

Guidelines for Task Force on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women during Public Comments

After receiving public comments, here are a few tips for MMIW Task Force members so as to avoid re-traumatizing people and to make the most of our opportunity to hear public input.

- 1) While people are speaking please be respectful by actively listening (no phones, side conversations, etc.) and please wait until people have finished their full comment before asking questions. Please be aware of your body language and facial expressions as people are providing their comments.
- 2) Please consider what types of questions are appropriate or not to ask people about their story. It may not be appropriate to ask about details of an experience unless those details are directly relevant to defining the problem in the system that we are trying to solve or to clarify recommendations. Details about the experience that are not related to the goals of the MMIW Task Force should not be questioned. Avoid language that has a tone of shame or blame.
- 3) Relatedly, people all have their own truths, and it is not appropriate to question the truth of anyone's comments or personal experiences. Some people's stories may seem to be incoherent, incomplete, or otherwise not fully accounted for and that's OK. It is not our job to put together a full, accurate account of what happened in each case.
- 4) Also, if anyone who makes a public comment names an individual, organization, or agency you know or are familiar with (or if it's you), this is not an appropriate place to debate or question details or defend the actions of individuals or agencies who were involved in the person's story.
- 5) MMIW Task Force members should not share the details of anyone's public comments outside of the Task Force meeting. These are not our stories to share or use for our own purposes. All public comments will be documented and can be reviewed by Task Force members as we develop the final report and recommendations, and may be made available to the public through Minnesota's data privacy rules, as the people who made the comments agree to.
- 6) You may encounter people who have provided public comments. It is appropriate for you to acknowledge and thank them for their time and sharing their story, but you should not get into a situation where you are offering help or suggestions for them about how to handle their specific situation/case. (exception: some MMIW Task Force members are staff of advocacy organizations that may serve victims/survivors/family members through their regular jobs outside of their role as Task Force members.) We do have a list of resources on the public comment form that can be given to people who need help with their individual case, and there will be advocates in the room to help individuals who request.
- 7) For any media in the room, members should take lead from people providing comments on what they are most comfortable with in terms of media coverage.