



**OF NATIVE
SOVEREIGNTY AND
SAFETY FOR NATIVE
WOMEN**

October 2024 | Volume 21 | Issue 3



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Black Bear,
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**Healing and
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Letter from the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

Dear Relatives and Friends,

At NIWRC's July board meeting, we explored points of tension and areas for growth among us. We delved into the challenging dynamics between gender identity, cultures, and languages.

The Sundance season and other community ceremonies were upon us as we convened. An elder on our board shared the challenges of including our Trans relatives in traditionally gendered ceremonies. While it's not our place to dictate cultural protocols, we agreed on the immense power of our ceremonies, which have held their integrity through generations of colonization and evolved to survive and thrive. Yet, we grappled with the limitations of the English language in expressing Indigenous concepts. For instance, where nature and water are often gendered as she/her in English, they have names in our languages—genderless, innately inclusive, and expansive. This complexity isn't easily conveyed with pronouns or how ceremonies are described in English.

Nothing about our Nations and communities across Indian Country is exclusive. We choose each other, care for each other, and ensure everyone is valued and contributes to the health of the Nation. How do we advance anti-violence efforts against Indigenous women while fostering respect and inclusivity using English?

We explicitly express our support and love for our queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit relatives. We recognize the urgent need for rejuvenated ceremonies and cultures as resilient, proactive measures resulting in respect for everyone in our communities and against gender violence. As our grandmothers, mothers, and aunts before us in this movement, we are committed to a path that prioritizes the safety of our women because when our women are safe, everyone in our communities is safe.

While our board discussion didn't yield definitive answers, it brought us closer as advocates, relatives, and board members. Our transparency around these tensions shows our beloved community nationwide that none of us has all the answers, and we all wrestle with language and cultural complexities. The key takeaway is that we choose each other, embracing all facets of womanhood and gender nonbinary identities. We are interconnected. We are all related. As seasons change, from summer to fall to winter, and we cast our votes in our upcoming elections, let us practice these lessons by caring for each other and ensuring everyone is valued and contributes to the health of our Nations. We are excited to have produced a video on Tillie Black Bear, a founding mother of our movement and NIWRC, which we aired at Tillie's 10-Year Memorial on October 1st.

"It wasn't until 1974, with the Indian Religious Freedom Act, that we were able to practice these ways without having to get permission. These ways are all attached to us as people as we make this human journey. There is a belief among our people that we live in this world not as humans on a spiritual journey but as spirits on a human journey. As Lakota, we believe that you are a spirit until birth. When you are born into this world, that first human touch is when you become a human being, and so when we leave this world, we go back into the spirit world as a spirit again."—Tillie Black Bear

In strength and solidarity,



Ahéhee',

Lucy Simpson, Esq.
Diné
Executive Director



Qe'ci'yew'yew',

tai simpson
Nimiipuu Nation
Board Chair



**OF NATIVE
SOVEREIGNTY AND
SAFETY FOR NATIVE
WOMEN**

Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for Native Women Magazine, 2003-2024

During the reauthorization process of the Violence Against Women Act in 2005, several national organizations came together to take a stand for the safety of Native women: Sacred Circle National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women, Clan Star, Inc., the National Congress of American Indians, and the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. It was recognized that to fully participate in the national movement to create the changes needed to increase safety for Native women, broad communication was essential. *Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for Native Women* emerged to fulfill this task.

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

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**NATIONAL
INDIGENOUS
WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER**

Comments

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NCAI VAW Task Force Co-Chairs Honored for their strong-hearted leadership. / Photo courtesy of NCAI.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Paula Julian, Filipina,
Editor, NIWRC *Restoration*
Magazine

I am so grateful and honored to have served as Editor of the *Restoration Magazine* over the past two years, and as Senior Policy Specialist with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center since we opened our doors in 2011. The past 13 years with NIWRC have been a blessing working with survivors, families, advocates, Tribes, Native Hawaiians, the staff, board, our many partners, and policymakers. Looking through the past two decades of *Restoration Magazine* editions provides the bread crumbs or answers to the question someone asked some time ago: how have we secured changes in laws and policies, especially when so many thought these changes were impossible? Let us learn from, remember, honor, and be inspired by our many leaders and all that they advocated for and taught us. Let us arm or dress ourselves with the knowledge, ceremonies, and love they have gifted us with so that we can continue restoring protections for women and Tribal and Native Hawaiian Nations. As we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the passage of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and the 30th Anniversary of the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, we must continue to keep the fires and provide the political will for Tribal, Federal, state and international policymakers to respect women's rights with the passage of laws and policies that reflect such respect.

Restoration has served as a beacon and an important organizing tool to communicate clearly our analysis of violence against women and recommendations

for removing systemic barriers facing Tribes, Native organizations, and women. *Restoration* reflects how we have affected changes in laws and policies. We have had **political clarity** about the systemic barriers and solutions to restoring Tribal sovereignty to increase Native women's safety, and we have centered **Indigenous worldviews**, including survivors' voices and Tribal perspectives. We have **organized** at the Tribal grassroots level and with non-Native allies, including creating the National Congress of American Indians Violence Against Women Task Force, the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, and so many more strong-hearted organizations. Article by article, edition by edition, graphic by graphic, we have communicated the following:

- Violence against Indigenous women is inextricably as (sic) a result of the laws, policies, and practices of the United States and other countries who had claimed these lands as their own, including but not limited to Russia, England, Spain, and France, in large part due to papal bulls that provided the basis for the doctrine of discovery.¹
- Solutions must prioritize Tribal sovereignty and Indigenous worldviews and ways of living in response to violence against women while continuing to hold federal and state/local

¹ <https://archive.ncai.org/news/articles/2023/03/30/ncai-statement-on-vatican-s-repudiation-of-doctrine-of-discovery>

Paula with former Restoration Magazine editor Jacqueline “Jax” Agtuca. Photo courtesy of Paula Julian.

systems accountable to reform and transform their responses, although the 2013 Indian Law and Order Commission Report stated “reject outmoded Federal command-and-control policies in favor of increased local control, accountability, and transparency.”²

Reflecting on the past 30 years, I am reminded of the strength of our relationships and responsibilities for each other—past, present, and future generations—to restore sovereignty and women’s safety. Our relationships and responsibilities help to light the path forward centering the voices of Indigenous women, survivors, Tribal Nations, and Native Hawaiians, especially when challenges to sovereignty and safety seem unrelenting, overwhelming, and impossible to overcome. We are so much more than the abuse, violence, misogyny (hatred for women), and colonization lead us to accept and believe. The continuous influx of new generations of advocates, policymakers, researchers, communications, leaders, and relatives working with long-time advocates and leaders reminds me of a story about geese that I first learned from Hopi relatives flying in V formation, which shared lessons about the strength of moving together versus alone and taking turns at the tip of the V.³ I look forward to continuing to work with new and current leaders while leading in the way that my elders taught me.

I am humbly honored to have contributed to organizing with so many to effect social change that



restores the sovereignty of Tribal Nations to increase women’s safety. I remain excited about all that NIWRC will accomplish with partners in the future, especially our continued movement building and the Indigenization of laws, policies, and social/cultural norms. If the last 13 years with NIWRC are any indication of our impact, then I trust that the future is even brighter with ongoing leadership and movement building within Tribes, Native organizations, and our many partners.

As I reflect on the consistent theme of being a relative that continuously came up throughout Tillie Black Bear Women Are Sacred Day, Tillie’s 10-year Memorial on Oct. 1st, and the inspiring contributions in this October edition of our Restoration Magazine, I look forward to continuing our work in my new position as Senior Advisor or from an similar to the responsibilities of an Auntie with the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center. Thank you, NIWRC.

Paula S. Julian
(Washtë Wiya, Good Woman) Filipina
Editor, Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety
for Native Women, NIWRC

² Indian Law & Order Commission, A Roadmap for Making Native America Safer Report to the President & Congress of the United States, 2013, Pg. iii.

³ Another version of the story here <https://www.bridgewaybhs.org/pubs/The%20Goose%20Story.pdf>.

Introducing Office on Violence Against Women Tribal Affairs Division

By Office on Violence Against Women, Tribal Affairs Division

The mission of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) at the U.S. Department of Justice is to provide federal leadership in developing the national capacity to reduce violence against women and administer justice for and strengthen services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

OVW administers grant programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA of 1994) and subsequent legislation. The Tribal Affairs Division (TAD) within OVW is responsible for the administration of Tribal specific grant programs and initiatives, management of Tribal specific training and technical assistance, and coordination with other federal departments and offices within the Department of Justice on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, and stalking in Tribal communities. TAD plays a vital role in assisting federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations in securing OVW funding.

By providing tailored support and guidance, the TAD helps Tribal entities navigate the often complex application process, ensuring they understand and meet the specific requirements and criteria. This assistance includes offering technical support, facilitating access to essential application resources, and organizing workshops and training sessions to enhance the applicants' knowledge and skills. Through these efforts, the TAD helps strengthen

the capacity of Tribes and Tribal organizations to develop and implement projects that address and prevent violence, ultimately contributing to greater safety and justice for American Indian and Alaska Native people. More information can be found at <https://www.ovwconsultation.org/Leveraging-TAD>.

There are currently 14 staff members in TAD, many of whom have extensive experience working with Tribes and Tribal organizations. Some of the TAD team members come from Tribal communities, bringing a deep understanding of the complexities and dynamics within these communities and the challenges survivors face. Their dedication ensures that survivors have access to necessary services and that Tribal communities receive federal funding.



Sherriann Moore

Rosebud "Sicangu" Lakota

Deputy Director, Tribal Affairs Division



Sherriann Moore serves as the Deputy Director for Tribal Affairs, a position established within VAWA to provide federal leadership, national oversight, and guidance for Tribes and Tribal organizations to strengthen their capacity and improve federal responses to end domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, sex trafficking, and stalking in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Darla Nolan

Associate Director, Tribal Affairs Division



Darla Nolan supervises policy and program development, contract management, division oversight, and planning. Darla began her work with OVW in 2005 and shifted her focus to organizational and program development for the Tribal Affairs Division in 2014. Throughout the years she has been instrumental in the development and enhancement of multiple grant programs, special initiatives, and projects, as well as the much-needed growth of the Division. She has a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's degree in social work.

Rebekah Jones

Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska

Assistant Director, Tribal Affairs Division



Rebekah Jones works remotely from Mayetta, Kansas, near the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation reservation where her adult children are enrolled. Rebekah supervises the Fundamental Assistance to Support Tribal Responses (TAD FASTR) unit, which includes the Tribal Governments Program, the Tribal Special Assistant United States Attorney (TSAUSA) initiative, as well as several other special initiatives and cooperative agreements. She also coordinates division-wide projects, including Tribal-specific training and technical assistance. Rebekah started at OVW Tribal Affairs in 2015. Prior to that she worked for many years serving Native victims and survivors in northeast Kansas.

Tia Farmer

Assistant Director, Tribal Affairs Division



Tia Farmer joined OVW in 2007. Mrs. Farmer supervises the TAD Justice League Division Unit, which includes the Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program, Tribal Jurisdiction, Tribal Jurisdiction Alaska Project, and the Tribal Reimbursement Program. Mrs. Farmer also collaborates with numerous technical assistance providers on policy and programmatic development on issues and matters relevant to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Before joining OVW, Mrs. Farmer was the membership and marketing manager at the Food Marketing Institute.

Renee Stapp

Muscogee Nation

Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Renee Stapp lives and works in Oklahoma. She manages awards under the Grants to Tribal Governments Program, the Tribal Special Assistant United States Attorney (TSAUSA) initiative, and the Technical Assistance Project for Men's Work. Renee has over 25 years of experience serving Indian Country victims and survivors. She has lived on numerous reservations and has a vast knowledge of the diversity across Indian Country.

Jennifer Marsh

Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Jennifer Marsh focuses her time on the Grants to Indian Tribal Governments Program. She also serves as the grant manager for the National Tribal Trial College. Ms. Marsh has over 20 years of experience working with victims and survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence on the local, state, and national levels. Ms. Marsh and her family live in Lawrence, Kansas.

Samantha Dziatkiewicz

Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Samantha Dziatkiewicz is responsible for managing grants and technical assistance awards. With over 22 years of experience living in Alaska, Samantha brings a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Tribal governments in the region.

Lisa Arnold

Choctaw Nation

Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Lisa Arnold works remotely from Oklahoma and manages awards under the Grants to Tribal Governments Program. Lisa has over 10 years of experience serving Indian Country victims and survivors. Lisa has worked as a paralegal in family and criminal law, supervised visitation, and certified mediation for over 17 years. She has served on the board of directors for the NAAV (Oklahoma Tribal Coalition) and Northeast Oklahoma RISE (Respect Inspire Support Empower which is the Northeast Oklahoma chapter of the NAAV) for over six years. Lisa is passionate about bringing culturally relevant services and tangible sources of help to all Native victims and survivors to assist them in regaining hope, strength, and sustainability.

Tammy “Paniqchuugak” (Bu-nick-chuck) Ashley

Unangan (Aleut) descent from Unga Island on the Aleutian Chain and Inupiat (Eskimo) from White Mountain of the Fish River Tribe on the Seward Peninsula

Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Tammy “Paniqchuugak” (Bu-nick-chuck) Ashley resides in Anchorage, Alaska, with her husband, her family, and her dog, Tank. Ms. Ashley is responsible for managing grants and technical assistance awards. She has worked in Native communities for over 20 years, primarily focusing on Native healthcare and social services in Alaska, and has worked with many Tribes, villages, and Tribal organizations.

Yulonda Candelario

Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Yulonda Candelario is responsible for managing grants and technical assistance awards. She is a United States Army veteran and spent 17 years as a law enforcement officer. Ms. Candelario has worked with Native communities in Alaska and Wyoming for over 10 years, focusing on victim services, including serving victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. She has also worked on issues related to the lack of law enforcement in rural Alaska, including on the Alaska Missing and Murdered Indigenous People Working Group and the Law Enforcement Tribal Response Working Group. She has also worked with the Anchorage Reentry Coalition. In 2019, Ms. Candelario received the Director's Award from the Justice Department's Executive Office of United States Attorneys for her superior performance in prevention and reentry activities in Alaska. Ms. Candelario has an Associate of Arts from Central Texas College, an Associate of Science in Criminal Justice, and a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice (2017).

Mary Mummaw

Contracting Officer Representative and Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Mary Mummaw serves as the Contracting Officer Representative as well as a Grant Management Specialist for the Tribal Affairs Division. She has 26 years of hands-on work experience with grants focused on Tribal nations, veteran populations, persons with disabilities, and other underserved communities. She has been involved with each step of the process, from project conception and grant writing, to grant administration and program fulfillment. Her background also includes addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking through resource management, mental health counseling, and as a program coordinator. Mary earned a master's degree in counseling psychology and holistic health from Western Michigan University.

Jordana Cunningham

Project Coordinator on the Alaska Pilot Program, Tribal Affairs Division



Jordana Cunningham is originally from New York with roots in the Deep South. Her family has been fighting for others for generations, including being active in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. This legacy led Jordana to continue that work as a Department of Justice employee, where she's been since 2001. Jordana's passion is to work with all underserved groups and populations. For over 10 years she worked at the United States Parole Commission to improve the lives of those in the criminal justice system, including assisting those with behavioral health disorders. She has overseen behavioral health programming and formulated alternatives to incarceration to help clients address their needs to secure early release from prison and end their relationship with the criminal justice system. She is currently on detail in the Tribal Affairs Division, where she works as the Project Coordinator

on the Alaska Pilot Program to help Alaska Native Tribes exercise criminal jurisdiction in their villages and communities.

Jenny Mills

Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Jenny Mills joined OVW's Tribal Affairs Division as a Grant Management Specialist in October 2022. She resides in Buffalo, New York, and has over 15 years of experience working with Tribal communities in the criminal justice system and victim services field. Her experience working as a public defender in rural Alaska inspired her to devote her career to working with victims. Her experience includes program development, subject matter expertise, policy and procedure development, grant writing, grants management, and training and technical assistance. She spent years working in child advocacy centers as a forensic interviewer, victim advocate supervisor, and multidisciplinary team coordinator.

Regina Madison

Senior Grant Program Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Regina Madison serves as a Senior Grant Program Specialist on the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) Grant Program. She is responsible for policy and programmatic development, oversight, planning, and implementation of federal grants and cooperative agreements related to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Ms. Madison has been with OVW since 1999 and has worked on various grant programs, including the Rural Program and the Legal Assistance for Victims Program.

Sydney West

Grant Management Specialist, Tribal Affairs Division



Sydney West manages the Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program (TSASP), the comprehensive technical assistance for TSASP, and the Technical Assistance for Responses for Urban Natives Project. She serves as a lead on the Tribal Financial Assistance Working Group and is a member of the Sexual Assault Set-Aside Working Group, the JustGrants User Group, and the DHS/DOJ/HHS Hotlines Working Group. Sydney has 20 years of experience managing global reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention and clinical trials, and adolescent sexuality projects in Haiti, India, Nigeria, and South Africa. Prior to joining OVW, Sydney spent seven years managing grants and contracts for the American Red Cross Haiti Assistance Program. Since 2010 she has served as a sexual assault crisis counselor on the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)'s DoD Safe Helpline and is a certified victim advocate. Sydney is interested in expanding sexual assault services and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) responses for Tribal communities.

Triumph Over Trauma *Justice* Is Restored



STRONGHEARTS
Native Helpline

Domestic Violence Awareness Month Holding Perpetrators Accountable

By StrongHearts Native Helpline

Every year, Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) sheds light on victim-survivors of domestic and sexual violence. We uplift heart-wrenching stories and marvel at the resilience of Native women and girls. Having endured colonization, Native women and advocates are speaking up to reclaim justice—one piece at a time.

Four out of five Native women and girls experience violence in their lifetime, half of them experience sexual violence, and in some counties, they face murder rates at 10 times the national average.¹ Despite these devastating statistics, Native women have found their voice and are asking for justice.

“These statistics demonstrate a lack of accountability,” said CEO Lori Jump, StrongHearts Native Helpline. “When court jurisdiction is shared between Tribal, state and federal governments, and access to justice relies upon race, type of crime and where it occurred - perpetrators often escape prosecution.”

The National Institute of Justice painted a picture of perpetrators who victimize Native people when a study revealed that a whopping 97% of women identified the perpetrator as non-Native. Similarly, 90% of men identified non-Natives as perpetrators.²

Sadly, one-third of Native women and men identified the perpetrator as being Native—35% of female victims and 33% of male victims.

These devastating statistics are in no small part due to antiquated laws and a complicated legal system with court jurisdiction hanging in the balance. At the core of the issue is a 1978 Supreme Court ruling, *Oliphant v. Suquamish*,² which held that Tribes do not have criminal jurisdiction over non-Natives.

“The ruling established a form of non-Native immunity in the judicial system and essentially denied Tribal people equal access to justice,” Jump explained. “The ruling couldn’t have been worse, and for more than 35 years, Native women and girls have borne the impact of that tragic decision.”

Against the odds, Native women and their allies challenged Congress to restore some form of Tribal court jurisdiction so that perpetrators could be held accountable. Their tenacity and testimony inspired Congress to take action.

The *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA 2013) was reauthorized with a historic provision that recognized the inherent authority of “participating Tribes” to exercise “special domestic violence



Photo courtesy of Diane Pavlat.

criminal jurisdiction” (SDVCJ) over certain defendants, regardless of their Indian or non-Indian status, who commit acts of domestic violence or dating violence or violate certain protection orders in Indian country.³

“Survivors and advocates achieved what many thought impossible - to reclaim and restore a piece of Tribal sovereignty,” Jump said.

In VAWA 2022 (1994, 2005, 2013, 2022), Congress restored another piece of court jurisdiction when they amended a provision to recognize “Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction” (STCJ) over an expanded list of “covered crimes” with additional provisions:

- Add an Alaska Tribes Pilot Program,
- Add formal authorization for the Tribal Access Program (TAP), and
- Reestablish the U.S. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Tribal Prisoner Program.

StrongHearts Native Helpline applauds the work of survivors and advocates, whose stories inspire Congress to continue progressing in the

restoration of Tribal sovereignty. It is because of their perseverance that StrongHearts advocates can provide support and advocacy that honors the culture of Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

Triumph Over Trauma

It is important to recognize that our relatives are struggling to heal from generations of trauma stemming from colonization, forced relocation, genocide, and the abduction of children and babies carted off to more than 350 government-funded boarding schools and countless non-Native foster homes, which caused irreparable harm to Native American and Alaska Native communities.

“When we call attention to Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we must not forget the path Tribal nations have been on for centuries,” concluded Jump. “Until Native American history is told in truth and totality, we must continue to tell our stories of triumph over trauma.”

For confidential and anonymous support and advocacy, StrongHearts advocates are available 24/7 to provide Native-centered, trauma-informed, and empowerment-based survivor advocacy based on Native American and Alaska Native culture and tradition.

Call or text 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483) or to chat online, visit www.strongheartshelpline.org.

¹ André B. Rosay, “Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men,” June 1, 2016, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/violence-against-american-indian-and-alaska-native-women-and-men>.

² Justia U.S. Supreme Court, “Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe, 435 U.S. 191 (1978)” <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/435/191/>

³ U.S. Department of Justice, “2013 and 2022 Reauthorizations of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)” <https://www.justice.gov/tribal/2013-and-2022-reauthorizations-violence-against-women-act-vaaw>



NIWRC Advocacy for LGBTQ2S+ Survivors Information Packet

By Kim “Sah-Povi” Zahne, *Tewa-Hopi*, Technical Assistance and Training Specialist, NIWRC

The NIWRC Advocacy for LGBTQ2S+ Survivors: Resources, Data, and Barriers resource was created to call attention to the fact that regardless of identity, gender, sexuality, or the identifiers of their partner, anyone can experience intimate partner violence (IPV). However, colonized gender roles, racist/ ethnic stereotypes, systemic prejudice & discrimination, and economic inequity, put certain populations at greater risk for experiencing violence, like women, the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) community, or people of lower incomes.

The Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ community experiences all the above injustices, but their experiences are also exacerbated by sex and gender discrimination, transphobic and homophobic stigma, and cis/het-normativity, and they are at greater risk of IPV in comparison to the general population.

This resource provides the following sections: An Introduction, “What We Know” Facts and Statistics, Barriers to Safety, Approaches and Recommendations, and Terms and Definitions.

IPV against our Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ relatives should not be overlooked. It is the responsibility of Indigenous Nations to protect all survivors of IPV regardless of gender, sexuality, race, economic income, ability, ethnicity, and other identifiers that marginalize Indigenous survivors. We must also recognize that our Indigenous LGBTQ2S+ relatives have always been respected and revered in our Indigenous communities. Protecting and supporting our Indigenous Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ relatives is living within our teachings, values, and kinship responsibilities as Indigenous peoples. Let’s continue to uplift those traditions and histories for safer Indigenous futures.



BARRIERS to safety

Societal misunderstandings that IPV does not occur in the LGBTQ2S+ community minimize the violence existing in the LGBTQ2S+ population and therefore, more difficult for advocates to recognize and identify.

OUTING

“Outing” can be identified as an abusive control tactic and a barrier to seeking safety.

ORDERS OF PROTECTION

In 2012, less than 5% of LGBTQ domestic violence survivors “sought orders of protection” (NCAVP). In the same study, of survivors who reported IPV to police, 19% reported police attitudes were hostile, and 25% reported indifferent attitudes from the police.

STIGMA

LGBTQ2S+ survivors may experience homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, and queerphobia from service providers and their cultural communities. This stigma and discrimination decrease the likelihood of reporting and/or seeking service.

COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted financial stability, and therefore survivors living with their abuser were likely to endure violence to avoid homelessness and financial insecurity.

SHELTER ACCESS

Transgender survivors experience additional discrimination when trying to access shelters and are often turned away or forced to stay in a gendered shelter they may not feel safe in, and therefore LGBTQ2S+ survivors may have to make difficult choices about their safety.

MEDICAL TREATMENT

Over 40% of transgender men experienced verbal harassment, physical assault, or denial of medical treatment in doctors’ offices or hospital settings⁴.

⁴ Miller, E.C., Goodman, L.A., Thomas, K.A., & Warshaw, C. (2016). Trauma-Informed Approached for LGBTQ* Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence Data: A Review of Literature and a Set of Practice Observations, June 2016.

Tillie Black Bear, 1946 - 2014

A Legacy of Resistance That Lives On

By Lucy Simpson, *Diné*, Executive Director, NIWRC

Tillie Black Bear, a Sicangu Lakota woman, dedicated her life to fighting for the safety of Native women and the sovereignty of Indian Nations. Her unwavering commitment stemmed from a deep-rooted Indigenous worldview shaped by her Lakota beliefs and the challenges she faced growing up on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation.

Tillie's childhood was marked by the strength of Lakota beliefs and the harsh realities of forced assimilation. The St. Francis Mission School, where she was sent as a 5-year-old girl, attempted to erase her language, spiritual practices, and culture. This experience, while painful, ignited a spark of resistance within her, fueling her lifelong activism for social change.

"It wasn't until 1974, with the *Indian Religious Freedom Act*, that we were able to practice these ways without having to get permission. These ways are all attached to us as people as we make this human journey. There is a belief among our people that we live in this world not as humans on a spiritual journey but as spirits on a human journey. As Lakota, we believe that you are a spirit until birth. When you are born into this world, that first human touch is when you become a human being, and so when we leave this world, we go back into the spirit world as a spirit again."—Tillie Black Bear

The Tillie Black Bear Story on Screen

A new documentary, "Tillie Black Bear: A Legacy of Resistance That Lives On," chronicles her remarkable journey. The film weaves together Tillie's words, archival footage, and personal photographs to paint a vivid portrait of her life and activism. Traditional Lakota background music by Connie Black Bear



1963, Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation – Graduating from the boarding school Tillie returned to her family and traditional Lakota spiritual practices that were underground and banned by United States federal law until 1974. / Photo courtesy of Connie Brushbreaker.

Brushbreaker and Lester Kills The Enemy underscore the power of Tillie's heritage.

The footage provides snapshots of history-making moments Tillie helped to shape. It opens on the steps of the US Supreme Court with a Lakota support song during the NIWRC response to the 2015 Dollar General case that threatened the civil jurisdiction of Indian Nations. It then takes viewers on a journey to a 2004 historic walk from Eagle Butte to Green Grass, South Dakota, to witness a traditional ceremony in collective prayer for the ending of sexual violence against Native women. It opens the door for viewers to listen to the words of Tillie Black Bear to Tribal Coalitions on the intersections of organizing to restore the safety of Native women, identifying

the fundamental social changes required, and the foundational role the beliefs of Tribal people provide for the movement. From her home in St. Francis, on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, in 2003, Tillie shared how traditional spirituality can support the healing of survivors of sexual abuse over their lifetimes. The video concludes in 2012 at a historic walk honoring Tillie and raising awareness about sexual assault on the La Jolla Indian Reservation in California.

The documentary examines several pivotal themes, including the profound effects of colonization, Tillie's spiritual evolution, and her lasting legacy and leadership. It chronicles her early life, explores her thoughts on the foundations of organizing, highlights the significance of traditional healing, and examines her enduring impact and influence.

The 30-minute documentary, directed by Jax Agtuca and produced by NIWRC in collaboration with Tillie's daughter, Connie Black Bear Brushbreaker, will be released on Oct. 1, a day annually dedicated to Tillie Black Bear, recognizing her 10-year memorial and the launch of the national October Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

As one of the founding mothers of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC), Tillie Black Bear holds a special place in our hearts. It is an honor for us to preserve this significant documentary of her life story, captured through archival footage from 2003 to 2012. We hope that

viewers will gain a deeper understanding of the profound linkages she drew between Lakota beliefs, the lasting effects of colonization, and the inseparable connection between the safety of Native women and the sovereignty of their Tribal Nations, which are essential for safeguarding their lives.

"I met Tillie at a meeting she requested in 1995. We had just opened the new federal office created by the passage of the *Violence Against Women Act*. Tillie and a group of Native women advocates wanted to discuss the implementation of the Act. After introducing herself, Tillie said, 'We are Tribal women of sovereign nations, and implementation of the Act must be designed for and by Tribal women.' Tillie's words shaped the foundational development of tribal programs and technical assistance from the very start. I am so thankful for Tillie's guidance over the years."—Jax Agtuca, former Editor of *Restoration Magazine*.

Building of a Movement of Resistance "Even in Thought, Women Are To Be Respected"

As a survivor of abuse, Tillie channeled her pain into advocacy. She organized at the Tribal, state, and national levels, uniting communities and advocating for legal and policy changes.

Jan. 28, 1996, Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation – Tillie Black Bear enjoying time with her grandchildren at her home in St. Francis. / Photo courtesy of Connie Brushbreaker.



***"Even in thought, women
are to be respected."***

In January 1978, Tillie advocated at a historic consultation of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission on the conditions and needs of Native women. Over the following decades, Tillie advocated for the passage and reauthorization of landmark legislation, including the *Violence Against Women Act*, *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act*, and the *Tribal Law and Order Act*, which provided funding for life-saving services and affirmed the jurisdiction of Indian Nations to protect their women and citizens. Her organizing supported the recognition and development of Tribally-based services for Native women in their struggle to end abuse.

Tillie's activism was not confined to meeting rooms and legislative halls. She led powerful walks, ceremonies, and demonstrations, drawing attention to the extreme violence committed against Native women and the need for social change. On Feb. 24, 2004, Tillie led a "Wiping of the Tears Ceremony" at the U.S. Senate Building to launch the organizing to include a Tribal Title in the *Violence Against Women Act*. This event also launched *Restoration Magazine*. Her leadership was grounded in Lakota spirituality, incorporating traditional ceremonies and teachings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman.

"One of the first things that happened at Rosebud was that we asked to name our organization after the White Buffalo Calf Woman, a sacred legend that was brought to the people. We had to ask the family who takes care of the sacred pipe brought to the people if we could use the sacred name in our work. I know that at the time of asking, around 1977, we certainly didn't know the impact that it would have on our work and the whole issue of violence against women. When we talk about the work addressing the violence that women experience in our communities, for me, the work has always been based on the legend because there are two teachings that came out of that story. The first teaching was that even in thought, women are to be respected."
—Tillie Black Bear

The Power of Traditional Healing **"We Are Spiritual Beings on a Human Journey"**

Tillie Black Bear's activism was deeply rooted in her Lakota spirituality. She believed that traditional ceremonies and practices could offer healing and

strength to survivors of abuse. Traditional ceremonies were a constant thread of her movement building. The teachings of the White Buffalo Calf Woman anchored her leadership.

Tillie understood that healing from abuse required more than just legal protection. She championed Indigenous-based programs that offered opportunities to understand and practice traditional ceremonies. These programs recognized that healing is a lifelong journey and that Indigenous spirituality can play a vital role in recovery. Her fundamental approach was driven by the central question, "How can I be a better relative?"

"There have been many times that we have taken women into the purification lodge, and it lays the foundation for the woman for healing. That's where I think it is really important for women who certainly believe in traditional spirituality—are reclaimed by that. There are other women there who have gone through a similar type of experience. And there are women there who are willing to support them whether they pursue it legally or not.

Women don't come in just once; they keep coming back for additional purification lodge ceremonies. I think that spiritual connection then becomes a foundation and framework for how they take care of themselves in other situations. It's not just about this one time, but it is about other periods of their lives where they might be experiencing childbirth, they might be experiencing their daughter dating for the first time. Instances when they experience something pivotal in their own lives, and so they want that to be spiritually connected and to have that strong spiritual foundation. It's about believing in Tunkashila or Wakan Tanka, having a belief in something greater. The belief in that makes them stronger.

Bringing women into the purification lodge, we talk about the tools. The tools that women can leave those ceremonies with. And those tools can vary from culture to culture. For us, for Lakota women, the tools I talk about is (sic) giving women the opportunity to use the sage, the cedar, and the sweet grass. The opportunity to use the water in a sacred way."—Tillie Black Bear

A Legacy of Resistance That Lives On

For nearly four decades, Tillie provided leadership in building organizations dedicated to addressing violence against women and promoting Tribal sovereignty. In 1977, she was a founding member of the White Buffalo Calf Woman Society Shelter, the first Native shelter in the United States that continues to provide direct services to women on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. In 1978, she founded the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence to offer training, education, and advocate for policy changes. In 2011, Tillie once again provided national leadership in founding the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center.

Tillie Black Bear's work continues to inspire future generations. Her legacy is unwavering strength, resilience, and dedication to Native women and Indian Nations. The grassroots movement she built laid the foundation for ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of Native women and the sovereignty of Indian Nations. Tillie understood such organizations were essential in the long-term struggle to reestablish the safety of Native women and the sovereignty of Indian Nations diminished by the systematic colonization of Indigenous Nations. This oppression is deeply ingrained in the legal framework of the United States.

Tillie Black Bear's advocacy from 1978 - 2013 was pivotal in reshaping federal policy and legislation to increase women's safety and Indian Nations' sovereignty. Her tireless efforts helped bring about historic legal reforms that have a foundational impact on Native women's lives and the ability of Tribal governments to protect their people.

"The work we do is about social change. It's about making those connections beyond the shelter door. We have to do that social change work. We can't just give a woman services and then let her go back out. We have to be that conduit to make that world change out there. So that she can go back out there and have a better place."—Tillie Black Bear

Continuing the Fight for Justice

Tillie Black Bear was a master of grassroots organizing. She understood the power of building coalitions and mobilizing communities to effect change. Her work extended far beyond policy reform

and legislative advocacy, encompassing a wide range of activities aimed at raising awareness and restoring the safety of Native women by strengthening the sovereignty of their Tribal Nations.

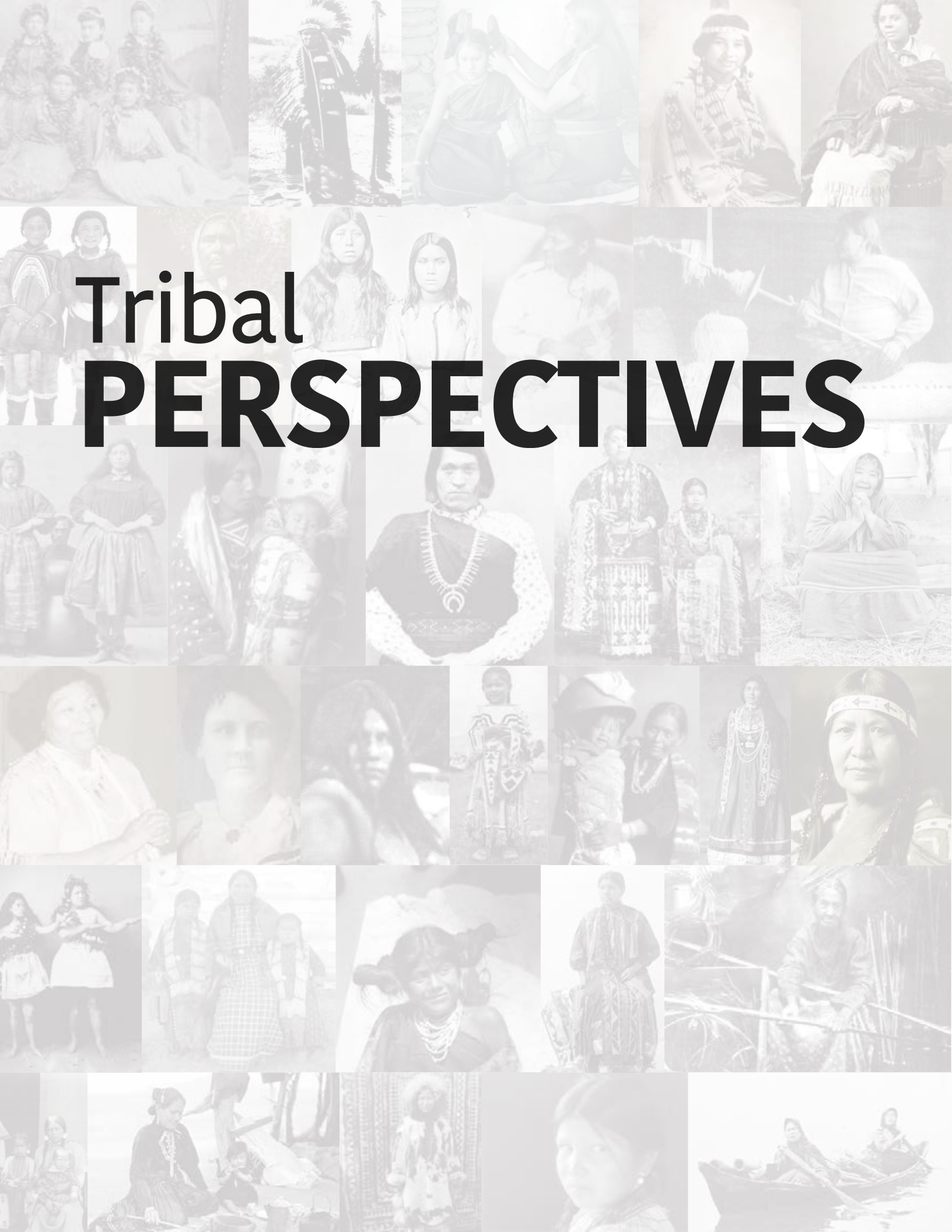
"Tillie Black Bear: A Legacy of Resistance That Lives On" is a call to action. It invites viewers to join the ongoing fight for the safety of Native women and the sovereignty of Indian Nations. Tillie's story is a reminder that one person can make a difference and that her legacy lives on in the work of countless activists and advocates.

By sharing Tillie Black Bear's extraordinary story, we honor her enduring legacy and welcome viewers to continue her struggle for justice and equality.

To view the video, please go to NIWRC's YouTube channel www.youtube.com/niwrc or scan the QR code below.



July 14, 2012, Rosebud Sioux Indian Reservation – Sister Friends Tillie Black Bear and Jax Agtuca, director of "Tillie Black Bear: A Legacy that Lives On." / Photo courtesy of Jax Agtuca.



Tribal **PERSPECTIVES**

Health Justice: Firearms and Intimate Partner Violence Against Native Women

By Tia Bahozhoni, *Diné*, Policy Specialist, NIWRC

Health justice is a framework that addresses health inequities by centering community-based perspectives and efforts grounded in the interest of human rights.

Healthcare practices are efficient when local communities are involved, as they understand the nuances of the issues by contextualizing the problems with lived experience and culturally-specific knowledge (Wiley et al., 2022). Historical, geographic, economic, community power dynamics, and other contexts can be applied to analyses and create a cohesive response to health injustice. As such, advocates with ties to the people they support are the leading sources for local solutions.

Firearm violence is a national public health and safety crisis. Access to firearms can mean the difference between life and death for victims of domestic violence (DV), increasing the risk of homicide in a DV incident by 500% (Campbell et al., 2003). Furthermore, when there is a firearm in the home, the risk of homicide committed by an intimate partner or relative is increased by eight times compared to a household without a firearm (“Domestic Violence and Women’s Homicides,” n.d.). When previous incidents of DV exist, the risk of homicide is 20 times greater with a firearm present. The intersection of DV and firearms also has a direct connection to mass shootings and stranger violence (Tobin-Tyler, 2023). According to a Johns Hopkins article (n.d.), “Researchers found that in 68.2% of mass shootings from 2014-2019, the perpetrator either killed family or intimate partners or the shooter had a history of DV.” Protections against gun violence and DV are necessary for communities to thrive.

The presence and misuse of firearms as it relates to the injury and death of Native women is a critical health inequity in Indian Country. Although there

are plenty of statistics conveying the reality of gun violence as it intersects with intimate partner violence (IPV) and DV, the information for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women is not as abundant nor as accessible as for non-Native counterparts. However, one study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows that 38.8% of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women who are murdered by an intimate partner are killed with a firearm (Petrosky et al., 2017).

Addressing the intersection of firearm violence and DV in Indian Country from a health justice perspective requires an understanding of the barriers to justice and safety AI/AN people face, such as distrust of law enforcement and healthcare systems, lack of safe shelter and housing, and underfunding of Native resources and programs. Increased Tribal access to the National Crime Information Center, funding the Tribal Access Program, and effective multi-jurisdictional coordination between law enforcement to enforce Tribal orders of protection are recommendations worth considering (Turner, 2021). There are models and possible solutions to address this crisis.

- **Quality Data Collection** - Data collection has been lacking in quantity and quality; AI/AN women are often left out of data collection, or the results are insufficient when it comes to inclusion. Oftentimes, the data on death/death certificates misrepresents the ethnicity of a victim (“Domestic violence and firearms,” n.d.). However, research may be expanding. In 2019, the freeze on federal funding for firearms research was lifted after 30 years. The CDC and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have \$24 million in firearms research funding (Weir, 2021). The inclusion of more comprehensible data collection could be a reality in the future.

- **Community-based Violence Intervention** - A key component of the health justice framework is considering the solutions within the community. There have been focused efforts on creating specific responses, such as the community-based violence intervention model (CVI), which uses a violence interruption model to disrupt gun violence in targeted communities (Vera, 2021). This model engages and collaborates with community members, stakeholders, and law enforcement to de-escalate gun violence (Julien, 2023). A community-based response collaborates with community members at the initial planning and considers the perspective of those same community members throughout the implementation. It has been modeled in a few states.
 - A program in California that has utilized the CVI model has seen a reduction in gun-related injury and homicide by 43% (Julien, 2023). The Washington State Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention has called on Tribal-led organizations and Tribal leaders to address prevention and intervention firearms safety needs, using “evidence-informed approaches that are culturally relevant and community-led” (Berg, 2024).

Firearms-related injury and death is a crisis nationally; however, as with most health injustices, it affects Native women and children at alarmingly high rates.



- **Community Response Plans** - The Department of Justice (DOJ) has created resources to help communities build Community Response Plans (Tribal Community Response Plans, 2023). Although these guides are targeted for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, the model could be used as a template for focusing on other concerns. The DOJ coordinated and collaborated with Tribal law enforcement, Tribal leaders, and Tribal community members to create these guides. The guides are for different areas of concern, such as developing community outreach response guidelines and victim services response guidelines. Creating guides that are focused on firearms safety and prevention could be useful for those affected by firearms violence.

Firearms-related injury and death is a crisis nationally; however, as with most health injustices, it affects Native women and children at alarmingly high rates. There are considerations when it comes to Native women's health that are unique and deserve focused interventions and prevention strategies. Health justice frameworks encourage that the answer lies within the community. Health justice matters because, at the root of it, it is a way that Native people have addressed community issues. It centers a problem with community knowledge and efforts. It is a collective answer from within rather than outsider observation. Health justice solutions matter in Indian Country because the solutions are creative, tailored to the environment, and sustainable because the people addressing the issue live in the impacted places. Resources such as funding research are integral in finding solutions; however, the most important aspect is listening and understanding the experiences and knowledge of the Native women who are victimized by firearms and interpersonal violence and including those perspectives in the strategies.

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Celebrating **Tillie Black Bear**

By Morning Star Gali, *Pit River Tribe*, Executive Director, Indigenous Justice, Paula Julian, Editor, *Restoration Magazine*, NIWRC

In celebration of our annual Tillie Black Bear Women Are Sacred Day on October 1, the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) honors Morning Star Gali, an advocate who exemplifies Tillie's teachings and dedication to our movement. Thank you, Morning Star.

Morning Star

My roots are grounded in my identity as an Ajumawi person, born and raised at the American Indian Movement (AIM) for Freedom Survival School. My parents were part of AIM and Women of All Red Nations (WARN). Strong Aunties raised me and my sister, which shaped the community organizing we continue today. At the time, the County Hospital had the second-highest infant mortality rate in the nation. I was born at a time in the late 1970s when Native women went in for routine procedures and came out involuntarily sterilized through IHS, leading my parents to make an intentional decision to birth me at home, which became a sunrise ceremony. Advocating for our peoples' safety and protection, especially of our women and girls, was instilled in me at a young age.

I am grateful that my parents raised me within ceremonies, political, and movement-gathering spaces. I understand that spirituality and our ceremonies are the foundation of our efforts. Our relatives and ancestors guide us.

My life changed because of intimate partner violence (IPV). I traveled between home and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, North Dakota, for four months in 2016 for No DAPL (protests). I walked out of the environmental violence experienced at Standing Rock and into a violent home. In 2017, I moved to Sacramento, California. Like many survivors, I navigated a broken system that felt defeating and demoralizing. Ultimately,

*Morning Star Gali at
Iss'Awe, within her
traditional homelands
in Pit River territories.*



after three years, I received a 10-year criminal protective order after a felony stalking conviction.

What most surprised me was that community members asked me, “How could you let this happen to you? You’re outspoken, a community organizer, and an advocate for Native women and girls.” Victim blaming and the shame of how I “allowed” this to happen were challenging to deal with, and why I didn’t feel like I could speak up or seek help. IPV isn’t about what victims did to get themselves in a situation. There are systemic issues like failures resulting in MMIW and creating conditions such that survivors feel powerless, hopeless, and that we can’t speak up against it.

In 2017, while working for my Tribe, I received a fellowship to address the issues of justice impacting Native peoples. This project, Restoring Justice for Indigenous Peoples, became Indigenous Justice, serving rural counties of our ancestral lands where sheriffs have historically not been friendly to Tribal members, which is common throughout California with an active militia presence.

2012 was my first experience supporting the search efforts of a missing Tribal member, Dewey McGarva. Since 2017, I’ve had close friends and relatives who have gone missing or been murdered. I met my close sister and friend Jessica Alva at a Tribal Youth camp in 2013. We formed a sisterhood as she was working on her recovery and sobriety. She was killed in 2019. Alva’s boyfriend has not been held accountable.

Nick Patterson went missing in 2020. There should and could have been federal resources activated for Nick, yet almost five years later, the family still has no answers. Two months after Nick’s disappearance, my friend Yogi McGarva was killed in his Tribal family home. Yogi was sober when he was murdered. The individual who killed him was not.

Driving into Modoc County, the signs read, “Where the West still lives.” A cowboys versus Indians environment. A non-Native person had never been charged with the killing of a Native person. We advocated for four years for justice for Yogi using an inside-outside system approach with state agencies. For the first time this past February, the state secured a first-degree murder conviction with the maximum

sentence for the individual who murdered Yogi.

By helping to fill the gaps for survivors, we can close the gap in MMIP. We want the same search efforts and resources for Indigenous peoples that Gabby Petito received in 2021 when she disappeared. Local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies coordinated immediately, found Gabby, identified what happened, and found her killer.

We’ve co-written and passed legislation, including AB 2022, which removes racial slurs from public place names statewide. We understand that a shift must happen for truth and healing in California with the history of injustice against California Indians and Native Americans. Recently at an event at the state capitol, legislators asked, “If you don’t want to be called a squaw, then what is it that we should call you?” I thought, “We want to be called women and girls. We are full human beings; although we haven’t been treated that way, this is who we are.”

We’ve created a guaranteed income pilot project (GIPP) for survivors who receive a monthly income for one year and are eligible for quarterly micro-grants for additional relief from expenses. When survivors are better resourced, they can make better decisions for themselves. We support families in crisis when their loved one goes missing from emergency support to direct services. We provide them with media training so they can tell their and their loved one’s story in a dignified way that doesn’t victim blame. We want the families to feel empowered - they are experts in their stories. It’s about building these reciprocal relationships, not transactional ones. Speaking up in the face of injustice is going to help other families.

We are creating a shift with Indigenous Justice. Although there may not be financial abundance in place, we’re operating from a place of caring for people, including staff. We’ve implemented self-care strategies within our organizational culture. Staff have four weeks annually and extended bereavement. They receive a ceremonial stipend of \$1000 annually. We can’t do this if we’re not caring for ourselves. We must have downtime to care for and nurture ourselves to be available to serve our communities with care, commitment, and courage.

Tribal Coalitions Organizing To Restore Sovereignty and Women's Safety

Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition, Inc.

By Keely Linton, *lipay and Kupa from the Mesa Grande Band*, Executive Director, Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition

History of Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition, Inc. (SHNWC)

Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition, Inc. (SHNWC) is a grassroots 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 2005 by women from the Luiseno, Kumeyaay, Cupeno, and Cahuilla Tribal communities in Southern California. SHNWC was founded to expand and enhance services and resources to provide safety for Tribal women and their children. The coalition's goal is to raise awareness and organize for systemic change among the Tribes within the area, which included nine Reservations: Pala, Pauma, La Jolla, San Pasqual, Rincon, Mesa Grande, Santa Ysabel, Los Coyotes, and Inja-Cosmit. We're thankful to Juana Majel-Dixon, who wrote our first grant proposal for the

Office on Violence Against Women Tribal Coalitions Program and was instrumental in recruiting members to support the work under the Violence Against Women Act. The first gathering in 2005 had 17 founding mothers who elected SHNWC's board of directors. The late Lorena Majel coined the phrase "Strong Hearted," hence the name Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition.

Today, SHNWC is governed by a 22-member board, which includes an Executive Committee: Bennae Calac as President, Melody See as Vice President, Linda Ruis as Treasurer, and Dorothy Willis as Secretary. Germaine Omish-Lucero served as the Coalition's first executive director from 2006-2017, and I have held the position since Germaine's departure. SHNWC employs 12 staff members and operates with funding from the Office on Violence Against Women, the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services, the Office for Victims of Crime, the San Manuel Band, Tribal sponsors, and various foundations.

SHNWC's mission is to restore health to families and communities. Our vision is an informed, peaceful, interconnected community with strong-hearted values.

Over the past 19 years, SHNWC has expanded its reach from serving 18 Indian Reservations in San Diego and Riverside Counties to primarily covering the Southern California region, which includes 34 Tribal Nations. As the only nonprofit Tribal Coalition in California, SHNWC strives to support all 109 Tribes in the state. This has included emergency victim support and relocation, technical assistance for Tribal program development, and systems advocacy.

SHNWC staff Joy Landers, Summer Elliott, Karen Wilson, Beverly Nelson, Junell Linton, Halona Alexander, Linda Schwartz, Maria Coplin, Tim Ruise & Keely Linton. Photo courtesy of SHNWC.



Technical Assistance Support and Training

SHNWC provides technical assistance and training to Tribes, state agencies, allied organizations, and supportive services for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, sex trafficking, and stalking, including cultural and unique barriers facing Native American women. SHNWC increases awareness of and provides technical assistance to Tribal communities to identify and organize to remove systemic barriers facing victims and Tribes, develop responses, and enhance access to services. SHNWC works with local Tribal governments, allies, and state agencies to develop and promote policies that enhance best practices for responding to violent crimes against American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Through the years, SHNWC has hosted several conferences, including a teen dating conference and workshops focused on healthy relationships. We host an annual sexual assault conference focusing on healing and wellness. SHNWC has hosted a statewide conference on sexual assault and domestic violence. SHNWC staff raise awareness through community events such as during sexual assault and domestic violence awareness months, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Day, and attending other gatherings and pow-wows. Several PSAs have been developed and are available on Good Health TV, YouTube, and other social media platforms.

SHNWC staff and board of directors are active advocates on state and national platforms. They provide testimony and education to keep policy and legislatures focused on survivor needs.

Kiicha Program

Kiicha is "home" in the Luiseno language. In 2011, several Tribes and Tribal programs within the region organized to develop a Native women's shelter operated by SHNWC. This collaboration included the All Mission Indian Housing Authority, Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, La Jolla Band of Luiseno Indians, Cahuilla Consortium, Indian Health Council, Southern Indian Health Council, and Riverside-San Bernardo Indian Health, Inc.

Through its members, Kiicha provides a safe home for American Indian victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking, including their children. Kiicha is a multi-agency, multi-service facility that centralizes, coordinates, and consolidates services across counties, governments,

and agencies in the Southern California region. Kiicha brings together and coordinates domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking service providers in the region who provide American Indian-specific services. Collaborative efforts include other Tribal agency service providers and Tribal governments. Through Kiicha, victims of domestic violence have the opportunities for safe spaces to heal and have access to holistic, comprehensive services unique to their cultural needs. Kiicha members and their partners work together to educate the community, provide services to the entire family, and work to keep our communities safe.

Two goals of the Kiicha shelter include:

1. Provide transitional, short-term, and emergency housing to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking to the Native American population in the Southern California region.
2. Provide holistic, culturally appropriate supportive services to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking, including but not limited to counseling, victim advocacy, legal assistance, transportation, child care, case management, employment counseling, and other assistance.

Prevention and Education

Domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and education services are vital for creating safer communities and empowering individuals. These services aim to raise awareness, provide education, and deepen understanding of the dynamics and impacts of abuse. SHNWC offers several prevention programs through a cultural lens, including workshops, training sessions, and outreach initiatives designed to educate the public on recognizing signs of abuse, understanding consent, and promoting healthy relationships. These programs also involve educating non-Tribal partners on cultural awareness and Tribal victim dynamics. The Puyamaangay Kiyam 2SLGBTQ (Always Family) program focuses on cultural aspects to support IPV survivors, while the MMIP Program provides support services for the extended families of victims and survivors. Our goal is to equip individuals with the knowledge and resources necessary to seek help and support those affected by violence.

To request SHNWC assistance or for questions, please contact us at www.strongheartednativewomen.org, 760-644-4781, or info@shnwc.org.



CCHG Logo: SWIWC is grateful to Waylon Pahona, one of the facilitators for the CCHG, who created this logo for the gatherings. The artistry is unique to his brand of art and incorporates several attributes of Arizona Tribal communities. This logo is used for all Community Circle of Healing Gatherings. / Photo courtesy of Waylon Pahona.

Community Circle of Healing Gatherings

COVID-19, Collective Trauma, and Community Healing

**By Memory Dawn Long Chase,
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Domestic
Violence Response Director, Southwest
Indigenous Women's Coalition**

The Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition (SWIWC) is Arizona's statewide Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition. Since its inception in 2006, SWIWC has worked with most of Arizona's 22 Indian Tribes to increase their capacities to respond to violence through education, training, technical assistance, policy advocacy, and culturally

sensitive supportive services. SWIWC has the distinction of being one of two Tribal Coalitions in Arizona. Our sister coalition, the Hopi-Tewa Women's Coalition to End Abuse (HTWCEA) primarily serves the Hopi Tribe. Our vision supports working toward safe Indigenous communities.

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which is a type of coronavirus. Since June 1, the death toll for Americans is more than 1.2 million. Less data exists on those with long-lasting health conditions. Tribal communities across Indian Country were especially devastated by COVID-19. Tribal communities lost history keepers, language keepers, and entire families were devastated—losing elders, loved ones, family members, and cultural leaders. In addition to these losses, our ceremonies and cultural protocols were halted due to safety concerns. Loved ones died alone, and families grieved alone. American Indians and Alaska Natives are no strangers to collective trauma, which the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration defines as “an event or series of harmful or life-threatening events that a group of people experience that has lasting adverse effects on their mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being.”

SWIWC acknowledged the need for collective healing and utilized the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding through the Arizona Department of Housing



CRIT CCHG Group Photo. This group photo came from the first CCHG for the Colorado River Indian Tribes in January in Parker, AZ. / Photo courtesy of SWIWC staff.

(ADOH). to support their efforts. Through our ongoing work as a statewide Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition, SWIWC has heard the stories from Arizona's Tribal communities and felt the need to opportunities for healing and connection. The healing activities shared at gatherings centered on helping the community work through trauma, grief, and loss caused by COVID-19. These activities included discussions on gender-based violence and intended to provide survivors the tools to work through their trauma and, by extension, help the community on a path towards healing.

Community Circle of Healing Gatherings (CCHG) commenced in three of Arizona's Tribal communities thus far in 2024 over the course of four days. The first CCHG was in Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) in Parker, AZ, from January 17-20. Total attendees were approximately 179. The second CCHG took place for the Hualapai Tribe's community in Peach Springs, AZ, from June 10-13. Attendees were approximately 104. Our final CCHG for 2024 took place for the White Mountain Apache Tribe on July 15-18. Attendees were approximately 104.

As SWIWC envisioned, planned, and implemented the CCHG opportunities, the impact of community healing was palpable at each gathering. SWIWC saw years-long estranged family members embrace after a couple of days of healing activities, and families shared valuable insights and solutions into the myriad social issues their community is facing. Families shared their trauma and grief and learned tools on how to support each other moving forward.

Healing activities included team-building exercises, during which attendees created their own "councils" to address the social issues facing their communities. The council created an action plan to address social

issues and strategies for social change. Other exercises included breath work, recognizing trauma held in the body, mind-body connections, guided meditation, journaling, and reconnecting with culture through the collective healing process.

Our amazing facilitators, Waylon Pahona and Johanna Corpeno, provided all workshops, exercises, activities, guided meditation, and journaling sessions. SWIWC was on hand to provide information on our work and culturally specific information on domestic violence and sexual violence.

At least five more Community Circle of Healing Gatherings are scheduled before the end of 2025. SWIWC intends to host one final large in-person CCHG, inviting all Arizona Tribes that SWIWC visited during the project.

SWIWC has been focusing on collective healing for the past few years. In October 2023, SWIWC held the first-ever national gathering for families impacted by missing and murdered Indigenous women and relatives. It was during this that we recognized the awesome power of collective healing. The sense of community and connection the MMIWR families created the blueprint for how the CCHG gatherings flowed.

The most impactful aspect of the CCHG are that the community members, and those most impacted by the grief and loss of COVID-19, MMIWR, DV/SA, elder, and child abuse, have the most valuable insight into how to heal the community together. SWIWC is proud to have been the conduit for those ideas to flow.

Sharpening Our Tools: National Tribal Sexual Assault Resource Center Hosts a Series of Listening Sessions

By Ingrid Anderson, *Standing Rock Hunkpapa Lakota Descendant*, National Policy Director, National Tribal Sexual Assault Resource Center, Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition

The National Tribal Sexual Assault Resource Center at the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) is excited to share that we have completed two listening sessions, one focused on the experiences of sexual violence advocates and one focused on policy advocacy to address sexual violence. We are excited to plan additional sessions to be completed by the end of 2024.

Our first listening session, focused on the voices of advocates and direct service providers, was held in Seattle, Washington, in March 2024. We completed our second listening session in Denver, Colorado, at the end of August 2024. This second session focused on policy advocacy in the many forms it takes in Indian Country, and we were thrilled to welcome

participants with diverse professional roles: elder, lobbyist, Tribal prosecutor, policy advocate, non-profit director, survivor, and more, and who recognized their even deeper responsibilities as relatives.

While we look forward to releasing a formal report from both of these listening sessions, we found the process of planning and hosting these listening sessions to be an exercise in cultural humility, relationship-building, and being in good relationships with one another. The method of planning and executing such events is equally, if not more, important than the result of our time together, and we want to share what we have learned about the process.

Subject Matter Expert attendees gathered in Denver, Colorado, and discussed policy advocacy efforts to address sexual violence perpetrated against our people in our communities. / Photo courtesy of MIWSAC.



The National Tribal Sexual Assault Resource Center at MIWSAC is funded through the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services at the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Because we have been granted this funding source, we are privileged to approach the work of resource development, training, and technical assistance through a public health lens. The latitude afforded to us through this funding stream has supported our exploration of how we work without focusing exclusively on the outcome. The most valuable outcomes of our work are the relationships we forge, the spaces we can convene, and how we declare, exercise, and develop solutions rooted in our traditional values as Native people.

In planning these two listening sessions and understanding that we have several more in the planning process, we consciously designed every aspect of the sessions to ascertain that we are relatives to each attendee and colleague who engages in the space. We have been mindful of the application language, the warm invitation we have sent across Turtle Island to encourage all relatives to apply, intentionally engaging with local organizations and communities to help us stay connected to the land and to conscientiously expend funds to ease the financial burden of travel that many individuals and organizations experience.

Many applicants have expressed eagerness to engage in these listening sessions and related events. Still, they feel underqualified, too young/too old, inexperienced, or without an education/certification to validate their attendance and voice. Our vision has been to declare the value of each attendee as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) who is eligible for an honorarium to attend and give voice to their experience and the experiences of their community and relatives. We, as the National Tribal Sexual Assault Resource Center, sat in these listening sessions in complete awe of the innovation, creativity, resilience, and strong vision exemplified by the work each attendee is doing in their day-to-day lives. We see the value of each attendee as a true expert in their field, and we are honored to support their work as such financially.

We continue addressing the extractive nature of research methods on Native peoples. Historically, they were conducted on Tribal lands. We plan to implement these modalities as a promising practice for research and information-gathering within our communities. We intend to declare the value of our relative's words, lives, stories, prayers, and existence in every detail of the way we do our work. As a result, we intend to share reports of our listening sessions that encourage others to do the same. One attendee shared, "We are sharpening our tools" as we sit in these spaces together. The National Tribal Sexual Assault Resource Center supports this work and the beautiful ways you are all working to sharpen your tools. Please reach out with any questions, requests for training or technical assistance, or to join our mailing list for information and invitations to upcoming events, webinars, and trainings. [Pilamayaye](#).



Stay in touch with MIWSAC!



For more information,
visit bit.ly/3zwtG2F.



To sign up for the mailing list,
go to bit.ly/miwsacmailing.



To request training, see
bit.ly/miwsacrequest.

First Nations Women's Alliance Advocacy To Prevent Sexual Violence

By Sandra Bercier, *Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Executive Director, First Nations Women's Alliance*

First Nations Women's Alliance (FNWA) took a significant step by applying for a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) aimed at Tribal coalitions for rape prevention and education. This initiative, although challenging due to the unfamiliar application format of the CDC compared to the Department of Justice (DOJ) with which we are more familiar, reflects Tribal advocates' deep commitment to addressing the issue of sexual violence in Indian Country. FNWA and the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) were the only two Tribal Coalitions to apply for the first round, highlighting the need for more widespread engagement in such funding opportunities.

FNWA's first project abstract underscored the urgent need to understand the extent of sexual violence within communities and Tribes, which remains largely undefined despite national documentation. FNWA is committed to developing solutions rooted in Indigenous cultures, which can foster the growth of healthy individuals through culturally appropriate prevention strategies. This approach is not only about preventing violence but nurturing complete human beings by addressing physical and mental health disparities and ensuring access to quality services. FNWA has expanded our #beagoodrelative hashtag campaign through this funding opportunity.

The initial Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) supported a capacity assessment for FNWA, revealing the stark disparities between Tribal and state programs. As Executive Director of FNWA, I have been a vocal advocate for parity at various decision-

making tables. The second round of grants proved disappointing, as state coalitions did not have to compete and received higher funding rates than those offered to Tribal Coalitions. This situation led FNWA and the 20 Tribal Coalitions across the country to communicate to the CDC our reluctance to compete against other Tribal entities, emphasizing the need for solidarity rather than competition in addressing such critical issues. FNWA's partnership with the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, which also received the CDC RPE funding, and the state coalition has been very collaborative and fruitful. Through this partnership, FNWA developed our "Medicine In Action" wheel (pictured here). FNWA has a group of changemakers who drive this work. Find more information about FNWA and our prevention strategies at www.nativewoman.org.

Despite these challenges, FNWA's first application process took a positive turn when the CDC announced that the funding would be higher than expected, necessitating a revised budget submission. This development enhanced FNWA's capacity to implement and evaluate comprehensive strategies for sexual violence prevention, as outlined in the NOFO. The ultimate goal of the CDC's funding opportunity is to advance health equity through prevention efforts. It aims to empower up to 10 Tribal Sexual Assault Coalitions to implement evidence-informed and Indigenous knowledge-informed strategies that address Indigenous Determinants of Health (IDOH) across Indian Country.

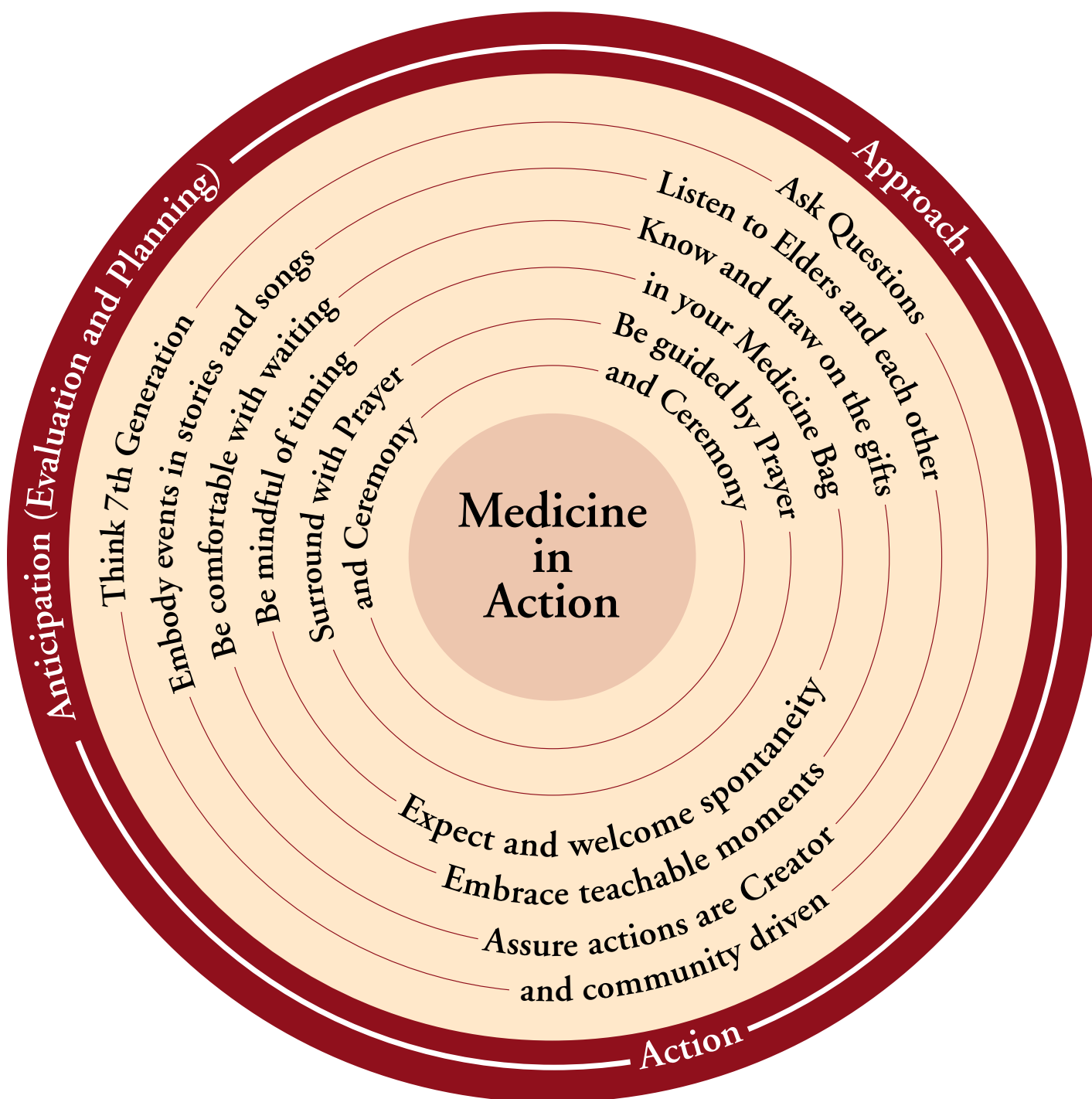
FNWA's experience reflects the complexities and potential opportunities within the grant application

process for Tribal Coalitions. It underscores the importance of aligning funding opportunities with the needs and values of Indigenous communities, ensuring equitable access to resources, and fostering a collaborative rather than competitive approach to addressing the pervasive issue of sexual violence in Indian Country.



MEDICINE IN ACTION

A Culturally Responsive Prevention Strategy



Sexual Violence Prevention in Tribal Communities

Centers for Disease Control: Rape Prevention & Education Funding Finally Makes Its Way to Tribal Coalitions



Annual MMIWR March and community awareness event in Minneapolis, MN. / Photo courtesy of Nedahness Rose Green.

By the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition

In 2001, the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) received funding from the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), becoming the first Tribal Coalition to focus specifically on sexual assault. However, it wasn't until 2023 that we received funding through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Rape Prevention & Education (RPE) Program. In its first year, we were only one of two Tribal Coalitions that applied for and received funding.

MIWSAC has been doing sexual violence prevention

work since our inception, primarily through foundation grants. Returning to our cultural knowledge and practices, the very source of our wholeness has always been our strategy. From taking youth into the woods to pick berries or harvest birch bark to make dishes to standing behind them on the rotunda stage at the Minnesota State Capitol, wearing our red, purple, and teal Solidarity Shawls, holding sacred space for them to amplify their voices is our way.

MIWSAC's free 40-Hour Sexual Assault Advocacy Curriculum addresses the root causes of sexual violence, identifies our history, and recalls our herstory of political organizing and healing through activism. It includes grooming tactics and red flags to identify potential child sexual abuse and spiritual abuse. Each module concludes with opportunities for systemic, institutional, and social change intended to prevent sexual violence.

We've convened three men's summits, where 427 multi-generational Native men gathered to deepen culturally-meaningful sexual violence prevention efforts. We've been piloting a Native Men & Boys Sexual Violence Prevention Toolkit, written by Native menfolk for Native menfolk, designed to be available for free and adaptable for other Tribal communities.

This part of our work has been minimally funded, so MIWSAC was thrilled to learn about the RPE Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

It was only because of our history of collaborative work with the Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence (ATCEV) and the Minnesota Department of Health that we even learned of the opportunity. The application process was clunky and unfamiliar. The language clearly separated state coalitions from Tribal Coalitions. The heavy focus on data collection made us nervous.

Our resistance to collecting even more data for funders, on the backs of survivors and our Tribal communities, ensured we would continue to work to Indigenize our data collection and instead tell our stories. Once funded, we were first required to assess our capacity to do sexual violence prevention work at all. We did this through focus groups, listening sessions, surveys with staff, coalition membership, our Circle Keepers (board of directors), and the community.

While this data suggested more work could be done around the distinction between intervention and prevention, it was clear that our organizations and our community know what we need and are capable of. It is important for funders to continue to hear us and build capacity with us, but it is equally important to trust us.

The rates of violence Native people experience remain high, and the incidents of those targeted, missing, or murdered remain at crisis levels. There are currently 20 Tribal Coalitions recognized by the Office on Violence Against Women.

Only two Tribal Coalitions applied for the RPE grant in 2023 and only nine received funding in 2024. What can the CDC and other funders do to better extend their resources to all Tribal Coalitions that implement intersectional and culturally meaningful prevention work in our Tribal communities?

The total project funding for the current grant for state coalitions is \$26,676,000, with a minimum and maximum budget of \$135,000 per year. For Tribal Coalitions, the total is \$3,600,000, with only nine Tribal Sexual Assault Coalitions expected to be funded with a maximum of \$90,000 per year. Further, the Tribal NOFO should be as streamlined as the State NOFO. Clear instructions would alleviate any

misunderstandings or errors in the application process.

Additionally, once funded, we found that reverse site visits were scheduled, then the Tribal Coalitions were informed that we would be having visits separate from the state coalitions. While it is important to have our own space, it is also essential to build relationships and strategize with the state coalitions that may also serve Native folks.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Provide equity in the amount funded across all Coalitions regardless of state or Tribal status.
- Facilitate shared virtual spaces and physical gatherings for state and Tribal Coalitions.
- Create consistent and ongoing communication.
- Remain flexible with approaches to how we do the work and collect the data.
- Provide technical assistance with navigating the NOFO application process and online portals.
- Secure ample funding to support truly collaborative efforts.

There is extraordinary expertise and skill among our Tribal Coalitions across the country. We center the voices of those most impacted and know what works in our communities. Funders and policymakers can best support our communities and programs through financial investments and policy change. Come out and get to know our communities and learn not only about our deficits but about our abundant cultural strengths and resources. We welcome your allyship and support.

If you are interested in collaborating on sexual violence prevention efforts, please contact MIWSAC at www.miwsac.org or contact Cristine Davidson (prevention and education) directly at cdavidson@miwsac.org.

MIWSAC staff in attendance at the 2024 Strengthening Sovereign Responses to Sex Trafficking in Indian country and Alaska.
Photo courtesy of Rich Real Estate Photography.

Restoration • Volume 21, Issue 3 • Nation



Evaluation Strategies for Indigenous Programs

Considerations for Evaluating Tribal or Native-Focused Victim Service Programs

By Ada Pecos Melton, *Pueblo of Jemez, President*, Rita Martinez, *Pueblo of Laguna and Jemez, Vice-President*, American Indian Development Associates, LLC

Introduction

Victim service programs operating on or off American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities are including evaluations in their programs to establish best practices, which are called practice-based evidence germane to AI/AN Tribes. Evaluation helps programs turn PBEs into EBPs rooted in longstanding cultural values, knowledge, methods, approaches, and worldviews.

Tribal governments and grassroots data warriors have developed guiding principles for conducting culturally respectful Indigenous evaluation and research.¹ Victimization in AI/AN communities against or by Native people requires understanding from historical, political, economic, environmental, and social perspectives as it impacts individuals, families, and communities. Also, historical trauma and cultural oppression have contributed significantly to social problems in Native communities and among Native people wherever they live.

¹ See bit.ly/4eA4WVS.

What is Evaluation?

Program evaluation employs various methods to assess program effectiveness in meeting intended objectives. Comprehensive evaluations encompass all program aspects of design, administration, implementation, planning, and impact. Evaluating programs involves numerous methodologies, such as experimentation, document reviews, questionnaires, observations, etc. Often selected methods present unique advantages and challenges for Native-specific evaluations. Therefore, culturally informed victim-related evaluation designs created by evaluators with extensive knowledge of AI/AN governments, communities, and experience evaluating Native programs are essential.

Program evaluation helps programs document how they integrate Native-defined PBEs with mainstream EBPs or new practices into programs. Many programs use Tribal- or culture-based PBEs to apply cultural knowledge, assets, beliefs, traditions, and practices and identify appropriate usage strategies. Identifying PBEs or EBPs for Native programs requires understanding the culturally complex Tribal context and the state and national-level mechanisms that may help or hinder service delivery. Indigenous program evaluations must be participatory, integrate culturally appropriate methods into study designs, and promote self-determination in the evaluation process.

What Can Programs Learn From Evaluation?

Evaluation findings and results provide information to draw solid conclusions, make informed decisions, and help staff understand their programs' effectiveness.

PRACTICE-BASED EVIDENCE (PBE)

PBE refers to methods and approaches that have long-standing usage but have yet to be formally evaluated or researched.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES (EBP)

EBP refers to a program, practice, or intervention whose effectiveness has been demonstrated by causal evidence (generally obtained through one or more impact evaluations).



Evaluations document program performance and identify what's working well, what needs adjustment or more attention, and what to put on hold or move.

Evaluations help a program better understand what it can or cannot provide, given its current capacities, and consider referring victims to other resources and services.

Evaluation helps programs justify the support needed from partners to deliver comprehensive victim services, assess connections with service providers, and provide suggestions to strengthen relationships.

Evaluation validates cultural measures and strengthens culturally responsive programming by creating and improving data collection tools to capture relevant measures.

Funders include evaluation in AI/AN solicitations to better support programs with training and implementation. These efforts increase the knowledge base of effective Native programs through culturally responsive evaluation methods.

Evaluation Types

Some agencies fund single-program evaluations, while others sponsor multisite or comparative cross-site evaluations. Four common types include:

- **Evaluability assessments** are preparatory steps for new or more mature programs to showcase their value and feasibility before an evaluation. These assessments identify program goals, resources, activities, and areas for improvement. They assess program readiness by ensuring the program structure, data, staffing, etc., are available for a process or outcome evaluation.
- **Formative evaluations** are tailored for early-stage projects and focus on design, implementation, and influencing factors. They prioritize learning and reflection to identify project strengths and challenges and make necessary adjustments.
- **Process evaluations** assess a program's progress and implementation. They measure significant milestones, objectives achieved, procedures used, services offered, reaching the intended recipients, and getting feedback on service satisfaction.
- **Outcome evaluations** measure program success

and service impact by tracking the achievement of core goals and measuring the changes in the intended population affected by the interventions or program.

What are Some Tribal or Native-Focused Evaluation Challenges?

Challenges center on applying culturally informed and respectful Indigenous-based evaluation principles, approaches, and methods. Following Indigenous approaches enables evaluators to intentionally include cultural and Tribal-based ideals, PBEs, and strategies for protecting cultural information.

Evaluation sometimes describes an issue like human trafficking as recent when Native people know it existed long before the new term was applied. Similarly, traditional cultural methods and approaches are not new. For example, Indigenous peacemaking has victim-centered processes that are still in practice. Identifying cultural indicators for longstanding PBEs presents challenges since they are only evident in oral traditions and practices, requiring intentional documentation. Also, some cultural practices contain "sacred knowledge" that cannot be shared and needs protection.

Costs, time, local expertise, and staff participation are competing factors, especially when funding only covers personnel's service duties. Many grants don't allocate resources for evaluation participation.

Funders could clearly outline the evaluation process and the evaluation type anticipated and require that evaluators with extensive Native evaluation experience be selected. Federal agencies often combine evaluation opportunities given to corporate evaluation firms, limiting the selection of Native evaluators. This practice hinders Native evaluators from fairly competing for evaluation opportunities to support programs and communities requiring their expertise.

How Can Programs Incorporate Evaluation?

It's essential to plan for different evaluations. Self-evaluations start at program onset, while nationally sponsored evaluations involve external evaluators and begin later. Evaluators use logic models to describe a program's structure and its intended activities for

CULTURE-BASED

Culture-based refers to strategies found in Native American beliefs, customs, traditions, and practices.

TRIBAL-BASED

Tribal-based refers to factors linked to governmental structure, rule, or practice.



change. Indigenous logic models integrate culturally relevant elements that are aligned with Native ways of knowing and understanding.

National funders include evaluations in the Native-focused victim service programs they fund. Programs are asked to describe how they plan to evaluate their programs, the data sources, tools, and processes, and who is responsible for collecting and reporting data. They must explain how they expect to succeed and specify the anticipated outcomes. By incorporating this step into every grant application, programs plan for meaningful evaluation.

Even when federal funders expect Tribal programs to participate in a national evaluation, this does not mean the Tribe has approved participation. Applicants must outline their strategy to obtain Tribal approval in their applications.

Before an evaluation, programs should identify internal and external data sources, data-sharing agreements, tools, and collection procedures and describe data protection and privacy procedures.

Programs can identify participants like service recipients, staff, partners, leadership, and the community to gain their support and perspective on program operations, services, and evaluation design.

Culturally-informed evaluators should evaluate Tribal and Native programs. Programs must assert this

standard of practice to their Tribal and organizational leadership and funding agencies.

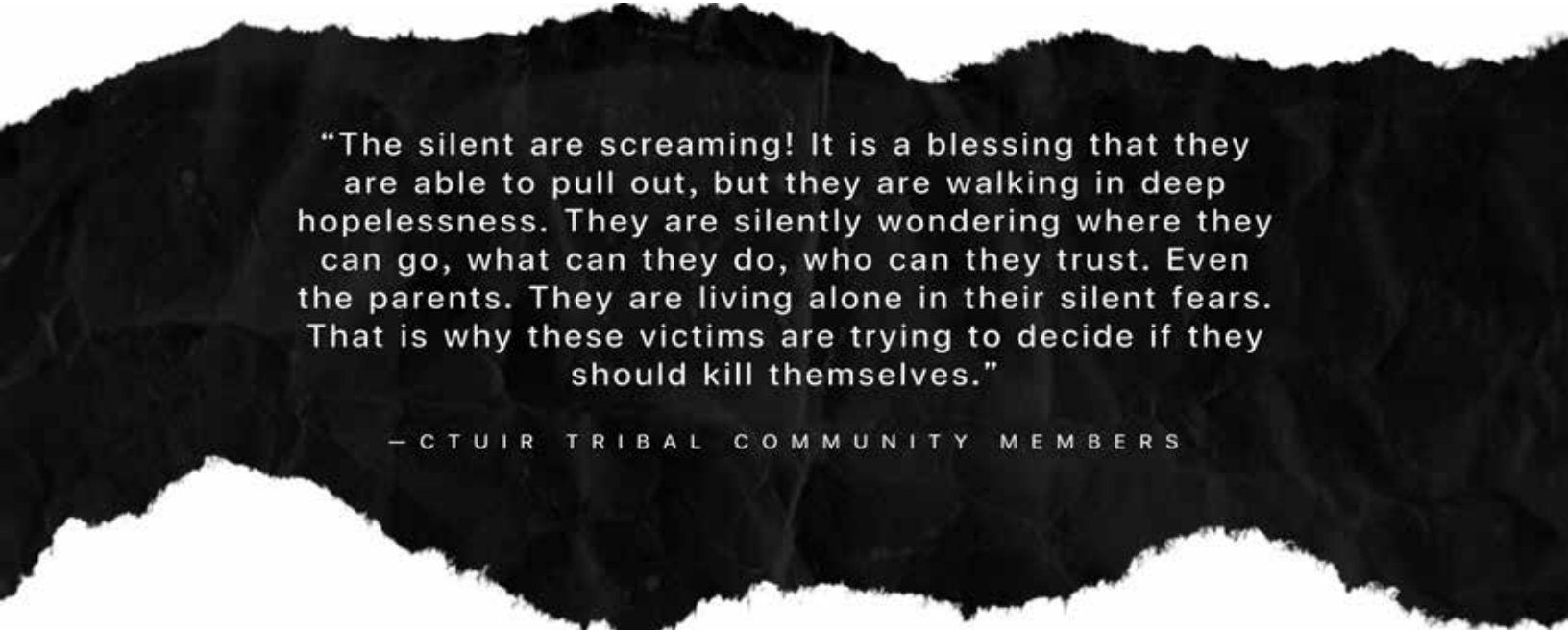
Using Evaluation Results

When programs start with an evaluability or formative evaluation, they lay the groundwork for the next steps in evaluation, such as a process or outcome evaluation. Programs can use the findings to make necessary adjustments and ensure the effective dissemination of results. Program evaluators must give back data or information to the community in creative and culturally-appropriate ways.

Tribal governments intentionally setting aside time and resources to evaluate their responses to victims of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, sex trafficking, and homicide, is reflective of and supports the increasing capacity to take better care of our citizens and community members.

Tribal Community Feedback Strengthening *Response* to Violence Against Women

By Diane Gout, Ph.D., Executive Director, Gray O.A.K., LLC, Desireé Coyote, *Confederated Tribes of Umatilla and Nez Perce*, Family Violence Services Program Manager, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation



“The silent are screaming! It is a blessing that they are able to pull out, but they are walking in deep hopelessness. They are silently wondering where they can go, what can they do, who can they trust. Even the parents. They are living alone in their silent fears. That is why these victims are trying to decide if they should kill themselves.”

— CTUIR TRIBAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

On December 31, 2023, the Increasing Access to Services by Sexual Assault Survivors: The Voices and Perspectives of a Tribal Community project reached its conclusion. This project initiated the critical journey of tackling the pervasive issues of sexual violence within a Tribal community. It laid the groundwork for cultivating a more trusting environment, directly confronting the existing gaps and barriers, and establishing pathways for healing and resilience.

This was a project not only desperately needed but also long hoped for. The Family Violence Services (FVS) with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) has long recognized the challenges faced by their people, including the scourge of sexual violence. CTUIR, understanding that systemic and

community change must come from within, approached the issue with the knowledge that, as a sovereign Tribal Nation with self-governance, meaningful changes in safety, protection, accountability, and healing can only emerge through the collective voices and actions of the community.

With nearly two decades of relationship-building, FVS, under the leadership of Desireé Coyote, partnered with Diane Gout, Ph.D., owner of Gray O.A.K., LLC, to design and implement a truly community-based, culturally relevant project. This project aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the underreporting of sexual violence and sexual assault within CTUIR. The initiative focused on two primary areas:

- **Needs Assessment.** A comprehensive assessment was conducted to understand the community's needs in addressing sexual assault, sexual violence, and sex trafficking. This process involved gathering insights from various stakeholders, or "rightsholders," within the Tribal community at multiple stages throughout the project. A community event held midway through the project celebrated the community's involvement and provided additional insights to address the findings from the needs assessment.
- **Strategic Planning.** A strategic plan was developed to guide the expansion of victim services programs. The plan, which places the community at the center of the work, addresses barriers to reporting and accessing services and proposes methods for improving coordination with relevant partners.

The project received widespread attention, including significant coverage from the East Oregonian, which published a "centerpiece" article about the project and community event, along with a series of feature stories on Indigenous survivors: bit.ly/4dijSXO.

The first of the feature stories focused on Coyote and her efforts to empower survivors of violence: tinyurl.com/desiree-coyote.

There is considerable literature on conducting community-based, participatory, and culturally relevant evaluations, but actualizing this work requires an immense amount of time and intentionality. Conducting a needs assessment is not merely about creating and administering a survey. It is not an extractive or one-and-done process. Instead, it demands a commitment to continuous and collective engagement with the Tribal community.

This multifaceted process began with a partnership rooted in transparency and respect between FVS and Gray O.A.K., LLC. It honored the Tribal community and Tribal data sovereignty, manifesting for years into what this project could and should become. The work was not about gaining recognition, responding to another RFP, or fulfilling a grant deliverable. It was not performative. Instead, it was about laying the groundwork for the essentials needed to address critical issues.

For almost three years, the project involved advisory board meetings, administering community and Tribal employee surveys, conducting interviews and focus groups with community members, hosting a community event, keeping departmental and Tribal leadership informed at critical junctures, and facilitating multiple strategic planning sessions.

At the heart of this work was the community's bravery and trust. Their willingness to share their stories and open their hearts was an act of profound courage. This bravery not only allowed the project to capture the depth of the challenges they faced but also set a powerful precedent for accountability and change. By voicing their experiences and concerns, the community created a ripple effect that demands attention and action, ensuring that the necessary changes will not only be discussed but implemented.

While the grant has ended, the work continues. The Tribe has held several sessions to discuss the next steps, and changes are beginning to take place as a direct result of this project's efforts. Once finalized, the report was printed and shared with all Tribal member households, programs, and departments. FVS has since hired a child youth specialist, a sexual assault specialist, and a violence prevention specialist to assist in strategic project implementation. It can't be emphasized enough that the community's courage in sharing their truths has been instrumental in driving these changes and will continue to be the cornerstone of ongoing progress.

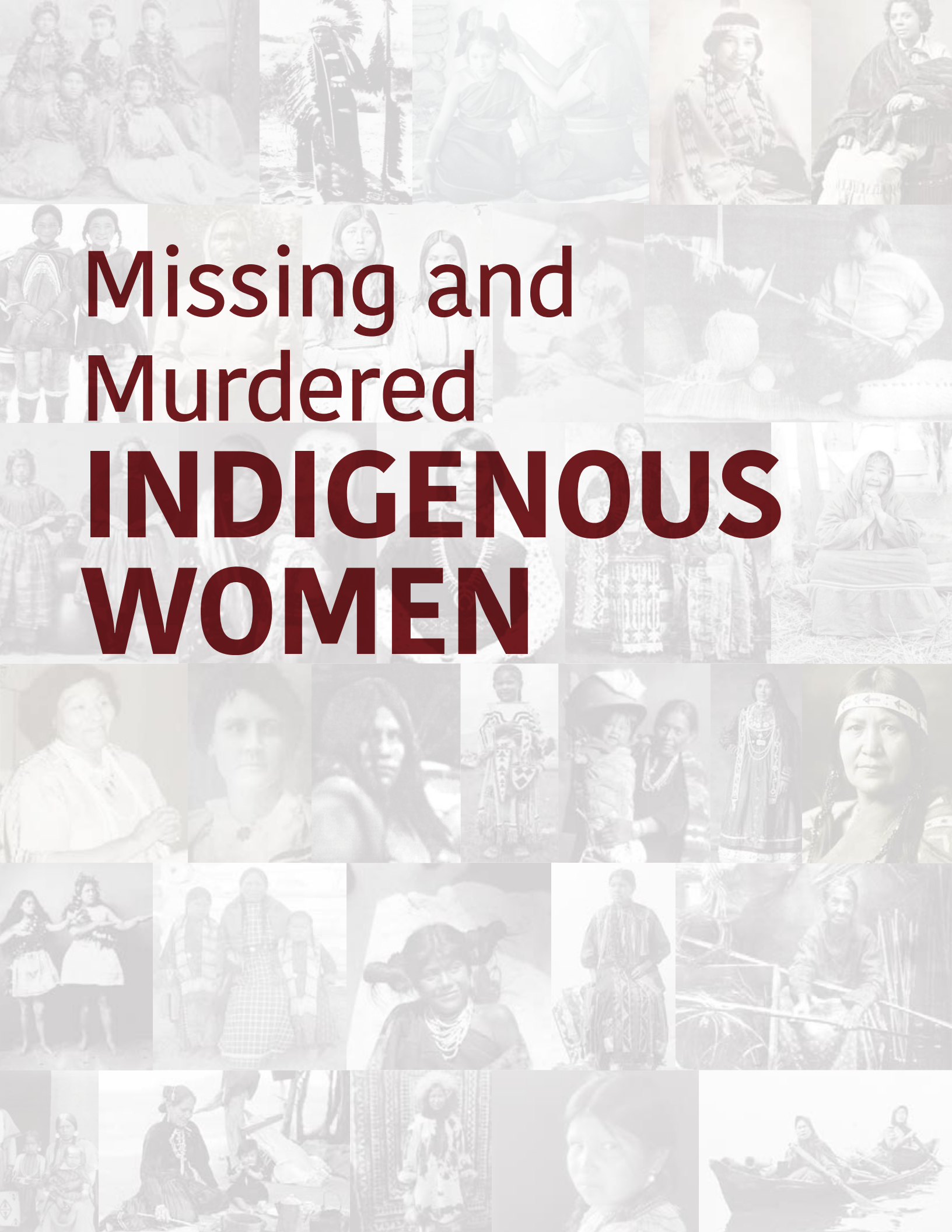
For more information, please contact dgout@gray-oak.com.



*Diane Gout.
Photo courtesy of Diane Gout.*



*Desiree Coyote.
Photo courtesy of Desiree Coyote.*



Missing and Murdered **INDIGENOUS WOMEN**

By the Numbers

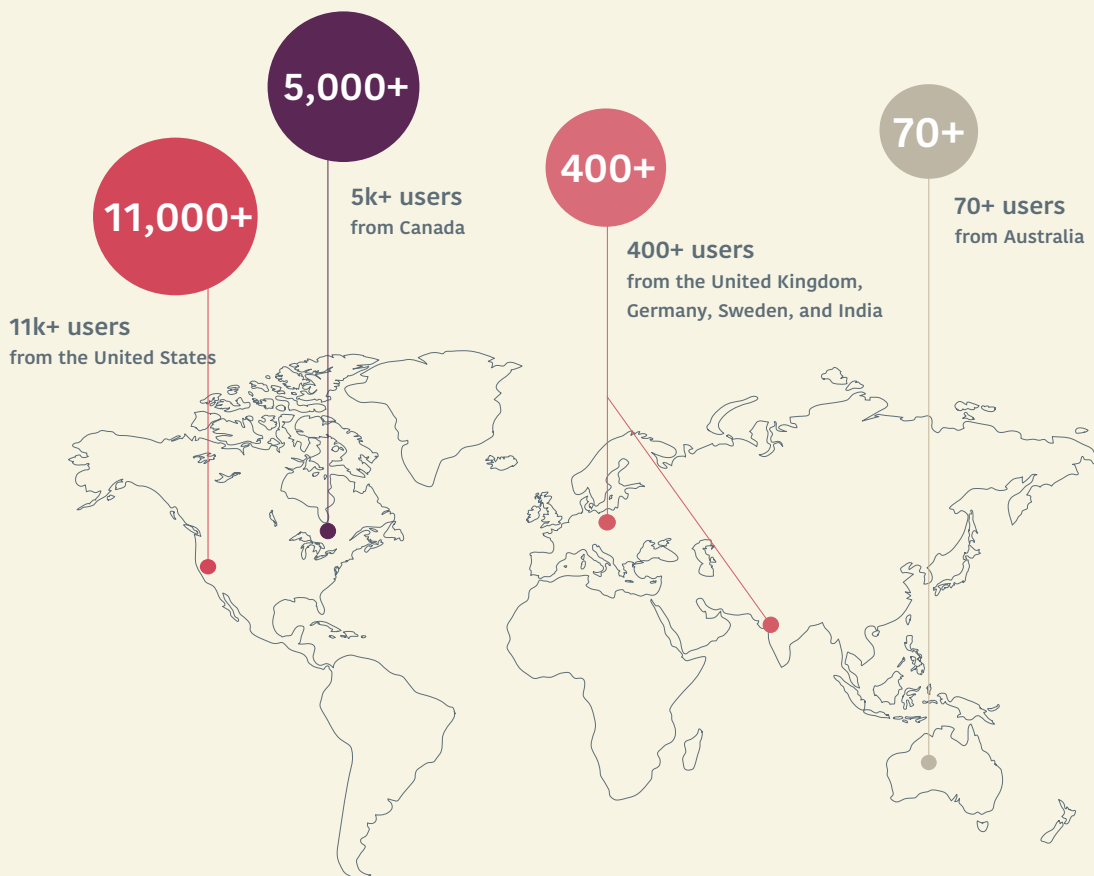


2024 NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION FOR MMIW

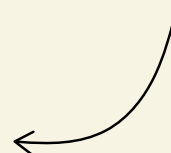
During the week of April 29 - May 5, 2024, the National Partners Work Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and the MMIW Family Advisors organized the National Week of Action. This event, held every year during the first week of May, calls on the nation and the world to take action in honor of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives.

Throughout the week, participants engaged in various activities, utilized shared resources, and organized community actions around May 5. These efforts aimed to raise awareness and demand justice for MMIW, with the message: ***“Enough is enough. No more stolen sisters.”***

This week serves as a critical platform for advocacy, honoring victims, and amplifying the voices of Indigenous families affected by this crisis.



Throughout the week, our website attracted over *19,000 new users* from **across the globe**. The countries with the highest number of visitors included the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, India, and Australia.



Social Media Impact

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) recognizes social media as a powerful tool for community outreach, raising awareness, and promoting culturally grounded resources. It also serves as a platform for political outreach, ultimately, uplifting the collective voices of grassroots advocates and survivors:



2,080

net audience growth across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter/X.



63

posts published across social media.



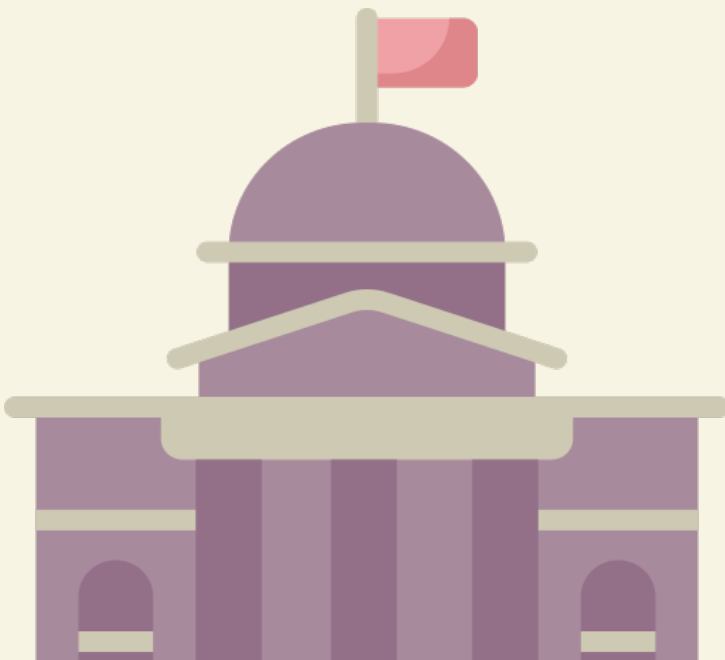
118,810

accounts reached through the hashtags: **#MMIWG2S**, **#MMIWActionNow**, **#MMIWGActionNow**, and **#MMIW**.

Policy Impact

1,248 letters were sent in support of the *Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act*.

1,283 letters were sent in support of *Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety for Native Communities Act*.



Healing and Accountability for Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples in Arizona and Nationwide

By Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya, *Hopi*, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Coordinator, Tribal Affairs, Office of the Arizona Governor

Who I Am

I am Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya, and I am thankful for what I have learned and continued to carry from all of the mothers in this movement to restore Tribal sovereignty and increase Native women's and Indigenous peoples' safety. My experiences all these years have guided me and given me the opportunities, resources, trust, and belief in myself to move forward in this work. This is where my passion comes from and what I share daily.

My advocacy begins in grassroots, for-profit, non-profit, Tribal, state, and federal organizations. The lack of adequate resources for adult missing persons led to the creation of a community-based Missing Person & Trafficking Recovery Program. Our success in finding missing persons, recovering remains, and trafficking survivors out of the life is rewarding. The most rewarding is guiding and providing the resources and tools to families of missing loved ones, educating and guiding community advocates to search for loved ones with a trauma-informed lens.

Since April 2023, I have been appointed by Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs as the first-ever Coordinator for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP) Task Force for the State of Arizona in Tribal Affairs. My appointment is supported by the governor's executive order creating the Task Force and charges. We focus on putting into action the state's previous MMIP work

since 2016, including studies around MMIP and the release of 83 recommendations.

What Have We Done

Governor Hobbs is very compassionate on this issue. I'm very fortunate that my director and the governor gave me free rein to build this position. Constant communication is required to ensure I am on the right path and aligned with the governor's vision.

Amendments were made to our Victim Compensation Program to ensure we removed barriers around eligibility, including adult cases of missing persons who don't have official law enforcement reports. State law requires that victims or their families report crimes within certain days. They are not eligible for victim compensation if they don't report a missing person within that period. The amendments address opportunities for families to apply for reimbursable compensation through the state of Arizona.

The community and our families haven't seen the actions they deserve. The goal is to ensure that we address our challenges, successes, and recommendations as the MMIP Coordinator and the Task Force. We have accomplished the following:

- We recognized that our municipal law enforcement departments were not identifying suspects or victims as Native American. We changed that.

- We shared our concerns and questions to help strengthen the coordination of the Medical Examiner's (ME) office with the 22 Tribes in Arizona when they have remains that could be Native American. As a result, we've had an increase in the number of remains returned to families. Some of our loved ones have gone home and had proper burials.

These stories empower my work.

Our governor met with our Tribes. This is the first time a governor has visited Tribes and sincerely participated in meetings, not just meetings with her agenda but meetings with the Tribe's agenda. We have a respectful relationship with our Tribes as collaborative partners, letting them lead conversations rather than the state. Our Task Force is planning a Tribal leader engagement in the near future.

Organizing MMIP Coordinators

The key to effecting social change and responding to and preventing MMIP is that we host quarterly national virtual meetings with state and federal MMIP coordinators. We can amplify our voices to make change happen locally and nationally. We've had three meetings since December 2023.

Most of the coordinators are Native. Some are new to this work, and others have been doing it for some time from different disciplines, with over half of them in the infancy stages of their work. Some come from grassroots, non-profit organizations and have been boots on the ground. Some don't have experience working or living in Indian Country. Some have college degrees and vast experiences in this field. We all have much to learn from each other. We've talked about our challenges and barriers and shared attempted solutions. We have supported each other and see the value of our networking.

We're dealing with the effects of missing or murdered loved ones, sometimes with no judicial accountability. We're dedicated to helping secure the healing of the families of MMIP and the community. While implementing and acting on recommendations is essential and long overdue, we must ensure that our people are healing with the support of actual resources. We must learn from and hear their testimony. They

must be leading actions for change with all of us.

We want to develop a collaborative platform to empower all to do this work. We're coming together nationally in person on October 16 and 17 for the first time and expect participation from the Pacific, Montana, the Great Lakes, Alaska, and the Southwest coordinators. Many of the coordinators shared that it's hard to sit and listen virtually. We're visual learners as Native Americans. We need to have these conversations in person.

We want to learn and share barriers, such as accessing victim assistance and whether law enforcement has responded or determined a crime has been committed. Acknowledge our accomplishments. What are we experiencing that may be the same? What solutions are we thinking about or implementing?

We know the people in the community addressing MMIP in Indian Country. We know someone knows something of a loved one missing or murdered. It's unfortunate, but it's a hurtful lesson. We must be careful of and identify how to protect against the exploitation of families, including fundraising to help with finding MMIP.

The gathering will be action-oriented. We will provide a strategic process for sharing, monitoring, and evaluating our practices to produce a comprehensive summary, maybe a plan, and recommendations.

I'm excited and honored to be part of organizing the MMIP coordinators and the event. It's the right time. We must take action and avoid isolation, which can be very easy with this work.

**Valaura Imus-
Nahsonhoya
speaking at
Arizona Capitol.
Photo courtesy of
Moonlit Dreams
Photography.**



Beyond the March

A Journey of Empowerment and Leadership

By Kiora Matthews, *White Earth Band of Ojibwe*, Youth Activist

Growing up as a young Black and Native American girl in a world marred with discrimination and hate, I developed a strong determination to drive change and raise awareness about pressing issues. My mother's work in combating sexual violence exposed me to numerous conferences and meetings from an early age. Immersed in these environments, I questioned our society deeply and considered how we might address injustices.

In seventh grade, I participated in National History Day, a project-based competition for 7-12 grade students. The theme that year was "Take a Stand," and my friends and I chose to explore Native American boarding schools—a topic that resonated personally with me as a Native American. Our project advanced

through the school competition, regional contests, and ultimately to the National History Day Competition in Washington, D.C. Reading and learning about the stories of these children in these boarding schools helped me visualize and empathize with what those children went through—loss of their language, hair, teachings, and families. I used that to help paint a picture of some of the experiences and pain these students went through. Being able to articulate and present the stories of Indigenous assimilation to a global audience was profoundly empowering. It illustrated the significant impact of raising awareness.

On Valentine's Day each year, in the freezing Minnesota weather, my mother's organization, the Minnesota Indian Women Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC),



co-hosts a march for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and relatives (MMIWR) with other community organizations. Having attended this march nearly every year, I took action in eighth grade. I organized a school walkout, rallying my peers to join the march. I wanted to share this enticing experience of marching and showing up for an important cause. I had rallied about 15-20 students to accompany me. Although threats of suspension occurred the next day—a stark contrast to previous walkouts—I felt more inspired than defeated.

In response, I led a school community project where my friends and I crafted around 2,000 cedar ties adorned with red ribbons and explanatory notes about the MMIWR movement. We distributed these ties to students, faculty, and staff, initiating conversations about the cause. The following year, the Minneapolis Public School district organized student buses to attend the march, demonstrating the powerful impact of youth activism. At just 14, we educated our school community and influenced an entire school district.

Through these experiences, I gained a deeper understanding of leadership—specifically, the power to positively influence others and effect meaningful change. In my first year of high school, my mother and I traveled to Chicago to collaborate with a Black-centered organization called A Long Walk Home, which focuses on art and activism to empower young people in the fight against violence toward girls and women. This visit was part of a longstanding connection between their organization and MIWSAC, which previously hosted some members at the MMIW march. We aimed to articulate the significance of the march and build solidarity between the causes of missing and murdered Black and Indigenous women and girls. The media often conflates these minority groups, so we must stand together and support one another.

Honored, I returned several years later, in February, to Chicago to speak on a public panel. This time, I presented findings from an infographic I created in the spring of 2023. As part of a youth-led research team, we analyzed data from the Minnesota Student Survey, specifically focusing on a new question added in 2022: “Have you ever traded sex or sexual activity to receive money, food, drugs, alcohol, a place to stay, or anything else?” We discovered that while 1.3% of students answered

yes, the rate significantly increased to—4.3%—among Native American students. This alarming disparity prompted us to collaborate with researchers from the University of Minnesota to explore further.

Our analysis identified several factors, including experiences of self-harm, transgender identity, and unstable home environments. Next, we examined other issues, including depleted resources, ineffective support systems, and unresponsive legal frameworks. Our disruption strategies included decolonizing and revitalizing Native traditions. We advocate for Indigenous civic action and critical education. Providing essential resources and addressing stereotypes creates space for healing and righteous anger. We must address the root causes and foster positive change in our communities.

Since then, I have been honored to travel nationwide, sharing my insights with diverse audiences. This opportunity has not only empowered me but has also been a profound source of inspiration. Engaging in thought-provoking conversations with peers and individuals significantly older than myself has been incredibly fulfilling. Sharing knowledge and wisdom and fostering awareness on important issues epitomizes what leadership means to me. These experiences have significantly shaped who I am today and who I aspire to become.

I commit to continuing this work in various capacities. I hope to inspire young people to embrace their potential and recognize their power to effect change. I believe in standing up for our convictions and maintaining faith in our ability to improve the world, even amidst uncertainty. This work has instilled in me a sense of security and trust in the possibility of transformation. I am dedicated to supporting just causes and creating pathways for youth to contribute to meaningful progress.



Health is a *Human Right*: Achieving Health Equity

NIWRC's Participation in CDC Museum Exhibition

From November 25, 2024 - August 1, 2025, the David J. Sencer CDC Museum at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, presents “Health is a Human Right: Achieving Health Equity.” This exhibition looks at how communities across the U.S. are working toward solutions to offer opportunities for all Americans to thrive in the 21st century. Through a compelling installation in the CDC Museum’s 5,000-square-foot gallery, visitors may engage with photographs, documents, media, artwork, and objects.

Representative of the entire country, the organizations, governments, and initiatives profiled are diverse in their mission and focus. They collectively reflect how communities embrace public health practices so that every person may thrive. Focused on “good news wins,” the exhibition details stories of communities that advance health equity in housing, education, and healthcare delivery. For example, it discusses the role of faith leaders in preventing HIV or tobacco use, looks at efforts to address food equity, and examines the community school movement.

But good news only goes so far: Some stories call out systemic crises. For example, the exhibition talks about the maternal health disparities among communities of color, particularly among Black and American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women, by discussing the historical conditions that contributed to such alarming current conditions and the grassroots and government activists working to address the situation.

One important story centers on grassroots organizations and governments that are working to address violence in Indigenous communities, particularly the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) crisis. Opening with an acknowledgment of the AI/AN risk factors for historical violence, including multilayered traumas resulting from war and loss of land, language, access to traditional ways, and cultural identity, it provides data about how Native communities continue to face the highest rates in the U.S. of assault, abduction, and murder, particularly among women. Profiled efforts by the U.S. government include Operation Lady Justice (OLJ) and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).

Hearing from Indigenous voices is critical; the exhibit organizers worked with the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC). The exhibit includes many of NIWRC's collateral materials and publications, underscoring the protective factors of tradition and culture.

Without a doubt, the highlight of the display and the entire exhibition is an empty chair draped with a red shawl created by Connie Black Bear-Brushbreaker-

The three shawls featuring the "No More Stolen Sister" artwork, representing the spectrum of violence. / Photo courtesy of Connie Brushbreaker.



Ga Wiyan Sni Win (Woman Who Doesn't Look Back, Sicangu Lakota). Representative of Indigenous activism, the chair and shawl symbolize a missing, murdered, or victimized loved one. Similar chairs appear at hearings held by the Not Invisible Act Commission (NIAC) and other hearings where people testify.

For her dramatic shawl, Connie drew upon the poster, also included in the exhibit, "No More Stolen Sisters," created by brother and sister duo Nick Alan Foote and Kelsey Mata Foote (Tlingit, Taakw.aaneidi). The artists, originally from Southeast Alaska, want to amplify the dire need to address the systemic barriers that allow this horrific reality to persist and to amplify the voices of advocates and families working tirelessly to share their stories, demanding justice and restoring safety.

The artwork portrays a Native woman adorned in her robe regalia, holding a feather across her chest with resolute countenance and stance, conveying a message all advocates share: *Enough is enough*. It is an intentional reflection on MMIWP and what has persisted for generations, employing red, violet, and purple colors to symbolize the spectrum of violence by Native women and children across Tribal Nations and Native Hawaiian communities. It stands in solidarity with daughters, sisters, mothers, and aunties who were taken from their nations and communities. Kelsey's and Nick's children's books, the first of their kind written in Tlingit, will also be featured in another section of the exhibition that discusses language revitalization initiatives undertaken by Native communities.

The MMIP exhibit will bring attention to a crisis few Americans know about. With knowledge comes power. The CDC Museum expects more than 100,000 people, including school groups and public health professionals worldwide, to visit the exhibition in Atlanta. An online version will further amplify this story and will be available at www.cdcmuseum.org.

In addition to the NIWRC and divisions and programs across the CDC, contributors to the overall exhibition include, among others, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, the City of Newark, New Jersey, the Rhode Island Department of Public Health, the Center for Black Health Equity, the California Nails Salon Collaborative, Black Mamas Matter, and the Healthy Neighborhoods program City of San Antonio's Metropolitan Health District.



Legislative **REFORMS**

Legislative **UPDATE**

By Kerri Colfer, *Tlingit*, Director of Legislative Affairs, NIWRC



Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act Introduced

The Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act (S.4514/H.R. 8061) was introduced in both the House and the Senate. The bill would ensure additional funding is deposited into the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) by diverting surplus funds collected through the False Claims Act, which currently go to the General Fund of the U.S. Treasury, to the CVF through 2029. The CVF supports victim compensation and assistance

programs and has faced a significant decline in deposits over the last few years, leaving programs at risk of closing their doors permanently.

Take action to urge your Members of Congress to cosponsor and support the Crime Victims Fund Stabilization Act and ensure victim assistance programs have the support they need.



19th Annual OVW Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation To Be Held in November

The purpose of each consultation is to solicit recommendations from Tribal government leaders on the following topics:

- Administering tribal funds and programs;
- Enhancing the safety of Indian women from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, homicide, stalking, and sex trafficking;
- Strengthening the federal response to such crimes; and
- Improving access to local, regional, state, and federal crime information databases and criminal justice information systems.

This year's consultation will be held in person from November 19-21, 2024, at the Hilton Santa Fe Buffalo Thunder in Santa Fe, New Mexico. More information about the consultation will be available at www.ovwconsultation.org.

NIWRC and our partners are hosting Tribal Leader Caucuses on November 12 (virtual) and November 18 (in person) for Tribal leaders and designated representatives and will release a consultation priorities document. Visit our Consultation Support page for more information: www.niwrc.org/policy-center/ovw-consultation-hub

Executive Order 14112 Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations to Better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self-Determination

By Elizabeth Molle-Carr, *Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa*, Tribal Advisor to the Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President



President Joe Biden signs an executive order at the White House Tribal Nations Summit in Washington, D.C., on December 6, 2023. From left, looking on: Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland, Chairwoman Sherry Parker of the Hualapai Tribe, Chairman Mark Macarro, of the Pechanga Band of Indians, Chairman Gerald Gray of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians and President Brian Ridley of the Tanana Chiefs Conference. / Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The nexus around Executive Order (EO) 14112, signed by President Biden on December 6, 2023, stems from the promises made by the Biden-Harris campaign in 2020 regarding Tribal self-determination, self-governance, and respecting the nation-to-nation relationship. The EO is a historic acknowledgment and has planted the seeds for federal actions to change the administration of federal funding and promote the next era of Tribal self-determination. We reviewed the last 10 years of Tribal consultation testimony from various federal agencies to identify the issues around federal funding. We understand the level of intensity that

federal grant reporting has created for Tribal Nations and the burdensome grant funding requirements that have often far outweighed the benefits of funding. Tribes have shared how hard it is to keep up to date with reporting and how reporting detracts from implementing Tribal responses and services. We also believe that eliminating bureaucratic red tape is an issue that both sides of the aisle can agree on. This EO will create a clearer picture and justification to help policymakers understand holistically what Tribes need to provide critical government services.

From a federal government perspective, we want federal dollars to be used practically, meaningfully, and impactfully, recognizing that Tribal governments

¹ <https://www.usccr.gov/files/pubs/2018/12-20-Broken-Promises.pdf>

are sovereign and have their way of doing business. Tribes understand best how programs will work in their communities. Our focus now should be on how we restructure federal systems to work better for Indian Country, including less burdensome and more meaningful reporting, increased access to federal funding, and ongoing success with implementing programs. It is incredible to see the work that Tribes can do with limited resources. We've seen Tribal grantees leverage resources to spread every dollar for as much impact as possible. We want to remove barriers to Tribal administration of federal funding. We recognize the effort required to implement Tribal responses and programs. Tribes must deal with the generational impacts of federal policies and practices, including chronic underfunding in all areas.

The second part of the EO is an unprecedented task and will be challenging to achieve, but is long overdue—assessing the federal budget for Tribal Nations. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is creating a measuring tool or assessment guidance to help federal agencies identify the shortfall in funding that Tribes need, which is data we do not currently have. For example, if the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) were to fund all 574 Tribal Nations fully, what would that amount be? Working closely with the team at OMB, that's the type of analysis we expect federal agencies to achieve, and data we will collect with this assessment to understand better how much we're falling short and help the administration plan for how to fulfill the federal trust responsibility as discussed over time by Tribes and most recently in the Broken Promises Report. The assessment guidance will probably require several iterations to nail down a methodology that reflects Tribal realities. Federal agencies will also conduct government-to-government consultations to assist with developing and implementing their assessments. This assessment is a much-needed step toward acknowledging the shortfalls and chronic underfunding of federal programs that Tribes rely on.

We've held several listening sessions and consultations with Tribes since the EO was signed, including on July 8. Each agency will have discretion about conducting its analysis and must conduct its own Tribal consultation on its processes. By May 2025, agencies must submit a report to the president on the shortfalls they've

identified and potential ways to better meet them. We've seen several changes happen across the agencies over the past several months, including through monthly reporting, and we look forward to sharing these success stories in the short and long term, including at the next Tribal Nations Summit.

We've often heard from Tribes that there's no way they would have been able to afford to apply for a specific grant program because of the cost-share requirements. We've also noted that when we can remove or limit cost-share requirements, more Tribes apply, which means the funding is getting where it is needed most. These are the types of challenges we are trying to tackle. We are also noticing improvements in reporting, including changes to reporting formats that used to be 30 pages and are now two pages or spending 15 hours on reporting versus 80 hours. We're freeing up some of those human capital resources and hours. The ultimate goal is to get funding where needed most, impacting or funding the need versus the program's administration. We are getting closer, but we know we have much work to do. This EO will have a lasting legacy for years to come.

To close, I wanted to recognize that my time at the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center and the Tribes they work with opened my eyes to how dysfunctional the federal government can be in providing funding and allowing Tribes and organizations to do what they need to implement responses. The frustration I heard from grantees has been the same as that from Tribal leaders for decades. It opened my eyes to how much we need to do better and how we influence what happens on the ground. I've been to Tribal communities across the United States but working with folks on the ground differs from visiting a community. I think those are the lessons for federal officials to learn—break away and do something in communities impacted by the services we are funding. We need more of that. I am grateful for the experience. It certainly has shifted and shaped how I think about how the federal government works. My hope is that it translates through and beyond this executive order regarding policy and how our government does business and meets its trust responsibility.

Advocating for Truth, Healing, and Justice for Survivors of Indian Boarding Schools

Considerations for Evaluating Tribal or Native-Focused Victim Service Programs

By Sherrie Catanach, *Pueblo of Pojoaque*, Communications Officer, The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition



Mathew Warbonnet, Survivors. / Photo courtesy of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

Following President Grant's Peace Policy of 1869, the United States government enforced Indian boarding school policies designed to assimilate Native American children by forcibly removing them from their families, communities, and lifeways. Native American children were sent to institutions that participated in federal Indian boarding school policies. The goal was to "civilize" them and eradicate Native culture, making the policy a deliberate act of ethnocide and genocide. The boarding schools enforced strict regulations that prohibited the use of Native languages and cultural practices, subjecting children to harsh punishments for non-compliance. The policies resulted in a significant loss of cultural identity, language, and traditional knowledge among Native peoples. The traumatic, long-lasting effects of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse experienced

in these institutions contribute to the ongoing social and mental health issues within Native communities. The forced separation from families broke cultural traditions and community bonds, causing lasting harm.

The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS) is a national organization founded in 2012 that advocates for Native peoples affected by U.S. Indian boarding school policies. Through a multifaceted approach that includes education, research, activism, policy, advocacy, and culturally grounded healing programs, NABS seeks to address these policies' historical and ongoing impacts.

Seeking Truth, Justice, and Healing

NABS is committed to uncovering the truth about U.S. Indian boarding school policies through rigorous education and research. Our mission extends to pursuing justice through active engagement in policy and advocacy and fostering healing via programs and traditional gatherings that honor Native cultures and histories.

The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act

Representatives from NABS, Indian boarding school survivors, and those supporting the bill advocate throughout the year in Washington, D.C., engaging with members of Congress to pass Senate Bill 1723 and House Resolution 7227—The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. These significant bipartisan bills, co-sponsored and led by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Sen. Lisa Murkowski,



Chiricahua Apaches Four Months After Arriving at Carlisle.

Chiricahua Apaches four months after arriving at Carlisle. / Photo courtesy for the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center.

Rep. Sharice Davids, and Rep. Tom Cole, marked the first time in U.S. history that the federal government officially acknowledged the horrific tragedies during the U.S. boarding school era.

The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act will:

- Conduct a comprehensive investigation of Indian Boarding School Policies
 - A Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act will conduct a comprehensive interdisciplinary investigation of Indian Boarding School Policies.
- Hold safe, public or private convenings
 - A Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act will hold safe, trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate public or private meetings or convenings to receive testimony relating to the investigation from survivors, descendants of survivors, family members, and other community members.
- Make recommendations to Congress
 - A Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act will provide recommendations to Congress based on the investigation, which will be included in the final report.

- Locate and identify marked and unmarked burial sites
 - A Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act will locate and identify, in a culturally appropriate manner, marked and unmarked burial sites, including cemeteries, unmarked graves, and mass burial sites, where students of Indian Boarding Schools were originally or later interred.
- Make publicly available a final report
 - A Truth & Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act will make publicly available a final report containing the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Commission that have been agreed upon by the vote of a majority of the members.

A broad bipartisan coalition supports the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. This diverse base underscores the Act's significance and the shared commitment to addressing the painful legacy of Indian boarding schools.

We urge you to take action. Reach out to your U.S. House representatives and senators, asking them to vote YES in favor of Senate Bill 1723 and House Resolution 7227. Your voice matters immensely in this pivotal moment. By advocating for this legislation, we collectively champion the rights and recognition of Indian boarding school survivors and their descendants. Let us work together to ensure their healing journey is supported and their stories are honored through legislative action.

Access to Crucial Records

In 2023, NABS launched the National Indian Boarding School Digital Archive (NIBSDA), a national digital platform and repository for boarding school archives across the United States. Access to these records is vital for survivors and descendants to understand the history and its impact on Tribal Nations. By preserving historical insights, NIBSDA supports community-led healing initiatives and helps restore Indigenous cultural sovereignty for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Another key initiative is the Oral History Project (OHP). NABS received a grant from the Department of the Interior (DOI) to conduct video interviews with Indian boarding school survivors across the United States, creating a permanent oral history collection. This unprecedented effort is part of the DOI's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

NABS has built trust within the American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities through our experience in collecting survivors' stories in a healing-informed manner. From our inception, we have demonstrated exceptional care and respect in working with survivors, recognizing the critical importance of sharing lived experiences on their healing journeys. The courage of Indian boarding school survivors inspired many others to come forward, and many continue to express their desire to share their stories, often for the first time.

We look forward to continuing our work with survivors, ensuring they feel empowered and respected throughout the process of sharing their stories. Most importantly, we commit to providing them love and care as they engage with our Oral History Project.

NABS's tireless efforts are paving the way for truth, justice, and healing for Native communities across the United States. Through continued advocacy and support, the painful history of Indian boarding schools can be acknowledged and addressed, fostering a path toward truth, justice, and healing.

Stay Updated

Visit boardingschoolhealing.org for the latest updates on the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, NIBSDA, OHP, and other NABS initiatives.

How You Can Support

Thank you to everyone for supporting our work! Your generosity allows us to continue making a meaningful impact in the lives of Indian boarding school survivors and their descendants. Please consider donating if you would like to support our fight for truth, justice, and healing. Every contribution helps us move closer to our goals and make a difference together. Visit <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/about-us/donate/>.

**MILESTONES IN THE MISSION TO END
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

*Celebrating
40 Years of FVPSA &
30 Years of VAWA*

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) would like to take a moment to reflect on our stronghearted advocacy to end violence against Native women, honor the advocates and programs before us, and recognize the progress we've made together.

Battered women and their advocates organized and provided the political will for federal lawmakers to pass the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) 40 years ago (Oct. 9, 1984) to assist Tribes and states in their efforts to prevent domestic violence and support shelter and supportive services.

Grassroots advocacy and organizing to restore Tribal sovereignty and women's safety provided the political will for federal lawmakers to pass the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) 30 years ago (Sept. 13, 1994).



Reclaiming Our Ways

A Glance at Decolonizing Hiring Practices

By Dolly Tatofi, *Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian)*, Interim Executive Director, Kree Kahoa Espinda, *Kanaka Maoli*, Kakoo Facilitator, Pouhana O Nā Wāhine

“He Hawaii Au,” or “I am Hawai‘i.” I am Hawaiian. It is a simple yet intricate statement that is all-encompassing and inclusive. It is also held secret until one is ready to receive all that needs sharing. This reminder perpetuates the importance of pilina, connection, and relationships, including the ‘āina, the land, the elements, the kai, the ocean, humans, and animals, from the smallest organism to the source of life, each functioning independently. This statement is where the “me” is deeply known as the “we.” This is what it means to be Hawaiian.

Since colonization and Western intrusion, an unwanted presence had become the barrier and disconnect to this understanding, leaving kanaka ‘ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) not knowing who they were and where they came from. Colonization brought forth ways that did not align with kanaka ‘ōiwi values and traditions. Foreign systems and laws favored the new visitors and caused power shifts, making this new way the norm. This norm seeped into Nohona Hawaii (living the Hawaiian way), causing the adoption of new systems. Fast forward to the present, where living with the ‘āina became a thing of the past, and foreign systems disconnected a people from that which feeds and sustains them.

Kree

While vying for a Pouhana O Nā Wāhine team position, an invitation emerged to interview in an unconventional location—the lo‘i (taro patch). Before this, I knew only Western interviewing methods (i.e., formal business attire, a quiet and professional office setting, and surface-level questions). Being kanaka ‘ōiwi and having previous experience in lo‘i restoration, I was excited for this opportunity to ground. The lo‘i has always been a safe and calming space, a place of ancestral connection where I felt my most authentic self.



Kree and Dolly. / Photo courtesy of Kree Espinda.

Hō‘ailona, or signs, presented themselves throughout the day. The location was Kāko‘o ‘Ōiwi, which was my hānau, or birthplace. The weather was inviting, with just enough cloud cover. In the distance were my beloved Ko‘olau mountains, smiling with encouragement. The descent into the lepo, or mud, made me feel like an old friend was greeting me. The kalo (taro) and weeds allowed me to harvest/discard them with ease. I was surrounded by people ready to share years of wisdom and knowledge with me. Everything surrounding us laid the groundwork for pilina, or relationship building, and discussions.

Our interview, or kūkākūkā, took place in a grassy area adjacent to the lo‘i patch. That connection to the ‘āina helped us cultivate the pilina between Dolly and me. It created an openness and a sense of comfort. The interview questions emphasized my values and ‘ano, or character, rather than my credentials. It was refreshing, and it helped us gauge whether my values aligned with the organization/staff and their direction. I am pleased to share that we were, and they offered me the position. Being the first to undergo this innovative interview was an honor. I express my deepest gratitude to Dolly and Pouhana O Nā Wāhine for the opportunity to uplift and empower our lāhui (nation).

Dolly

Since inception, Pouhana O Nā Wāhine emphasized that our kanaka ‘ōiwi worldview is based on pilina—the relationships between land, the ocean, the elements, kanaka (people), and especially those in the spiritual realm where Akua (god), ‘aumākua (personal or family god), and our kūpuna (elders) guide us. Each relationship is integral to our way of life and conducting ourselves respectfully. “Aloha mai, aloha aku,” or “Love and be loved.” “Mālama mai, mālama aku,” or “Care and be cared for.” “A‘oa‘o mai, a‘oa‘o aku,” or “Teach and be taught.”

Immersing ourselves in ‘āina gives us a sense of belonging and identity. We remember who we are when we spend time with the ‘āina. This compelled me to reclaim this pilina by conducting our first hiring

interview with Kree on the ‘āina at Kako‘o ‘Ōiwi on the windward side of O‘ahu. This opened a level of assessment of a potential hire through “ma ka hana ka ‘ike,” loosely known as “in the doing is learning.” The space and activity revealed themselves when such an interview could occur. Kree was willing to teach our sister culturally specific resource centers on sexual assault about the importance of the taro patch or lo‘i to our way of life. I could see Kree’s personability with Pouhana staff, our guests, and on the ‘āina. We discussed our role in the community and her interest in working for Pouhana. Removing barriers and tools like paper, pen, and table allowed for open discussion and genuineness. Sitting on the land with the sun above our heads and the wind embracing us felt good. This was pilina in action, and this is how we can live what we share with others through our work at the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

This is how we heal and live simultaneously. I did not know exactly how this process would turn out, but I knew that kūpuna had guided me to open this space. We continue to weave this practice into our hiring processes. This will lead to further kanaka ‘ōiwi practices that uplift our organization’s identity. Examples like these not only uplift an organization’s culture but also open the pathway for individuals, organizations, communities, and entire people to bring back what is pono (good) and feels right, including within our working environments. Too often, the importance of ‘āina and the spiritual space is not respected and included in our daily lives, yet these elements reassure us when we need a boost or a hō‘ailona (sign) to affirm we made good choices. It is the pilina that we have and continue to need as a people to affirm the reclamation of our lifeways without shame or guilt. Embracing our ways unapologetically and confidently in completeness is our safety, protection, protective factor, and asset, and most of all ensures our healthy, long lives. “E ho‘i mai kākou i ka Nohona Hawaii,” or “Let us return to our Hawaiian lifestyle.”

VAWA Implementation and the Alaska Pilot Program

Alaska Update

By Rick A. Haskins-Garcia, Esquire, Director of Law and Policy, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center



*Chickaloon
Traditional Chief
Gary Harrison with
Chickaloon Tribal
Police Officers.
Photo courtesy of
Donna Anthony,
Chickaloon Chief of
Police.*

Alaska continues to remain a dangerous state for women, particularly Alaska Native (AN) women, who face some of the highest rates of violence in the United States. A study by the National Institute of Justice revealed that over 84% of AN and American Indian (AI) women have experienced violence in their lifetimes—almost double the national average—reflecting an ongoing epidemic of domestic and sexual violence.

The root causes of violence are deep and complex, influenced by historical trauma, systemic neglect, and the isolation of many AN communities. Many villages are located in remote areas with limited access to law enforcement and judicial resources, severely hindering the ability to report crimes, investigate them, or secure justice. Law enforcement response times can take hours or even days, leaving victims vulnerable and without support, forcing many women to remain in dangerous situations or travel long distances to seek help.

The 2022 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) included the Alaska Pilot Program (APP), which allows Alaska Tribes that meet certain statutory requirements to exercise Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ). The APP enables Tribes to prosecute non-Native offenders for certain crimes committed in AN Villages, addressing a significant accountability and justice gap left by the 1978 *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* decision, which removed Tribal authority over non-Natives.

The Chickaloon Native Village and the Native Village of Dot Lake have received STCJ grant funding to support their efforts to develop and implement Tribal criminal justice systems to prosecute non-Native offenders in their communities.

The Chickaloon Native Village

The Chickaloon Native Village (Chickaloon), known as “Nay’dini’aa Na” in the Ahtna Athabaskan

language, is located in Sutton, Alaska, about 90 minutes from Anchorage. The Tribe, with over 350 citizens, provides services and resources to its members, the area's AN/AI population, and its robust non-Native community.

Since the 1900s, Chickaloon's traditional lands have attracted extractive industries like logging and mining, which brought increased violence and victimization, disrupting traditional ways of life. Today, Chickaloon is committed to upholding Tribal sovereignty and operates over 11 comprehensive programs, including a robust Tribal Justice and Police Department.

Philip Ling, Chickaloon's Traditional Tribal Court Director and Council Member, and Donna Anthony, Chief of Police, identified five key areas for implementing VAWA:

1. **Establishing a Tribal Police Department** that is fully operational and adequately equipped and trained to handle challenges, especially against sexual assault, domestic violence, MMIP, and human trafficking.
2. **Securing adequate funding and resources** to ensure financial and material support to sustain law enforcement efforts, including equipment, facilities, and training.
3. **Building collaborative partnerships and relationships** with state and federal agencies and other Tribal communities to enhance cooperation and resource sharing is crucial for effective law enforcement and community protection.
4. **Fostering community engagement and awareness**, including educating Tribal citizens about law enforcement resources, building trust, and encouraging collaboration between the community and the Tribal Police Department.
5. **Providing training and capacity building**, including prioritizing the training of Chickaloon Police Officers in culturally competent practices and areas such as victim support and investigation techniques for cases of MMIP and human trafficking.

"We want to create a robust and responsive law enforcement to effectively protect our people and address the safety issues in our community," said

Donna Anthony, Chickaloon Chief of Police. "By weaving traditional tribal values into contemporary law enforcement, we create a model that honors cultural heritage while addressing modern challenges and promoting a holistic approach to justice."

Chickaloon faces significant challenges in securing consistent funding and developing infrastructure to support a Police Department, including communications systems, data management, and emergency response.

"These challenges require our Tribe to be resourceful, persistent, and strategic in our approach to implementing VAWA and the Alaska Pilot Project as we strive to overcome these obstacles and build a safer community for our citizens," said Ling.

The Native Village of Dot Lake

The Native Village of Dot Lake is the Upper Tanana Athabascan Tribe, located on the Alaska Highway, 155 miles southeast of Fairbanks. Led by President Tracy Charles-Smith, the granddaughter of Village founder Doris Charles, the Village provides numerous programs for its 180 Tribal citizens, including the "Teejuh" Behavioral Health and Counseling Services and a Culture Camp that teaches youth about tradition, language, and songs.

When discussing VAWA implementation with the Village, President Charles-Smith shared that the Village chose to participate in the APP to better protect its Tribal citizens and AN/AI people.

"Alaska Native people and communities have been at the mercy of state law enforcement officers and resources to protect and serve our communities, and we feel that our communities have suffered many injustices and abuse at the hands of local law enforcement," said President Charles-Smith. "The Alaska Pilot Project will not only allow us to provide justice to our people but also to hold those outside of the Native communities responsible for the crimes and abuses they have inflicted on our communities."

Currently, the Village is prioritizing reviewing and

revising its existing codes and ordinances and drafting new ones in preparation for the implementation of VAWA and the APP. In addition, the Village is collaborating with the Chickaloon Native Village to assist with creating a robust law enforcement agency. Finally, the Village is reviewing and discussing upgrades to its existing Tribal courts and Tribal justice infrastructure. It is working with the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) and the University of Alaska Fairbanks for training, technical assistance, and code review, drafting, and revision efforts.

Like Chickaloon, Dot Lake is facing challenges with implementation. The Village has encountered pushback from the state regarding expanding protections under VAWA. "Many state agencies do

not want to recognize our Tribal sovereignty—we believe they view our sovereign rights as a threat," said Charles-Smith. "We simply want to be able to govern our people in our traditional methods and provide a safe and healthy environment for our tribal members."

For more information about VAWA implementation or the APP, please contact Rick A. Haskins-Garcia, AKNWRC Director of Law and Policy, at tribaljustice@aknwrc.org.

"We simply want to be able to govern our people in our traditional methods and provide a safe and healthy environment for our tribal members."

—TRACY CHARLES-SMITH, PRESIDENT, THE DOT LAKE VILLAGE

Charlene Cleary and her granddaughter enjoying Jan Lake at Dot Lake Village Culture Camp. / Photo courtesy of Alan Faulkner of Dot Lake Village.





Photo courtesy of Mary Kathryn Nagle.

VAWA Sovereignty Initiative Update

By Mary Kathryn Nagle, *Cherokee Nation*, Counsel, NIWRC

We have witnessed two recent victories in cases in which the VAWA Sovereignty Initiative (SI) participated, which are discussed below. Victims and survivors prevailed in *Rahimi v. United States* in the United States Supreme Court and in *L.B. v. United States* in the Ninth Circuit of Appeals.

Rahimi v. United States

On August 21, 2023, the NIWRC filed its *amicus* brief in *United States v. Rahimi*. This case was argued before the Supreme Court in November. The Court issued its decision on June 21, 2024. The Supreme Court reversed the Fifth Circuit's dangerous ruling that allowed domestic abusers to be armed and confirmed that abusers subject to restraining orders do not have a constitutional right to own guns.

In *Rahimi*, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held that 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8) violates the Second Amendment. If left untouched, this decision threatened to leave Native women and children even more vulnerable to homicide than they were before the Fifth Circuit's decision.

Section 922(g)(8) is the federal law prohibiting individuals subject to a protection order from accessing and possessing firearms. The NIWRC's *amicus* brief explained how the loss of § 922(g)(8)'s protections places Native women at greater risk. Native women are more likely to be victimized by domestic violence than any other population in the country. When a Native woman secures a Tribal Court protective order, § 922(g)(8) makes it illegal for her abuser to access a firearm. This is a statute that saves lives.

Under the Supreme Court's Second Amendment jurisprudence, whether § 922(g)(8) remains constitutional and in effect depends on whether the

¹ Case No. 22-915 and Case No. 23-35538, respectively.

² § means section.

Court finds the firearm regulation in § 922(g)(8) to be commiserative with firearm regulations at the time of the Amendment's passage. Thus, much of the oral argument focused on relevant historical analysis. The NIWRC's *amicus* brief pointed out that although the Second Amendment was initially passed to protect the right of individuals to possess firearms to kill Indians, this policy changed with the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment—a time when the United States signed treaties with Tribes promising to protect Tribal citizens from “bad men” or white men seeking to harm Tribal citizens. The NIWRC *amicus* brief, therefore, made the argument that § 922(g)(8)'s prohibition on access to firearms for individuals subject to a protection order is part and parcel of the United States' treaty trust responsibility to safeguard Native women.

On June 21, 2024, the Supreme Court ruled, in an 8-1 decision, that the federal law prohibiting domestic abusers subject to protective orders from possessing guns is constitutional under the Second Amendment. In an opinion authored by Chief Justice John Roberts, the Supreme Court concluded that “[a]n individual found by a court to pose a credible threat to the physical safety of another may be temporarily disarmed consistent with the Second Amendment.” In its decision, the Court found that the history of American gun laws “confirm[s] what common sense suggests: When an individual poses a clear threat of physical violence to another, the threatening individual may be disarmed.”

The NIWRC is thankful that the Court preserved § 922(g)(8)'s firearm prohibition for domestic violence abusers. The Court's decision will save lives, especially of Native victims. The VAWA SI is honored to have played a role in this case.

L.B. v. United States

The NIWRC, through the VAWA SI, filed two *amicus* briefs in *L.B. v. United States*. In this case, a Northern Cheyenne woman who was the victim of a rape committed by an on-duty BIA officer sued the United States under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA). She asked for damages to pay for the pain and suffering caused by the rape. The case was argued before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in June.

On July 24, 2024, the Ninth Circuit reversed the lower court's decision, stating that the lower court was wrong to grant summary judgment in the federal government's favor and dismiss L.B.'s lawsuit under the FTCA. In August of 2023, District Court Judge Susan Watters dismissed L.B.'s lawsuit, claiming that BIA officer Bullcoming had raped L.B. to serve his own interests, not the federal government's and therefore the federal government could not be held liable for his actions. The Coalition of Large Tribes (COLT) and the NIWRC filed a joint *amicus* brief supporting L.B.'s appeal before the Ninth Circuit.

During oral arguments in June, the United States, and specifically the DOI and the BIA, argued it cannot be held liable for its officer's actions because he committed the rape for “his own enjoyment” and not to “further the interests of his employer.” It is a despicable, deplorable argument that contributes to the high rates of violence against Native victims. The BIA and DOI should publicly apologize to L.B. for the rape and pay the damages she is owed. They must train officers to report other officers who rape Native women. Officer Bullcoming bragged in his deposition that he had done the same thing to at least 12 other women. Why didn't the BIA do something about his behavior to prevent these rapes? This situation is inexcusable, and the fact that DOI and BIA won't accept responsibility for their wrongdoing is beyond the pale.

As the attorney arguing for the Department of Justice, DOI, and BIA stood before three women judges and told them that it is not rape if the perpetrator has a “crush” on his victim, the Native victim, their relatives, and allies stood outside the Court demanding justice. The Ninth Circuit decided against the federal agencies, and the case goes back to the District Court.

Enough is enough. COLT and the NIWRC call on the United States—specifically the DOI and the BIA—to settle this case immediately. The United States must accept responsibility for its officer's actions, apologize, and compensate L.B. for her losses. Indian Country is watching.

International Efforts to Advance Indigenous Women's Rights

By Christopher Foley, *Cherokee Nation*, Senior Attorney, Indian Law Resource Center

Indian Law Resource Center Leading Advocacy Trip to UN Human Rights Council

The Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC) is working to bring Indigenous leaders and attorneys from Brazil and Argentina to the U.N. Human Rights Council's 57th Session in Geneva in late September to address Indigenous rights violations in their respective countries. Each year, during its Fall Session, the Council holds a half-day panel on Indigenous Rights and hosts interactive dialogues with the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples.

This year, the Center will work to draw attention to two significant human rights matters. "First, we will speak out about land rights violations in the Jujuy region of Argentina, where the national government is seeking to promote industrial-scale lithium mining on Indigenous lands without adequate consultation or consideration of the social and environmental impact of this work," said Leonardo Crippa, Senior Attorney



Photo Caption ORPIO: ILRC staff Chris Foley, Miranda Carmen, and Armstrong Wiggins are meeting with leadership from AIDESEP and ORPIO at ORPIO's headquarters in Iquitos, Peru. ORPIO's women's rights project is led by Zaira Lizeth Rodríguez López (Yagua), standing right of center. / Photo courtesy of ILRC.

at the ILRC. "In the United States, we have seen over and over again how extractive industries operating in or near indigenous communities lead to sharp increases in all forms of violence against indigenous women as non-indigenous workers stream into remote areas," added Chris Foley, Senior Attorney, ILRC. "The Center's work will focus on securing land rights for these communities and building support for their local indigenous governments to resist these mining companies, but we know this will contribute directly to advancing safety for indigenous women."

At the same time, the Center will also create space for our longtime partners from COIAB, the leading indigenous organization in the Brazilian Amazon, to speak out against a dangerous new law being considered by Brazil's federal government. This law would reinterpret Brazil's constitution to bar all, or nearly all, Indigenous land claims. In doing this, it would directly undermine Indigenous peoples' land rights and other fundamental rights, including their right to self-determination and their right to maintain and strengthen their cultures. Further, securing land rights creates a firm basis for Indigenous Nations to

resist unlawful land invasions and to strengthen the governments and cultures that protect Indigenous women.

Indian Law Resource Center Developing Human Rights Training With the Regional Organization of the Indigenous Peoples of the East

One of the co-sponsors of the 2024 Commission on the Status of Women Parallel Event organized by the Center on March 12, was the Regional Organization of the Indigenous Peoples of the East (ORPIO) an Indigenous organization in the Peruvian Amazon. At that event, Zaira Lizeth Rodríguez López (Yagua) spoke about her work to build the capacity of women in her region so that they can join her in leading political and advocacy work in their communities and Indigenous organizations. This summer, Center's attorneys Gianella Sanchez (Shipibo-Conibo) and Chris Foley (Cherokee) have been working with Zaira and other staff from ORPIO's women's rights program to identify ways for the Center to contribute to a planned education initiative. ORPIO's program will offer a cohort of grassroots Indigenous women leaders classroom instruction in human rights and Indigenous rights, building a human rights based response to violence against women and girls, and defending Indigenous lands, among other topics. With this training, these women will form a new network of leaders who can integrate women's rights throughout their community's governance and development programs. While the Center's Safe Women, Strong Nations project remains focused on our work in the United States, we are very excited to share some of the

“Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

—THE BEIJING DECLARATION

lessons and organizing strategies we have developed here, with our Indigenous partners and colleagues throughout Mexico, Central America, and South America.

Upcoming International Advocacy Events

March 10-21, 2025

69th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The CSW will meet in New York City from March 10-21, 2025, to mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Beijing Declaration is the leading, comprehensive global commitment on women's rights. The Declaration recognizes that “Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms” and calls on national governments to respect indigenous women's rights by “encouraging greater involvement of indigenous women in decision-making at all levels,” and to “take concrete steps, as a priority and with their full and voluntary participation, to address the impact of violence on indigenous women in order to implement appropriate, effective programmes and services to eliminate all forms of violence.”

The 69th Session of the CSW will focus on an appraisal of successes and challenges related to implementation of the Declaration.

Registration for in-person attendance will be open from October 4-January 24.

Further information about the CSW, details about registration and additional participation opportunities, will be posted when available at

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-womenc/csw69-2025>.



Visit Our Resource Library

Our Resource Library includes culturally-grounded resources developed by NIWRC to support Tribes, Tribal programs, and advocates working on issues of violence against Native women, as well as other materials and publications from outside sources.



niwrc.org/resources

Help us make a difference in the lives of Native women.

Each gift made to the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) strengthens our mission to end violence against Native women and vision of restoring sovereignty for Tribes to hold perpetrators accountable.

We are committed to providing national leadership in this work by lifting up the collective voices of grassroots advocates in Tribal communities.

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

—CHEYENNE PROVERB




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