

Global Indigenous Council Endorses ‘Vote No’ in California Recall

Billboard in LA-Long Beach Highlights Newsom’s Commitment on Murdered & Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) Crisis

Group that Challenged ABC Studio’s “Big Sky” for Ignoring MMIW Epidemic Joins Fight

LOS ANGELES, California – The Global Indigenous Council (GIC) today endorsed VOTE NO on the California recall of Gov. Newsom and placed a striking billboard on the 405 freeway in Long Beach urging voters to allow Newsom to make good on his commitment to address the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) tragedy in the state by voting NO on the recall.

“It is not something we take lightly when we endorse a non-Native American candidate or issue, but through careful deliberation we concluded ‘vote no on the recall’ is a cause with deep meaning for the Indigenous people of California,” said Tom Rodgers, a member of the Blackfeet Nation and president of the Global Indigenous Council. “This administration has taken some of the most significant steps in the country to heal the relationship with Native Americans and improve the quality of life for the state’s Indigenous communities. Gov. Newsom has joined us on a path of enlightenment in what is now a shared journey of truth, cultural diversity and respect.”

California has the largest Indigenous Native American population in the country, with about 720,000 people identifying as Native American or Alaskan Native, and more than 100 federally recognized tribes. GIC is engaging in a multi-media Get Out the Vote outreach campaign the final days of the recall election that includes placing the billboard, social media, traditional outreach, and volunteer recruitment aimed at Native Americans and their allies.

The Gabrielino-Tongva Nation has aligned with GIC in the VOTE NO campaign. “In 1994, the State Assembly and State Senate of California officially recognized the Gabrielino as the aboriginal tribe of the Los Angeles Basin, and the tribal territory encompasses the Channel Islands of Santa Catalina, San Nicholas, and San Clemente since time immemorial,” said Sandonne Goad, chairwoman of the Gabrielino-Tongva Nation. “Vote No Recall!”

The billboard, located on the 405 just south of the Cherry Avenue exit, and seen traveling southbound before the Lakewood Blvd./Long Beach Airport exit, features the nationally recognized imagery conceptualized by film director Rain, best-known for the critically acclaimed MMIW documentaries, *Somebody’s Daughter* and *Say Her Name* (President Joe Biden features in the new version of *Somebody’s Daughter*, which is set to premiere in Washington, DC in October. It debuts in California at the Autry Museum of the American West in November).

Gov. Newsom has a record of engaging on several issues of significance to Native Americans. He took a bold and righteous step in 2019 toward healing the wounds of Native Americans when he apologized for atrocities against the state’s Indigenous tribes over the course of two centuries. “It’s called a genocide. That’s what it was,” Gov. Newsom said at the time. “No other way to describe it and that’s the way it needs to be described in the history books.” Gov. Newsom established the Trust and Healing Council created to correct the record to accurately define the historical relationship between the state and California’s Native Americans.

“Gov. Newsom’s powerful words, spoken by too few leaders throughout the United States, gave clarity to the systematic atrocities against the state’s Indigenous population,” Rodgers said. “Most leaders hide behind two-bit, feel-good terms like ‘manifest destiny’ or ‘progress,’ but Gov. Newsom broke new ground when he accurately called it genocide.”

Gov. Newsom has taken initial steps to address the MMIW tragedy in California, calling for tougher laws in the state and nationwide to protect at-risk Indigenous women and girls. The Humboldt County-based Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI) has cataloged 1,900 MMIW cases in California. SBI's data indicates that there are presently some 105 MMIW cases in Northern California alone, and that statewide MMIW cases are seven-times less likely to be solved. In 2019, nearly 5,600 Indigenous women were reported missing in the U.S., according to the FBI's National Crime Information Center. GIC believes those numbers are conservative and that the number is much higher due to underreporting and misidentification of victims' race. The same issues exist in California.

A staggering 91 percent of known MMIW cases in California remain unsolved. Newsom's home, the Bay Area, accounts for 16 percent of MMIW cases in the state.

"It is not coincidental that the rape and destruction of the Earth parallels the rape and murder of tribal women and girls. Look around you, we are at code red with both crises," said film director Rain, who also serves as GIC's executive director. "If people vote no on the recall, I'm confident Gov. Newsom will take far-reaching executive action on the MMIW tragedy." Rain drafted the MMIW Executive Order recently enacted by Gov. John Bel Edwards in Louisiana, currently the most expansive in the country.

GIC has led several education and advocacy projects on behalf of the MMIW cause throughout the U.S and has built powerful alliances between tribes and nations and federal and state lawmakers. The organization has lobbied from Congress to the White to House to state capitals to raise awareness of MMIW, and has raised funding to help produce the documentaries, *Somebody's Daughter* and *Say her Name*. Rodgers was also a creative consultant in the production of the acclaimed ESPN short, *Blackfeet Boxing: Not Invisible*, which finally took the MMIW epidemic to a mainstream non-Native American audience.

A year-ago, GIC organized a collective of Indigenous organizations that took on ABC Studios over its "serious concerns" that primetime series *Big Sky* reflected "at best cultural insensitivity, and at worst, appropriation" by ignoring the staggering statistics that demonstrate Indigenous women are 10-times more likely to be the victims of sexual assault when compared to the general population, and that one-in-three Indigenous women will be the victims of rape in their lifetimes. The show is set in Montana, home to eight federally recognized tribes, but *Big Sky* cast non-Indigenous women as the show's victims.

ABC Studios acknowledged its error in judgment. Parent company Disney has since said it is moving ahead with plans for a Native American superhero to assume the Captain America role under its Marvel Entertainment brand.

GIC is able to participate in the vote no recall effort with the support of Deterra Drug Deactivation and Disposal System, the only product available today that is scientifically proven to destroy prescription medicine, including addictive opioids, and over-the-counter medicine, making them unavailable for misuse and safe for the environment.