

Amanda Blasko:

Welcome to the NCJA Podcast. Listen to lively discussions with a variety of guests about promising criminal justice practices and programs worth taking closer look at. Your interesting ideas from around the country on a variety of important and timely topics, and learn how you can adjust or adapt your Beringia grant program for improved success. Thanks for joining us. We hope you enjoy!

Welcome back to the NCJA Podcast, everyone. For today's episode, I have the privilege of speaking with Matt Lunn, the director of the Colorado Department of Public Safety Division of Criminal Justice, also known as the SAA in Colorado, and Melody Delmar, the director of Colorado's office at the Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives.

Today's conversation will serve as part one of a two-part podcast series exploring the great work Melody and Matt are doing across the state in building meaningful relationships with tribes, community stakeholders, and law enforcement alike, and leveraging those connections to influence change in this crucial space. We'll also talk about the importance of the role of the SAA in missing and murdered indigenous relatives work, and how the unique role of Colorado's co-located SAA and Office of the Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives acts as a force multiplier for change. Matt, welcome to the NCJA podcast. Melody, welcome back. Before we dive in, would you mind introducing yourselves for our listeners?

Matt Lunn:

Hi Amanda. Thank you so much for having us. Really appreciate the invite. Someone who always listens to the podcast every time it drops, so very excited to be here.

My name is Matt Lunn. I have the honor of serving as the director for the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice. I've been here for a little over a year. We have six amazing offices that make up the division, and I also had the opportunity to serve on the board of directors for NCJA.

Melody Delmar:

Hi Amanda. Thanks for having me back. My name is Melody Delmar and I'm the director of the Office of the Liaison for Missing and Murdered indigenous Relatives within the Division of Criminal Justice at Public Safety in Colorado. I'm also a member of the Navajo Nation.

Amanda Blasko:

Perfect. Thank you so much for being here. I'm thrilled to have you both here for this important discussion, and I'm excited to learn from you both. I thought we might first start with some background about your role as the director of Colorado's office of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, Melody. I know you're pretty new to your role, but your position is also pretty new. Can you talk a little bit about how your position came to be?

Melody Delmar:

Sure. Again, thank you for having us and continuing the conversation on such an important topic, missing and murdered indigenous relatives, which is what brings us back to your podcast, but this time in Colorado where you mentioned our office is fairly new. The Colorado legislature created what is known here as Senate Bill 22-150, which created the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice Office of Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives to address the heartbreaking crisis of missing and murdered indigenous people.

The bill is intended to increase response time, educate our community, and close the gap between law enforcement and our community. So some of the work our office does is to facilitate technical assistance and collaboration among tribal, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, develop best practices for law enforcement responses to reports of missing indigenous persons, enhance partnerships with tribal law enforcement and communities to build trust, and ensure timely reporting and investigation, provide guidance and support to families of victims, including assistance with navigating legal processes and connecting with community-led support efforts, and fostering better communication trust between law enforcement and our indigenous communities. Finally, we provide necessary support and resources to the families of victims, aiding them through the investigative and legal processes.

So overall, SB 22-150 seeks to bring justice to effected families and communities by creating a structured and collaborative approach to tackling the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous relatives in Colorado. Our office consists of three roles. Myself as the director, a community support coordinator who we recently just added to the team, and we are also currently hiring for a program assistant and a data analyst. The office provides resources to support indigenous relatives, the Community Volunteer Advisory Board, and collaborates with the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs and Indigenous-led organizations, tribal and local law enforcement agencies, the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, and the Colorado State Patrol and other stakeholders.

So ultimately, Amanda, Colorado is leading the way in the work we are doing to close the gap for families and loved ones. I'm really proud of the work Colorado is working on in this realm, and I'd also like to highlight some of our national efforts. We've been able to create partnerships with the United States US attorney's offices, the National Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons state coordinators, the US Department of Justice, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office at the State of Oregon Governor's office, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations

Matt Lunn:

Yeah. And Amanda, we're so proud of the work that Melody is doing in the state right now and building relationships with different communities and bringing people together.

I had a unique opportunity when I started here at the Vision of Criminal Justice as the director. A couple days into starting I had the opportunity to hire a new OMMIR director, and that really started a few months long process of stakeholdering and better understanding what the community would like to see in this particular role. The Division of Criminal Justice has six very unique offices that do very different things, but there is a lot of intersectionality in the work that everybody does, and that's certainly true with OMMIR. We have offices that deal with victim services, so obviously there's overlap there. Human trafficking. The Colorado SAC is part of our division as well, and so providing that data and policy background is really helpful. And we have a long history of developing partnerships across various communities, and so Melody highlighted the partnership with Colorado Bureau Investigations, but we also have a good working relationship with the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, which is in the Lieutenant Governor's office, as well as a community grassroots organization, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Task Force.

Amanda Blasko:

Perfect. Thank you for highlighting that background information, and also for mentioning the strong working relationships that you have, which we'll touch on more later. You mentioned you're at an important foundational stage in Colorado's OMMIR work, a launch point of sorts. I'm sure there's been a steep learning curve, even though I know Melody, you have a lot of experience in this space. I'd love to talk a bit about your approach to information gathering and generally becoming acquainted with both your individual and joint roles in this space. What has that process looked like so far?

Matt Lunn:

Yeah, it's really been a wonderful process to get to know people in this space and community, and the professionals working on these important cases. As I previously mentioned, we had the opportunity to hit the reset button here in Colorado when I came in as the new director for DCJ, and the opportunity to hire a new director for OMMIR. And so we really started active stakeholder process that lasted multiple months, like I stated previously, that was really beneficial to understand what the community expected out of this office, how we can best serve those who are forced into this situation, and how we can support our law enforcement and victim service partners who are really the first responders on this work, handling these different cases.

At the end of that stakeholder process we launched a nationwide search to find the new director for OMMIR, and we also invited community members to be part of the interview process. And so we had a panel specific to tribal communities and urban Indians who are serving their communities in this space. And what I was really encouraged by was at the end of the interview process, the public safety leadership team that had a panel, and the community panel identified the same finalist for the position, which I think really speaks to

the significant stakeholdering and process that we went through and allowed us to have a unified vision of what we wanted this office to be moving. At the end of that, I'm pleased to say that we were able to convince Melody that Colorado was the place to be to do this work, that it was a unique opportunity to build something from the ground up, and really be impactful in this space, not only in Colorado, really working with other professionals around the country doing this work so that we can increase communication, increase effectiveness, and increase resources for those in the community.

Melody Delmar:

For the last 15 years, I've dedicated my career toward the work of missing and murdered indigenous relatives by partnering with indigenous communities through academic development, public safety, public health and social work roles across the nation, specifically in New Mexico, Arizona, Maryland, Missouri, and Oklahoma. My former experience pairs well with the efforts of Colorado where the goal is to continue building a strong foundation of community trust. This is particularly important to myself and my work because it's critical to the community response as we continue building and improving systematic response. So we focus on responding with strategic stakeholders, building partnerships to support our alert systems, and connecting resources to support MMR-affected individuals and families.

Matt Lunn:

The only other thing I would add to that, Amanda, is this is a community that for historical reasons does not necessarily trust law enforcement in some instances. Certainly doesn't trust government, and so this has been a wonderful opportunity for us to be present in community, for us to listen, and for us to meet people where they're at so that we can better serve them. And as somebody who came from a major city law enforcement agency, I'm used to being in communities where there's historical distrust of law enforcement and of government. And so having that background and that experience of being in that space with those individuals and listening and trying to build trust gave me a good foundation to step into this role and to be the acting OMMIR director while we conducted an nationwide search. And I got to tell you, this has been some of the most meaningful work I've done since I've been at DCJ. I've greatly enjoyed the opportunity to work with our tribal communities and with our urban Indian population and the people that serve those who are thrust into this unfortunate situation. And I got to tell you, I'm really positive about where we're at, the work that we've been able to accomplish, in about a year, and I'm looking forward to continue to build on that strong foundation as we move this work forward with Melody, with OMMIR and with our community partners.

Amanda Blasko:

Can I just ask, because Matt, you mentioned for Melody's position there was a tribal community interview panel, so I was wondering, were those folks involved all the way through, or did they sit on one of three interviews? Did they help come up with the questions or ... I'm just curious. That's really interesting and cool.

Matt Lunn:

Yeah, absolutely. When we started the stakeholder process, one of the things that we did was when we met with community members, we met with legislators that were involved in the creation of this office, the legislation that created this office, and we met with those who serve this community. We wanted to know from them what questions they would want to ask somebody coming into this role. And so there was a collaborative nature for not only developing the position description that we would publish for the recruitment, but also the questions that we would ask candidates when they came in.

So I was really pleased. We had a very significant response from professionals doing work in this space. We had a lot of applications from all across the country. We were able to narrow it down to six individuals, and from that six, we interviewed all six. Like I stated before, they sat with the public safety leadership panel, they sat with the community panel. And when I met with both groups, the things that they appreciated about the applicants and the responses to the question, there was incredible synergy there. And again, as I noted before, it just speaks to the foundation that we laid through the stakeholder and process to have a shared vision for what this work should be like and what it should look like moving forward. So they played a role really in every step of this process, and continue to play a role. We have an advisory council that is made up of community members from all across the state, and they continue to provide invaluable feedback on what we can continue to do to better serve the community.

Amanda Blasko:

That's really cool. Thank you for going into a little bit more detail. And it's also interesting and cool that that same group is falling along in an advisory committee capacity. That's really nice.

Matt Lunn:

Yeah, it's been really beneficial. And what I would say is just like any issue, it takes a whole of community approach to tackle difficult challenges. And the issue of MMIR is definitely one of those critical and difficult challenges, not just in Colorado, but all across the country. And so we don't always agree, but that's okay because we work towards the shared mission and goals that we've laid out together, and we continue to try and advance the

work through providing resources for community, while also supporting the investigations so that we can bring closure to some of these cases.

Amanda Blasko:

Yeah. And I like what you said about how you might not always agree with all the different stakeholders, but you have that shared vision which helps you kind of keep coming back and collaborating, because you're mission driven.

Matt Lunn:

Yeah, as someone who's married and has kids, I'm used to being disagreed with quite a bit. And so that comes in handy every now and then.

Amanda Blasko:

Matt bringing the comedy to the NCJP podcast.

So before you began your current role, Melody, you worked for an agency that was not part of an SAA's office, and now as the director of the OMMIR in Colorado, you part of an SAA's office. Has being a part of the SAA's office changed the nature of the MMIR work and/or the collaborations needed to make change?

Melody Delmar:

Colorado deeply cares about the resources provided to close the gap and reach families and loved ones who need the resources and the partnerships across the agencies, law enforcement organizations and tribal partnerships to promote public safety. From my 15 years of experience in the missing and murdered indigenous Relatives space, and understanding of practices in other states, having a state administering agency housed within the division of criminal justice is relatively uncommon. And having an in-house resource such as this is invaluable to effective collaboration and meaningful work with our native communities.

My travels in going down to our federally recognized tribes STEM South, I have been able to get acquainted with their resources for public safety. And having an SAA housed within our division has been crucial and critical in building a partnership with them and connecting them to the grants that are available and recognizing the equity and inequity that is happening in terms of them even being able to apply for grants. So I've been able to connect them with some of our in-house division directors who are in charge of those grants to help them better understand how to access them. And I'm really happy that I'm able to have that resource that is right across the hall from me.

As a state of Colorado's Tribal Liaison for public safety, I recognize how this unique positioning allows us to build equity and further strengthen partnership with tribal leadership and creating significant benefits for both public safety and tribal relations and

community trust. So I think this is great because it reflects Colorado's strong commitment to the mission of the Office of Liaison for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives. This structure ensures that the mission of OMMIR is supported with the tools and partnerships necessary to make a meaningful, sustainable, and long-term impact.

Amanda Blasko:

Thank you. I like how you brought up specifically the grant inequity in terms of access, but also just in terms of knowledge level for not everyone has a basic knowledge of what grants even entail and how restrictive and overwhelming they can be. So I really like how you mentioned that as well. I'm interested to see how your work in that space and increasing access goes along.

So Matt, what have you seen as the benefits to having a role like Melody's attached to the SAA's office?

Matt Lunn:

Yeah, so our friends at NCJA like to say if you've met one SAA, you've met one SAA. And that's very true. We're all very different, offices are very different, and the roles that we play within our individual states are very different, but I would say, in general, SAAs are really good convening stakeholders and discussing difficult challenges within our communities. And so that's why I really love having OMMIR as part of DCJ here in Colorado. It allows us, as Melody said, to build some additional bridges, to identify resources more efficiently for the community, and try to increase the overall engagement with the system as a whole.

And so as I discussed earlier, there's obvious historical distrust within this community. And the way that we do that, like I said earlier, is to continue to show up and to be our authentic selves. And this is a topic, working with tribal communities broadly, not just OMMIR work, but broadly working with tribal communities is a significant area of focus right now in our country. And it was even, just a couple weeks ago, when we held the Sequential Intercept Model Symposium here in Denver, it was brought up by some of the presenters there and the challenges of building those relationships and finding ways to get funding and other resources into tribal communities. So Melody brought up the benefit of having OMMIR as part of the SAA here in Colorado because of the access to federal and state level funding, which is obviously very important. The ability to braid different funding sources and increased resources within various communities that have not had access to that funding previously is essential.

But I would also say, one thing that Melody didn't bring up that I think is important to highlight here is it's also helped us increase our representation from indigenous communities more broadly. So we have six different offices at DCJ, like I discussed earlier, and we have a lot of stakeholder boards, commissions, funding committees, and we have seats identified for our tribal communities, and we have had historical challenges filling

those seats and having that representation. And by having OMMIR as part of DCJ, by having Melody being out in the community and so visibly present, it's really created this opportunity for us to fill those seats, to increase representation, to have people in the room when decisions are being made.

Because what I hear from our indigenous community members is they really appreciate that we bring them into the fold when we're talking about legislative issues related to OMMIR, but they also want to talk about access to healthcare. They want to talk about education. They want to talk about all the broad issues that the state's addressing and they want to be heard and in those rooms. It's a valid concern. Us continuing to build these relationships allows us to increase that representation, number one, and number two, increase the awareness across all of the different offices and departments in the executive branch of government. Melody also serves as our liaison for Tribal Communities for Public Safety broadly, and works with the other liaisons across the executive branch, truly raise awareness on issues and make sure folks are all on the same page. That's been incredibly beneficial not just for public safety, but for state government as a whole to continue to elevate those voices, continue to elevate those concerns so that we are truly serving all who call Colorado home.

Amanda Blasko:

I like what you said about the importance of showing up and being authentic and being willing to be vulnerable and have a genuine interaction with someone. I feel like a lot of people are afraid to mess up, or they're afraid of looking stupid, especially when they're going into a community where there is that historical distrust.

Matt Lunn:

Yeah, that's something we actually hear from our law enforcement partners. Melody and I were giving a talk about the work that she's doing across the state, and one of the questions from one of our law enforcement partners was, "We really want to do this right. We want to work with our indigenous communities and do it the right way, but it's not something we've done previously or we've had limited exposure to." And so Melody's in the Office of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives in DCJ can be that resource for folks to help bridge that gap and make people feel comfortable so that they can go into those communities and better serve that population all across the justice system in Colorado.

Amanda Blasko:

So you've done a lot of intentional community engagement around the state as we've been talking about. I know we've already talked a little bit about your perspectives going into meaningful community engagement, but just want to drill down a little bit further. From each of your perspectives, what advice do you have other things that we haven't talked

about on building those meaningful community partnerships and relationships in this space? Do you have any lessons learned that you'd like to share?

Melody Delmar:

I think one thing that I really would like to highlight with this work is that what I found from my experience for the past several years is that in identifying specific partners and stakeholders, I've found that across the board it's people who really honestly care, and it really is that simple. And now working back in another state, I developed a partner that I still work with from FBI. He's an analyst, and he said that ... Something that really touched me that really moves me forward in this work is that the intention of him being in this sphere, this very specific sphere of MMIR, really roped him in and made him care about the community he's serving. And he definitely goes above and beyond to help build partnerships and to be available and to go above his role. He does blue collar crimes, and he said, "Once I got into this work, I couldn't stop." And so with that said, I think that meaningful intention and care for doing MMI work is what moves the work forward and keeps it sustainable as well.

That said, I look forward to continuing and building partnerships and relationships with organizations and agencies and individuals centered on humanity. Our motto here is Stronger Together. This holds true for the work we're all doing together in the MMIR space. While Colorado's OMIR office is fairly new, the commitment and passion I share with others in this space is not, and that's really evident here in Colorado. So we're all working together and are stronger together because of it as we continue moving forward with families in mind and constantly working to find and bring home loved ones, the lessons I'm always learning is giving myself and others Grace and Room to continue to grow on all cylinders through our partnerships, through education, and through building community.

Matt Lunn:

Yeah, I think the advice that I would give is the same advice I would give to anyone that's going into a space with a community that has historical distrust of government, is to show up, be transparent and be authentic. Continue to show up, we're honest about what we can do, what we can't do, and finding a shared vision to move forward together. And then being our authentic and true selves, I think that's appreciated by our community members. We receive feedback that they appreciate our approach so far.

The other thing I would say is we're trying to actively build relationships with these community members. We want to bring them along as champions for the work. We want to continue to have this shared vision and shared goals in this space, and to just generally avoid transactional relationships. We see this a lot of times in government and politics where somebody will come in, they'll be present for a brief period of time, and then they fall back until the next cycle or the next issue comes up. And we actively try to avoid any

appearance of a transactional relationship. We want folks in this community and the Colorado community more broadly to know that we are in this for the long run, that we see them as partners in this process, and that we want them to feel comfortable working with us and disagreeing with us and tackling difficult challenges collectively as we move forward.

Amanda Blasko:

That's great. A lot of great gems that I wrote down. Avoiding transactional relationships, giving people grace to grow and room to grow. And then Matt, you mentioned finding those stakeholder champions, and I think Melody, what you were saying about the FBI contact that you mentioned. That's a great example of the champion in this space.

Matt Lunn:

We were actually just at the Governor's mansion a couple of weeks ago for a proclamation and recognition of Native American Month in November. And I got to be honest with you, there's nobody that was probably more popular in that room than Melody. The amount of community members from all across the state and all across the Mountain West region that were coming up to say hi to her, to introduce her to other community members was truly amazing. I felt like I was next to a rock star or something. But I think it speaks to the amazing work that Melody and the office are doing and building those relationships, those long-term relationships, that I think are going to pay dividends as we continue to do the work together.

Amanda Blasko:

So as we discussed, the Office is new and you're charged with forging community partnerships with necessary stakeholders, which we've been talking about such as law enforcement, nonprofits and community members. Are there any particular events or partnerships that you'd like to highlight as an accomplishment at OMMIR?

Melody Delmar:

I'm excited about this question, Amanda. As our initial discussions in this work began with us, you and I, at the NCJA conference a few months ago, I thought it would be a meaningful highlight to listeners on the podcast and how we are working together with our stakeholders, rural community, and especially our law enforcement. So early in my work with our tribal communities, I found that training, networking, and community engagement are what we're being asked from our office in terms of tribal law enforcement engagement from our tribal leaders. Specifically with the Southern Ute tribe.

So from my experience, law enforcement specific convenings are particularly effective in fostering community, and so I'm particularly proud of an event put together and co-hosted with the Navajo Nation where the work started with these interstate convenings. So

Colorado hosted the very first convening a few months ago down at [inaudible 00:28:34] tribe actually. And we had our executive leadership attend and be present with the Four Corners region of law enforcement agencies, state agencies, all the way to the federal level giving ... And what they did at this convening was to, number one, network and also to learn more about the recent findings that would support law enforcement in the reporting or investigations. And I remember standing in the room, and I was particularly proud of seeing people who were connecting with each other that I would love to see connect each other. And they're having great conversations in how they can work together with our states and to better serve their communities across the border. So I always say that this is a borderless issue as we've had a lot of missing persons come from within our region and our surrounding states. So I'm looking forward to Colorado continuing to be a part of these conversations. And our community support coordinator will be attending the next meeting actually in Phoenix in December at the Arizona AG's office.

Amanda Blasko:

So since this will be part of a two-part series here on the NCJA podcast, I'd love if you could both tell our listeners a little about your future plans and goals for MMIR work in Colorado. What does the future of the MMIR office and its connection to the SAA look like? What is your vision going forward? Your shared vision.

Melody Delmar:

DCJ attended the recent SIM convening, and I am new to this approach in engaging with our communities. At the convening, Matt and I were able to answer questions about how Colorado is working with our communities and building partnerships, which is what MMIR is all about. Making connections. I'm really looking forward to how we can engage with our federal partnerships and ensuring we can be equitable to all our tribal communities.

Matt Lunn:

So from a division perspective, at DCJ we're getting ready to release our new strategic plan at the beginning of 2025. We went through a significant stakeholder process both internally and externally, and I'm really proud to say that we've identified three pillars that we're going to be working on. The first is elevating or being responsive to diverse populations. The second is what I call building the bench, but I was informed that not everybody likes sports, so it will be phrased something to the effect of recruitment and retention of staff. And then the third is enhancing collaboration and public safety, or what I like to call being the partner of choice in Colorado as it relates to public safety. And you can see in those three pillars that while there are division-wide visions, they really fit perfectly, all three of them align perfectly with the work in OMMIR.

So being elevating and being responsive to diverse populations we've talked about, continuing to elevate this crisis as a statewide issue and building partnerships not only across the state and the region but across the country to better investigate and respond when these incidents occur, and work towards prevention, and also elevating native voices more broadly, not just in public safety, but in government and legislative affairs.

Recruitment, retention of staff. We're in the process of building out the Office of Missing and Murdering Indigenous Relatives. And so identifying people that can do the work, that can be responsive to victims and families, and being a support and a bridge for our law enforcement community. And then finding ways to continue to support those individuals in their personal and professional growth. And then being the partner of choice, we want people to partner with our office so that we can increase access to resources, that we can prove the communication and efficiency of investigations with our law enforcement partners. And really, when we talk about being the partner of choice, our office is not a first responder agency. When we're in that acute stage of these events, we have to depend on the local law enforcement agency, local victim advocacy groups, but we want to be their first call. Once they stabilize the situation, we want to be that bridge for them to resources, to connect them to other investigative resources, potentially either with our partners at the Colorado Bureau Investigations, other local partners, or federal agencies engaged in this work. And so OMMIR is going to be an essential component of our division moving forward as we continue to try to better serve all who call Colorado home.

Amanda Blasko:

I really like what you all said about that very intentional strategic planning process and having those key pillars and having a holistic approach that really feeds in to inform the work. I like what you said, Melody, about the whole idea of the office about making connections and bringing people together. And I also like what you said, Matt, about being the partner of choice. I think that's really important. You don't want to be the default partner. You want to be the partner of choice.

Matt Lunn:

Yeah. And I think that as we continue to progress in this work and the broader work of the division, I'm really excited. I think our strategic plan and our shared vision moving forward really allow us to address the different challenges within our state. And as I said before, we have six very different and unique offices, but there is significant intersectionality and there's significant opportunity for us to partner so that we are creating solutions across systems and not trying to address one thing here and then in a different silo, check off a similar issue in a slightly different context. What we're trying to do is really increase the communication and collaboration across the state, and OMMIR in DCJ is a key component of that. I joke that Melody has a new state car and we already have to put new tires on it

because she's been traveling all over Colorado, being face to face and working with community.

Amanda Blasko:

So I know not all MMIR offices are connected to the SAA, but as we've discussed, the SAA can really help move this work forward. So how should SAAs best engage and collaborate with the MMIR work happening in their states, in whatever form that may take? Whether it's mostly task force or an office or all of the above?

Melody Delmar:

I'm especially excited about this question, especially coming from the SIM training. And as you saw, Amanda, there's a question asked about how SAAs are going to work with tribal communities, or how that's working. And I believe our office within DCJ is uniquely set up for a state to work with our tribal communities in a very meaningful and effective way. And as you saw when that question was asked, Matt ran the mic back to me because I was sitting in the back right next to him, and that was a great connection to make and I've already had set up some meetings with him to talk more about how that relationship's going to work. And so as this is a part of a two part series, I'm excited to come back around and talk more about how that relationship, and this relationship, is working for our tribal communities.

Also, from my experience, I think that adhering to the Not Invisible Act is crucial to leading the way in terms of community engagement. I've been involved with that legislation on the federal level for a while, so as our work continues, I'm looking forward to reporting back to you in about a year or so and talking more about how that's been working and how we tailor our office.

Matt Lunn:

Yeah. And what I would say to my SAA colleagues about working in this space is first, be present. Make sure the community knows who you are and you know who community is, and listen to their concerns broadly. We're not trying to address MMIR in a silo. We need to understand just like every challenge in the public safety space, that there are a lot of components that lead to a particular crisis, and this one is no different. And so understanding access to healthcare, access to resources, understanding educational concerns of the community, have a broad understanding of what your tribal communities are concerned about, and the unique aspects of the different tribal communities. The tribes in Colorado, just like the tribes all across the country, are not a monolith. They're all individual, they all have their own individual concerns, they have their own individual history and story. And so being steeped in that, being present for that, I think is really important.

And then last, I've already mentioned this, but ensure your tribal communities have a voice and have a voice on a wide range of issues. Make sure that you're understanding what their unique concerns are within their community, just like you would with any other community, whether it's urban, rural, underserved, it doesn't matter. Having them at the table so that the unique issues associated with their community is really important.

Amanda Blasko:

Is there anything that we didn't touch on that you really want to make sure that we say?

Matt Lunn:

So I would encourage your listeners to also check us out. They can find us at dcj.colorado.gov, or I'm also asking folks to follow us on LinkedIn. We have really been focused on elevating the work, not only of OMMIR, but all of our six offices, as well as highlighting the great work that is being accomplished by our community partners, many of which we fund through our federal grant.

Amanda Blasko:

All right. Thank you so much for both the great work you both are doing in Colorado and also for being willing to come back ... Well, to come on the podcast for you, Matt, to come back on the podcast for you, Melody, to talk about the great work that you're doing. I know I learned a lot from your processes and your advice on meaningful community engagement. I know our listeners will have learned a lot as well, and I'm really excited to see how this work grows and evolves as you continue to build and learn. So thank you for being here.

Matt Lunn:

Well, thank you so much for providing us with this opportunity to talk about this important topic.