



**Global  
Indigenous  
Council**

11-17-2020

ABC Studios  
500 S Buena Vista St  
Burbank, CA, 91521-0001

ATTENTION:

**Karey Burke, Head of Entertainment**

**David Ambroz, Executive Director - Corporate Social Responsibility**

**Matthew Gross, Executive Producer**

**David E. Kelley, David E. Kelley Productions**

**RE: *BIG SKY***

We write with serious concerns of at best, cultural insensitivity, and at worst, appropriation, in respect to the soon-to-be premiered series, *Big Sky*.

We are a collective of Indigenous organizations that are members of the team that produced *Somebody's Daughter*, a critically acclaimed documentary that addresses the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), with particular focus in Montana. Among our collective is the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (RMTLC), which represents every Tribal Nation in Montana (the backdrop for *Big Sky*), and the Coshatta Tribe of Louisiana, executive producers of *Somebody's Daughter*.

Last January, our film premiered at the '2020 Presidential Forum' in Las Vegas, NV. It quickly began attracting the attention of production companies and studios prior to the COVID-19 induced shutdown that affected the film industry. Subsequently, President-elect Joseph R. Biden, Jr. has supported the film. An updated version of *Somebody's Daughter* will premiere in January 2021 and includes President-elect Biden's contribution.

We recently learned of ABC's new prime-time series, *Big Sky*, which we understand has, as a central theme, the abduction of young women from Montana highways. Please be aware that Indigenous people constitute 7% of Montana's population, but the state identifies some 26% of missing persons as Native American.

It has been represented to us that *Big Sky* depicts the Interstate highways in Montana as the hunting grounds for deranged sexual predation. We covered these identical highways factually in *Somebody's Daughter* and identified them as human trafficking tracks. We also sounded an alert about the dangers posed to Indigenous women at truck stops along these main Montana highways. These key points were detailed in our film, featured in the trailer (which trended for several weeks <https://youtu.be/NscqDqT0L18>), and were even referenced in an interview where a

tribal leader speaks about Native women being fearful to stop at truck stops on I-90. Similarities exist between ABC's *Big Sky* and our documentary, *Somebody's Daughter*.

We understand that the plot of *Big Sky* is based on C. J. Box's novel *The Highway*. Unfortunately, neither *Big Sky* nor *The Highway* address the fact that the disproportionate majority of missing and murdered women in Montana are Indigenous, a situation replicated across Indian Country, which has made this tragedy an existential threat to Native Americans. To ignore this fact, and to portray this devastation with a white female face, is the height of cultural insensitivity, made even more egregious given the national awakening to the need for racial justice.

The fact is that in 2016 alone, more Indigenous women and girls in the United States were missing or murdered than the number of US fatalities suffered during the entirety of the Iraq War. That year, Montana was the state with the fifth highest incidence of MMIW cases. It is implausible that C.J. Box is unaware of the MMIW tragedy. Mr. Box is from Casper, Wyoming, which is in close proximity to the Wind River Indian Reservation, about which Mr. Box has written and drawn inspiration for his Joe Pickett novels. We could, of course, convince ourselves that *The Highway* was not influenced by the infamous "Highway of Tears" in British Columbia, along which dozens of Indigenous women have gone missing since 1969, and is traveled by heavy truck traffic. In *Somebody's Daughter*, I-90 in Montana is referred to as "the second Highway of Tears." It seems highly improbable that neither the screenwriters, Annakate Chappell and David E. Kelley, nor ABC studio executives, discussed *Big Sky* with Mr. Box.

It is our sincere hope that you will enter into a dialogue with us to discuss including an information frame at the end of future *Big Sky* show credits that directs viewers to the *Somebody's Daughter* documentary and factual information on the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women crisis.

We believe that such an inclusion will be an important signal of your willingness to work with other entities to ensure that the magnitude of the MMIW crisis is not diminished. Disregarding MMIW in Montana and elsewhere would be harmful to the strides made by the Native American community and its dedicated allies that have worked tirelessly to expose and remedy this deadly crisis. It would be extremely unfortunate for you to miss this opportunity to tell the entire, truthful story. [www.somebodysdaughter-mmIW.com](http://www.somebodysdaughter-mmIW.com)

Sincerely,



William F. Snell, Executive Director – Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council.



Chairman David Sickey – Coshatta Tribe of Louisiana, Executive Producers of *Somebody's Daughter*.



Tom Rodgers, President – Global Indigenous Council.

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cc. Kurt Streeter, *The New York Times*.

Naomi Fry, *The New Yorker*.

Bob Cusack, *The Hill*.