

# Strong Families Respect Each Other:

What Native Youth Need to  
Know About the Connection  
Between Sexual Assault and  
Domestic Violence

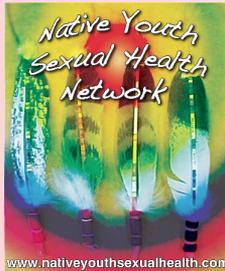




National Indigenous Women's Resource Center  
[www.niwrc.org/resources](http://www.niwrc.org/resources)

# Strong Families Respect Each Other: What Native Youth Need to Know About the Connection Between Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence 2019

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Made in partnership with NYSHN  
[www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com](http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com)



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## 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. Perpetrators who are physically violent with their partners are often sexually abusive also.

## What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault usually refers to a criminal offense where someone knowingly causes another person to engage in an unwanted sexual act by force or threat.

**Sexual** means any behavior or action relating to sex and sexuality, not just physical 'intercourse'. This includes words and images, as well as touch.

**Assault** means the action causes hurt or harm, was unwanted and/or was done without clear and knowing consent. To give consent, the person must be old enough to understand what it means and must be in a coherent state of mind. Many jurisdictions have laws that say a person under the age of 14 is not legally capable of giving consent for sexual relations, and that if a person is drunk or on drugs, that person is not capable of giving consent.

**Sexual Assault** is a collection of actions and behaviors that result in hurt or harm and/or aim to control another person. Sexual assault can be rape, but it can also be any unwanted touching or pressuring someone into any sexual act (like oral sex, for example, or a blow job) that the victim doesn't want to do. Perpetrators use many methods to gain control of the victims such as guilt, embarrassment, physical force, retaliation, fear, finding out what a person needs and withholding it unless they get sexual favors in return, e.g. cash, illusion of safety (safety from gang initiations), or alcohol/drugs.

## Examples of Sexual Assault include:

- Ignoring someone's boundaries, limits or feelings about sex, or sexual behaviors.
- Engaging in sex or a sexual act without hearing a very clear 'yes' verbally or in body language or by ignoring a 'no'. A 'no' can be verbal or in body language.
- Thinking you have the right to control someone else's body or sexuality.
- Making assumptions about what's ok to do without someone's consent throughout the 'intimate' experience or beyond their comfort level.
- Engaging in sex or a sexual act with someone who is too young, doesn't understand what is happening, or who is drunk or on drugs.
- A partner in a relationship sharing sexually explicit photos ("nudes"), that were intended for just that one person to see, with his friends without the consent of the person that sent the photo.

**If it doesn't feel comfortable,  
if it doesn't feel right,  
you have a right to say "No"  
and be heard.**

It is important to remember that perpetrators aren't always strangers. In fact, most sexual assaults happen with people we know and trust such as family, friends, relatives, community members, and caregivers. It can happen to anyone and at any age. And it can happen between two people who are in an intimate partner relationship- married couples, and couples who are just dating. Just because two people have been willingly intimate in the past doesn't mean that sexual assaults can't happen in the relationship.

A perpetrator isn't always male and the victim isn't always female. It can happen between boys, girls, two spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.



# Supporting Each Other and Our Communities: Native Youth can Lead the Change. Learn the Facts

For people who experience sexual assault, know that it is never their fault! This is important for youth to remember because a lot of bullying and gossip can happen as a result of sexual assault.

**MYTH:** You can't be raped or sexually assaulted by someone that you are in a relationship with.

**TRUTH:** Intimate partner sexual assault and rape are used as a way to intimidate, control and demean. Between 14% and 25% of all women are sexually assaulted by intimate partners during their relationship. Between 40% and 45% of women in abusive relationships will also be sexually assaulted during the course of the relationship.

**MYTH:** People lie about sexual assault to get attention or because they're mad at their partner/boyfriend/girlfriend/friend.

**TRUTH:** Sexual assault is usually not reported at all out of fear or shame. We need to show our Native Pride by supporting and believing each other and recognizing the realities of sexual assault in our communities and supporting each other.

**MYTH:** People who dress in 'slutty' or revealing clothing or have lots of sexual partners are 'asking for it.'

**TRUTH:** Sexual assault is about the perpetrator trying to control the victim and has nothing to do with what people wear or how they act. In fact, people who have experienced sexual assault wear a variety of

clothes: miniskirts, hoodies, sweat pants and jeans. Some victims of sexual assault have had many sexual partners and some have had none at all. Remember, it is not about what the victim did before, during, or after the assault. It is about the actions of the perpetrator.

**MYTH:** If you've never had sex before being sexually assaulted, you lose your 'virginity' after being assaulted.

**TRUTH:** Sex and sexuality are way more complex than labels. If your first sexual experience was through a sexual assault, you still have the power to give yourself in the future on your own terms--you can decide who your first healthy experience will be with and when. These choices define you, not the assault. Violence never totally defines who we are as individuals or as Native peoples.



"Protecting the Circle" Aboriginal Men Ending Violence Against Women, Ryerson Student Campus Centre Toronto. [www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/protectingthecircle.html](http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/protectingthecircle.html)

## What To Do If You Have Been Sexually Assaulted

**Tell Someone.** Tell someone you trust like an elder, auntie or close friend about what happened and think about what they can do to support you. Don't be afraid to ask for the support you need. Consider getting medical attention—ask someone you trust to go with you. Remember that you can always get CONFIDENTIAL support from a local domestic violence/sexual assault advocate, who can help you understand that it is NOT your fault.

**You are not alone.** Although every sexual assault involves unique circumstances, there are other people out there that understand what you are going through and are willing to help.

**Knowledge is Power.** Get to know the different resources in your area. If you don't feel comfortable going to the local advocacy program, 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.

**Trust Yourself.** Learning how to do this can be hard, but your body and your spirit belong to you. It's important to listen to both of them – especially if they are telling you No, Stop, or Slow Down. If you are feeling unsure or uncomfortable about what's happening in a situation, even if it started out feeling good, you have the right to stop at ANY TIME AND TO SAY 'NO'.

*Sexting is popular among young people. 'Sexting' is sending sexually explicit photos, images, texts, emails or other method via text, emails or the like. Once you send it into cyber space, you have no control over who sees it or how it may possibly be used against you. Before you hit send, think about who may see the message.*

## What To Do If You Know Or Think A Friend Or Family Member Has Experienced Sexual Assault

- **Avoid Gossip.** This is so important in Native communities. Only share information that you have permission to share and is based on facts. Rumors make a bad situation even worse. And remember, if your community has a local domestic violence/sexual assault advocacy program, they are available to provide CONFIDENTIAL support.
- **Don't Judge.** Remember that sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.
- **Knowledge is Power.** Learn about the domestic violence and sexual assault resources available in your community. Share this information with anyone in need, help them make a call, or just offer support when they visit the clinic or some other service.
- **Empower Change.** If we want to be part of the solution to end domestic violence and sexual assault, it means learning how to trust our own decisions about our bodies, sex and sexuality; learning how to respect the decisions of others; and learning how to truly support people who have experienced sexual assault.



## Our Power as Life-Givers

*"Throughout several of our Aboriginal nations, women have always been held with the highest honor because of their ability to give life in its many forms, and the leadership roles they possess within our communities. But we need knowledge in action, not simply teachings of the past that we might give an occasional "nod" to. Each of us must learn to honor the roots of our own culture so that collectively we can have a stronger backing in ending violence and abuse against women." - DJ Danforth, Four Worlds International Institute.*

We all give life in many ways – women, men, two spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people - by supporting each other through hard times, sharing food or time together, and taking on cultural responsibilities like knowing or participating in ceremonies. When we respect each other's roles and honor each other's life supporting power, we create stronger communities. Stronger communities mean pulling together and never leaving anyone behind, especially when they are healing from domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

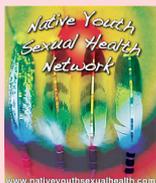
# What the Tech?!

## Cool Apps That Can Help Prevent Violence



These days, almost everyone in the city or on the rez has access to a computer, cell phone, smart phone, iPod etc. of some kind. If you don't have one of these, nicely ask to borrow your cousin's iPod or cell phone and check out this fun app!

**Circleof6** - a free app with the goal of helping to prevent violence before it happens. With Circle of 6, you can connect with your friends to stay close and stay safe. The Circle of 6 app for your smartphone makes it quick and easy to reach the 6 friends you choose. Need help getting home? Need an interruption? Two touches let your circle know where you are and how they can help. For more information visit <http://www.circleof6app.com>.



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