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Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Co-Chairs Appointed to Tribe's Violence Against Women Task Force



Juneau, AK (September 6, 2018) – Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska's (Tlingit & Haida) President Richard (*Chalyee Éesh*) Peterson has appointed two co-chairs to the Tribe's Violence Against Women (VAW) Task Force which was authorized to form through the adoption of Tribal Assembly resolution ([TA 18-37](#)). Tlingit & Haida Delegates Pamela Stearns of Washington and Patricia Alexander of Sitka, Alaska have been appointed to lead the special task force.

“Pamela and Pat will be great resources to the task force,” said President Peterson. “I’m confident that with their leadership we will effectively contribute to the greater effort to end the violence against our indigenous women and children. Domestic violence has had a tremendous negative impact on our communities, families, women and children. When you understand that Alaska Native women already experience a disproportionately higher rate of domestic violence and sexual assault than any other group in the nation, it becomes very clear why there is such an urgency behind Tlingit & Haida’s efforts to address this issue. Women are the foundation of Southeast Alaska cultures and the health of our communities cannot be addressed until we ensure that women live in an environment free of violence.”

The VAW Task Force is charged with researching and reporting all of its findings to the Tribe’s Judiciary Committee for developing the capacity of Tlingit & Haida’s Tribal Court and related tribal codes, policies, procedures and practices.

Key VAW Task Force Objectives:

- Improve criminal justice system to better serve and protect Alaska Native women.
- Increase criminal justice protective and investigative resources for reporting and identifying murdered and missing Alaska Native women.
- Identify rates of violence against women and reduce incidences through continuing efforts to connect state, tribal and federal resources.
- Address issues relating to public safety and law enforcement that create barriers for responding timely to violent crimes against Indigenous women in rural Alaska communities.
- Identify effective tribal justice methods used to reduce violence against Alaska Native women.

- Create partnerships with local, state and national organizations for resource development (i.e. Alaska Native Women's Resource Center, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center and National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) VAW Task Force).

Violence against Native American women has been a silent issue in many communities throughout the nation, but it has gained attention through grassroots efforts to raise awareness. Alaska Native women suffer the highest rates of sexual assault in the United States and, according to information from the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, one in two Alaska Native women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.

In 2013, President Barack Obama signed into law the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which included provisions for tribal governments to protect Native women. A section of VAWA was repealed in 2014 to remove the "Alaska exemption." Through that repeal, Alaska's tribal courts have the authority to issue and enforce civil domestic violence protection orders and can provide culturally appropriate intervention.

The first meeting of the task force will be held September 24, 2018.

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