of School Safety Professionals
 California Narcotic Officers' Association
 California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
 California Reserve Peace Officers Association
 California Tribal Business Alliance
 Claremont Police Officers Association
 Corona Police Officers Association
 Culver City Police Officers' Association
 Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
 Fullerton Police Officers' Association
 Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake
 Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office
 Los Angeles School Police Management Association
 Los Angeles School Police Officers Association
 Murrieta Police Officers' Association

Newport Beach Police Association
Palos Verdes Police Officers Association
Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association
Pomona Police Officers' Association
Riverside Police Officers Association
Riverside Sheriffs' Association
Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians
Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians
Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation

Opposition

None submitted.

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