



## COLT and NIWRC Stand with L.B. at the Ninth Circuit

May 31, 2024

Browning, MT - The Coalition of Large Tribes, an intertribal organization representing the interests of the more than 50 tribes with reservations of 100,000 acres or more, is proud to stand with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center in support of L.B., a Northern Cheyenne woman raped by an on-duty Bureau of Indian Affairs law enforcement officer seeking federal government accountability. The case is *L.B. v. United States*, No. 23-35568.

On Monday, June 3, 2024, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit will hear the appeal in *L.B. v. United States*— a case where a Northern Cheyenne victim of a rape committed by a BIA officer is suing the United States under the Federal Tort Claims Act, asking for damages to pay for her pain and suffering caused by the rape. NIWRC and COLT jointly filed an amicus brief in the Ninth Circuit arguing that the United States government should be held liable for the unlawful conduct of its law officer. This Monday morning (at 9:30 am PT), leaders from both the NIWRC and COLT, as well as survivors and Tribal leaders in Oregon, will gather at the footsteps of the federal courthouse in downtown Portland to demand accountability from the federal government.

The stakes at issue in *L.B. v. United States* could not be higher. Native women are victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and homicide at rates higher than any other population. If Native women calling the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) law enforcement have the choice between calling for help and being raped, or not calling for help and not being raped, they are in a no-win, incredibly violent, unjust situation. “Our women deserve a federal law enforcement that will not perpetrate additional harm against them as they seek help,” states Lucy Simpson, Executive Director, NIWRC. “Accountability under the law is critical in ensuring that law enforcement agencies put protocols in place to prevent their officers from abusing their power and position within the community. We want the federal government to take responsibility for the actions of its officers and take steps to make sure this violence won’t happen again.”

Because of a complex web of jurisdictional laws that prevent Tribal Nations from prosecuting all of the crimes that occur on reservation lands, many Native victims cannot call their tribal law enforcement for help and instead are forced to rely on federal law officers to keep them and their families safe. “In many of our communities, because of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Oliphant*,



we have no choice but to rely on BIA police,” explains Marvin Weatherwax, Jr., Chairman of COLT and a member of the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council. “Whereas other Americans can turn to their local sheriff that they elect in a local election, we are dependent on the federal government to properly hire and train the law officers that protect our community.”

“In this case, the officer who raped L.B., Officer Bullcoming, bragged in his deposition that he did the same thing to twelve other women while he was on active duty and in uniform,” states Mary Kathryn Nagle, attorney for the NIWRC. “It is inexplicable and horrific that the BIA, Department of the Interior, and the Department of Justice won’t simply admit liability for the wrongful conduct of their law officer and pay L.B. for her pain and suffering. The Biden Administration claims to care about the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, but their conduct in this case demonstrates otherwise.”

The NIWRC and COLT invite all advocates, survivors, tribal leaders, and allies to join them on **June 3 at 9:30 am** at the federal courthouse in Portland, Oregon, to show your support for L.B. and all of our Native women, men, and Two Spirit Relatives who have been sexually abused and assaulted by law enforcement.

**Media Contacts:**

COLT Chairman Marvin Weatherwax - (406) 845-5477, [mweatherwax@blackfeetnation.com](mailto:mweatherwax@blackfeetnation.com)

COLT Vice Chairman Tracy Ching King - (406) 680-7029, [ching49mazaska@yahoo.com](mailto:ching49mazaska@yahoo.com)

COLT Executive Director OJ Semans - (605) 828-1422, [tateota@hotmail.com](mailto:tateota@hotmail.com)

NIWRC - [media@niwrc.org](mailto:media@niwrc.org)