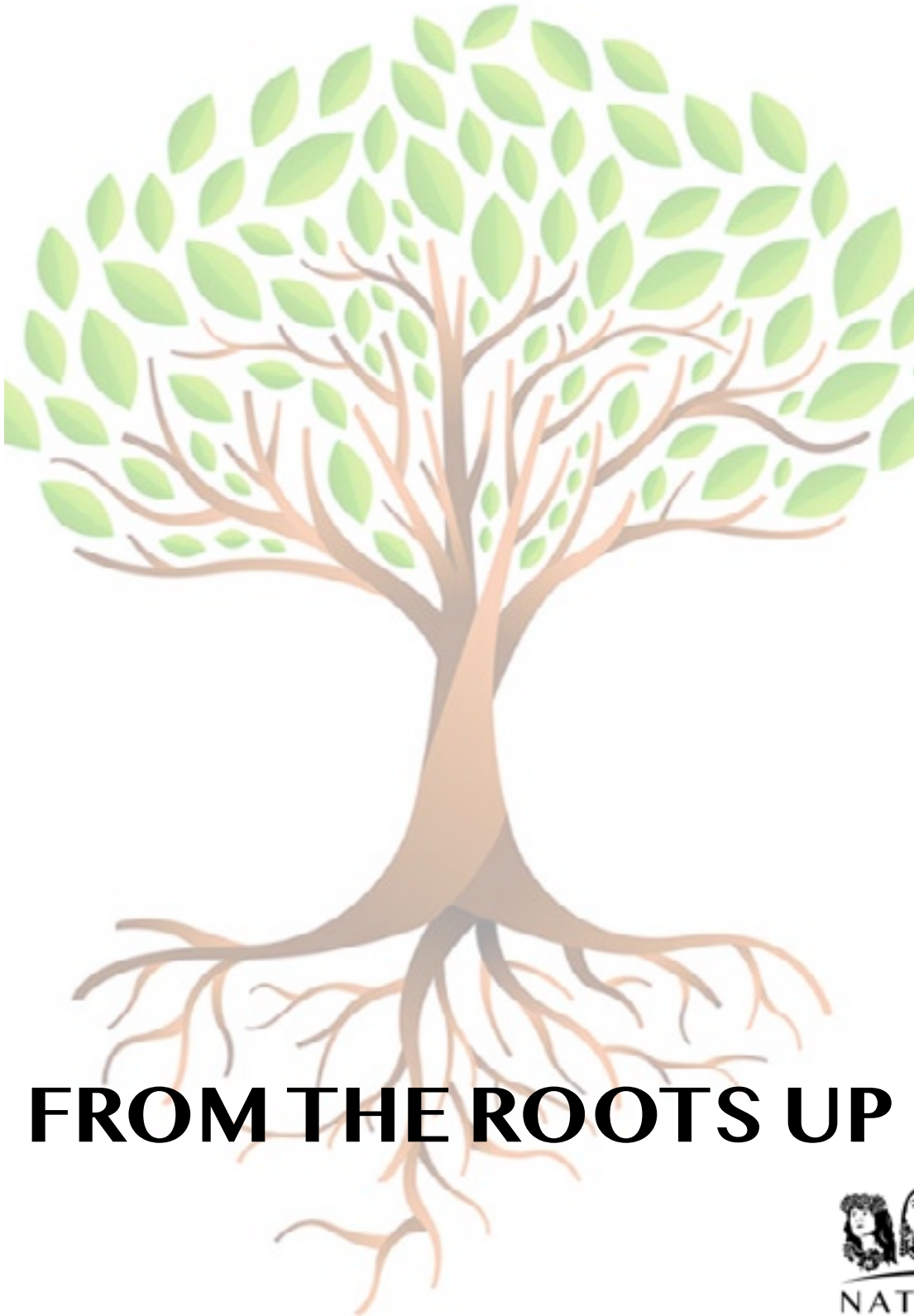


An Overview of Shelter and Advocacy Program Development in Indian Country



FROM THE ROOTS UP

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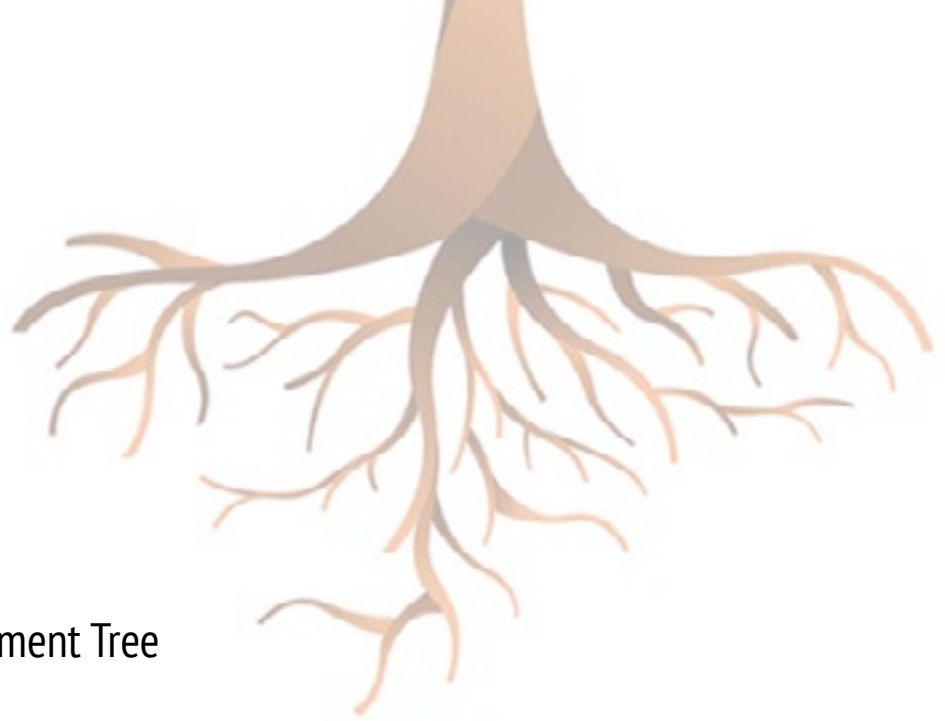
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*“Your life will be forever changed
by the work to end violence against
Native women.”*



PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT FROM THE ROOTS UP

BRANCHES

Advocacy & Social Change for Native Women's Safety & Sovereignty



TRUNK

Supports:

- Leadership and expertise of women who are survivors
- Inclusion of LGBTQ2S, male survivors
- Structure & administration of tribal domestic violence programs
- Other organizational structure: private non-profits
- Policy & procedure promoting sovereignty of women
- Identification of needs, resources & barriers
- Affirm traditional lifeways

ROOTS

Program Belief System

Supports sovereignty of women

Focuses on safety of women, offender's, system's and community's accountability

Validates the expertise & voice of women who are battered

Reclaims indigenous belief systems and values

Describes root causes of violence against Native women as a result of colonization

Identifies battering as a crime & cultural issue

Includes disenfranchised groups

INTRODUCTION

Story-telling is a time-honored method of teaching and inspiring critical thinking among Native people. The following story is the inspiration for the “tree” graphic to illustrate program development.

The Three Sisters

One spring morning, three sisters left camp with their buckets to get water from a nearby stream. The stream was narrow, but deep and fast flowing. The sisters were enjoying the warm weather and visiting as they walked to the stream. But as they got closer to the stream, they began to hear the cries and screams of babies. The sisters dropped their buckets and ran to the stream. To their horror, there were dozens and dozens of babies floating down the stream; many were drowning.

The first sister jumped in and began catching and throwing babies on to the bank of the stream as fast as she could. The second sister yelled, “You’re not saving enough babies!” She jumped in and began teaching the babies to swim so they could save themselves.

The third sister began running up stream. Her sisters yelled at her to help. She turned and hollered, “I am. I’m going up the stream to see how the babies are getting in the water in the first place.”

The first sister responded to the immediate, obvious crisis. Her action is similar to crisis intervention, crisis line and shelter work done to assist women who are battered. Sometimes we *jump into* action with different kinds of programs trying to save lives, because the crisis is so severe. These actions save lives. But these actions are *reactions* – we respond after the violence has occurred.

The second sister’s actions are less geared to the immediate crisis. She places responsibility on the babies for saving themselves. This approach represents the typical individualistic, mental health response to violent crime, i.e., battered women are “*dysfunctional*,” if women “*fixed*” themselves they wouldn’t be battered, or they would make themselves safe. The accountability of offenders and community for violent crime is often ignored. These reactions minimize the violence and are victim-blaming.

The third sister seems to not respond to the overt crisis; she looks past the immediate and seeks the **root cause** of why the babies are in the stream. She seeks to understand the larger picture before choosing an effective response. She works to end the crisis. This is the goal of *social change* work: transformation

of society by addressing the root cause. This sister understands the connections between the *roots* – the philosophy of the program, and its *outgrowth* – the results.

The reactions of the first two sisters may assume that violence is an unavoidable aspect of reality. The third sister understands that the drowning babies, i.e. violence against women and violence in general, are not inescapable realities. The third sister knows that by understanding and confronting the *root cause* of violence, we can end violence through social change and transformation. She knows the solution lies in reclaiming the tradition, natural belief systems of Native people.

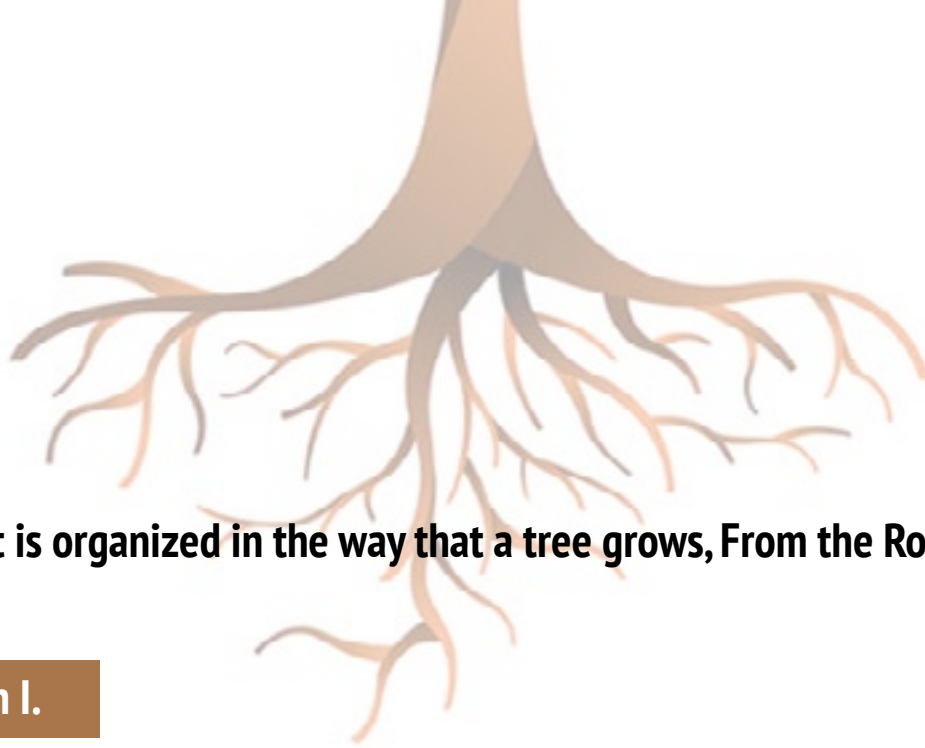
The *root cause* of violence against women (and Native peoples as a whole) is an unnatural belief system. This unnatural belief system was imposed on Native communities through colonization, resulting in Native women being denied the right to control their own bodies and lives. This unnatural belief system condones and encourages violence against women, endorses misperceptions of male superiority, ownership of women and children, and men's rights to control women, children and the environment. Battering cannot occur without these unnatural beliefs that objectify women and justify violence against them. Throughout history, attempts to destroy tribal sovereignty began with the destruction of women's sovereignty. Destroy the women – destroy the culture. The major tactic of colonization was to destroy the family, especially targeting women, the backbone of Native cultures, and children, the future of Native nations.

Before colonization, the vast majority of Native peoples had non-violent life ways based on an understanding of the natural world. This natural belief system requires and encourages non-violence, respect and compassion, and supports the relationships between all things in Creation. This natural belief system recognizes women as sacred. Reclaiming the life way that this natural belief system fosters, is the goal of social change.

Battering does not occur within a belief system that acknowledges and honors the power, role and sacredness of women. When Native women are respected as sacred, and their safety is a priority, the safety of Native families and all tribal citizens is positively impacted. Understanding the root cause of violence against women helps direct our work for social change to end violence against all members of our community.

Our work must move beyond the limitations of a “direct services” approach of mental health or social services. Our work must become advocacy and social change. As we move forward, program development must make consistent connections between the root cause of violence and the way programs do their work.

Violence and non-violence both grow from the roots of a culture: a belief system that describes values, perceptions of reality and relationships. The roots or belief system of a program is described in its mission and philosophy statements. The roots determine the growth of the trunk. In society and in programs, the trunk provides support by determining organizational structure, policy and procedure, decision-making methods, elements of leadership and the like. The branches and leaves of the tree are the outgrowth of the roots and trunk. The branches of a program are the approach, methods, programming, and importantly, relationships and life way. The branches are a reflection of the roots.



This booklet is organized in the way that a tree grows, From the Roots Up:

Section I.

The Roots: Program Belief System, i.e., mission and philosophy, understanding of the root causes of battering and purpose of our work, the theoretical foundation of our approach and methods.

Section II.

The Trunk: Supports, describes the “trunk” of the program tree or elements that contribute to the growth and strength of the program.

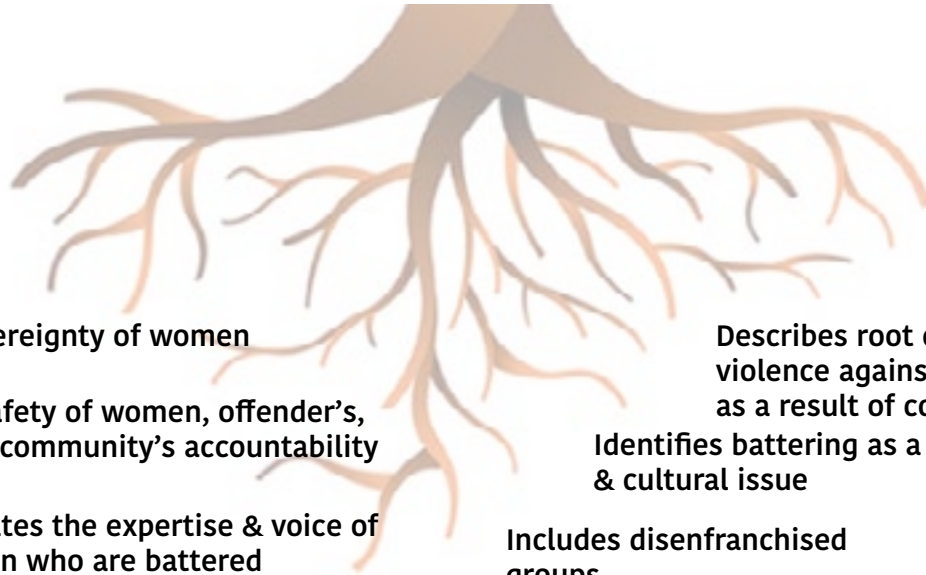
Section III.

The Branches: Response, describes the actual programming and activities. The branches are the outgrowths of the program “roots.” As Native people, we have an understanding that everything is connected. This is an example of that concept.

This booklet offers a basic outline for the development of shelters and other programs providing advocacy for those who have been battered. The intention is to provide the framework of the major elements involved in our work to end violence in intimate partner relationships to restore our communities to well-being. This is a starting point, not a comprehensive collection of everything you need to know in order to do shelter or program development and advocacy.

SECTION I. THE ROOTS

Program Belief System



Supports sovereignty of women

Focuses on safety of women, offender's, system's and community's accountability

Validates the expertise & voice of women who are battered

Includes disenfranchised groups

Identifies battering as a crime & cultural issue

Describes root causes of violence against Native women as a result of colonization

SECTION I. THE ROOTS: PROGRAM BELIEF SYSTEM

As advocates, we are committed to creating safety, support, and justice for our sisters who are battered. Our commitment as advocates also extends to men and LGBTQ/Two Spirited individuals who are battered. We recognize that although women suffer from domestic violence at much higher rates than men,¹ men are victims of domestic violence and are beginning to reach out for services more than in decades past. Further, domestic violence does not merely impact heterosexual relationships. LGBTQ/Two Spirit people also suffer from domestic violence. We acknowledge and value the role of men, youth, elders, and LGBTQ/Two Spirit people in the movement to end domestic violence. We need to ensure advocacy address the needs of all survivors,² and we acknowledge the foundation to this requires returning to a foundation of a natural belief system.

Our commitment as advocates is often grounded in our own experience: the experience of being battered. We have known fear and pain. We have lived the hope that we will be believed, and we continue to offer prayers for help and peace. Our strength and courage in the face of violence, and our ability to live compassionately, form the heart of our work.

Our ultimate goal is a return to communities based on respect and compassion and an acknowledgment of the value of our individual sovereignty, and our collective responsibility for respect. Individual sovereignty means the right to control our bodies and lives without threat or fear of violence, to make all decisions regarding our bodies and lives, having both the resources to fulfill our choices and the right to define our experiences and identity. This vision comes from our Native life ways before colonization.

1 Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 187635 (Oct. 2001) (The study found that women were victims in 85% of the reported cases).

2 Because of the disproportionate impact of domestic violence on women, this booklet primarily references violence against Native women. However, be mindful that an effective advocacy response to Native men and LGBTQ/two spirited victims of domestic violence, will share many of the same considerations outlined herein.

Please note that programs receiving federal funds must provide non-discriminatory services. This means programs must have the ability to offer the same services to all groups although the types of services requested may vary depending on the unique needs of men, women, children and LGBTQ2S survivors. Considerations need to be made about needs of all special populations, including those who are differently-abled, at all stages of program development. As native communities, we are aware that battering and intimate partner violence are unnatural and is gender-based. The National Institute of Justice (2016) found over 83% of Native women are victims of violence. Advocacy reclaiming the safety and sacredness of women, also requires inclusion of all our Relatives within our programs and initiatives, to be consistent with our traditional values and belief systems.

The creation of a vision statement is integral to fostering a shared picture of what an organization is working towards. A vision is often described as a shared image of a successful future, a picture of the future that is desired by the organization and its stakeholders. Some terms that are used to describe a vision statement are: inspiring, aspir-ing, and motivating. It can be a couple sentences that reflects the perfect world we want for future generations. The vision statement is a kind of touchstone. When challenges or competing interests arise, revisit the vision statement to assure decisions are made to move the organization closer to that ideal. It also serves as the foundation for the mission statement.

Next, the mission statement describes the guiding principles of the program. In practice, mission statements often become lost in the flurry of administration, program development, politics and crisis intervention. Ideally, mission statements remind us of our purpose and act as a shared “consciousness” to help us stay focused.

The mission statement describes and justifies goals and methods, and outlines the organizational beliefs about the issues to be addressed by the program. This should be based on a shared understanding of the root cause of violence against women, and other survivors, and our relationship with those who have been battered.

Battering, also called intimate partner violence (IPV), is the product of an unnatural belief system that aims to maintain power and control over intimate partners. We must ask ourselves if our “program belief system” replicates this unnatural system. Or, does the program, beginning with the mission statement, reflect the natural belief system? The natural belief system:

- Honors the sovereignty, expertise and voice of women and survivors
- Focuses on the safety of survivors and accountability of the offender, systems, and the community
- Validates the voices of survivors who are battered/raped
- Identifies battering as violent crime and against traditional values

The expertise of survivors who have experienced battering is invaluable, yet today, as the movement has grown, public awareness increases, and legislation and funding have been made, often their expertise and rights are overlooked. Tribal peoples are aware of the importance of history and its continuing impact. This is true of the history of the movement to end violence against women as well. Women survivors and their allies made the path we are on today. In our work, however, we strive to validate their voices and expertise by including survivors in positions of governance and decision-making, assure access, space and necessary resources. Instead of soliciting “input,” which minimizes their knowledge and understanding, programs must ensure women who have been battered are integral members of the team.

Naming your organization is not as simple as it sounds. What you name the program is a reflection of the work you do and how you do it; the name is part of your advertising. Some programs choose to use their tribal language with a subtitle in English that indicates shelter and advocacy for women who are battered and their children. Some programs are named in honor of someone in the community who worked tirelessly to end violence against women and their children in their community. A logo can help get the message across.

In many ways, advocacy to end violence against Native women is about personal sovereignty: the right to safely self-identify, make decisions that impact the individual or group, access to resources, define their own culture and history and control over their bodies and life way. These rights are basic principles within traditional Native societies. Cis-gendered male survivors, LGBTQ/Two Spirit survivors, survivors who are differently-abled, and other disenfranchised groups also have the right to this form of sovereignty. Given the levels of poverty, oppression and internalized oppression, this can be extremely challenging, though a necessary part of our work.

In some circumstances, as long as there is a safe space and a thorough vetting process, there can be a valuable place for the inclusion of recovering batterers to be part of the advocacy team to help promote positive change in our communities. Their involvement may include being part of an advisory board or through the creation of men's societies or clans and accepting responsibility of ensuring their male relatives who are violent are held accountable and supporting them through the process of change.

An advocate once referred to a man who had a history of battering, but in the following decades dedicated himself to being respectful and re-educating male batterers, as an “ex-batterer.” He said batterers are never “ex”. It's like being alcoholic – because of the pressure of society to be disrespectful and violent towards women, he has to remind and monitor himself every day, and seeks out women and men who will hold him accountable for his behaviors and thoughts towards women.

Hiring qualified personnel is critical. It helps to define what “qualified” means to your organization, given previous discussion about the role of advocates, cultural belief systems etc. Many programs establish job qualifications that include an understanding of the dynamics and impact of violence in the community. This can often be met through the actual experience of being a survivor. Hiring survivors who have been battered from a pool of qualified candidates is a logical way of ensuring the person hired brings expertise based on experience.

Language plays a key part in advocacy, social change and program development. Most Native people understand that words are powerful. Words carry energy, describe our perception of reality, and reflect our belief system. For example, if we describe the on-going beating, sexual assault and emotional abuse of a woman by her batterer as “a violent relationship,” “they're fighting again,” or “family dispute,” we deny what is really going on. This characterization minimizes and “equalizes” the violence and takes the focus off of the violent offender. Describing the situation this way further sets the stage for questioning the behavior of the woman who is victimized by violent crime and fails to hold the batterer accountable for his actions. Relationships aren't violent, the batterer is. We must name specifically what is happening, by whom, accurately if we are to appropriately respond to, and end, violence.

Women and others who are battered are often referred to possessively “my victims” “my patients,” or “my clients.” Using this language denies respect for survivors as unique, capable human beings with minds, hearts and spirits. Terms like “my clients” or “my victims” imply ownership and control over our Relatives who are battered.

Labeling is a tactic used by batterers. Rarely do batterers refer to their partners by their names prior to, during, or following an assault; instead, women are called bitches, whores, hags, old ladies, etc. Labels and use of possessives (clients, patients) dehumanize and objectify the individual and are permission-givers for violence. Labels deny our relationships as relatives.

Calling each other by our given name or relative name shows respect and honors our connection as relatives. It reflects our understanding that, though, that person is in our lives because they've been victimized, they have many gifts, skills, wisdom, experiences and relationships. People survive horrendous violence because of their relationships and individual qualities. When we treat each other as relatives, we overcome oppression and internalized oppression - we validate each other's personal sovereignty and reclaim the natural, traditional ways of relating to each other.

Trauma- Informed Care

“Trauma-Informed Care” (TIC) has become an expectation within the domestic violence field. Native, grassroots advocates doing culturally-based, women-centered advocacy, have been utilizing many trauma-informed practices before the TIC concept and language became popularized. TIC is defined as “attending to survivors’ emotional as well as physical safety.... we assist survivors in strengthening their own psychological capacities to deal with the multiple complex issues that they face in accessing safety, recovering from the traumatic effects of domestic violence and other lifetime abuse and re-building their lives. It also means ensuring that all survivors of domestic violence have access to advocacy services in an environment that is inclusive, welcoming, destigmatizing, and non-retraumatizing.” (*Creating Trauma-Informed Services: Tipsheet series of the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health.*)

Understanding the neurobiology of trauma and its impact on the functioning of the brain, and it’s behavioral, mental, emotional and physical consequences is a necessity for appropriate advocacy and healing. Indigenous life ways, knowledge and healing practices are “trauma-informed” and can be incorporated into advocacy and programs practices.

Native grassroots advocates, often women who are survivors, know that battering and rape impact all levels of existence: physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual. We also understand that historical and intergenerational trauma provides the context for individual violence, as well as adding an additional layer of trauma to violence experienced by Native people. Providing an environment that is inclusive, welcoming, destigmatizing and non-retraumatizing are basic principles of grassroots advocacy, and support the need for Native advocacy programs. These principles are founded on traditional Native beliefs and life ways. Traditional values of respect and generosity, roles and responsibility as relatives, and ways that support non-violence and cooperation are central to advocacy.

The Process of Change

Reclaiming our Native ways and returning to a natural belief system of respect and non-violence requires affirmation of our relationships with each other. Women and other survivors of battering/ IPV may be in our lives for minutes or years. We may like who they are--“approve” of their choices - or not; it’s irrelevant. Women who are battered are our daughters, sisters, mothers, aunts, and grandmothers. They can also be our sons, brothers, fathers, uncles and grandfathers. They are our teachers.

Social change doesn’t just happen. It takes a lot of hard work. Sometimes we focus so much on our intended outcome, we forget about how significant and empowering the process in getting there can be. There is power in the debate, conflict and dialogue. There is just as much power in the *process* of the change as there is in the *outcome*. The process is about relationship building, connecting and learning from each other. The means is the end.

The process is social change itself. Social change begins on an individual, grassroots level. Social change is political and personal; it can be tiresome, bothersome and painful. It can be especially painful when we become aware of our own internalized oppression. Social change also can inspire vision, hope and the gifts we have to offer each other.

Remember that conflict is an inevitable and necessary part of change, program development and organizational administration. How we resolve conflict is as important as the resolution itself. Conflicts can be “teachable moments” if they are seen as an opportunity to learn, and we look for the lessons. Keep in mind that our different perspectives are our gifts to the work; our similarities and shared vision keep us connected. Allow time (and food!) for dialogue and periodically revisit your mission statement to stay on track.

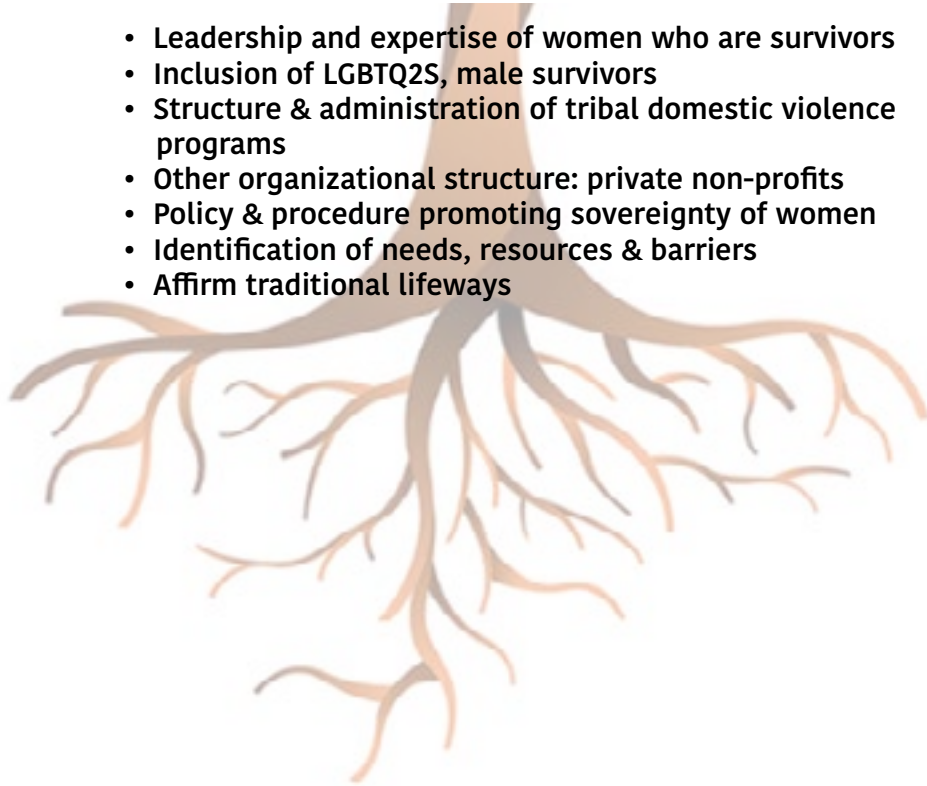
This work requires courage and personal accountability. This work can inspire finding respectful and compassionate ways to hold each other and ourselves accountable. It’s tough work some days, but we are all in this together. Celebrate each new lesson, each success and positive step. Celebrate the strength and courage of the women we work with as they struggle to end the violence in their lives.



SECTION II. THE TRUNK

Supports

- Leadership and expertise of women who are survivors
- Inclusion of LGBTQ2S, male survivors
- Structure & administration of tribal domestic violence programs
- Other organizational structure: private non-profits
- Policy & procedure promoting sovereignty of women
- Identification of needs, resources & barriers
- Affirm traditional lifeways



SECTION II. THE TRUNK: SUPPORTS

Once the mission statement is established, it is time to do some “nuts and bolts” work. This stage of planning and development reflects the philosophy and values of the mission statement.

1. Leadership And Expertise Of Women Who Have Been Battered

There is a tendency to expect the chief of police, judges and politicians to be responsible for taking action to end violence in our communities. People in those positions can greatly impact our work. However, when survivors of battering are in positions of leadership, authority and decision-making, the real needs of survivors can be addressed. In short, this means survivors of domestic violence are often the appropriate leaders of domestic violence programs.

Tribal communities traditionally gave leadership positions to those who earned the respect of the people based on their skills, knowledge, character and life style, not formal education. The same should be true about the hiring preference for those who have been battered. Formal education can be a benefit, but is not a substitute for grassroots expertise. Be clear and unapologetic about this acknowledgement of expertise for those who have been battered.

All Native nations had/have women’s societies and culture. Women-centered programming is a way of re-creating and nurturing Native women’s societies. Shelters and programs for battered women are women’s societies and should be respected as such.

Traditionally, men honored and supported women’s societies and culture, understanding they balanced men’s societies and culture. It is appropriate for men to act as allies, serve on task forces or advisory councils, work with their brothers who batter, support men who have been battered, and assist with educational and social change efforts. This promotes men’s traditional role as protectors of women and children.

2. Organizational Structure Of Native Domestic Violence Programs

The organizational structure of a program, whether a tribal program or a separate non-profit, is a reflection of its belief system imbedded in the program’s vision and mission statements. Most programs are hierarchical in nature as is the norm in American society. Native nations have the potential for reconsidering the ability to create programs more compatible with traditional ways. This transition would be labor and time intensive but could be part of a long-term strategy.

A. Structure Of A Tribal Domestic Violence Program

Typically, a domestic violence shelter and/or program that develop in Indian Country will be a “tribal program,” meaning it is developed as an entity of the tribal government. As such, employees of the program operate under the Personnel Policies and Procedures of the Tribe and within the overall structure of the Tribe. The Tribal Council or Tribal Chairman takes ultimate responsibility for tribal programs. However, tribal programs can still organize a non-binding advisory board to help guide program development. Advisory boards for a domestic violence program should primarily reflect the population they serve: Native women, LGBTQ/Two Spirit individuals and cis-gendered men who have been battered. A tribal program can have more than one advisory board to help ensure all survivors—women, men, LGBTQ/Two Spirit-- get appropriate advocacy and services from the program, particularly since men survivors’ needs may be different than the needs of women survivors.

There are benefits to being a tribal program, but there are also problems that might arise. Tribal politics can be difficult to navigate: changes in tribal leadership can lead to personnel changes by uninformed committees, changes or the nullifying of established policy, procedure and protocol, etc. Tribal fiscal policies may not be built to safeguard confidentiality and often internal policies require many bureaucratic delays when monies are needed for emergency assistance.

Additionally, advocating for survivors who have been battered can mean holding people within law enforcement, the criminal justice system and political arena accountable for their actions. These situations inevitably involve conflict. If advocates are tribal employees, their ability to take a biased stand for survivors and their children, against other tribal employees, can be greatly compromised. This conflict of interest may endanger, or compromise their jobs.

It is the responsibility of the tribal domestic violence shelter/program to create space within the tribal structure that reflects and honors the experience of Native woman, survivors, and honors the sacred role of women and the traditional roles of men and women in the Native community. It is also the responsibility of the tribal program to ensure that a survivor seeking advocacy and related services will receive confidentiality.

Educate your Tribal Council about the differences in operating a program that provides advocacy and related services from a more general social services program. Regularly place domestic violence educational materials in your council representatives’ box. Carefully select articles that reflect the philosophy of the program and are short and easily read. Most people believe that there is something wrong with a woman who is battered. Include articles that clarify the purpose of a shelter and provide information on the dynamics of domestic violence. The National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center has educational materials that you can access for this purpose.

Routinely invite council representatives to trainings and events, even if they never attend. Ask your council representatives to provide a welcome address or make a brief statement at local conferences, walks, etc. Attend tribal committee meetings, council meetings, etc., when possible. Visit with council representatives and tribal employees– make a relationship. These are opportunities to exchange information about the nature and challenges of each other’s work and also create common ground. Common ground provides a less threatening place to address tougher issues.

Make sure that all advocates understand the philosophy of the program and can articulate the dynamics

and effects of domestic violence. Advocates will run into council representatives (at the grocery store, post office, etc.) who will ask them questions about the program, complain about the program or even make threats toward the program. It's a good idea to have some prepared responses that advocates agree upon when responding to these informal encounters with council representatives. On-going staff training and development is paramount to program success.

B. Structure Of Private, Native Non-Profit Domestic Violence Programs

In some tribal communities, it may be preferable to develop a domestic violence program outside of the Tribe, as a separate non-profit organization. An important benefit of this status is the ability of programs to have financial and administrative autonomy. It will also make the program eligible for other types of funding from private foundations and government programs. The structure of a non-profit organization allows for the development of a grassroots program that promotes the leadership, expertise and decision-making of those who have been battered. Often, it is one or two dedicated, grassroots women who identify as survivors of battering that initiate the process of creating the non-profit. They may also become the directors of the program, because of their commitment and vision.

Even if a program organizes separate from the Tribe, it is beneficial to your program and the work in general to inform the local tribal council about the program mission and purpose. Councils can be powerful allies in ending domestic violence and restoring women's role as sacred in the community. Ideally, an educated council has the ability to model community accountability for making survivors safe and holding offenders accountable.

To organize as a separate non-profit, the program must first develop **Articles of Incorporation**, setting forth the purpose of the organization, and By-Laws to guide the Board of Directors in how to govern the organization's policy (NOT micro-managing daily work). Although some organizations start out with "working boards", where the Board members are actually doing the work of the program, it is often a good idea to plan for the eventual transition to policy boards, where the Board provides policy direction and financial management, but leaves the day to day administration to the Executive Director and staff. Boards should reflect those they serve within the community including male survivors and LGBTQ/Two Spirit individuals to ensure all needs are being met.

The **By-Laws** should outline the decision-making process for the organization. These should reflect the philosophy of the program. Robert's Rules of Order can be used, but many programs choose to use a consensus model, which replicates a common traditional decision-making method among tribes and within the movement to end violence against women in our communities. If a non-profit receives federal grant funding, they should develop a non-discriminatory mission that recognizes that women, men and LGBTQ/Two Spirit could be battered and all will be assisted.

Next, the program must get **incorporated by the state** as a non-profit corporation (or by the tribe, if the local tribe has laws allowing for tribally incorporated/chartered organizations). The program should also apply for **501 (c) (3) non-profit status** with the Internal Revenue Service, which means the program can receive grants and/or donations without having to pay taxes on the money received.

Some tribes also may have "charters" available to Native non-profits existing within their boundaries. These are similar to the state incorporation.

For non-profit organizations, the **Board of Directors** takes ultimate responsibility for the organization and directs the policy or the program. Things to keep in mind in creating the Board of Directors:

- Ideally, the composition of the Board reflects the people served by the organization.
- Board size can vary, but three is usually the minimum. It is often thought that the best size for a Board is five people. This group size is easy to manage for meeting attendance and logistics. Further, five people can be representative of the population the program works with, yet still allow everyone a chance to be heard. There is a tendency with smaller groups for people to feel more invested in the program. However, depending on the community, it may be that more Board members are needed.
- Programs should consider using a screening process, including applications and interviews for Board members, to ensure their support for survivors and the program purpose, and their understanding of the dynamics of battering and oppression.

The Board hires the Director. The Director hires staff. Boards must entrust the Director with the responsibility and authority necessary to do the job. The Director needs to be accountable to the Board and staff. The Board, Director and staff must be accountable to the women and other survivors of battering that they serve.

As social change organizations, we can consider creating organizations that allow all staff to participate as partners within the program. Everyone has a voice and participates as team members. Group members respectfully acknowledge each other's expertise and limitations. The group comes to consensus about the mission of the work and specific objectives. Those that have the expertise needed to accomplish the task/project are supported in their decisions by the other group members. The entire group must be committed to ethical communication, conflict resolution, and participation in consensus decision-making. It can be time consuming and emotionally and intellectually challenging.

Procedures are developed by administrative staff (Director) based on board policy. Procedures detail how the policy is to be enacted. Procedures should include a protocol that specifies who does what and in what ways. However, procedures should not be so rigid they limit the ability to respond effectively to the needs of women.

Every aspect of program development, including budgets and all forms, should be evaluated based upon their ability to meet the needs and ensure the safety of women. Remember, budgets, forms, procedures and different types of programming are only tools to help provide safety. Sometimes while attempting to be credible administrators, there is a tendency to mold the work to meet the needs of administration, rather than the needs of survivors and their families and their children. With the development of any form, policy or procedure, it is important to always ask yourself, "how does this create safety?"

Minimize the paperwork. Ask yourself why you need the information, whose need is it meeting and how does it impact an individual's safety and integrity? Any information gathered should benefit those you serve. Lots of paperwork does not necessarily make the program more responsible or responsive to its community. It only means that you will have less time to spend with women and their children. Paperwork can also lead to breaches of confidentiality.

Language plays a key role in how we describe our work. "Case management" approaches, and related paperwork, is inappropriate and can have legal ramifications that are dangerous for women escaping violence. Case management is a mental health approach. Victims of intimate partner violence and

victims of violent crime and are not “sick.” Battering is a criminal justice issue, not a mental health issue. Survivors are asking for help to get safe and regain control of their lives. Psychological evaluations, assessment of parenting skills, treatment planning, etc., revictimize and minimize the violence against them. These types of actions do not hold the batterer accountable for their behavior nor do they address the root cause of violence. We do however, need to develop or incorporate a way to document our work, such as numbers served and services provided. How this information is captured and described is very important. Again, when deciding what information needs to be collected, ask yourself, “how does this create safety?”

Protection of confidentiality must continue to be emphasized in procedure. The breach of any confidentiality under any circumstances endangers everyone. Protocols for responding to phone calls, to attempts to serve warrants, court orders or subpoenas, people at the shelter door and other requests by anyone need to give clear specific steps for advocates to follow that maintain confidentiality.

EXAMPLE

A woman in a shelter or receiving advocacy from a shelter /advocacy program must be assured that her stay in the shelter or the contact she has with the program is anonymous and confidential. Procedure requires advocates to answer any telephone or in-person inquiries about any woman as follows: *“Our program has a confidentiality policy that does not allow us to admit or deny we know or have contact with any woman. We only take messages and post them. That does not mean she is here or not here. You can speak to the shelter director if you have other concerns. Thank you.”* This script is taped to every phone and entrance in the building.

The program should also facilitate in-service trainings about this policy with other agencies and organizations that may have need to contact people in the shelter, or that the advocacy program may have contact with. Clarifying the purpose of this policy and strategizing ways for them to get needs met allows the provision of services without endangering the survivor and children’s safety.

Procedures and protocols like this example should be supported by policy that requires mandatory in-service training about confidentiality and advises employees that breaches of confidentiality are grounds for immediate dismissal. Employees should also be required to sign a statement indicating they understand all policies regarding confidentiality.

It is the board’s responsibility to bring the overall mission of the program to life through establishment of general policy. If they choose, they can involve administrative and other staff in this process. It is the administrative staff’s responsibility to convert policy into concrete actions, or procedures to follow. Each of these phases should be consistent with the mission statement.

Remember, shelters are not treatment or penal institutions, so 24 hour staffing, schedules and detailed rules are not always necessary. Rules or guidelines for residents should reflect the philosophy or mission statement. The basic function of rules is to keep everyone as safe as possible and get everyone’s needs met. Critique rules from the perspective of power and control issues. Are they respectful and empowering? Whose needs do they meet? How do they create safety for the survivors we serve? How do

they promote safety for our community?

The process of creating and administering a non-profit may seem overwhelming; but there is no need to re-invent the wheel. In addition to the materials, training, technical assistance and consultation available through the NIWRC, there are many tribal coalitions and sister native domestic violence programs willing to share their expertise, policies and support, that you can access. Each program is autonomous, but we share a similar vision and mission. The change we seek is achieved together.

3. Policy And Procedure Promoting Safety:

Policy development by the Board is critical. In general, policy gives additional description and explanation of the by-laws. Policy describes the intent and purpose of a general course of action. Policy does not describe specifically how things will get done; that is left to administrative staff (Boards should not be involved in the daily functioning of the program).

Policies provide guidelines to manage the organization so it fulfills the mission in the most effective manner possible. Policies can direct the work (advocacy, education, trauma informed, etc.) to ensure that domestic violence, and particularly violence against women, will be addressed as a criminal justice and human rights issue, not a mental health problem.

Remember the mission is not to meet the needs of the organization, its directors, or staff; the mission is about the safety and sovereignty of women and other survivors of violence. Having a lot of policies does not increase the organization's credibility. In fact, more policies creates more bureaucracy. The end result is attention, time and energy directed at compliance with policies, instead of toward survivors and their children. Also, in developing or creating trauma-informed organizations, we need to be mindful that our rules, policies, procedures and protocols can be re-traumatizing for survivors. It is important to be cognizant of potential trauma triggers for those you are working with.

Programs need to consider the question "What are the minimum policies to ensure the safety of women, other survivors, and their children?" Policies flow from the mission statement and should not change or misdirect the mission. Personnel, fiscal and shelter policies must prioritize the restoration of Native women's sacred role and ending violence against all community members. Policies should be helpful to those we serve, as well as the staff. We all live within the same oppressive society; policies need to support personal efforts by staff members to maintain non-violent, healthy life ways. The policies should emphasize that advocates are the biased supporters of survivors and their safety, the return of Native women to their sacred status, and offender accountability, in hiring, training, education and all aspects of the work.

Tribal sovereignty and Native women's sovereignty are interdependent. Women are the lifeblood of Indian nations and without safe and strong women, a strong healthy sovereign nation cannot exist. Strong nations are able to better exercise their sovereignty to protect their citizens from violence including domestic violence and sexual assault. Shelter and advocacy policies should be developed in such a way as to promote and protect both tribal sovereignty and Native women's sovereignty, recognizing their inter-relatedness and importance in ending ALL violence in our communities.

A. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial to safety and breeches of confidentiality may inhibit others who are battered from utilizing the program. Lack of trust is a big issue for everybody. The credibility and capacity of the tribal domestic violence program in maintaining confidentiality will, in large part, determine how effective the tribal program might be in assisting women and others who are battered.

All programs must consider the maintenance and retention of their confidential financial records and other documentation. Federal agencies that administer domestic violence grant funds do not have specific guidelines for how confidential records should be retained, however, [the FVPSA statute](#), [FVPSA regulations](#), and [VAWA](#) are specific about what is considered personally identifying information who should or should not have access to that information. Although grants from the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and Victims of Crime Assistance require programs to maintain confidentiality, it is the program's responsibility to figure out how that can be accomplished.

Survivors may need assistance to keep copies of protection orders, divorce papers, social security cards or other personal documents in a safe place. These document shuld not be collected by programs as part of the survivor's file. A locked file cabinet, designated for personal items and not program property, or a safe deposit box is the safest way to keep these types of records. It is safest to treat safety plans as personal property, depending upon their individual situation rather than as program files.

Both shelter/advocacy program operating as a tribal organization and autonomous non-profit corporations must develop formal policies within the appropriate organizational structure to safeguard names and other identifying information of survivors and their children. A few states and Tribes have passed privileged communication laws that do not allow advocates to reveal information about survivors that have received advocacy and related services from the program. Tribal nations have the ability to codify privileged communication statutes for advocates which would protect advocates from being forced to reveal survivor's information, thereby protecting survivors' confidentiality and safety.

Defending the right to a survivor's confidentiality can be a difficult issue particularly for tribal programs. Tribal councils, council representatives and other tribal officials need to know that a breach of confidentiality could mean life or death or another beating. Confidentiality means that no one—not tribal council members or other tribal officials can access confidential files and information without the survivor's written, informed consent.

If it is a tribal program, the Tribal Personnel Policies and Procedures should be reviewed to determine if the document adequately maintains safety and confidentiality. If the policies do not meet this basic safety requirement, it is your responsibility to advocate for changes within the Personnel Policies and Procedures that will, at the very least, stress confidentiality and provide strong sanctions for employees who breach confidentiality.

When the Tribe receives a grant to support a domestic violence program, it is important to remember

that the Tribe is the grantee. The Tribe is responsible for the overall grant including the financial records and progress reports. However, the tribal domestic violence program is responsible for the actual program records and individual survivor's records. Other departments within the Tribe, such as finance, contracting, committees, etc., including the Tribal Council should never have access to the tribal domestic violence program's confidential records.

Whether a tribal program or a separate non-profit program, the policies on confidentiality need to be explicit and strongly enforced. Breach of confidentiality by staff should be considered grounds for immediate termination from the program. It should be noted that some Native domestic violence program policies prohibit all employees from using alcohol, even in their private life. Some find this controversial, but the purpose is to prevent breaches of confidentiality and avoid the perception of this happening. Advocates are responsible for earning the trust of survivors who have been battered.

Further, it is important to ensure that advocates and staff in allied agencies or group, such as multi-disciplinary task forces understand that even if confidentiality agreements are signed, information can only be shared on a *need to know* basis. Beyond a safety issue, confidentiality is an issue of respect and privacy.

Confidentiality is integral to the safety of those who have been battered. Since this right rarely has legal protection, it is important for policies, procedures and by-laws to explicitly defend this right.

B. Fiscal Policies

Non-profit domestic violence programs can also enter into **sub-grants with a tribe**. In this relationship, the Tribe is the grantee, even though the non-profit program actually performs all of the program duties. This type of relationship is governed by a Memorandum of Agreement, contract, etc., that outlines the different program and financial responsibilities of the Tribe and of the sub-grantee.

Whether a program is state or tribally incorporated or both, the domestic violence shelter/program must have a **certified accounting system** and be prepared to be accountable to the Tribe and/or the federal granting agency. A certified accounting system means that a certified public accountant has reviewed your financial policies and procedures, personnel policies and procedures, and procurement policies and attests that they are in compliance with certain federal standards.

Fiscal policies should address how confidentiality will be maintained. Many programs have budget line items to assist survivors with rent, utilities, etc. However, survivors must not be identified in the process. Accounting standards must be met for auditing and fiscal accountability, but confidentiality still must be safeguarded.

The Tribal Finance or Business Office handles most tribal domestic violence programs' finances. The process for maintaining the confidentiality of records and, especially requests for emergency financial services, such as bus tickets, rent, deposit, and payment of bills for an individual who is battered must be developed. Some tribal program advocates report problems with tribal finance personnel making

judgments about the individual needing emergency services when her name is required by the tribal finance department. These attitudes include: “Why buy her a bus ticket? She’s just going to go back to him anyway!” Or, “I saw her at that party and she deserved it! Why does she deserve help now?” For this reason, paperwork submitted to the tribal finance office should have all names and any other identifying personal information redacted/blacked out.

Advocates working in tribal domestic violence shelter/programs need to recognize that the infrastructures of tribal governments are not designed to accommodate emergency, confidential services. Domestic violence program staff should meet with finance staff to review and develop streamlined procedures that honor safety and confidentiality for those who are battered. This process can assist in developing a system that timely responds to check requests in emergency situations. Further, under the Tribe’s fiscal accountability requirements, it may be difficult to justify tribal funds being used to buy an individual a bus ticket. However, it can be done. Always, the focus should be on how to maintain safety and confidentiality along with the fiscal integrity and accountability of the Tribe.

Making changes in your community, organizational structure, accounting office, or tribal institutional response to domestic violence is difficult. It requires fortitude and patience. Making these changes may require you to enter into relationships where you must work with people you might have issues with. It is expected that you put your personal biases aside and do the best you can to educate, find, and create allies who will help you develop policies, procedures, activities, and actions that will maximize safety for women who are battered and their children.

4. Identification Of Needs, Resources And Barriers

The purpose of identifying needs, resources and barriers is to direct program and budget development as well as try to anticipate a response to possible barriers. Ideally, these should reflect and fulfill the mission of the organization.

Think beyond the shelter door. Remember, survivors look everywhere for help and every community member is a potential advocate. Many women choose not to go to a shelter or have contact with law enforcement, although they may need assistance from other agencies or programs. Those programs should have an understanding of the dynamics of battering and prioritize safety and respectful services.

Identify needs, resources and barriers by focusing on specific parts of program development: individuals who are experiencing domestic violence and their children; staff training and development; community outreach and engagement; networking and collaboration with other organizations, and; security issues. Feel free to create other or more specific categories. The following is not a comprehensive road map, but

rather a list of some of the considerations we should be thinking about.

Planning should always occur along two tracks: 1) **individual advocacy**, that includes crisis response; working with the individual; providing basic resources; and 2) **social change**, which is advocacy for community transformation that supports the safety of all community members and restores sovereignty of women and their children in respectful ways.

It is extremely important to have resources available that allow the grassroots experts (people in the community who have been battered) to fully participate in the various aspects of the program. Self-governance is an important principle of social change aimed at reclaiming the safety and sovereignty of Native women, and Native people as a whole.

We are relatives. Our relatives seeking shelter have experienced serial violent crime and trauma, and may be forced to go into hiding because their batterers have not been stopped. They are not responsible for the violence, or stopping the batterer. Being battered is traumatizing, disheartening, exhausting. Many survivors come to advocates with post-concussion syndrome, traumatic brain injury, sleep deprivation, post-traumatic stress, depression, etc. These are expected consequences of violence that vary from person to person. Healing requires time, safe space, quiet, little change and stress, support and sleep. Medical attention may be needed. Providing accurate information and naming what is happening accurately are hallmarks of good advocacy. Responding as relatives, meeting them where they are, making a relationship with them and providing what they want, in the ways they want, when they want, is what advocates strive for. Traditionally, Natives people showed respect, compassion, generosity and humility by providing protection, food, shelter and other resources in ways that did not require their relatives in need to ask for, justify or in any way embarrass them. Providing these resources, in these ways is an expectation of being a “good relative.”

What Do We Mean by ‘Trauma-Informed?’

- Understanding the neurobiology, pervasiveness and impact of trauma
- Mitigating and transforming those effects
- Minimizing retraumatization
- Supporting healing, resilience and well-being
- Attending to the impact on providers and organizations
- Addressing the underlying conditions that produce abuse, violence and oppression
- Embodying in our lives and our work the world we want to create

Thinking about Trauma in the Context Of Domestic Violence Advocacy:
An Integrated Approach

Module 1 from the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health

A. Those Who Are Experiencing Domestic Violence

Safety is always first. The safety of one is the safety of all. If a behavior is endangering the safety of others, take appropriate action that will continue to meet the safety needs and the safety considerations of everyone, while still focusing on the specific needs of each survivor you work with.

Allow for visiting and free time for those in the shelter or program. Find volunteer childcare or schedule children's programming at these times. Survivors need the opportunity to share and build relationships and to have time for themselves (so do children).

Survivors of domestic violence are each unique individuals who bring with them a vast variety of skills, qualities and expertise. As a competent adult, they are great resources to each other, to advocates and to the program itself – if given the resources and freedom to do so.

Bruises are a natural consequence of being hit. Whether those bruises are physical, mental, emotional or spiritual, they can often heal naturally once the violence stops, and a safe, supportive environment is provided, along with adequate resources and accurate information.

B. Staff Training And Development

Develop staff orientation and training programs. Aside from the basics of advocacy, all staff need to be familiar with both legal and law enforcement aspects of the work. All advocates need to be trained to provide basic legal advocacy. This includes domestic violence and related laws, law enforcement procedures, protection orders, full faith and credit, child custody-related issues and stalking and harassment laws. Identify lawyers familiar with the dynamics of battering who can be called upon for consultation and/or offer pro bono services.

Understanding Trauma

Advocates are fully aware that those who are battered, and their children, experience physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harm. However, more information and understanding about the impact of violence on the brain and psychological effects (post-traumatic stress, sleep deprivation etc.), along with effective responses, policies, and procedures are now available. Usually called a trauma-informed approach, this information is helpful not only to advocates, but to the survivors themselves. Educating other responders and service providers, such as law enforcement and social service workers, about the neurobiology and impact of trauma can help increase effective, respectful, and empathetic responses. For example, law enforcement officers and other service providers commonly call battered women “uncooperative” or “unreliable” or “non-compliant.” It is beneficial for these providers to understand that what they may be seeing is the effects of trauma, brain injury, sleep deprivation or depression.

Because those who have been battered also often use other health and social service programs, it is essential for domestic violence advocates to have familiarity with the staff and policies and procedures of these programs. This can be achieved when advocates routinely work with these programs, provide in-service training, and support creation of services that are “friendly” and protective of safety and confidentiality.

Crisis line responders should also be well trained to respond to callers in a trauma informed manner. If your program does not have a crisis line, consider using volunteers. Answering machines can be used on a limited basis if they offer other emergency responder numbers and contacts. Cell phones can be made available to on-call advocates and neighborhood watch volunteers. Cell phones can be made available and used by those survivors who don’t have phones at home.

Create a referral list of possible resources. Make sure you “visit” with potential referrals to ensure they appropriately understand domestic violence and the dynamics of IPV. Well-meaning but uninformed, or worse anti-woman, professionals can be re-victimizing and dangerous to anyone attempting to escape violence. Only make referrals to programs or people that have been vetted or checked out.

C. Community Outreach And Engagement

Program and shelter development can take many directions in terms of specific issues they address and the approaches they take. These initiatives can benefit from community support and involvement. A first step could be brainstorming with community members to identify resources required to successfully run a shelter program. Begin with women in the community who have been battered and are now safe enough to participate. Be inclusive! A major part of social change is re-establishing relationships and valuing the gifts and contributions of each other. Include men, LGBTQ-Two Spirit, grassroots people, possible fund-raisers, tribal, local, state, national resource folks and organizations.

List existing resource programs and coalitions that can serve as mentors or may have available space or buildings to house the new program. As Native people we are used to making do. Don’t think you have to start with a new building. Living rooms and basements are common places to establish a grass roots program. These options are okay for a start, but have a long-term vision, too.

Identify barriers. This includes community attitudes, inappropriate agency and institution policies and/or procedures, lack of training and/or expertise. Geographic location and poverty are two major barriers to getting safe and accessing resources.

Strategize methods of overcoming all of these barriers. Community organizing efforts begin with education. Identify and specifically invite community leaders to these events. Agendas need to describe concrete, appropriate ways people can get involved in ending domestic violence in our communities. Also, be creative, without “re-inventing the wheel.” There are a number of well-established Native programs that can share their expertise, experience and lend support. Contact NIWRC at www.niwrc.org for information about these organizations.

Program publicity is a great opportunity to provide community education and let people know who you are. Start by getting the word out about your program/shelter and the dynamics of battering. Radio stations and newspapers often provide time for free public service announcements. Newspapers or tribal newsletters generally welcome articles submitted for publication. If these resources are unavailable,

program newsletters, poster campaigns or competitions can help raise awareness and can be fun and effective.

Schools are often good sites for community education and prevention work. Advocates can develop specialized curriculum and arrange annual schedules with nearby schools for presentations on non-violent conflict resolution, dating violence, etc.

Mini-workshops, especially if you offer food and transportation, are excellent ways of letting the community know who you are as individuals and as a program. Asking for help can be difficult; asking for help from strangers can be especially difficult and nerve-racking. Keep advocates involved – survivors need to know who the advocates are in order to assess safety and increase trust levels so they are willing to ask for help when they need it.

D. Networking And Collaboration

Social change cannot take place in isolation. Create working relationships with existing shelters, coalitions, women's and anti-violence organizations. We need each other for support, sharing information and expertise. Developing and maintaining working relationships with a wide reach of organizations and individuals is integral to our work and is a major aspect of our "herstory." Nurturing relationships with people and organizations on a local, state, and national level is a way of overcoming oppression that purposefully separates and isolates survivors and Native people.

Outside individuals, groups, organizations or other potential partners should be selected with care. One indicator of the appropriateness of a potential partnership is if they have educated themselves about these issues of sovereignty, culture and history of Native nation(s), Native women, and other survivors, and understand their role is supportive and directed by the Tribe and Native advocates.

Non-Native programs that aren't confronted by or addressing racism tend to minimize Native cultural and historical oppression. Mental health oriented programs or programs with "missionary" attitudes also challenge advocates attempting to do respectful work. If this is the case in your current network of providers, it may be best to decide if it is best to spend the amount of time, energy and resources to work with these programs versus expanding your service area. Keep in mind that the end goal is to offer respectful, appropriate and accessible, shelter and advocacy.

Advocacy in Native communities can be very different than advocacy in non-Native communities. If a tribal community must contract with non-Native organizations, consider facilitating in-service trainings and workshops on issues of dynamics of battering in Indian Country, the traditional role of women as the foundation of Native communities, historical oppression, and understanding tribal sovereignty a condition of the contract. Mentoring programs and the hiring of Native staff can be addressed within these contracts as well. Although every situation offers its own considerations, in general contracts with non-Native programs should be seen as a temporary measure.

Keep in mind that more survivors go to a shelter rather than report to police, and even more survivors try to deal with the battering on their own or go to hospitals rather than go to shelter. For this reason, it is important to develop working relationships with people within social services, law enforcement, hospitals, etc. by visiting and assessing their attitudes, policies and responses to those who are battered. What you learn from these visits will be invaluable for development of memorandums of agreement,

policies, procedures and protocols, and training needs. Once you have begun developing relationships with other agencies, it is a good idea to continue with in-service trainings and workshops followed by periodic visits to encourage consistent, appropriate responses to domestic violence. This will help create a network of trusted responders within and outside of your community.

E. Security

Internal program policies and procedures need to outline what steps are to be taken and by whom if security is endangered and should cover a multitude of possible situations. For example, what do you do if a batterer knocks at the shelter door? What kind of phone security do you offer? How will you protect an advocate who is being stalked or harassed? What if a survivor is drinking, how do you protect her and the others in the shelter? Other shelters programs, the local law enforcement, and/or NIWRC can help you develop the most effective system for the shelter and budget. For example, a neighborhood watch program may work in your area.

Security protocols should include interactions with outside agencies as well. Consider memoranda of agreement/ understanding, or policies and procedures with law enforcement and court systems that provide protections while at court, the police station, the emergency room, etc. Some tribes have codified increased sanctions for harassing, intimidating or assaulting advocates, in the same way that police officers and court staff are. Model advocate safety policies, developed by Mending the Sacred Hoop, Sacred Circle and Oklahoma advocacy programs are available through NIWRC.

5. Affirm Traditional Life Ways

Ending violence in Native communities goes hand-in-hand with reclaiming our Native culture. One cannot happen without the other. How elements of women's and men's societies, ceremonies and other Native lifeways are brought into individual programs depend upon the Native people within the program.

The greatest strength and unifying power available to us as Native people is our understanding and belief in our relationships - in living as relatives with respect. Reclaiming our relationships means seeking out the gifts in others and in ourselves, and finding ways to honor and nurture those gifts. It means holding ourselves accountable for responding to people in need, whether that need is safety or being stopped from hurting ourselves or others. Also, it means reaching out to everyone in our community for help-women, men, youth, elders and tribal leaders.

Often the most difficult challenges we face as individuals and advocates is finding the balance between our responsibilities to our work, our self, our family, our community/Native nation and the future generations. The work to stop violence against Native women can be painful. It brings up memories of our own victimization and the impact of historical trauma. Internalized oppression, a devastating symptom of historical trauma, is alive and well in Indian country. Being aware of our behavior and learning to support each other in this work is very important in order to effectively and supportively advocate for those we serve.

Burnout is commonplace, but is not inevitable. To avoid burnout, advocates can look to traditional beliefs and perspectives, ceremonies and, of course, our relatives for support and guidance. Utilizing our culture in this manner can give us a renewed balance, clarity about ourselves and our relationships, and help us avoid burning out. Despite the difficulties we face in our work on a daily basis, honoring the strengths and gifts we and other survivors have is cause for celebration. Traditional life ways and our relatives can provide support and guidance.

Programs reflect the life way of their leadership. When leadership and individual advocates reclaim their balance as relatives, programs become more than institutions providing services to others; they become sacred societies and respectful places for women, their children, and other survivors. We encourage you to use the strengths of your culture. Your people need you!

Summary:

The considerations discussed herein are by no means complete. This publication is intended to merely serve as a starting point. Trust what you know, be open to change, and rely on the expertise of those who “have been there.” Sitting around a kitchen table, sharing food and conversation is a natural, powerful place for women to learn and re-energize as individuals and as a group. These components can be part of the routine of “work.” Advocating for the sovereignty and safety of women and Native communities of women provides a dynamic gift of knowledge and understanding, especially if conflicts and challenges are seen as opportunities to grow, learn and make relatives. Your life will be forever changed by the work to end domestic violence and restore Native women to their sacred role in our communities.





SECTION III. BRANCHES

Advocacy & Social Change for Native Women's Safety & Sovereignty

SECTION III THE BRANCHES - RESPONSE

Advocacy & Social Change for Native Women's Safety & Sovereignty

Holding offenders accountable for the violence is essential to social change in creating a response for survivors that includes support by community members, tribal government and relatives for protecting those who are battered. Creating the social change necessary for all to walk freely and safely through the world requires a bigger vision – a vision of societal transformation that reflects our understanding that women are sacred and powerful beings.

Power in this sense means using our ability, knowledge and relationships with others– family, community, nation and universe– in a balanced and spiritual way to create, preserve and nurture life. Power is not the ability to control others; it is not violent. Peace and non-violence is born out of respectful, compassionate relationships that actively affirm the uniqueness of every individual. Women's sovereignty and safety should be the vision that guides our everyday work and program development. This vision requires a focus on social change work, not merely social service work.

A. Social change and social service are distinctly different.

What are some of the weaknesses in only focusing on a social services model? Although in theory, social work should be about social change, in practice the social service model requires little analysis outside of the individual's experience. The focus is on individual victimization or "dysfunction," often resulting in victim blaming. The social service model requires separation and detachment from our relationships as relatives, from other institutions and from anything deemed political. It requires maintaining the status quo, by assuming oppression and the current functioning of political, medical and social systems are "natural." Social service tends to lead individuals to adapt to the needs of the existing political, medical, economic and political systems. Social service is an institutional reaction by people "in power." Social service requires accountability to the institutions that fund them, not to the people it serves.

In contrast, what strengths or benefits do we gain from social change in a bigger, broader context? The social change perspective requires making connections between individual experiences, oppression, culture and history. Social change is political: it requires critical analysis of power and control, i.e., oppression and human rights within all levels of society. It is about a transformation that will allow political, social, and economic equality for all. Social change for Native nations requires a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of colonization, genocide and oppression. It also requires that we know who we are as Native people – our history, language, and culture. Most importantly, social change to end domestic violence requires accountability to those who are battered.

In an attempt to be clear with funders and other agencies, advocates often talk about assisting survivors and their children to safety, promoting access to resources, and providing for basic needs. Commonly referred to as "direct services," this language comes from the social service model. It reflects a case management approach aimed at "fixing" individuals during business hours, at the worker's convenience, and subject to eligibility requirements.

There are many competent, compassionate, and well-meaning direct service providers in Indian County. Some are Native, others are not. Direct service providers who learn about domestic violence as both a

societal gender issue and result of colonization and assimilation, empower themselves as responsible advocates, employees, and relatives. Social change to address the root cause of violence is integral. The mechanism for social change is advocacy. Being an advocate is powerful in the best sense of the word. As advocates, we are afforded the challenge and opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our relatives. This role provides innumerable lessons about our relationships and ourselves.

B. Advocacy is an opportunity to understand the societal and personal impact of oppression and internalized oppression.

Internalized oppression occurs when we take on the beliefs and behaviors of our oppressors. We are operating from internalized oppression when we compete instead of cooperate; detach instead of create relationships; talk “about” or “at” instead of “with” someone; label or judge others instead of accepting people as unique individuals; blame instead of understand.

We operate from internalized oppression when we excuse our lack of respect and compassion instead of holding ourselves accountable. Internalized oppression can create feelings of inadequacy, confusion and fear that immobilize us or burn us out. We can react by becoming oppressive to those around us in a misguided attempt to maintain control. Or, we can choose a path of courage – intellectual and emotional honesty that leads us back to the natural life way. Guidance on this path can come from embracing relationships with sisters whose expertise about this journey comes from personal experience. Actively recognizing and honoring our differences and our variety of expertise is key to grassroots’ advocacy and our ability to work through internalized oppression together.

Native advocates come to understand the depths of trauma through personal experience and/or vicariously with the survivors they work with. The historical trauma experienced by Native people can deepen the trauma of battering . “Trauma-informed” advocacy, including our social change work in Indian Country encompasses individual violence, gender-based violence and historical violence. Addressing the connections between these forms of trauma, especially historical trauma, is challenging. Effective, comprehensive efforts to end violence, and reclaim the status of women are strengthened when we recognize how we all are impacted in some way by historical trauma. Our efforts are further advanced when we recognize our resiliency, our strengths, our ability to heal, to survive and to thrive. Healing is a process we do together as equals: our relationships sustain and empower us.

Our relationships with individual survivors are the fabric of social change. Advocates work side-by-side with the survivors as “relatives,” trusting that they know what they need, and prioritizing their safety, integrity and autonomy. Advocates’ relationships with survivors are the “life force” of the movement to end domestic violence.

The relationship between a survivor and the advocate includes: validation of the experience, empowering them to control decision-making, recognizing expertise and leadership by women who are battered; developing mutual trust and respect, compassion and non-violence; encouraging personal accountability for our internalized oppression and behavior; and believing in and providing non-judgmental support as whole human beings.

In the Victims Advocacy Manual (1995, Section Two, Advocacy), Ellen Pence and Anne Marshall describe four aspects of advocacy:

Personal relationship with the battered women. The ideal relationship between a battered woman and her advocate is that of a partnership, working together to reach a conclusion that is acceptable to the woman and providing her with maximum protection. There may be cultural and class differences between the two women but there are always commonalities that can be instrumental in developing the trust that is needed in this partnership. It is the advocate's responsibility to look for these commonalities, at the same time recognizing and respecting the differences.

Decision-making. Remembering that decisions must be made by the woman, the advocate can best help by walking through this process with her, prioritizing the decisions she will be facing, listing the options that are available to her, discussing how realistic they are and the ramifications of those options she may choose. It is the advocate's responsibility to provide the women with information she needs in order to make decisions.

Clearing the path. Of all the people involved in the response to domestic violence, the advocate is the most likely person to have an overall picture of what a battered woman faces. It is the advocate's responsibility to advise and, if need be, educate the service providers and agencies of all the obstacles that are in a woman's way before she can gain some control over her life: taking care of her children, finding a home that is affordable and safe for her and her children, having reliable transportation, reconnecting with family and friends from whom she has been isolated. Many times rules, regulations, long-standing practices or attitudes of people who control resources prevent women following a course of action. The advocate's role is to use her influence, her knowledge and her pervasive powers to help women overcome those obstacles. Certainly stopping the abuse is paramount, but the other very real obstacles cannot be ignored and often prevent women from making what an onlooker may see as her only choice.

Changing the system. The best tool an advocate can have to make any changes in the system is documentation of instances when cases of domestic assault are mishandled, trivialized or neglected. Laws or procedures that are being circumvented can be challenged with dispassionate memos, stating dates, times, names, etc. While each case will have its own set of circumstances, an advocate can watch for consistent practices that are not in the interest of the victims of domestic assault. It is the advocate's responsibility to know the system she is working in and to be able to determine when the only recourse is to change policy or practices that will ensure victims will be protected.

Knowing the system also refers to knowing what boundaries are constricting an advocate. While good advocacy may typically mean arguing a victim's position at every level of decision making, the justice system is not an environment conducive to challenging decisions. The advocate who walks into a judge's office to tell him or her that they "blew it on the Steven's case" may compromise her effectiveness. Yet an advocate who is afraid to raise objections will also fail to be effective. Those within the system must recognize the obligation of the advocate to question all decisions on behalf of the victim's safety and integrity.

Advocacy includes all the things programs offer individual survivors: 24 hour crisis line, shelter, food, clothing, transportation, accompaniment to court and other services, general, legal and medical advocacy, consciousness-raising/support groups, information and referrals, assistance with rent and utilities, childcare and crisis intervention, men's re-education groups, probation departments and children's programming.

The list is expanded by other needs a survivor identifies to be safe and to get her life back. The list is limited by victim-blaming, lack of funds or support and sometimes our lack of creativity, energy, program politics, or barriers imposed from outside agencies.

Limited access to resources, mounds of paperwork, eligibility requirements to receive services, limits on how the programs can use funding to support the survivor, shelter compliance, "white savior" or "do-gooder" attitudes, and compromising behavior of staff all create barriers to survivors getting what they need and have a right to. These barriers can re-victimize survivors, prevent them from achieving safety and increase their danger level. Creating a trauma-informed approach and a safe environment is likely to remove most if not all of these barriers to adequately supporting survivors.

Sometimes advocacy programs provide resources to survivors such as utility payments, rent deposits, food and gas cards. Other times partnerships with other agencies are created to assist them in finding ways to prioritize survivors' needs. Advocates also work with programs to create respectful policies and procedures that ensure survivor safety, minimize delays and paperwork, and reflect trust that survivors know best what they need.

As a result of decades of advocacy and social change work, domestic violence shelter programs are now seen as essential in many communities. The nature of shelter work is crisis-oriented; we are challenged to move outside of the shelter doors to work with other systems, organize community education events and the like due to lack of resources. We are equally challenged to not re-create the oppression of other systems we work so hard to change.

C. How we work within the shelter is a reflection of our social change work.

Shelter is more than providing safety and getting basic needs met on a temporary basis. This may be the first time in a survivor's life that she is listened to and asked what she needs and wants. Part of our social change work is to ensure that the voices of survivors are heard and play a major role in decision-making, not just behind shelter doors, but also beyond shelter doors.

D. Outreach work is another avenue for providing advocacy to survivors and their children.

Outreach advocacy includes making sure people know who you are as individuals and as a program. Some survivors may not come to a shelter at all but would like an advocate to help navigate the criminal justice system, social services, child protection etc. Sometimes family members and friends come to advocates out of fear for their loved ones or for support to get the individual who is battered to "do something." As advocates, sometimes we work with family and friends to arrange a safe meeting place with a survivor, if that is what she wants. Outreach advocacy may include providing transportation, accompaniment to court or service providers, providing information or just conversation. Clearly, advocacy can take many different forms.

E. Legal advocacy means providing support, accurate information about the operation of the court system, transportation, accompaniment through the court system and assistance in completing necessary documents.

Legally, unless advocates are attorneys they cannot provide legal advice. However, advocates can offer basic information, make referrals to attorneys, and assist survivors in filling out and filing protection orders and other routine paperwork. Advocates can act (with the survivor's permission) as the contact person for law enforcement, attorneys and others involved in her legal situation.

There are a variety of ways to provide legal advocacy. In addition to protection orders and accompaniment throughout civil or criminal proceedings, advocates commonly help survivors figure out available resources to manage the divorce process, child custody, visitation and even things like taxes and bankruptcy. Legal advocacy may also include tracking paperwork through the system, making sure papers get served, visiting with law enforcement and attorneys to ensure a case is not lost in the system and is handled appropriately.

Legal advocacy empowers those who are battered. It is not the job of advocates to get survivors to cooperate with law enforcement or the criminal justice system. Both law enforcement and the criminal justice system have specific responsibilities that do not always prioritize the safety and sovereignty of survivors. The survivor of battering knows her situation best.

Legal advocacy requires knowledge about federal laws (Violence Against Women Act and related legislation), tribal and state domestic violence codes, law enforcement departmental policy, procedure and protocol regarding domestic violence and mandatory arrest. Legal advocates become experts on writing protection orders, service of these orders and creating safety plans. Legal advocates know that mutual arrests and protection orders are not appropriate. They understand that full faith and credit and other jurisdictional issues are areas that they must become very familiar with.

Legal advocates also work with court systems and law enforcement to develop policies, procedures and protocols related to domestic violence that are victim-centered. Provision of training about the dynamics of battering, the history of violence against Native women and the law enforcement response can help create a common foundation for this work.

Smaller programs will most likely not have specialized legal advocates. That's ok – the specialization of advocacy is a relatively new phenomena. In the end, all advocates provide a similar role: they prioritize safety and accountability in all matters, provide support, may give general advice, educate about rights, speak up for the survivor (as requested) to assure their needs are met in a safe, consistent and respectful manner with all providers and agencies survivors interact with, and provide accurate information about the causes, dynamics and impact of domestic violence.

F. Women's groups are a foundational part of our movement.

We recognize that men can and do suffer from domestic violence, and as advocates it is important to support all survivors, including men. However, we also recognize that the current movement to address domestic violence started as a women's movement to address violence against women, and in many

ways is still rooted in that foundation. The movement began with women coming together to support other women. These groups began early in the shelter movement as “consciousness- raising” or “CR” groups.” These groups connect women with similar experiences as sisters for support, validation and information sharing. Importantly, they created plans and agendas that used the combined expertise of women survivors to take action to end domestic violence and other forms of violence against women. The key concept of these early groups was that the “personal is political.”

Moving from individual experiences to social change work was the goal of these groups. Their efforts resulted in the establishment of shelters, advocacy programs, state and nation-wide action organizations. The Violence Against Women Act is an outcome of decades of work by grassroots women advocates. The sacrifices and often dangerous work of those women changed America’s consciousness about battering from a socially acceptable “family matter” to battering as a violent crime.

Today, there continue to be many forms of women’s groups, but the connection to ongoing social change is often lacking. Some of these groups are commonly referred to as “women’s support groups.” They tend to be more “self-help” and can have a mental health focus rather than a political or social change one. Rather than hearing “sisterhood is powerful” or “the personal is political,” there is talk about co-dependency and recovery. Unfortunately, sometimes the focus of these groups can dwell on personal deficiencies. In Indian country, these women’s groups are often called “Talking Circles” or “Talking Stick,” where the focus is on support for one another, healing, sharing our experiences, establishing relations or making relatives. This is an important aspect of sisterhood, however again, the connection with ongoing social change is sometimes missing.

There are a number of theories about why this change occurred. It may be that people are entering this space unaware of the herstory of the movement. It may be that more and more advocates are getting into the work for employment, rather than from personal experience of having been battered themselves. Whatever the reason, advocates must be aware of the herstory and conscious of the differences and consequences for the various approaches to women’s groups. For example, the only eligibility requirement for a group should be that a woman has been battered with no pre-requisites of filing charges, parenting classes, staying in a shelter or leaving her batterer. Professional facilitators are not necessary for these groups. Battering is understood as a violent crime, not a mental health issue; we believe and trust in women and their expertise.

Organizing groups can be difficult for many reasons ranging from building trust after being subjected to “victim blaming” to not enough resources for women to attend, etc. Finding time to share food, have coffee and visit is a legitimate, women’s way of providing support, information and organizing projects that connect women.

Many survivors may believe they need counseling and request a referral. The reality for Native communities is that counselors are not easily accessed and the crisis/chaos environment of tribal communities is not conducive to healing by appointment. Regardless, we need to make sure we give survivors accurate information about battering, validate her survival skills and expertise, and make a referral to a competent counselor or therapist that understands the dynamics of battering that prioritizes safety and doesn’t discount the violence.

G. It is important that we also take into consideration the needs of children exposed to violence, and acknowledge the distinct impact that battering has on mothers and their children.

All children in homes where there are batterers witness the violence and quite often are victims of abuse themselves. National statistics show approximately 50% of batterers also beat their children/step-children and 1/4 to 1/3 sexually abuse their children/step-children (National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect; “Child Protection in Families Experiencing Domestic Violence”) . One hundred percent of batterers emotionally abuse their children. Some studies have shown that children are more traumatized by witnessing their fathers beating their mothers than if the children themselves are beaten. Therefore, abuse of the mother is child abuse.

The purpose of children’s programs should not be to assess or improve parenting skills of battered women. Neither, should it be to “reunite” families. Children’s programs should be aimed at helping children to understand what the violence is about and to give them information that will help them deal with their experiences. Battering is emotionally exhausting for children who witness the violence, and the women who experience it. Sometimes women need time away from their children and similarly children need time away from their mothers – without either feeling guilty. Children also need safe space where they can “bounce off the walls” and not get into trouble. Structure and routine are helpful in making children feel secure. We need to establish relationships as sisters with women, and as aunts or grandmothers with their children, so we can be respectfully supportive.

Safety planning for children and visitation centers are important aspects of these programs. Remember that perhaps the most powerful tactic of battering, next to the physical, is the batterer’s use of the children to gain access to their mother through visitation, custody battles and emotional blackmail -“tell your mother when she stops being mad at me we can be a family again,” etc.

Too often child protection, social services and even some advocates end up unintentionally colluding with batterers by charging the woman who has been battered with failure to protect her children or with child neglect or abuse when she returns to the batterer.

We need to be clear that it is not the responsibility of survivors, especially mothers, to end the violence: she is the victim of the violence. It is the responsibility of the abusers, law enforcement and the criminal justice system to stop the violence. It is the responsibility of advocates, community members, child protection, and social services to prevent and intervene. To blame a woman for her batterer’s violence or to blame her for our inability or unwillingness to stop or prevent battering is re-victimizing; it lets the batterer and the rest of us off the hook. Additionally, it puts the woman and her children in much more danger.

H. Community or public education is a broad term that describes efforts to raise awareness levels throughout our communities about the history and dynamics of violence against Native women and its impact on violence in our communities today.

Community education can create ownership of the community’s roles in ending violence against women and their children, and domestic violence in general. Community education takes place through workshops, newspapers, public service announcements, radio talk shows, school presentations, written literature, posters, candle light vigils and other community events. A number of national resource centers,

including the NIWRC, have materials and guides that individual programs can use to tailor events and presentations to their communities. A lot of these educational materials are associated with monthly themes such as:

- January—stalking awareness
- February—teen dating violence and sex trafficking awareness
- April—sexual assault awareness and also child abuse prevention
- May—mental health awareness
- October—domestic violence awareness

Monthly themes provide a great opportunity to bring and expand awareness in the community. In addition, the United Nations observes a number of International days as well, such as International Women’s Day (March 8th); Mother Earth Day (April 22nd); Indigenous People’s Day (August 9th); Elimination of Violence Against Women Day (November 25th) and others. These days provide a great opportunity to connect with the larger global community and provide an opportunity for education.

Every conversation with individual community members is powerful. Lunch sales, auctions and other fund-raisers or events are non-threatening opportunities to create relationships and have conversations within the community. The most effective educational approaches include the following components: 1) target specific age groups; 2) take into consideration literacy and education levels; 3) capitalize on other skills and abilities beyond formal education; and 4) establish a connection between ending domestic violence, returning to a natural belief system that recognizes women as sacred, and acknowledging the community’s role in helping to end the violence and demand accountability.

I. Advocates are encouraged to make the establishment of *Batterers’ Re-education program* a part of their strategy and vision of program development and coordinated community response.

Like the first sister in the Three Sisters story in the Introduction of this booklet, most advocacy and shelter programs are overwhelmed by the enormous effort it takes to provide safety for survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and their children, and help them reclaim their lives. Meeting the needs of male survivors, those of the LGBTQ2S communities and other disenfranchised groups pose additional challenges. However, like the third sister seeking to confront root causes and create social change to end violence, it is necessary to strategize ways to hold offenders accountable and foster change.

As noted in Section I, intimate partner violence/ battering is a gender-based crime and the majority of offenders are male. This is not natural but a result of socialization, hence batterers’ re-education programs are about unlearning unnatural, negative beliefs and behaviors, and learning natural, non-violent beliefs and behaviors. These programs are relatively few and far between for a variety of reasons. Programs can run anywhere from 4 to 56 weeks, usually dependent upon available funding.

“Success rates” of existing batterers’ re-education programs are not very high. What “success” means in this context is also debatable, however, there is general agreement they are necessary to hold offenders accountable and offer a means to change their thinking and behavior. Batterers’ re-education programs give an opportunity for personal accountability, to examine their violent behavior and the impact it has on himself, his partner, children, family, community, and nation.

Culturally-based re-education programs examine the offender’s use of power and control tactics,

focus on personal accountability and unnatural beliefs about women, gender roles, etc. from a cultural perspective. Since violence against women and children, domestic violence in all its forms, rarely happened before colonization, the natural belief system and its values, beliefs and practices held by indigenous societies provide the path to change. Non-violence, spirituality, respect, compassion and personal responsibility are hallmarks of culturally-based programs. It is important to note that men, who participate in men's camps or cultural camps have a much higher success rate and lower rate of recidivism. Culture, tradition and ceremony play a huge role in healing our men and protecting our women and children. No young boy says he wants to grow up and abuse women, just as no little girl wants to grow up to be abused.

Model re-education programs are part of a coordinated community response led by an advocacy program. Learning to be non-violent, respectful of intimate partners, honoring women, and behavior change are difficult and occurs over time with mechanisms for continued accountability and support. It is highly recommended that attendance in these programs is court-ordered, part of intensive, extended probation and compliance consistently monitored in coordination with an advocacy program. Survivors are the experts on their batterers and whether true change is happening. The survivor's voice in this process promotes to true accountability. Their involvement, usually through an advocate for safety reasons, is strictly voluntary. Their confidentiality must be guarded at all times, regardless of their involvement.

Batterers' re-education programs are not counseling or therapy groups. If participants have mental health issues, referrals to mental health professionals are appropriate; however, they do not replace criminal justice consequences for criminal behavior. Anger management programs are inappropriate and possibly dangerous if used to replace re-education classes or jail time. Violence is not caused by anger. Anger is an emotion. Violence is behavior and about power and control.

Alcohol/substance abuse is a major problem throughout Indian Country (as throughout the U.S.) and many offenders attending re-education programs do abuse alcohol and/or other drugs (substances). Substance abuse and violence are highly correlated - they increase the frequency, unpredictability and severity of physical and emotional battering. However, battering/ intimate partner violence is not caused by alcohol or substance abuse. Offenders who are alcoholic, abusing or addicted to other drugs should be referred to treatment, ideally before beginning the re-education program.

There are women who are mandated to re-education classes, but it is best for them attend gender-specific classes that address issues specific to women. Advocates and class facilitators are also cautioned that it is not unusual for women to be wrongfully convicted of domestic violence/ Intimate Partner Violence. Too often, attempts at self-defense are wrongfully interpreted as IPV, commonly due to lack of law enforcement and/or criminal justice system training. Preferably, LGBTQ2S offenders should also have classes that address specific gender, social and cultural issues that impact their behavior.

Batterers' re-education programs are accountable to women/survivors who are battered. Best practices direct coordination of their activities through the advocacy program to ensure the safety of women/survivors. Recovering batterers co-facilitating with an advocate is the ideal. They can role-model respectful partnerships. Self-identifying as "recovering batterers," rather than "ex-batterer" indicates acknowledgement of the difficulty of remaining non-violent and respectful of women. This reflects the harsh reality of society's pressure to maintain male privilege and be disrespectful towards women. Because of this dynamic, it's best that a woman facilitator or advocate co-facilitate or monitor the classes to provide support and accountability.

Facilitation of men's re-education classes is difficult work. Again, success rates for re-education programs are very low; up to 90% will re-offend. This is not necessarily the fault of the facilitator or the program. These programs are fairly new and will continue to evolve and become more effective. The low success rates reflect the pervasiveness of beliefs and attitudes of American society that created battering to begin with. Indian Country has survived a couple hundred years of colonization; it will take generations to undo the oppression and reclaim non-violent life ways.

High re-offense rates indicate that ending violence against women, holding batterers accountable for their violence and helping them to reclaim a natural, respectful life way requires the involvement of community members and relatives, in addition to programs and systems. When funding or other issues block attempts to establish a comprehensive re-education program, remember that traditionally, native peoples did not have "programs" to teach people how to behave or deal with violations of proper behavior or crime. With or without a re-education program, advocates can reinforce our roles and responsibilities as relatives through cultural community education and trainings, role-modelling, teaching by-stander interventions, and utilizing traditional means to protect and support survivors, and stop offenders' violence while promoting cultural values and life ways.

J. Coordinated community response initiatives are effective tools.

The goal of the coordinated community response (CCR) is safety of women and offender accountability. This is accomplished by education, dialogue and creation of memoranda of understanding or agreement, policy, procedure and protocol, and law and other legislation. This initiative is strengthened by ongoing cross-training that emphasizes interaction and includes the operation and history of each agency.

A coordinated community response is based upon the concept that ending domestic violence by holding batterers accountable for their violence and helping them as relatives to reclaim a natural, respectful life way requires the direct involvement of every community member, relative, agency and system.

The overall purpose of the coordinated community response is the transformation of systems and institutions that actively support and respect the sovereignty of women and hold offenders accountable. Involvement and leadership of advocates and survivors is key to that objective. Other CCR team members are people within law enforcement, the criminal justice system and men's programs who have authority to establish policies, procedures and protocols. Of all the players involved, advocates are the only ones able to maintain biased support of survivors, and maintain 100% focus on eliminating domestic violence/ violence against women. It is the job of advocates to keep the focus on the safety and sovereignty of women and hold offenders accountable.

Coordinated community response may involve various other programs such as child protection, social services or housing agencies. However, battering must be clearly acknowledged as a violent crime, and the coordinated community response is a tool to share information and create relationships among disciplines to respond to domestic violence in the community. The CCR team is not a mental health or social services task force. Systems advocacy includes educating mental health and social service agencies about the dynamics of battering so they can provide respectful, appropriate services to survivors and their children, and prevent unintentional collusion with batterers.

It is inappropriate and re-victimizing to utilize CCR meetings for staffing about specific women, case management or discussion of survivor's behavior in general. Discussion should focus on the system's response and ability to hold offenders accountable and provide safety.



CONCLUSION

The work to end domestic violence and reclaim the sacred status of Native women is a dynamic commitment. If this booklet has achieved its goal, you have a stronger sense of the relationships among shelter, advocacy and social change. Hopefully, it has provided some direction and guidance in your work.

This booklet is possible because of the struggles, experience, courage and wisdom of hundreds, if not thousands of survivors, mostly women. It is impossible to share their knowledge and understanding in one lifetime, much less one booklet. We hope it inspires each of us to continue the challenge that literally saves lives, and transforms us and our relationships in our Native communities and the broader global society. If we choose, this work can teach us how to reach within ourselves, reach out to others, reach back to our ancestors, and reconnect and reclaim the natural, peaceful life way of our ancestors.

This concept is thoughtfully described by Terri L. Henry, Eastern Band of Cherokee Tribal Councilwoman, and former NIWRC Board Chairwoman:

“The development of this work is founded in the creation of a social movement for change. Implementing this initiative in Indian Country is different for the rest of the country because we, as Indian people, have access to our traditions and customs. Our task is to unravel all the imported attitudes from the fabric of our tribal societies and emerge as the dream we were to our ancestors seven generations ago.”

Tribal Response to Combat Violence Against Native Women, presented at the Federal Bar Association Conference, Indian Law Section, 1998© Terri L. Henry





515 Lame Deer Ave, Lame Deer, MT 59043
1-855-649-7299 | (406) 477-3896
Website: www.niwrc.org
Facebook: [fb.com/niwrc](https://www.facebook.com/niwrc)
Twitter: [@niwrc](https://twitter.com/niwrc)
Instagram: [niwrc](https://www.instagram.com/niwrc)
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