

Restoration

OF NATIVE SOVEREIGNTY AND SAFETY FOR NATIVE WOMEN

Increasing Public
Awareness of
Missing and
Murdered Native
Women

NATIVE
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END THE INJUSTICE
OF MISSING AND
MURDERED
NATIVE WOMEN

JUNE 2017



National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
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Restoration

OF NATIVE SOVEREIGNTY AND SAFETY FOR NATIVE WOMEN

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Dear Friends,

The current reports of abduction and murder of American Indian women and girls are alarming and represent one of the most severe aspects within the spectrum of violence committed against Native women. The murder rate of Native women is more than 10 times the national average. Often, these disappearances or murders are connected to crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking.

The NIWRC recognizes that before this crisis can be sufficiently addressed it must first be acknowledged. This past year, more than 200 tribal, state, and national organizations joined with NIWRC and signed on in support of a resolution to create a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls. On Wednesday, May 3, 2017, the U.S. Senate took an historic step forward and passed Senate Resolution 60 by unanimous consent. The NIWRC expresses its heartfelt appreciation to the Montana delegation led by Senator Steve Daines, joined by Senator Jon Tester, and then Congressman Ryan Zinke, for their introduction and leadership on the passage of this resolution.

The NIWRC was honored to have worked with so many sister organizations at the tribal, state, and federal levels to witness the passage of this historic resolution. On May 5, 2017, numerous tribal communities organized actions in honor of missing Native women and girls. The staff of NIWRC's national office, located in Lake Deer, Montana, were deeply honored to walk with Melinda Harris, mother of Hanna Harris, Senator Steve Daines, Senator Jon Tester's staff and members of the community, and so many others. Nationwide tribal actions are also being held at the Muscogee Creek Nation, the Mohawk Nation, the Oglala Lakota Nation, the Northern Cheyenne Nation, Minneapolis, and many other locations.

In addition, May 5 was marked by a groundswell of individual actions by Native women across the United States by the "I Wear Red" campaign in honor of our Native sisters who are missing or are have been murdered. The online campaign tracked more than 2 million impressions through Facebook and Twitter. This edition of *Restoration* showcases pictures posted by women across the United States.

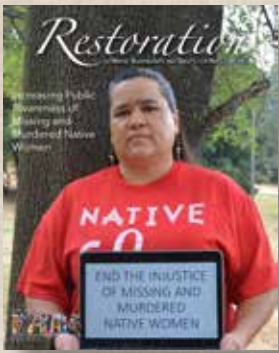
The NIWRC is committed to organizing to increase safety and access to justice for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women and girls. This crisis is the end result of hundreds of years of a failed system by which Native women were not only targeted but systemically made vulnerable to violence through federal laws and policies. We ask all of you to join us in working together to bring an end to this crisis.



Lucy Simpson
Executive Director
NIWRC



Cherrah Giles
Board Chair
NIWRC Board of Directors



Cover: May 5, 2017, La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians Reservation-Wendy Schlater, Director, Avellaka Safety for Native Women Program and Treasurer of the NIWRC Board of Directors participated in the 1st National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls by posting online the cover photo. "We must end the silence now about the injustice of missing and murdered Native women and girls and organize for accountability to bring healing to our communities. Our women and girls have been kidnapped, trafficked and murdered since other governments - the Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. - have come onto our homelands."

Editor's Note

As the legislative season for reauthorization of lifesaving federal programs, including VAWA and FVPSA, challenges our national movement to increase the safety of Native women, we express our appreciation to all the contributors and supporters of *Restoration*.

Understanding federal programs, such as the Victims of Crime Act, is essential to providing access to services for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples. Addressing the crisis of missing and murdered Native women and girls is tied to understanding the linkages to the vulnerabilities Native women face as a population. Oftentimes, what might be described simply as "gaps" are actually systemic legal barriers requiring knowledge to identify and remove. As the maxim goes, "knowledge is power."

Restoration is committed to informing the movement of emerging national issues and ongoing developments impacting the safety of Native women. *Restoration* has served this purpose for nearly 17 years, and we look forward to organizing with our sister organizations and national allies in the coming months.

Jacqueline "Jax" Agtuca,
Editor, *Restoration*

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Instructions on how to use the QR codes in this magazine

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2. Search for the **QR Bot** app. Download and open on your phone.
3. The QR Bot app will use the camera on your phone to scan the code at right.
4. Open the website link it takes you to!



StrongHearts Native Helpline Update! A Historic Step Forward

In March 2017, the StrongHearts Native Helpline began taking its first calls as a culturally-appropriate, confidential service for Native Americans affected by domestic violence and dating abuse.

Staffed by advocates with a strong understanding of Native cultures, as well as issues of tribal sovereignty and law, the StrongHearts Native Helpline connects American Indian and Alaska Native victims one-on-one with advocates who provide immediate support, assist with safety planning, and refer them to Native-specific services based on their tribal affiliation, location and culture.

“The lives of our Native people and the safety of our tribal communities remain at the heart of our work as we develop this critically needed resource,” said Lucy Simpson, executive director of the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC). “For the past several years, we have been working closely with the National Domestic Violence Hotline to make our vision a reality.”

The StrongHearts Native Helpline is a partnered effort, combining the NIWRC’s Native-centered expertise and community connections, along with the technology and infrastructure of the National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline).

Fulfilling a Critical Need

As highlighted by the National Institute of Justice’s 2016 study analyzing data reported in the Centers for Disease Control



STRONGHEARTS Native Helpline



The NIWRC Board of Directors and staff worked nationally with NCAI Task Force members and The National Hotline since 2014 to develop the StrongHearts Native Helpline. Pictured left to right: NIWRC Board members Deborah Parker and Lenora Hootch, with NCAI Task Force member JoAnn Horn, Director of the Emmonak Women’s Shelter.

and Prevention's 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Partner Survey, American Indians and Alaska Natives experience some of the highest rates of physical and sexual violence in the United States.

The report also focused on the need for supportive services in tribal communities. It found that of those who had experienced violence, half of Native women and nearly one in five Native men required victim services.

To help address this critical need, the StrongHearts Native Helpline provides culturally-appropriate support, referrals and safety planning through trained, knowledgeable Native advocates with support from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Verizon.

The National Congress of American Indians passed a resolution in October 2014 during its Atlanta meeting in support of a national Native

helpline for Native adult and youth victims of domestic violence and dating violence.

How StrongHearts Can Help

Trained advocates are available by phone Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CST at 1-844-7NATIVE (1-844-762-8483). Callers after hours will have the option to connect with the National Domestic Violence Hotline or to call back the next business day.

StrongHearts takes calls from Native victims of domestic violence, those concerned about a loved one, people who identify as abusive, or from anyone seeking help for someone else.

Visit strongheartshelpline.org for more information about domestic violence and dating violence, getting help and staying safe. Contact info@strongheartshelpline for more details about how to get involved.

Steeped in Tribal Cultures and Expertise

As part of its Native-centered approach, StrongHearts advocates, as well as staff, have unique ties to tribal communities. Caroline LaPorte is the first Native Affairs Senior Policy Advisor for the StrongHearts Native Helpline and is an immediate descendant of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians.

In her policy work, LaPorte, a licensed attorney in the state of Texas who concurrently serves on the NIWRC's Policy Team, will focus on specialized issues including criminal justice, children and youth, firearms, housing and human rights relating to domestic violence in tribal communities.

Before joining StrongHearts, LaPorte worked as a family law attorney and at Dallas CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), an organization that represents children in foster care. She previously held positions as a clerk in both the Office of Tribal Justice within the Department of Justice and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians criminal justice system.

She has a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Miami School of Law in Florida and a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Baylor University in Texas.



Pouhana 'O Na Wahine Organizing Efforts Continue



As Indigenous women of the Hawaiian Islands, Pouhana 'O Na Wahine, Pillars of Women, is focused on determining how best to respond to domestic violence from the perspective of Native Hawaiians. For more than three years, the all-volunteer collective of women has organized using the indigenous framework of their Native Hawaiian language, the teachings of their people, and the voices and experiences of survivors.

Since its January meeting with NIWRC, the hui (group) has continued to build its collective through ongoing discussions. "We are a na'au driven people and ancestrally we were spiritually guided to know our gifts; we become driven by that which we were called to do," said Pouhana sister Dolly Tatofi. "When we do this and recognize this, we allow for the very spirit of our seed to grow organically, how it wants to grow. We also weave in the spiritual aspect to our journey; that is part of our Hawaiian worldview."

The hui understands and struggles with the knowledge that relying solely on current non-indigenous responses to domestic and sexual violence does not serve Native Hawaiians well. Non-indigenous responses are short-term solutions. This approach fails to address the violence over the long term. The

reality is that Native Hawaiians represent the highest percentage of victims of domestic and sexual violence within the state. The hui knows long-term approaches must rely on an indigenous view of the world.

Taking on the challenge of organizing for changes from their worldview continues via phone calls and emails and has been difficult without more dedicated resources. "We must continue and organize based on our reality. Our hui understands our lives and the violence we experience as Native Hawaiians. We are committed to working together to identify a Native Hawaiian plan of action," said Rose Pettigrew, acting president of the Pouhana's Board of Directors.

Pouhana volunteers are currently located on Molokai, Maui, Oahu, and Lana'i. They are discussing ways to build their capacity to respond, including networking with Native Hawaiian practitioners to become practitioners themselves and developing a response designed by and for Kanaka Māoli. Ongoing support of the Pouhana to increase understanding and analysis of the injustices Native Hawaiians face, and identify what changes in laws, policies, and responses will save lives and will be important moving forward.



NATIVE Love



NativeLove staff with the children of the Northern Paiute Tribal Youth Program: Tu-Wa-Kii Nobii (The Kid's House) Program.

Native Village of Emmonak, Alaska, April 2017—The NIWRC NativeLove team continues to travel far and wide to meet with tribes, tribal communities, and Native youth to talk about the importance of teen dating violence and awareness. The team was honored to be invited to the beautiful Native Village of Emmonak, Alaska, to spend time with the amazing and talented high school students who attend the Emmonak School. The Village of Emmonak is a Yup'ik Eskimo village with a population of approximately 800 enrolled tribal members. It is located in southwestern Alaska, approximately 200 air miles northwest of Bethel and 490 air miles northwest of Anchorage. There are no road systems in the entire region—the river serves as their highway with boats used as their primary mode of transportation during the summer months and snow machines during the winter months.

The NativeLove team was invited by the Yup'ik Women's Coalition (YWC) to include youth voices and participation at the Yup'ik Women's Coalition Justice Now Sexual Assault Conference: Understanding and

Improving the Response to Sexual Assault. The YWC's Executive Director, Lenora Hootch, along with staff and community members expressed the critical importance of including youth in their conference to discuss teen dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and other forms of violence. On Day One, conference attendees received an overview of the NativeLove Project from NativeLove team member Rebecca Balog.

On Day Two, NativeLove joined more than 50 students to hold important discussions about teen dating and healthy relationships and to encourage and foster community conversations, share stories, and learn more about what healthy love is and is not. The students also made powerful posters/signs for a Community Sexual Assault Awareness Walk in which conference participants, community members, and students joined the Emmonak Women's Shelter and the YWC to walk through the village to increase awareness and to encourage the development of Yup'ik Village responses to sexual abuse. Many students led chants amplifying their voices to rally, "No More Violence in Our Village" and "Justice Now."

NativeLove Visits Native Village of Emmonak

Youth Track at Alaska Yup'ik Women's Coalition Sexual Assault Conference: Understanding and Improving the Response to Sexual Assault in the Native Village of Emmonak, Alaska



Tasha Bird and Stella Fancyboy (YWC staff members) joined the youth track on Day Two to get into the heart and spirit of NativeLove discussions participating in the hands-on interactive workshops including social media, the use of arts (poetry, music, plays), and other forms of communicating what NativeLove means to them. The all-day youth track offered a safe space for the Native youth to discuss teen dating violence, consent, bullying, suicide, and other forms of violence they have witnessed or heard about. The NativeLove team kept the discussions lively with plenty of activities, and divided students into four groups in which they identified a NativeLove project to work on collectively, presented their activities and voices to each other, and shared at the larger YWC Sexual Assault Conference.

At the end of Day Two of the conference, several students from the Emmonak School shared the beauty

of what NativeLove means, including respecting their elders and upholding that NativeLove means family. They highlighted their collective work with their peers, which featured a poem about what NativeLove means to them, a play, a poster, and a rap song, as performed by Yup'ik students:

NativeLove Is . . . Rapping Our Ways

Yo, How are we living without respect and hope?
Because domestic violence is not our tradition, all you
got to do is see this beautiful thing called Native love!
All you need is peace with love
And all you gotta do is look up above!
Native love is about respect and hope.

With it in your life you can just float
Look at our village family in our traditional boat
Caring and sharing is going to happen YEAH!!! This is
NativeLove love!

Come on over. It's time to stand up
It's time to speak up!
This is NativeLove and it's about respect and hope!

Don't give up, don't give up, respect is in the air
NativeLove is your friends that care!

We hand out gifts like love and hope
And these things have no cost
In times like these we give consolation
Like our traditions are our first education
Fishing has been ours for many generations.
Sharing our catch without any compensation.

Living off the land just like our forefathers
We are sharing the fruit of our labors with our family
members
Hunting, driving our boats, and berry picking
Cutting up fish and drying and smoking
Are all sacred labors of Native loving and hoping
NativeLove is Respect and Hope.

Yup'ik Alaska Community
Emmonak High School Students
"NativeLove Rap"



A Long Time Coming: FY2017 Appropriations to Create an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence

Change comes slowly, but over the last 30 years the advocates and tribal leaders of Alaska have witnessed changes many said would never happen. For Alaska Native women, the most recent step toward changes needed to create safety is the appropriation of \$1 million in the FY 2017 omnibus budget to establish an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence per the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees. The appropriation is recognition that violence against Alaska Native women is a national policy issue.

Many Alaska Native peoples have lived on their traditional lands for thousands of years governing themselves according to their lifeways and traditions in which women were respected. Today, Alaska Native women are subjected to the highest rates of sexual assault, at least 7 times the non-Native rate, reporting domestic violence rates 10 times higher and physical assault rates up to 12 times higher. Alaska Native women are over-represented in the domestic violence victim population by 250%, and while Alaska Natives represent 19% of the Alaska state population, they are 47% of reported rape victims. Many say the current crisis in the everyday safety of Alaska Native women came with the arrival of “outsiders.”

“It is long overdue that Alaska tribal governments have the resources we need to help develop local, village-based responses to domestic violence and related injustices,” said Mike Williams, respected tribal leader from the Akiak Native community.

\$1 Million FY 2017 Appropriations

The organizing efforts and systems advocacy over the past 30 years by Alaska tribes and advocates were based on the foundation that solutions to end the violence, and many other problems, rest in the beliefs of their peoples and villages, not western criminal justice. The recent appropriations are the result of alliance building with other tribes nationally, many tribal and allied organizations, and federal lawmakers and agencies. Senator Lisa Murkowski has strongly

supported the concerns and recommendations of advocates and villages and monitored the final inclusion of the \$1 million FY 2017 appropriation under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families budget to support an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence to address such disparities. Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director of the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center (AKNWRC), said, “We appreciate Senator Murkowski’s partnership, leadership, and advocacy in securing the \$1 million included in the FY 2017 appropriations for an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center to reduce the disparities in Alaska.”

State tribal resource centers were originally authorized in 2010 as part of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act reauthorization (FVPSA 42 U.S.C. 10410 or Sec. 310). Congress included the following description for state resource centers “to reduce disparities in domestic violence in states with high proportions of Indian (including Alaska Native) or Native Hawaiian populations,” and such centers “shall provide statewide information, training, and technical assistance to Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and local domestic violence service organizations serving Indians (including Alaska Natives) or Native Hawaiians, in a culturally sensitive and relevant manner.”

“Continuing to exempt the state from national policy change is wrong. It sets Alaska apart from the progress that has become possible in the rest of Indian country. The public safety issues in Alaska—and the law and policy at the root of those problems—beg to be addressed. These are no longer just Alaska’s issues. They are national issues.”

—Indian Law and Order Commission’s November 2013 Report to Congress, <https://www.aisc.ucla.edu/iloc/report/>

“The authorizing language for these resource centers came at a time of increased awareness of the high rates of violence against Alaska Native women,” said Truett Jerue. “The Indian Law and Order Commission dedicated a chapter to addressing law enforcement issues in Alaska not as a state issue but as a national issue of federal concern. The specific \$1 million appropriation designated for an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center helps to ensure our issues are of national concern.”

What the Future Holds: Support for Alaska Indigenous Solutions

Since 2013, and in partnership with the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC), the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center has worked with advocates and four villages to create a grassroots indigenous training curriculum based on three core components of teachings, language, and voices of Alaska Native peoples. “These core components are the foundations to our work. While the lower 48 has spent decades and billions of dollars on training efforts, so much of the material is not relevant to the 229 villages of Alaska. We have found the terms used do not exist in our Yup’ik language or other Alaska Native languages. And many of the concepts such as reliance on arrest and prison system do not apply. We are all relatives and responsible for one another,” said Lynn Hootch, Board member, AKNWRC.

“We are excited for the opportunity to apply for and continue our partnership with the NIWRC, the FVPSA-funded national Indian resource center, to potentially



serve as the Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center,” said Truett Jerue. “What is on the horizon with this appropriation is the culmination of years of unending advocacy and dedication of survivors, our families, tribal governments, and everyone’s support to change the status quo.”

One of three statutory requirements for the new state resource center is to coordinate all projects and activities with NIWRC, the FVPSA-funded national Indian resource center. As Lucy Simpson, Executive Director of NIWRC, said more than three years ago when the AKNWRC formed, “Working closely with you, we will begin to lay the groundwork necessary to remove barriers to Native women’s safety in Alaska Native villages and ensure victim safety and offender accountability. We look forward to supporting you in continuing to make life-saving changes for your women, families, and villages, and are excited about how you will inspire your sister tribes and indigenous peoples in the lower 48, as well as internationally.”

The appropriation for an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center opens a door for not only Alaska Natives but for the nation to learn indigenous-based approaches that may also assist in their organizational efforts. “We are so excited for this opportunity for the new resource center to build capacity and engage Alaska tribal village governments in developing village-based responses to domestic violence and support networking and coalition building between village-based advocates,” said Truett Jerue. “For tribes across Alaska, it also opens the door to build relations with indigenous peoples across the country.”

“Alaska Native tribes face unique challenges and require additional training and technical assistance to enhance statewide capacity to respond to domestic violence affecting tribal and Alaska Native populations. The \$1 million increase to establish an Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence would build capacity to engage villages in developing local responses to domestic violence and support critical networking and coalition building between village-based advocates and tribes across the state.”

–FY 2017 Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees

Today I Wear Red: First National Day of Awareness

On May 5th, Native women and allies across the United States and internationally organized to take action through numerous walks and post individual statements on Facebook, Twitter, and websites. The actions culminated a two-year organizing effort joined by more than 200 organizations to create a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.

"Resolution 60 passed the Senate by unanimous consent on May 3, two days before the day chosen as the National Day of Awareness in the United States. May 5th was selected by the Montana delegation because it is the birthday of Hanna Harris who went missing in 2013 on the fourth of July weekend here in Lame Deer," said Lucy Simpson, NIWRC Executive Director. "We are excited at the tremendous response to honor missing and murdered Native women and girls, the increased awareness, and organizing taking place."

Images of women wearing red, red dresses hanging at the front of homes and offices, and various art installations acknowledged the first National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.

"The following hashtags garnered well over 2 million impressions by midnight of the first National Day of Awareness," said Rebecca Balog, NIWRC staff member. "#MMIWG and #NationalDayofAwareness were used nationally and internationally to make statements of awareness of the crisis we face as Native women. Hundreds of family members posted their own photos wearing red on May 5th, sharing stories of their missing (and oftentimes murdered) grandmothers, mothers, aunties, sisters, nieces, cousins, or friends. The participation was overwhelming. Among the many participants who sent messages of thanks on this day, one wrote, "Thank you for bringing this issue to light. It's never easy to talk about or accept, but knowing there are others like us makes me feel a lot less alone."





Photo courtesy of Jessica Karin Photography

Today I Wear Red: Okmulgee, Oklahoma

The Mvskoke Women's Leadership (MWL) is committed to raising awareness of missing and murdered Native women and girls, especially our Mvskoke sisters.

On May 5, MWL hosted a prayer circle in honor of our missing and murdered sisters at the College of the Muscogee Nation. We collected names of friends and family members who are missing or were murdered and presented our Ribbon Comb Project, which serves as a reminder of missing and murdered Mvskoke sisters. Mvskoke women have traditionally worn ribbons during our Green Corn Ceremonies. MWL will be adding a red ribbon for every murdered Mvskoke sister, a white ribbon for every missing Mvskoke sister, and a pink ribbon for every missing sister returned home. The ribbons were placed in a silver comb traditionally worn at the back of a Mvskoke woman's head.

—Cherrah Giles, Chairwoman,
Mvskoke Women's Leadership

Today I Wear Red: Lame Deer, Montana

In Lame Deer, MT, on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, a walk for the National Day of Awareness was organized by Melinda Harris Limberhand, mother of Hanna Harris, and family. Hanna's extended family, Senator Steve Daines, the tribal liaison for Senator Jon Tester, tribal leadership, community members, and advocates joined the walk. The NIWRC national office is located in Lame Deer and NIWRC was honored to join the walkers and provide the meal afterwards for all participants.

—Lucy Simpson, NIWRC, Executive Director.



Today is a meaningful day to commemorate Hanna's life and the lives of others in Indian communities with similar stories, many of which go untold and unreported. We stand together as a nation, in solidarity to say this epidemic of missing and murdered Native women and girls must stop.

—Senator Steve Daines

Today I Wear Red: Akwesasne, New York



May 5, 2017 National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women pursuant to Tribal Council Resolution (TCR) 2017-23 signed by the Tribal Council on Onerahtókha/April 23, 2017. Tribal Council expressed its support for the federal resolution by passage of the same in TCR 2017-23; which calls for education and public awareness on May 5th to demonstrate solidarity with the families continuing to deal with the loss of a loved one. Community events took place to help educate and raise awareness, as well as to commemorate the lives of missing and murdered women and girls.

Seven Dancers Coalition along with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe in Akwesasne, NY collaborated and combined their two events. The day began with Chantel Henderson, a survivor of being abducted twice, and now turned advocate and activist, presenting at Seven Dancers Coalition with the Three Sisters Program (below left).



Top Right: Saint Regis Mohawk Tribes' Awareness event located in the lacrosse box at Generations Park, in Akwesasne, NY. This event was led by our council voicing their concern and willingness to help educate and raise awareness, as well as to commemorate the lives of missing and murdered women and girls.

Above: Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Chief, Matthew Rourke and Akwesasne Mohawk Police Services police chief Leanne O'Brien holding hands with Chantel Henderson. We asked local law enforcement to participate in this action campaign to recognize the victims and to bring awareness to the issue of Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls to a wider audience.

Today I Wear Red: Pine Ridge, Oglala Lakota Indian Nation

Hecel Wasagyah Unyapi kte—We will stay strong

During a Four Directions Walk, more than 100 people gathered at the Sacred Heart Church hall to speak out about their loved ones who went missing or were murdered. Many tears flowed as families spoke of their experiences and trauma.

In the last five years, a number of women have gone missing or were found murdered. Organizers compiled a list of 16 names of missing and murdered tribal members. Two tribal members, Larissa Lonehill and Alex Vasquez, are still missing.

Suzanne Kills Back spoke of her little sister, Sharon Kills Back, who was abducted 32 years ago. She was found murdered in Texas. She told the families in mourning, there is hope for closure and to remember to keep them in prayer. It took 20 years and six months before her little sister's killer was found.

Darla Black, Oglala Sioux Tribe's vice president, held the Wiping of Tears Ceremony for the mourners and spoke of the need for awareness and education. Recently, a young Lakota girl was almost abducted by a truck driver near

Rapid City when she tried to catch a ride home to the reservation. Fortunately, she managed to get away and find safety.

Larissa Lonehill, 21, was last seen on October 2, 2016, in Rapid City. She has not been heard from since. Lisa Lonehill, Larissa's mother, who attended the event said, "I miss my daughter every day and hope they will be able to find her."

Donna Salomon, Oglala Sioux Tribe's secretary, spoke for the family of Jessie Waters, who died on April 30, 2015. Jessie was with child and a young mother with two sons, a very caring woman. "How she was taken from us is what hurts the most," said Salomon.

Sam Long, father of Hanna Harris, spoke of the pain of losing a loved one and said Hanna would be 25 years old on that day. He spoke about what Hanna loved to do—fancy dance, rodeo—and her plans to join the military. "We chose today to honor and remember our loved ones," said Long. "All over, people are doing events such as this for awareness and to remember them."

Two miniature dresses representing Emily Blue Bird and Hanna Harris were present during the event.

The traveling display is being developed by Native Women's Society of the Great Plains as one of their projects to build awareness and education in grassroots communities regarding the epidemic of missing and murdered Native women and the need to establish a protocol for when a loved one goes missing.

"We need to keep saying their names and seek justice for their families. Their lives mattered," said Amanda Takes War Bonnet, Education Specialist for Native Women's Society of the Great Plains. "There is no real data on the number of women who go missing in Indian country; we need to be their voice."

Karen Red Star, the tribe's health education director, who collaborated with the tribe's employee assistance program, the vice president's office, Sacred Shawl Society, and OST Victims Services to organize the event, also drafted a proclamation that was signed by the president of the tribe. The proclamation declared May 5th as a day of remembrance for the Murdered and Missing Native Women, Children, and Men of the Oglala Nation.



Keep up to date with the NIWRC e-newsletter

Beyond the Shelter Doors
Advocate!



Fixing a Broken System: NCAI Resolution on Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls

In response to the tragic disappearances and murders of Native women, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) passed a resolution at its last annual meeting. The resolution recognizes the crisis in the destruction of human lives, the toll on tribal families and communities, and the danger it poses to the future of Indian nations.

"This crisis is not a new one. Native women became vulnerable to violence over hundreds of years due to the attacks on tribal governments and their ability to protect women," said Cherrah Giles, Board Chair, NIWRC. "Clearly, we have a long road to restore the safety of Native women, but with the passage of VAWA over 20 years ago tribes received the first resources to respond to violence against women. VAWA has also strengthened tribal authority to respond to the violence."

The disappearances and murders are the end result of a broken system that has failed Native women. The federal and state criminal systems do not, and cannot, provide the level of local response that is needed to protect Native women. Many times, the federal and state focus is on individual staff, the need for training, and increased personnel. While these issues are important, the reality is that the 229 Alaska Native villages and 335 American Indian tribes need a local immediate tribal response. As one grieving mother

stated, "We cannot wait for the system to be fixed. We need help now. I have five grandchildren to take care of, to raise."

The NCAI resolution highlights immediate steps the federal government can take to increase the response and also help grieving families and tribal communities. The resolution reads:

The NCAI does hereby resolve to advocate for changes to increase safety for Native women to address the crisis of missing and murdered Native women and girls by the federal government, with agencies including but not limited to the Departments of Justice, Interior, and Health and Human Services, including actions such as:

- To review, revise, and create law enforcement and justice protocols appropriate to the disappearance of Native women and girls, including inter-jurisdictional issues; and

- To provide increased victim services to the families and community members of the disappeared or murdered Native woman such as counseling for the children of the disappeared, burial assistance, and community walks and healing ceremonies; and
- Coordination of efforts across federal departments to increase the response to the disappearance or murder of Native women and girls; and
- Coordinate efforts in consultation with Indian tribes' efforts to increase the response of state governments, where appropriate, to cases of disappearance or murder of Native women or girls.



The resolution provides an overview for basic reforms at the federal level. These are basic steps that begin to address this crisis and cause everyone to question why

they do not exist. Why for example do Indian tribes not have a dedicated funding stream under the Victims of Crime Act? Why, when the murder rate for Native women is 10 times the rate of other populations, does no protocol exist for law enforcement? Why are no response or efforts being coordinated across criminal justice agencies and departments?

A Conversation with the Field: Understanding Missing and Murdered Native Women—Organizing a Response

As advocates, we know that Native women often go missing and are murdered at higher rates than any other populations of women. In some tribal communities, the U.S. Department of Justice found that American Indian women face murder rates more than 10 times the national average. Over the last year, the national movement for the safety of Native women organized to create a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls. This effort included nearly 200 tribal, state, and national organizations. May 5, 2017, marked the first national day of awareness with tribal awareness and justice walks taking place across the United States. In 2005, the grassroots movement for the safety of Native women led the struggle to include within the Violence Against Women Act a separate title called Safety for Indian Women. While awareness of this national issue has increased over the last decade, more must be done at all levels. To organize and respond to an issue, it must be first be acknowledged and understood. The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center is organizing dedicated discussions with advocates and tribal leaders concerning missing and murdered Native women, ways to increase national awareness, and ways to organize to end such violence. If you would like to discuss the issue of missing and murdered Native women, please email Jax Agtuca at JAgtuca@NIWRC.org.

A Conversation with the Field: Understanding the Issue of Missing & Murdered Native Women and Organizing a Response



In 2005, the movement for the safety of Native women led the struggle to include within the Violence Against Women Act a separate title called Safety for Indian Women. One of the findings of this title was that during the period of 1979 through 1992, homicide was the third-leading cause of death of Indian females aged 15 to 34, and 75 percent were killed by family members or acquaintances. In some tribal communities, the U.S. Department of Justice has found that American Indian women face murder rates that are more than 10 times the national average. Over the last year, the national movement for the safety of Native women organized to create a National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls. May 5, 2017 marked the first national day of awareness with tribal awareness and justice walks taking place across the United States. While awareness of this national issue has increased over the last decade, more must be done at the local, regional, national and international level. To organize and respond to an issue, we must first acknowledge and understand it. Please join us on June 12, 2017, for a Conversation with the Field to discuss the issue of missing and murdered Native women, including ways to increase our national awareness and organizing efforts to end such violence. For more information, please contact Paula Julian at pjulian@niwrc.org

This event is made possible by Grant Number #90-EV-0452-01-00 from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Congressional Resolution Aimed at Creating Awareness on Missing and Murdered American Indian and Alaska Native Women

(February 15, 2017, Washington, D.C.) – The reported rates of abduction and murder of American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls are alarming. However, Native women advocates say too often these terrible crimes are ignored by law enforcement and the media. Three sister organizations hosted a congressional briefing in the Senate Hart Building to inform members of Congress and national policymakers of the urgent need to address the crisis of missing and murdered Native women and girls in the United States.

“Indigenous women go missing twice—once in real life and a second time in the news,” said Amanda Takes War Bonnet, Public Education Specialist of the Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains. Takes War Bonnet was part of a panel during the Moving Ahead in Addressing Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Efforts to Address Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls congressional briefing, held February 15, to provide legislators and the public with an overview of this urgent issue.

“These are not new crimes, but a pattern of crimes that has existed for decades upon decades,” said Terri Henry, Secretary of State, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Co-Chair, NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women, and Board Chair, Indian Law Resource Center. Henry says colonization and the policies that followed have created circumstances of vulnerability for Native women and children. “As governments, we are here today to begin the process of acknowledging missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women so that as governments we can act to stop these horrific crimes.”

To help bring attention to these tragic, often undocumented crimes, Montana Senators Steve Daines and Jon Tester introduced Senate Resolution 60 on Monday, Feb. 13 – a resolution calling for the designation of May 5, 2017, as a “National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.” May 5th was chosen because it is the birthday of Hanna Harris, a Northern Cheyenne woman who went missing in July 2013 and was found murdered five days later.

“We all know someone,” said Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director, Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center. “I remember as a child hearing my mother, my aunts, and their friends at the kitchen table lowering their voices and whispering about those women in our families who went missing or were murdered.” Alaska Natives are 16% of the population in Alaska, but 28% of the murder victims according to statistics. “I hope this resolution will increase awareness and alert villages and programs to develop protocols for an immediate response. I hope it will inform the criminal justice system’s response to view a disappearance for what it is—extremely dangerous.”

“Before we can address and end any injustice, we must first acknowledge the injustice,” said Cherrah Giles, Chairwoman, Board of Directors, National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC). “This Senate Resolution is the beginning of that acknowledgment. Stand with us on May 5 to acknowledge and honor Indian women who are missing or murdered. As we come to understand the roots of violence against Indian women, we can continue to remove the barriers to their safety.”

The National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, the Indian Law Resource Center, and the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center co-sponsored the briefing in cooperation with Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. Senator Murkowski, along with Senators Daines and Tester, spoke at the briefing. Juana Majel Dixon, Co-Chair, NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women, and member of the Traditional Legislative Counsel, Pauma Band of Luiseno Mission Indians, gave the traditional welcome and opening prayer. The NIWRC organizes regular Hill briefings to inform members of Congress, national policymakers and federal agencies of national issues impacting the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women.

Hill Briefing Online Resources

Restoration February 2017 Magazine: <https://goo.gl/8LgEr2>
NIWRC Facebook Photo Album of briefing: <https://goo.gl/qMIQk8>
Indian Law Resource Center’s Hill Briefing: <https://goo.gl/5bqA7B>

Tribal Community Response When a Woman Is Missing: A Toolkit for Action

Coping with the disappearance of a loved one or community member is very difficult. The fact that American Indian and Alaska Native women experience higher rates of domestic violence and sexual assault than any other population of women in the United States has broad ramifications. One consequence of this reality is that domestic and sexual violence occurs on a spectrum of abusive behavior and can include abduction and murder. If a woman you know is missing, taking immediate action is very important. The quicker you respond, the faster she may be located and provided the help needed.

Is the disappearance voluntary?

One important factor to consider in preparing to respond is whether the disappearance is voluntary. A woman may be missing because she intentionally decided to cut ties to family and friends to avoid future harm to herself and loved ones. A woman may have decided, based on their specific circumstances, that the safest option is to leave and place herself, and possibly children, beyond the reach of her abuser. Disconnecting from family, friends, and community is a dramatic and life-changing decision and does not occur without significant reasons, one of which may be prevention of further abuse.

Missing because of force and violence?

The harsh reality is that many Native women who are victimized by domestic violence disappear, are abducted, or are murdered by their abusers. The Department of Justice reports that Native women are stalked and murdered at higher rates than other populations of women in the United States.

The lack of adequate law enforcement in tribal communities increases the importance of communities being informed and prepared to immediately respond to a disappearance. The following actions may increase awareness of the steps to take and help prepare tribal communities to respond during this very difficult time.

Why develop a response before confronted with a disappearance?

The disappearance of every Native woman requires an immediate response. The hours and minutes following a disappearance count. In order to respond immediately to a disappearance, it is recommended that advocacy programs develop a protocol ahead of time for when a woman goes missing. The development of a protocol will allow programs to

understand how to contact law enforcement agencies and other important steps. In developing a protocol, programs and organizations might consider the actions, issues, and concerns discussed below.

Should law enforcement be contacted? By phone or in-person?

Contact the local law enforcement where the disappearance occurred as soon as possible. The law enforcement agency will differ from tribe to tribe and in some cases multiple agencies will need to be contacted. This might include tribal law enforcement, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the FBI, county police, and in Alaska the village public safety officer and state trooper, or a combination of these agencies. In addition, based on the circumstances, notifying tribal law enforcement in the home community of the missing woman might also be important. While many Native women live away from the community they consider home, they stay in touch and reach out to family and friends. When contacting law enforcement, provide as much detail as possible that could help establish the identity of the missing person. Write down the names of the people you speak to and request copies of any documents completed, including the missing persons report.

Why document and track events? Dates and times are important

The steps you take and contacts you make with law enforcement are very important to document. Keeping a journal will help you remember conversations with law enforcement and other agencies. This process makes an already difficult situation less stressful, and writing down the dates and times, names and telephone numbers of everyone you speak to will be highly valuable. It is also recommended to complete a calendar at the end of each day of the events or developments.

Why issue an alert?

A press release, radio announcement, Facebook post can alert the community

Informing, maintaining, and increasing public awareness of the disappearance is very important. The alert, bulletin, or flier circulated broadens the number of people who can help locate the missing woman. The alert should provide basic information about the person and how to report any information to the law enforcement agency or community member serving as a contact person.

Why organize community actions?

A vigil, search, justice walk, or march provides a positive anchor for family and community to support the woman who is missing

Many tribal communities are closely related and organized based upon family relationships and clans with long histories dating back over generations. Respect, prayer, and ceremonies are strengths of tribal communities, and often vigils and similar

events are held for the person who has disappeared. These actions also support the family and those left behind during a very difficult time. Justice walks and marches are common in the effort to increase the response of law enforcement and also hold local and federal law enforcement accountable for, in some cases, a failed response. In the disappearances of many Native women, it has been the families or community members who have conducted a search for their loved one. Unfortunately, in some cases, the walks and marches for justice are the only closure a family might have after a Native woman goes missing.

Take care of yourself and loved ones

In organizing to respond to issues concerning missing and murdered indigenous women, NIWRC encourages each person to remember self-care. Addressing the reality of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women is very difficult and can create high levels of stress. Stay connected to friends and family. Rely on your tribal beliefs and practices for support as a foundation for these efforts.



Important Steps to Take When a Native Woman Goes Missing



Family Violence Prevention and Services Act

BATTERED WOMEN'S GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT

The battered women's grassroots movement of the 1970's helped to end the silence and begin addressing the injustices that victims of domestic violence have faced in the U.S. The movement's purposeful engagement with local, state, tribal and the federal governments have resulted in changes in laws, policies and social norms over the past 45 years.

Engagement by the grassroots movement seen in early federal events related to domestic violence included a consultation, "Battered Women: Issues of Public Policy" in 1978, during which Tillie Black Bear, a member of the Sicangu Lakota, and other advocates provided testimony to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and a series of Congressional hearings in 1983 and 1984. In 1984, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) was signed into law by President Reagan (PL 98-457). FVPSA has since been reauthorized seven times, including twice as part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and five times as part of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), most recently in 2010 that expired Sept. 30, 2015 (PL 111-320). Based on the definition of domestic violence in the statute, domestic violence and intimate partner violence are used interchangeably.

BACKGROUND

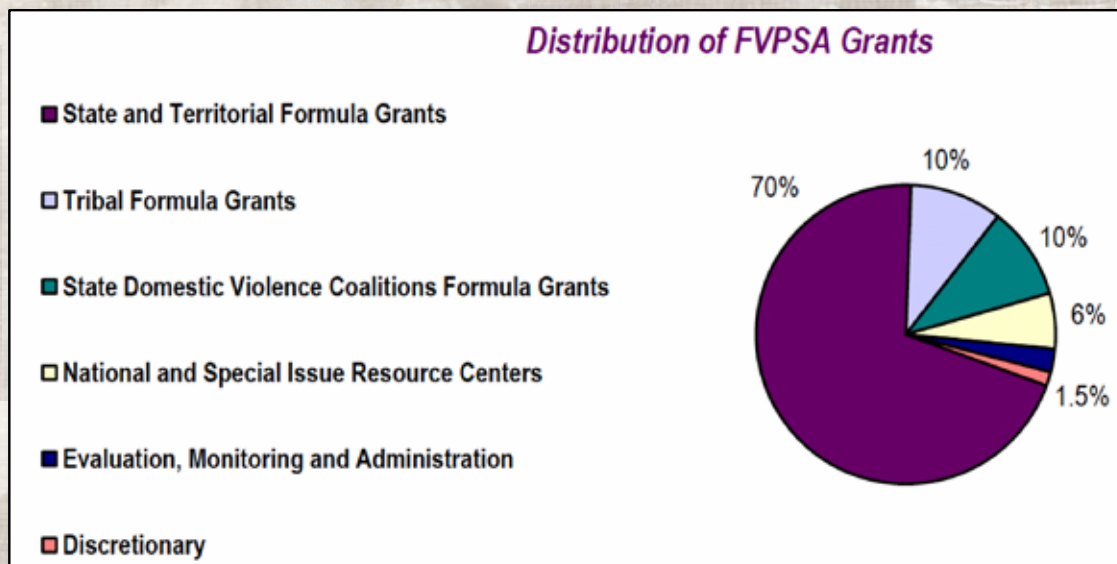
FVPSA is the primary federal funding source dedicated to supporting immediate shelter and supportive services for victims of family violence, domestic violence, or dating violence and their dependents. Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children, Youth and Families, FVPSA supports these activities through state and tribal shelter programs, state domestic violence coalitions, training and technical assistance service providers and the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

OVERVIEW

Of the \$135 million appropriated for FVPSA's shelter and supportive services in 2015, \$13.5 million in FVPSA formula grants were distributed based on population to more than 200 tribes in 26 states. Local tribal domestic violence programs served 30,452 victims of domestic violence and their children. This is 2.3 percent of clients served by FVPSA-funded programs. Ninety percent of adults served were female, and 10 percent were male.

Of the \$135 million appropriated to FVPSA in 2015, over \$94.5 million FVPSA formula grants were distributed based on population to every state, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories. FVPSA State and Tribal Grants fund close to 1,600 domestic violence shelters and 1,300 non-residential service sites. Each year, local domestic violence programs, including tribal programs, serve about 1.3 million victims of domestic violence and their children. 92.5 percent of the adults served were female, and 7.5 percent were male.

Distribution of FVPSA funding is as follows:



The legislation mandates that “not less than 10 percent” of the annual appropriation shall be used to support Indian tribes to achieve the purposes of the Act. FVPSA funds include support for emergency shelter, crisis hotlines, counseling services, victim assistance initiatives, and other similar services. Some of the FVPSA state fund requirements govern the FVPSA tribal funds.

With funding under FVPSA many Indian tribes have developed tribal programs to provide a spectrum of services, including: shelter; safety planning; counseling; legal services; child care and services for children; career planning; life skills training; community education and public awareness; and other necessities, such as clothing, food, and transportation. **Yet, despite these advances, funding and services remain nonexistent for over one-half of all Indian nations.** Given this lack of resources and the unaddressed high rates of domestic violence against Indian women, including 38% of victims needing necessary services but unable to receive any,¹ Indian tribes and tribal coalitions strongly support both reauthorization of and an increase in FVPSA funding specifically to meet the unmet needs of tribal victims of domestic violence.

For more information, please go to the Family & Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services.²

HOW FVPSA LINKS WITH OTHER FEDERAL LAWS

FVPSA is also linked with other federal laws as noted above. With the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, Congress broadened the federal response to domestic violence to provide additional resources for victim services and focus on the law enforcement and legal response to domestic violence and other crimes involving violence against women – sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and for Indian tribes also sex trafficking. In addition, FVPSA includes victim assistance with accessing other federal and state financial assistance programs, including the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), created and authorized in 1984 under the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) which has 2 programs – the Victim Compensation and Victim Assistance Formula Grants Programs, currently awarded to states and territories. In recent years, between 40-50% of victims served by these 2 programs were domestic violence victims.

NCAI Resolution Supporting FVPSA Reauthorization

During the Atlanta NCAI Annual convention in October 2014, the NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women worked with tribal leaders, advocates, and tribal coalitions on Resolution #ATL-14-028,³ which supports reauthorization of FVPSA. The resolution included support for several important tribal amendments. The NCAI Task Force voted unanimously in support of the resolution that will provide direction to NCAI staff and the NCAI Task Force to work toward reauthorization of FVPSA.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NCAI does hereby resolve to support reauthorization of the Family Violence Services Protection Act and increased FVPSA funding under the Health Services Appropriations bill, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI does hereby resolve to support amendments to increase the tribal set-aside in FVPSA;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI does hereby resolve to support amendments to the FVPSA to include Tribal Domestic Violence Coalitions;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI does hereby resolve to support a National Native Hotline/ Helpline developed and run by Native advocates to provide information and culturally appropriate support and assistance to Native adult and youth victims of family violence, domestic violence, or dating violence.

Continued grassroots organizing and engagement with government officials is critical to effecting ongoing change and ending domestic violence.

For more information, please contact us at policy@niwrc.org.

- 1 <https://nij.gov/journals/277/Pages/violence-against-american-indians-alaska-natives.aspx>
- 2 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/programs/family-violence-prevention-services>
- 3 <https://goo.gl/4S1XtW>

The Violence Against Women Act, 1994–2013

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), originally sponsored by Senators Biden and Hatch, was enacted in 1994 as a result of national grassroots organizing by battered women and advocates, including Indian women who organized to engage state and federal systems to hold governments accountable to address the nationwide statistics, crisis, and seriousness of violence against women—domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The Act’s passage marked the federal government’s historic acknowledgment of the extent and pervasiveness of violence against women and the need for more dedicated resources for law enforcement and judicial responses to these crimes. Over the last two decades, VAWA has grown into an historic Act reshaping the laws, policies, and responses of federal, tribal, and state governments.

VAWA and American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages

The VAWA has been reauthorized three times: 2000, 2005, and 2013. The current VAWA sunsets and must be reauthorized by the end of 2018. The growth of the national grassroots movement has seen important advancements over the last 20 years with each reauthorization of VAWA, including the following highlights:

- 1994–VAWA included a dedicated funding stream of 4% of the available funding for American Indians and Alaska Natives tribes with a statutory purpose of “developing, enlarging, or strengthening programs addressing the needs and circumstances of Indian tribes in dealing with violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault and domestic violence.”
- 2000–VAWA increased the tribal dedicated funding stream to 10%, provided increased clarity regarding tribal court protection orders and enforcement, and created a tribal coalition grant program.
- 2005–VAWA included a Safety for Indian Women Title, recognizing the unique legal relationship of the United States to Indian tribes and women. Congress explicitly provided that the title was “to strengthen the capacity of Indian tribes to exercise their sovereign authority to respond to violent crimes committed against women.” It authorized the creation of a single VAWA tribal grant program, creation of a tribal unit and Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, and mandated an annual tribal-federal VAWA consultation. VAWA 2005 also included dating violence under the VAWA as a purpose area.
- 2013–VAWA included an historic amendment affirming tribal inherent authority over non-Indians committing certain acts of domestic violence or dating violence or violation of certain protection orders in the Indian country of the tribe, provided increased funding to the tribal coalitions program, and recognized sex trafficking as a purpose area.

The above amendments to federal law highlight an increasing awareness of the need to address violence against Native women and the critically important role of Indian nations in the full implementation of VAWA. The statistics among Native populations represent the ongoing effect that colonization has had on Indian people and nations. The federal Indian legal framework is devastatingly complex and one that Native victims must confront and navigate daily for safety and protection. However, resources are scarce, and culturally appropriate resources are practically non-existent. Many barriers and questions present themselves concerning jurisdiction, law enforcement availability and/or funding, lack of culturally appropriate services and victim advocates to assist the victim, and whether or not emergency shelters and rape crisis responses are available.

More than **4 in 5** American Indian and Alaska Native women (**84.3%**) have experienced violence in their lifetime, including:

56.1% who have experienced **sexual violence**

55.5% who have experienced **physical violence** by an intimate partner

48.4% who have experienced **stalking**

66.4% who have experienced **psychological aggression** by an intimate partner

Source: (NIJ, 2016)

VAWA 2018 Reauthorization Efforts Begin

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 was signed into law by President Obama on March 7, 2013, for fiscal years 2013–2018. The last three reauthorizations—2000, 2005, 2013—have expanded protections for American Indian and Alaska Native women increasing services and further recognizing tribal authority to protect women. “We have achieved important foundational advances with each of three reauthorizations of VAWA over the past years,” said Dorma Sahneyah, NIWRC, Director of Training Technical Assistance. Despite these advances, many Indian tribes struggle with systemic injustices posing barriers to the safety of Native women under the five VAWA-identified crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking.

It is with the understanding of these barriers, along with the dedication and desire to remedy them, that grassroots advocates, organizations, and tribal leaders have successfully amended past VAWA reauthorizations to be relevant to Indian nations. “In 2000 and 2005, I recall, as Chief Prosecutor of the Hopi Tribe, encountering roadblocks on a regular basis to my work to achieve justice,” said Sahneyah. “We identified issues and worked to amend VAWA. We also advocated for passage of the Tribal Law and Order Act to include restoration of tribal jurisdiction; however, this didn’t occur until VAWA 2013. This effort involved providing testimony before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. This same approach is needed for VAWA 2018 to enhance the safety for Native women and to hold offenders accountable.”

VAWA 2018 reauthorization efforts are currently underway with the following activities:

- Biweekly calls of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women (NTF). The discussions focus on issues and policy concerns that directly relate to and intersect with domestic violence and sexual assault.
- The NTF VAWA subcommittees including the VAWA tribal subcommittee have formed with representation from both NIWRC and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).

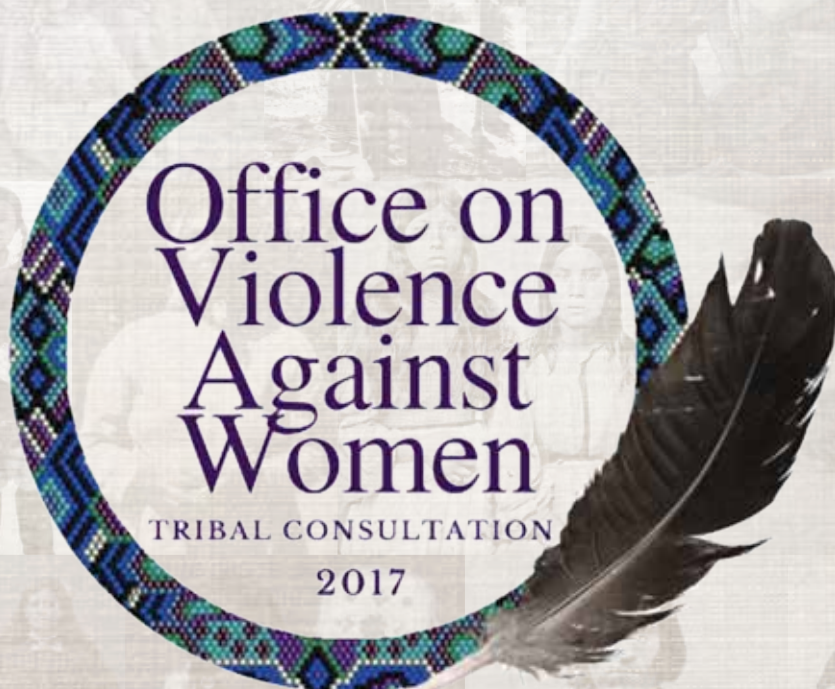
- The NTF coordinated an initial VAWA 2018 meeting with Senators Grassley, Feinstein, and Murray to provide an opportunity to educate Hill staffers about intersectional issues, successes, and gaps in the current VAWA legislation.
- The NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women began discussions about VAWA 2018 at the 2017 Executive Council Winter Session. This discussion focused on tribal issues and concerns.

Like previous VAWA reauthorizations, there will be opportunities for local, regional, and national discussions to examine current and emerging issues impacting the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women. The issues identified by the grassroots movement provide valuable insight and inform the dialogue with national policymakers and members of Congress. Going forward, the following organizations will play important roles in collaboration with their networks, stakeholders, advocates, and community members:

- The NTF and VAWA subcommittees will continue to hold biweekly calls and will attend bipartisan meetings with Senators and Representatives to educate them on specific intersectional and policy issues, including tribal challenges and implications.
- The NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women will convene a session on June 12, 2017, to discuss VAWA 2018 reauthorization at the 2017 Mid-Year Conference in Uncasville, CT.

If you have any comments or would like to be included in the reauthorization process, please do not hesitate to contact NIWRC’s DC Policy Advisor, Caroline LaPorte, at claporte@niwrc.org. Caroline will be happy to answer your questions and provide further assistance and information about the VAWA 2018 reauthorization.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



12th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation

to be held **October 3-4, 2017**, at the We-Ko-Pa Resort and Conference Center on the reservation of the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation in Fountain Hills, Arizona.

Please be sure to visit **ovwconsultation.org** for additional information.



Native Village of Emmonak, Alaska, April 25-26 - The Yup'ik Women's Coalition with support from the Office on Violence Against Women organized the first conference on sexual assault for the region.

Specialty Institute: “Strengthening Indigenous Advocacy by Honoring our Sacred Connections to Earth Mother”



Minneapolis, MN, June 2017–The National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center fulfilling its commitment to offer Indigenous approaches to training and technical assistance, organized a Specialty Institute focused on the connections between violence against Earth Mother and violence against Indigenous peoples.

“The Institute was based on our belief that there is no separation between Indigenous peoples and the land we walk on, we are one with Earth Mother,” said Dorma Sahneyah, NIWRC Director of Training and Technical Assistance. “Tribal communities suffer when our most valuable resources, our people and our land, are exploited. We looked at the parallels of violence in tribal communities - domestic and sexual violence and assault against our land, the disappearance (missing and murdered) of our women-children and our vanishing precious resources.”

The Institute was designed to provide the opportunity to discuss and increase the understanding of how crime, including domestic violence, assault, murder, rape and sex trafficking against Native women and children comes from a long history of violence perpetuated against Native women and the land.

“Recognizing that services our people need often are lacking or inaccessible, participants discussed how to increase and improve available services, including shelters, culturally appropriate interventions and preventions, partnerships and collaborations, and positive changes in law and policy,” said Sahneyah. “Participant engagement at the Specialty Institute demonstrated the need for such indigenous based training opportunities, which NIWRC strives to provide.”

The NIWRC organizing team for the Specialty Institute included Dorma Sahneyah, Tara Azure and Gwendolyn Packard.

Upcoming NIWRC Webinars

AUGUST 2017

“Reviving the Movement: Voices of Advocates” **Wednesday, August 23, 2017**, at 1:00-2:30pm MDT.

Be sure to register and mark your calendars to keep up to date with the latest news and resource information to end gender-based violence in your tribal community. Webinars offer video-streaming training material through live interactive platform and include special guests with downloadable handout resource material.

Can’t make a scheduled webinar? No problem. All webinars are recorded and archived and available for the public! Please visit www.niwrc.org/events to register, watch recorded webinars and keep be on the lookout for new additions. We will announce availability of following previously recorded webinars before respective awareness months.

The Victims of Crime Act

The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) was enacted in 1984 and established the Crime Victims Fund (CVF or Fund). The CVF is unique in that it is funded only through the collection of criminal fines, forfeited appearance bonds, penalties, and assessments. These dollars derive from offenders convicted of federal crimes and resulting fines and penalties, not taxpayers. While Congress does not appropriate funds for VOCA, it does determine how much can be released or distributed each year from the CVF. The 2013 balance of the CVF was over \$13 billion.

Overview

The idea behind the Act was that the money collected by the government from criminals should be utilized to help victims of their crimes. VOCA dollars are primarily distributed to support two important types of programs:

- Crime victim compensation programs, which pay many of the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by victims as a result of crime (including medical costs, mental health counseling, funeral and burial costs, and lost wages or loss of support), and

- Victim assistance programs, which provide victims with support and guidance in the aftermath of crime (including but not limited to crisis intervention, counseling, emergency shelter, criminal justice advocacy, and emergency transportation).

Each state and territory is recognized under VOCA to receive a dedicated annual amount for the above purposes. Formula grants to all states and territories are based largely on population. Of the amount available for state victim assistance grants, each state receives a base amount of \$500,000 (\$200,000 for territories) and the remainder proportional to population.

VOCA Generally Not Available to Indian Tribes

Unlike states and territories, tribes were not included in the 1984 VOCA legislation. As a result, there is no dedicated tribal funding stream under the VOCA for Indian tribes to administer to compensate and provide assistance to tribal victims of crime. Rather, tribes must access these funds through one of two grant

Victims of Crime Act

Rebuilding Lives through Assistance and Compensation

Source: https://www.ovc.gov/images/VOCA_Chart.jpg



sources. The first is what is known as a pass-through from the state where the tribe is located. The second is by competing for very limited grant resources administered by the Department of Justice under the Children's Justice Act and OVC discretionary grants. These small, discretionary grant programs cannot be compared to the current state formula program.

Key Issues for Tribes

Since 2003, the NCAI Task Force has recommended that Congress create a funding stream within the CVF for Indian tribes. American Indian and Alaska Natives experience the highest crime victimization rates in the country, yet are largely left out of the programs funded through the VOCA. The NCAI resolution expressed the following concerns based on information from the United States Department of Justice:

- Between the years of 2011-2014, programs that served American Indians/Alaska Native survivors of violent crime received less than 0.5% of the CVF annually.
- In 2013, more than 60% of states with Indian tribes did not make a single subgrant, meaning that Native communities and survivors of violent crime received little assistance, none of which was likely to be culturally relevant or competent.

Currently, a Dear Colleague Letter for a tribal dedicated funding stream under VOCA is being led

by Senators Mike Crapo and Dianne Feinstein. The VOCA Dear Colleague Letter asks that appropriators establish a funding stream for tribes. For the last three years, Congress has considered amending the VOCA. In 2015, Senators John Barrasso and Jon Tester and other bipartisan senators on the Indian Affairs Committee introduced the SURVIVE Act to direct 5% of the overall disbursements from the CVF to tribal governments with the express purpose of meeting the needs of crime victims on tribal lands. In 2016, Representative Mike Honda (prior D-CA) and Tom Cole (R-OK) worked together to pass an amendment to the House Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill for FY 2017, directing 5% of the CVF to fund tribal governments.

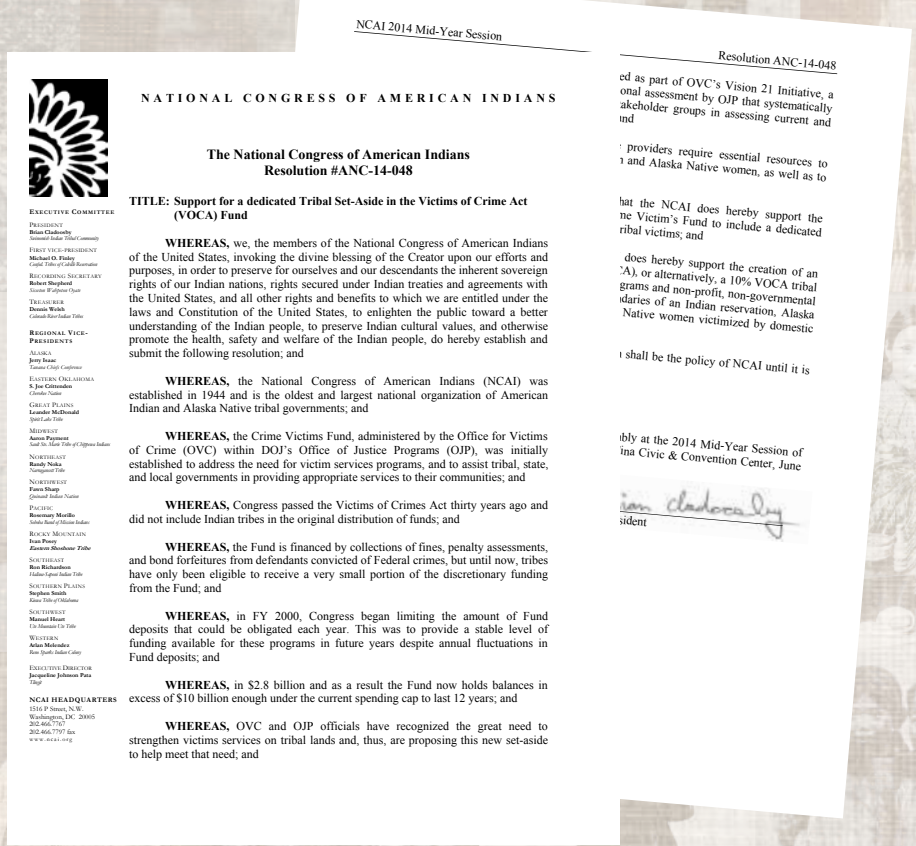
FY 2017 VOCA Distribution Is \$2.5 Billion

During the past two years, Congress has more than tripled outlays from the CVF, which reflects Congress's commitment to provide services to victims of crime. For FY 2017, the VOCA cap was set at \$2.5 billion. Even with the documented efforts above, the FY 2017 distribution did not include a dedicated stream for tribes. However, tribes and American Indian/Alaska Native survivors have not been given any access to these increases.

NCAI Resolution #ANC-14-048

TITLE: Support for a dedicated Tribal Set-Aside in the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund

Download PDF at <https://goo.gl/Sqt9zV>



Home Truth: The Story of Jessica Lenahan

Shot over the course of nine years, *Home Truth* chronicles one family's incredible pursuit of justice, shedding light on how our society responds to domestic violence and how the trauma from domestic violence can linger through generations. In 1999, Colorado mother Jessica Lenahan (formerly Gonzales) experienced every parent's worst nightmare when her three young daughters were killed after being abducted by their father in violation of a domestic violence restraining order.

Devastated, Jessica sued her local police department for failing to adequately enforce her restraining order despite her repeated calls for help that night. Determined

to make sure her daughters did not die in vain, Jessica pursues her case to the U.S. Supreme Court and an international human rights tribunal, seeking to strengthen legal rights for domestic violence victims. Meanwhile, her relationship with her one surviving child, her son Jessie, suffers, as he struggles with the tragedy in his own way.

"In 2008, Clan Star and the Indian Law Resource Center filed an amicus brief in support of Jessica Gonzales because all women and children, Indian and non-Indian alike, in the United States have the right to be protected from violence and to have protection orders enforced by law enforcement officials," said Lucy Simpson, NIWRC Executive Director. "We recognized women are denied the right to have protection orders enforced by the police. Left with great discretionary power, law enforcement officials may, and frequently do, disregard violations of protection orders. This failure to enforce protection orders leaves women unprotected and vulnerable to ongoing violence. Even though the case did not arise on Indian lands or involve a tribal protection order, it had vast implications for Indian women and the enforcement of tribal protection orders by state law enforcement officials."

The amicus brief was the first filed specifically to raise the voice of American Indian women before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. "We filed the brief to educate the Commission about the epidemic of domestic violence and sexual assault against American Indian women in the United States," said Jacqueline Agtuca, Editor of *Restoration*, and former Public Policy Director of Clan Star, Inc. "We wanted to support Jessica Gonzales who is a tribal sister and Native American, but even if she was not, we also understood the rule established by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Town of Castle Rock, Colorado v. Gonzales*, 545 U.S. 748 (2005), extended to all women in the United States, including Indian women."

Online resources:

An 8-minute video about the Lenahan case is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvPtMCrI4J4>

For additional information about the film, see <http://www.hometruthfilm.com/thefilm/>.

For additional information about the Lenahan/Castle Rock case, see the websites of the University of Miami Human Rights Clinic, the ACLU Women's Rights Project, and the Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute.

Home Truth



April 2017 International Update

By Jana L. Walker, Christopher Foley, and Karla General, Attorneys, Indian Law Resource Center

At the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, indigenous nations and indigenous women's and tribal organizations secured commitments from the UN and its member states to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Work continues to realize the important commitments set out in the World Conference Outcome Document, including but not limited to decisions to intensify efforts to address violence against indigenous women and to create new rules for indigenous governments to participate in UN processes.

UN Commission on the Status of Women (March 14-24, 2017)

The Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC), the Indian Law Resource Center, the International Mayan League/USA, the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition, and the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women's 61st session in March to make recommendations to the UN and member states on actions they can take to end violence against indigenous women. The Commission is the UN body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission designated the "Empowerment of Indigenous Women" as the Focus Area for the session, a theme suggested to the Commission by the General Assembly in the World Conference Outcome Document. This year's meetings thus provided an important international forum to raise awareness about violence against indigenous women. "We, along with our partners, were very happy to help bring the perspective of indigenous women in the United States and Guatemala to the event," said Chris Foley, attorney at the Indian Law Resource Center.

To inform the Commission, the Indian Law Resource Center submitted a joint written statement with the Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians and supported by the NIWRC and California Association of Tribal Governments. To further raise awareness, the Center joined with the AKNWRC, the International Mayan League/USA, the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and the NIWRC to sponsor an event, Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women as a Step Towards Empowerment, on March 15. The panelists addressed indigenous women's empowerment, the grassroots movement for safety for indigenous women, and

their human right to be free of violence and discrimination.

Nicole Matthews, Executive Director of the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition, spoke about research her organization had conducted regarding trafficking of indigenous women. Her presentation drew attention to the need for reliable data on the violence to develop effective programs and policy solutions.

Juanita Cabrera Lopez, Executive Director of the International Mayan League/USA, discussed the history of violence against indigenous women in Guatemala, and legislation that has been developed by indigenous women to extend state recognition and economic support to Maya midwives—traditional healers who often serve as primary responders to violence and sexual assault.

Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director, AKNWRC, addressed the challenges indigenous women face in Alaska, and the failure of state and federal law enforcement to respond to violence against indigenous women, and called for law reforms that would allow Alaska Native villages to better respond to violence in their communities.

"This problem is based on policies of colonization and laws that create barriers to the implementation of local solutions," she said. "We are demanding more resources, but we also need state and federal policy changes to create a legal framework that will let Alaska Native villages implement the changes that we need."

Two other events brought much-needed attention to the issue. On March 14, Cherrah Giles, Chairwoman of the NIWRC's Board of Directors participated in a side event sponsored by Canada and the United States. "In the United States, 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native women have been assaulted and, on some reservations, these women are facing murder rates 10 times the national average," Ms. Giles explained. On March 18, Terri Henry, Chair of the Indian Law Resource Center's Board of Directors, Secretary of State of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Co-Chair of the NCAI Force on Violence Against Women, and member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), addressed a side event sponsored by the PFII and the International Indigenous Women's Forum. Ms. Giles and Ms. Henry both



From Left to Right: Cherrah Giles. | Paula Julian, Cherrah Giles, Tami Truett Jerue, Christopher Foley, Juanita Cabrera Lopez. | Juanita Cabrera Lopez, Cherrah Giles, Nicole Matthews, Tami Truett Jerue. | Side event panel.



spoke about the legal barriers to safety embedded in U.S. law, the grassroots movement of indigenous women to change these harmful laws, and shared recommendations for UN actions to address this issue.

As a result of our efforts and the work of many other indigenous women and allies, the Commission, in its agreed conclusions for the session, acknowledged that violence against women and girls is an obstacle to gender equality, noted “the importance of the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for indigenous women and girls,” and urged states to take measures aimed at “addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and barriers . . . including violence” that indigenous women face. Additional information on the Commission’s 61st session, including copies of statements, the parallel event program, and the Commission’s agreed conclusions, is available at <http://indianlaw.org/safewomen/CSW61>.

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (April 24-May 5)

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, an advisory body to the UN Economic and Social Council, held its annual session focused on the special theme “Tenth Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: measures taken to implement the Declaration,” where the issue of violence against indigenous women was featured heavily and remains a key priority. On April 24, Cherrah Giles participated in a side event sponsored by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, Eliminating Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls Through Empowerment. Ms. Giles discussed the extreme rates of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women in the United States, the federal laws and policies that are at the root of this crisis, and the successful work at the grassroots level to address this issue and empower tribal governments. Her fellow panelists included indigenous representatives and state officials from the three countries who also shared information, best practices, and ideas about combating violence.

Participation of Indigenous Peoples’ Representative Institutions at the UN (April 26 and May 3)

In the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document, the General Assembly committed to consider ways to enable the participation of indigenous peoples’ representatives and institutions (governments) at the United Nations. Following two years of discussions and consultations with indigenous peoples and member states, the first draft of a resolution that would provide indigenous governments with the ability to attend and participate in many important meetings at the UN has now been released. This is an important development that would greatly enhance the ability of our tribal governments to advocate directly for indigenous rights, including indigenous women’s rights, at the UN. Negotiations among member states will continue over the summer. A final resolution is expected in September. The draft resolution and further information about this process is available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/participation-of-indigenous-peoples-at-the-united-nations.html>.

Upcoming Events

The Human Rights Council will hold its 35th session in Geneva from June 6-23. The Council will hold its annual full-day discussion on women’s rights during this session. The Council’s program of work and relevant materials will be published here as they become available: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session35/Pages/35RegularSession.aspx>. The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will hold its 10th session in Geneva from July 10-14, 2017. More details are available here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Pages/Session10.aspx>.



Restoration

OF NATIVE SOVEREIGNTY AND SAFETY FOR NATIVE WOMEN

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RESTORATION OF SOVEREIGNTY & SAFETY MAGAZINE, 2003-2017

Thirteen years ago during the reauthorization process of the Violence Against Women Act, several national organizations came together to take a stand for the safety of Native women: Sacred Circle National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women, Clan Star, Inc., the National Congress of American Indians, and the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. It was recognized that to fully participate in the national movement to create the changes needed to increase safety for Native women, broad communication was essential. The *Restoration of Sovereignty & Safety* magazine emerged to fulfill this task.

The *Restoration of Sovereignty & Safety* magazine is a publication dedicated to informing tribal leadership and communities of emerging issues impacting the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women. The name of the magazine, *Restoration of Sovereignty & Safety*, reflects the grassroots strategy of the Task Force that by strengthening the sovereignty of Indian nations to hold perpetrators accountable the safety of Native women will be restored. The magazine is a joint project of the National Congress of American Indians Task Force on Violence Against Women and the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. It is produced and made available during national NCAI conventions and the annual USDOJ Tribal Consultation on VAWA.

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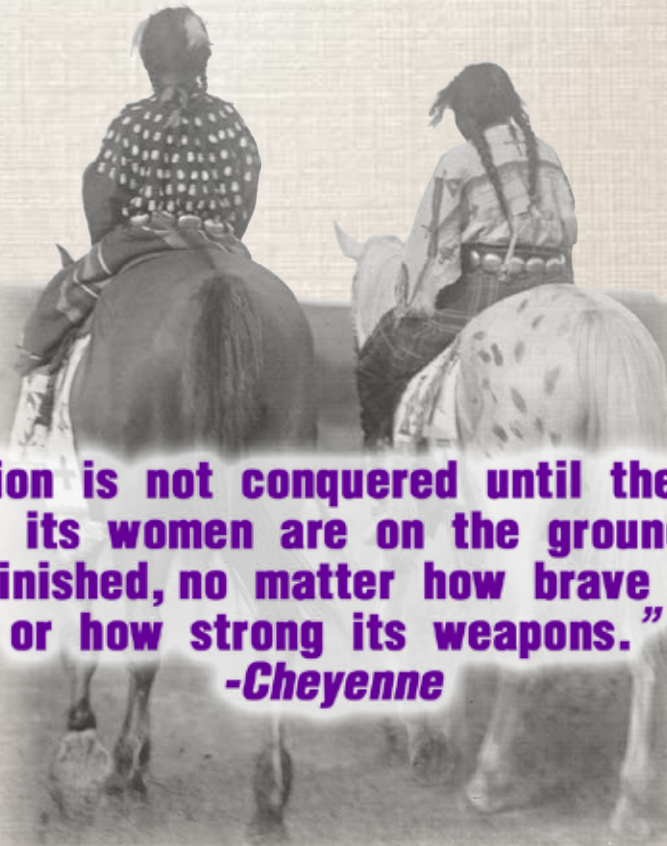
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Restoration

OF NATIVE SOVEREIGNTY AND SAFETY FOR NATIVE WOMEN



**“A Nation is not conquered until the hearts
of its women are on the ground.
Then it is finished, no matter how brave its warriors
or how strong its weapons.”
-Cheyenne**

Violence Against Women Is Not Our Tradition





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