



National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

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Sexual Violence Against Women and Children in Indian Country *Fact Sheet*

Excerpt of Testimony by Dr. Susan Karol, Chief Medical Officer, Indian Health Service, presented to the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Infant Mortality (2015)

Historical Trauma is the emotional and psychological wounding and group trauma over generations and throughout lifespan.

- Native people in North America have endured traumatic events such as the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, the Trail of Tears, the Long Walk of the Navajo to Bosque Redondo in 1864, etc.
- These events have resulted in the **unresolved trauma** of genocide, loss of culture, traditional lands and language, forcible removal of children from family and traditional lands (ex. reservations and boarding schools).
- **Boarding School Period** was accompanied by the beatings, rape and sexual abuse of children, as well as the prohibition of practicing their Tribal language and spiritual practices.
- **European and American colonialist policy:** Introduced disease (smallpox) and alcohol into Native communities, which resulted in the extermination of North American Indians from a population of 12 million (estimated) in 1500 to as low as 237,000 in 1900.

American Indians and Crime, Report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (1992-96) - *First time American Indian women identified as a specific group in report on violence against women*

American Indian women are the most battered, raped, stalked and murdered group of women in the United States; 70 percent of the time by non-Native offenders. According to the report:

- American Indian women are raped at a rate more than double that of rapes reported by all races on an annual average. (All races: 2 per 1,000; American Indian: 7 per 1,000)
- American Indian women were victimized by an intimate partner at rates higher than those for all other females (White: 8.1 per 1,000; American Indian: 23.2 per 1,000).
- Violent crime rate among American Indian women was 98 per 1,000 – at least twice that of white females (40 per 1,000) and of black females (56 per 1,000).
- Non-Native perpetrators (ex. individuals of other races) commit at least 70 percent of the violence against Native Americans.

In the Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota, Report by Melissa Farley, Nicole Matthews, Sarah Deer, Guadalupe Lopez, Christine Stark, Eileen Hudon (2011)

As with other types of violence towards Native women, a majority of perpetrators are non-Native. Native women are fetishized as exotic.

- *"A john said to me, 'I thought we killed all of you'."*
- Sixty-two percent of Native women saw a connection between prostitution and colonization and explained that the devaluation of women in prostitution was identical to the colonizing devaluation of Native people.
- Forty-two percent of Native women who were trafficked reported racial verbal abuse by pimps and buyers.
- Thirty-three percent said cultural/spiritual practices are an important part of who they are.



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Violence Against American Indian & Alaska Native Women and Men, Report, National Institute of Justice (2016) - From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey

More than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women (84.3 percent) have experienced violence in their lifetime. This includes:

- More than half (56.1 percent) have experienced sexual violence.
- More than half (55.5 percent) have endured physical violence by an intimate partner.
- At least half (48.8 percent) have experienced stalking.
- Sixty-six percent have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner.
- The vast majority (96 percent) of AI/AN female victims of sexual violence experienced this violence at the hands of a non-Native perpetrator (ex. individuals of other races); 21 percent have experienced intra-racial violence (ex. members of the same race).

The most common service needed was medical care (38 percent of female victims), yet 38.2 percent of AI/AN women were unable to get the services they needed. According to the report:

- Three out of five (66.5 percent) of AI/AN women expressed concern for their safety (men: 26%).
- Two out of five (41.3 percent) of AI/AN women were physically injured (men: 20.3%).
- Ninety-two percent of AI/AN women talked to someone about what the perpetrator did (men: 74.3%).
- Nearly half (49 percent) of AI/AN women needed victim services (men: 19.9%)
- Two in five (40.5 percent) of AI/AN women missed days of work or school (men: 9.7%).

Poverty and Health Disparities for American Indian and Alaska Native Children: Current Knowledge and Future Prospects, Report by Michelle Sarche and Paul Spicer, University of Colorado Denver, American Indian and Alaska Native Programs (2009)

- U.S. Census Bureau statistics reveal that 27 percent of AI/AN children live in poverty; 32 percent of children were younger than 5 years old.
- Higher drop-out rates and grade retention than their peers, as well as highest rate of violent victimization of all races.
- **Tribal youth between ages of 12-19 are more likely to be victims of both serious violent crime and simple assault.**
- In a national survey of more than 13,000 Tribal youth in grades 7-12 from 200 reservation-based schools... reported violence and gang involvement. This factor was correlated with other risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use; suicide attempted; and vandalism, stealing, and truancy.
- **AI/AN youth witness high rates of trauma among their family and friends** and are exposed to trauma not only as direct victims but as bystanders.
- Interconnectedness of reservation communities means that the serious injury or traumatic loss of one individual has an effect on the entire community.
- Extent of traumatic loss not exactly known, but in a small sample of 109 students, grades 8-11, in a Northern Plains community, 28 percent reported the sudden loss of someone close or witnessing a death; in a larger national sample, 11 percent of adolescents reports knowing someone who had committed suicide.
- **Exposure of AI/AN children to domestic violence is not well-documented, but research suggests that exposure is high relative to non-Native peers.**
- Twenty-one percent of 1,000 AI/AN children were victims of children maltreatment in 2002 (compared to 20.2 of 1,000 African American children; 10.7 of 1,000 white children).
- AI/AN children from Alaska and South Dakota evidenced the highest rates of child maltreatment (Alaska: 99.9 of 1,000; South Dakota 61.2 of 1,000).

Attorney General's Advisory Committee on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence: Ending Violence So Children Can Thrive (2014)

- **Native children experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at the same rates as veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan** and triple the rate of the general population.
- The rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Native adults is 4.4 times the national average.