

Strong Families Respect Each Other:

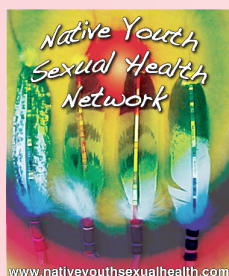
What Native Youth Need to
Know About Domestic Violence





National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
www.niwrc.org/resources

Strong Families Respect Each Other: What Native Youth Need to Know About Domestic Violence 2019



Made in partnership with NYSHN
www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com



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*"One cannot respect the future, our future,
or Seven Generations forward, without truly respecting
those that make the future, our future, and Seven
Generations forward possible: our women."*

—Robert Animikii Horton,
Manitou Rapids Anishinaabe



What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is when one person in an intimate partner relationship controls or exploits their partner. It can happen to people in any race, age, class, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation. It can happen in dating relationships at a very young age or occur in marriages or relationships that have lasted for decades. It can also occur in current relationships or with ex-partners.

People who abuse can use physical, verbal and emotional harm as well as threats and intimidation to control or exploit their partner. Some of the things an abuser does to control or exploit their partner are illegal, such as physical abuse or rape. But many of the things an abusive person does are generally considered “legal”, like using put downs or controlling their access to money. Just because an action is legal, doesn’t mean it is okay. Abusers can also use their own vulnerabilities (for example: threatening to kill themselves) to manipulate their partner into staying. In short, domestic violence is about power and control.

Domestic refers to something that happens in the home, within a family, or in an intimate partner relationship, even if the people don’t actually live together.

Violence can come in many different forms. It exists in behaviors and actions that are intended to cause fear, hurt, harm, and as a show of power and control over another person. When extreme, the violence can and does often result in death. Jealousy can be a form of violence. Even though it may not cause physical harm, jealousy is often about exercising power and control over others.


Domestic violence is usually not just a one time thing. It is an ongoing pattern of abusive control. Survivors (the victims targeted by an abusive person) often deal with abuse 24/7- not just during a violent incident- because they are in constant fear.

Domestic violence usually includes an ongoing combination of many different forms of controlling violence:

- Physical abuse such as slapping, hitting, kicking, biting or strangling. It may be the easiest to identify, but it can still be hard to talk about.
- Emotional abuse such as name-calling, put downs, damaging or threatening to damage regalia or pets.
- Economic abuse such as withholding money, controlling access to a car or phone, or preventing the partner from going to work or school.
- Isolating the victim by acting jealous or making their partner feel guilty for seeing friends or family or even preventing them from seeing friends or family.
- Intimidating the victim by making them feel weak or inferior.
- Sexual abuse such as expecting or forcing their partner to do things they do not want to do sexually.


Domestic violence is not always easy to recognize. Here are some specific examples:

- Your partner refuses to use protection such as condoms or birth control, or interferes with you being able to use protection, like poking holes in condom packages or hiding birth control pills.
- Your partner tries to control where you go and who you see or talk to, and/or gets mad and makes you feel guilty if you spend time with your friends or family or talk to other people.
- Your partner sends you threatening texts or tries to humiliate you in public or on Facebook.
- Your partner demands to check your phone log and private messages.



Domestic violence can be hard to talk about for a number of different reasons. People don't always understand that a survivor is dealing with this on a daily basis. People outside the situation may just be aware of one incident so they don't understand the severity of the situation or how long it has been going on. Friends and family may respond by making the victim feel shame or suggesting that they caused the abuse or is just "causing drama". If the victim senses that a friend, confidant or the community blames them for the abuse, they will not feel safe or comfortable revealing the ongoing nature of the violence. Victims may also feel a sense of family loyalty to the abuser and may choose not to talk about the violence for fear of getting the abuser in trouble, or for fear of embarrassing the family.

Support the victim and do not blame them. Victim-blaming reinforces the shame that they feel. Victims are often afraid, hurt, isolated or physically or emotionally in pain. They may feel like no one will believe them or the family will protect the abuser because of family loyalty. Always support the victim!



If you are a victim of domestic violence, the first thing to know is— it is NOT your fault. Domestic violence is caused by the actions of the abuser—not you.

Younger women, ages 16-24 are most likely to be victimized.¹ In over 85% of domestic violence cases, the victims are women and the abusers are men and boys.² However, domestic violence can and does happen to men and boys and between same sex and two-spirited couples. For this reason, domestic violence is sometimes called **intimate partner violence**. Intimate partner relationships, no matter who is involved should be about respect; not power and control masked as love. You deserve healthy and respectful love.

*"Human kind has not woven the web of life.
We are but one thread within it.
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.
All things are bound together.
All things connect."*—Chief Seattle 1854,
Ancestral Leader of the Suquamish Tribe

¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 187635 (Oct. 2001).

² *Id.*

Domestic Violence is Not Our Tradition



Domestic violence is not cultural or traditional in our Native communities. But since colonization, domestic violence has become more common. Our communities are often silent about this violence out of fear of retaliation or not wanting to get into other people's business; or we may feel hopeless and think no one will help anyway so why bother saying anything.

TRUTH:

Domestic violence affects everyone in our community and is not consistent with tribal beliefs and values. We all need to take responsibility for being part of the CHANGE.

What To Do If You Are Experiencing Domestic Violence In Any Form.

Make a Safety Plan. Even if you feel like you cannot leave the situation right now, there may come a time in the future when you need or want to leave. A safety plan can help you figure out how to leave and stay safe, as well as how to be as safe as possible if you stay. There are many different ways to make a safety plan, so here are some things to keep in mind:

- Plan ahead.** Even if you don't plan on leaving, think about where you could go if you needed a temporary place to be safe – a local shelter, an aunt's, cousin's or friend's house. If you have children or younger siblings, think about their safety and how to get away if needed.
- Knowledge is Power.** Get to know the different resources in your area. If you don't feel comfortable going to the local advocacy program or shelter, keep in mind that many have websites or hotlines you can call or text if you have questions or are in crisis. The StrongHearts Native Helpline has trained Native advocates available by phone, at 1-844-7NATIVE, to help you develop a safety plan, refer you to culturally-appropriate services in your area, or just to listen- Trust. Speak. Heal. Together.
- You are not alone.** Domestic violence is more common than you think. Although every situation of domestic violence involves unique circumstances, there are people who understand your situation and are willing to help.
- Tell Someone.** You don't have to do this alone. Tell someone you trust—like an elder, auntie/uncle or close friend. Don't be afraid to ask for the support you need. If they don't believe you or give you the kind of support you need, find someone who will. There ARE people who will believe you and help you.

- **Talk with an advocate.** A domestic violence advocate can help you make a safety plan. Remember that you can always get CONFIDENTIAL support from a local domestic violence advocate, who can help you understand that it is NOT your fault. No matter what you do, no one has the right to physically or emotionally hurt you, make you afraid or control you.

SAFETY FIRST: Keep in mind that sometimes abusers may try to monitor your Internet use, texting and email activity without your knowledge. In some circumstances, it may be safer for you to communicate with advocates via public phones or to research websites or hotlines using a computer in a public place such as a library.

For Family and Friends of People Experiencing Domestic Violence.

Knowing that someone you care about is being hurt, is hard. Actively listen to their needs and ask them what you can do to help. Respect their answer even if it's not what you want to hear. Because of the violence they have suffered, it may be hard for them to trust people. Help them with a solution that works for them—don't impose your ideas because that may end up just pushing them away.

- **Be available.** If you agree to help or support someone, be clear about what you can and cannot do. Don't promise support if you aren't certain that you can follow through. Take action in a way that maintains safety for you and your family/friends.
- **Don't Judge.** It can be hard to understand why your friend or family member stays in the relationship. The reasons why victims stay with an abusive partner are very complex. Remember that domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior designed to exert power and control over a person through physical

violence, intimidation, or threats. Fear of increased violence is a big reason why many people stay in violent relationships. Don't judge your friend or family member if they choose to stay, or if they end up returning to the abuser after leaving. Be supportive.

- **Avoid Gossip.** If you are concerned for a friend or family member's safety, or your own, tell someone you trust who will take it seriously and listen. Remember, only share information that you have permission to share and that is based on facts. Rumors make a bad situation even worse. And remember, a local domestic violence advocacy program can provide CONFIDENTIAL support.

- **Knowledge is Power.** Even if you think you don't need them for yourself, get to know the domestic violence resources in your area. Share this information with anyone in need, help them make a call, or just offer support when they decide to visit a shelter or other services.



"Native Love means respect for everything."

—Sarah James, Board of Director Gwich'in Council International

Breaking the Silence: Native Youth Can Lead the Change.

A unique fact about Native American communities is that our people and families tend to be younger. This means we have more young people in our communities, and we have children at younger ages. This can be a powerful part of creating positive change in our communities. Our young people and young families are our greatest change makers when they have good support and respect from the community and family members.

Even though domestic violence has become more common in today's society, it is NOT traditional and is not in keeping with our Native cultural teachings. In order to end this violence, we must return to our traditional values of respect and community accountability. Being 'accountable' or 'responsible' for our actions happens in many ways—it starts with naming violence as violence and not turning our backs when we see it in our community. While it may seem like a big task - being part of the solution is easier than you think.

Get the Conversation Started: Key questions to ask about responsibility and accountability in the community.

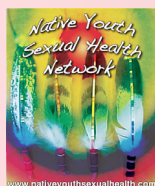
Native American youth across the United States are taking action and you can too. Here are some questions to ask yourself and your community to start healthy conversations about domestic violence.

- If you could decide how people would respond to violence in your community, what would that look like?
- Does your community talk about violence? If so, who talks about it? For those that don't, why do you think that is?

- How does your community talk about violence? What terms do they use? For example, do they talk about 'domestic violence' or 'family violence' or 'Indian or Native lovin'? How do you feel about these words?



- Does your Tribal government or traditional societies talk about violence? Why or why not?
- What are some of the traditional roles in your Native culture? What values are at the foundation of your Native community? Does domestic violence fit within that or not?
- What does Native Love mean to you? What should it mean?



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