September 2, 2023

Director Christopher Wray

Federal Bureau of Investigation

935 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Director Wray:

I write to demand justice for Kaysera, a Crow tribal citizen. It has now been four years since Kaysera’s death, and the family still waits for justice.

On August 24, 2019, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places went missing in a suburban neighborhood in Hardin, Montana, less than a half mile off the Crow Reservation. Kaysera’s body was discovered five days after she went missing, and although significant evidence exists indicating who took her life in August of 2019, her killer still walks free. He has never been charged with any crime.

Days before Kaysera went missing, she filmed and posted to social media the beating of her 15- year-old brother by law enforcement at Crow Fair. The officers beating the minor in a wheelchair included Big Horn County deputies. The U.S. Attorney’s Office investigated the incident and officers were reprimanded. There is reason to believe that one of the deputies who was under investigation for the scene filmed by Kaysera was a responding officer when her body was discovered.

This is a miscarriage of justice. Even worse, the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office has told the family they will not investigate her murder because she died “of natural causes.” Healthy, eighteen year old girls, however, do not lay down at the corner of a busy suburban intersection, die, and then lay there unnoticed for five days (Kaysera went missing on August 24 but was not found until August 29). Kaysera’s body was discovered at the corner of Mitchell Ave. & Rangeview Dr. on August 29, by a resident of the neighborhood, when he went for his daily jog. He told law enforcement that had her body been there for five days straight, he would have noticed her before August 29. The autopsy dates her death as days before August 29 (and places it most likely on the early morning of August 25, based on the contents of her stomach), and it is clear that whoever murdered Kaysera dumped her body at this busy intersection corner on August 29. This is more than enough to command an investigation.

Despite the suspicious circumstances surrounding Kaysera’s death, the FBI, the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office, State of Montana and the Montana Department of Justice have done absolutely nothing to investigate. Kaysera’s family has provided the authorities with tips and evidence to aid the investigation, yet they continue to be ignored.

The FBI has a federal trust responsibility and duty to protect tribal citizens, including Kaysera. When a tribal citizen living on a reservation goes missing and is murdered, the FBI has a trust duty and responsibility to investigate.

The FBI has stated it would *not* investigate because her body was eventually found half a mile off the Crow Reservation border. Instead of abiding its federal trust duty and responsibility to protect the lives of our Native women and girls, the FBI abandoned its responsibility and claimed it had “no jurisdiction” to investigate this taking of a young girl’s life, even though the FBI knew of *no* evidence to prove her life had not been taken *on* the reservation—where the FBI would have undoubtedly had jurisdiction. To be sure, the fact that the Supreme Court and Congress have created a complex web of jurisdiction for crimes committed in Indian Country is no excuse for the FBI to sit by and doing nothing as our girls and women are murdered. The FBI can always investigate the murder of a tribal citizen on or near a reservation. If it turns out the murder occurred off tribal lands, the FBI can turn over the investigation to the proper authority to prosecute.

We all witnessed the FBI swing into action and pour an incredible amount of resources into the investigation of Gabby Petito’s death. At the time that the FBI began its investigation of Ms. Petito’s death, the FBI did not know whether Ms. Petito had been killed on or off lands under federal jurisdiction. But that did not stop the FBI from investigating her disappearance because her disappearance was a top priority for the FBI. And while Ms. Petito’s life is highly valuable, so are the lives of our Native women and girls. The disparate treatment Native victims receive is unconscionable.

There is no lawful or moral reason that justifies the FBI’s failure to investigate Kaysera’s death. The circumstances around her death warrant a complete investigation without any further delay. Now, four years after Kaysera was murdered, I respectfully demand that you take her murder seriously and commence a legitimate investigation immediately.

 Sincerely,