

Honoring
Missing and Murdered
Indigenous Women to
Guide Our
Advocacy for Change



MAY 5, 2020

Partnering Sister Organizations



Alaska Native Women's Resource Center
Indian Law Resource Center
National Congress of American Indians
Native Women's Society of the Great Plains
Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition



National Day of Awareness Presenters

Moderated by Paula S. Julian, Senior Policy Specialist, NIWRC

- ▶ **Welcome, Cherrah Giles, Chair, NIWRC Board of Directors**
- ▶ **NCAI Violence Against Women Task Force Co-Chairs**
 - Michelle Demmert, Tlingit, Eagle, Kaax'ooos hittaan clan
 - Juana Majel Dixon, Pauma Band of Luiseno Indians, Tribal Traditional Councilwoman & Secretary of NCAI
- ▶ **The Voice of a Mother Calling for Justice**
 - Malinda Limberhand, Mother of Hanna Harris, Missing and Murdered, July 2013
- ▶ **Honoring the Missing and Murdered Through Action**
 - Virginia Davis, Senior Policy Advisor, NCAI
- ▶ **Honoring Native Women**
 - Tami Jerue, Executive Director, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center
 - Carmen O'Leary, Executive Director, Native Women's Society of the Great Plains
 - Leanne Guy, Executive Director, Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition
- ▶ **International Update on Efforts to Address MMIW**
 - Christopher Foley, Staff Attorney, Indian Law Resource Center

Welcome
Honoring Our
Native Women
Missing & Murdered

A National Day of
Awareness

May 5th, 2020



Cherrah Giles, NIWRC Board Chair



Michelle Demmert

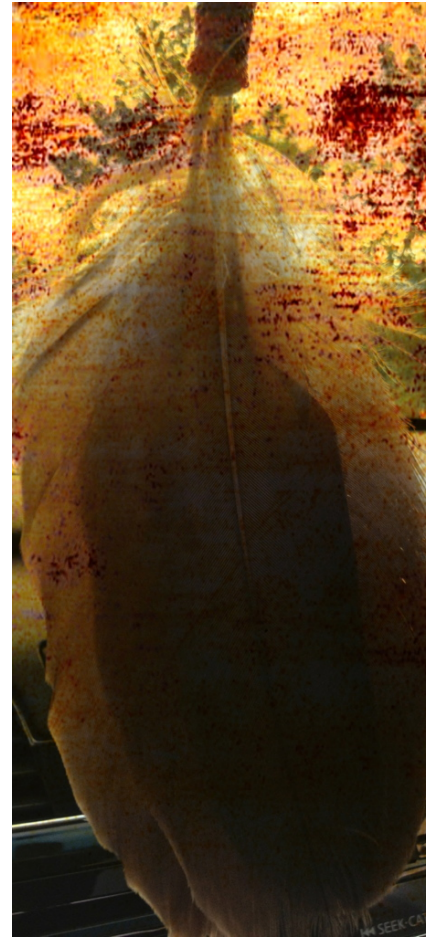


Juana Majel-Dixon

NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women, Co-Chairs

In the United States: An Alarming Pattern of Missing and Murdered in the U.S.

- ▶ Native women are murdered and go missing at a higher rate than any other ethnic group.
- ▶ Many of these cases are part of the spectrum of violence against Native women.
- ▶ On some reservations women are murdered at a rate 10 times higher than the national average.
- ▶ 2017 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) homicide is the 6th leading cause of death of Native females between ages of 1-44.



Honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Public Awareness



Public Honoring

- ▶ Honor the women
- ▶ Support their loved ones
- ▶ Support community healing

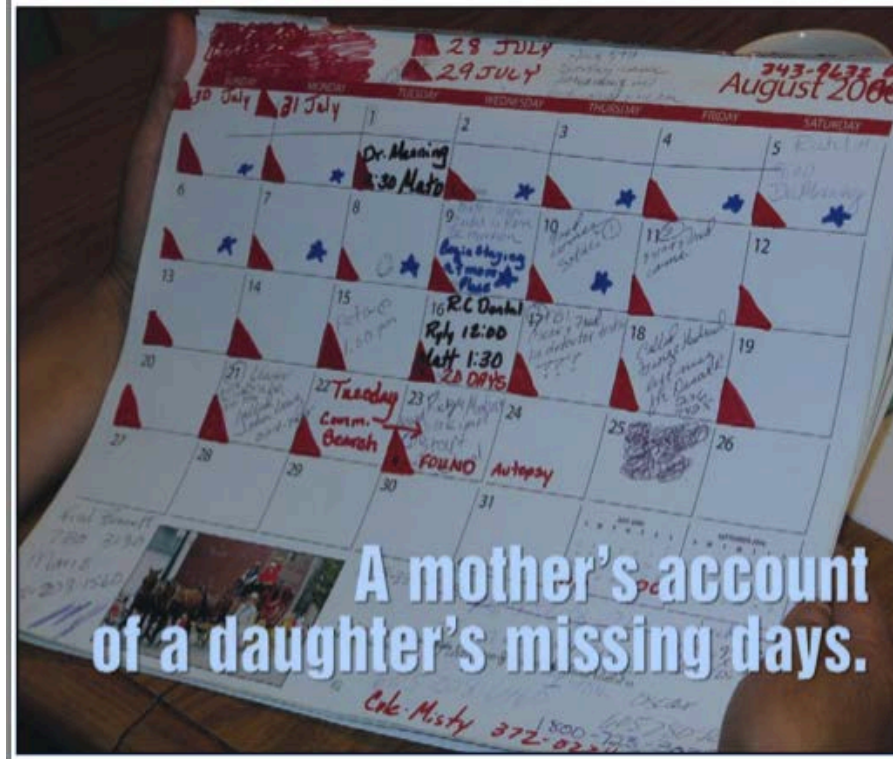
Lack of Consequences for Violent Crimes Against Native Women

- ▶ Native women as a population are vulnerable to violent crimes.
- ▶ The National Institute of Justice reports that more than four in five AIAN adults (83 percent) have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime. Among AIAN women, more than 1 in 2 have experienced physical violence by intimate partners or sexual violence in their lifetime, and more than 1 in 12 have experienced it in the past year.
- ▶ Vulnerability is due in part to the lack of legal consequences reflected in the minimal to zero number of federal prosecutions of domestic violence and sexual assault abusers and sex traffickers.
- ▶ Federal Prosecution: <https://www.justice.gov/tribal/tribal-law-and-order-act>. Declination rates remained relatively steady between 2011-2018.

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| ▶ 2018 – 39% | ▶ 2017 – 37% | ▶ 2016 – 34% | ▶ 2015 – 39% |
| ▶ 2014 – 34% | ▶ 2013 – 34% | ▶ 2012 – 31% | ▶ 2011 – 38% |
- ▶ In 2018, federal prosecutors filed cases against
 - ▶ 172 defendants under VAWA's 2013 enhanced federal assault statutes and obtained 115 convictions
 - ▶ 51 defendants using domestic assault by habitual offender (18 U.S.C. Sec. 117) and obtained 33 convictions
- ▶ In 2018 consistent from previous years, 65.2% of declinations by federal prosecutors involved categories of physical and sexual assaults, sexual exploitation, or failure to register as a sex offender
- ▶ Due to this reality tribal domestic violence programs are encouraged to have a protocol prepared to respond if a Native woman goes missing.

A Pattern of Failed Systemic Response

- ❖ Native woman is missing
- ❖ Report is made
- ❖ Inadequate response by criminal system
- ❖ Community search for MMIW
- ❖ Community walk and other social justice actions



Malinda Limberhand



- ▶ A National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls
- ▶ May 5th is the birthday of my daughter Hanna Harris who went missing on July 4, 2013 and was murdered.
- ▶ Organize for changes needed at the tribal, state, and national level
- ▶ Increase public awareness: wear red, post your efforts on social media
- ▶ Honor our Native women and girls

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 4, 2019

Mr. DAINES (for himself, Mr. TESTER, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. ROUNDS, Ms. WARREN, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. LANKFORD, and Ms. MURKOWSKI) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Designating May 5, 2019, as the “National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls”.

Whereas, according to a study commissioned by the Department of Justice, in some Tribal communities, American Indian women face murder rates that are more than 10 times the national average murder rate;

Whereas, according to the most recently available data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2017, homicide was the sixth leading cause of death for Amer-



Organizing for Changes Needed

Honoring the Missing and Murdered Through Action

- ▶ Education and awareness that MMIW is preventable
- ▶ Increased support of Indian tribes to respond
- ▶ Development of tribal, state, and federal protocols
- ▶ Reform of law enforcement response

First Capitol Hill MMIW Briefing



Virginia Davis, NCAI

Alaska Native Women's Resource Center



Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director

Efforts to Address MMIWG

- ▶ Raising Awareness
- ▶ Breaking the Silence
- ▶ Support for Alaska Tribes efforts to respond, addressing the absence of law enforcement in Alaska villages, and other barriers.
- ▶ Assist Alaska Tribes in their efforts to develop MMIW protocols at local, state and federal level

Native Women's Society of the Great Plains



NWSGP Face Book Page
<http://www.nativewomensociety.org>

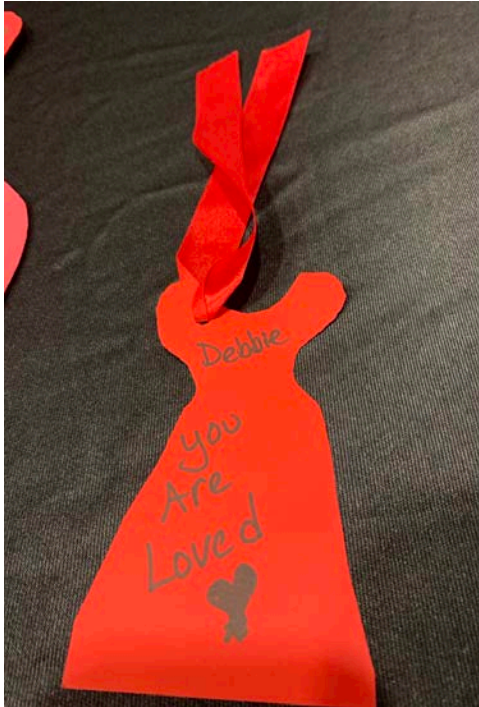


Carmen O'Leary, Executive Director, NWSGP

Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition AZ MMIWG Bill Signing May 2019

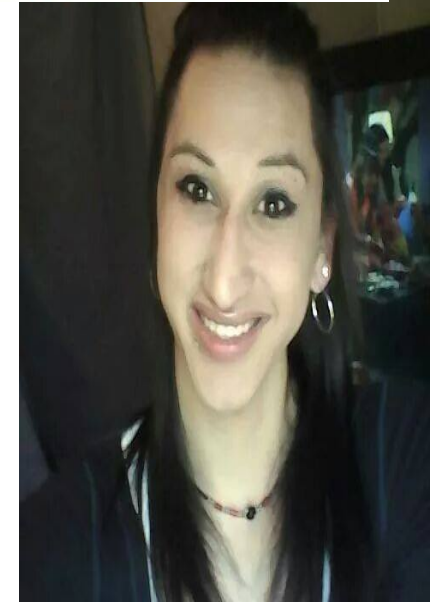
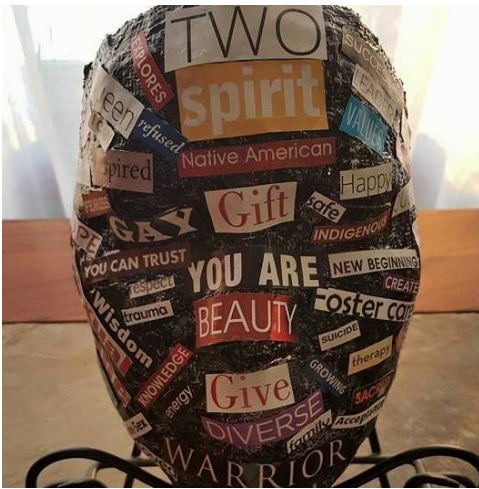
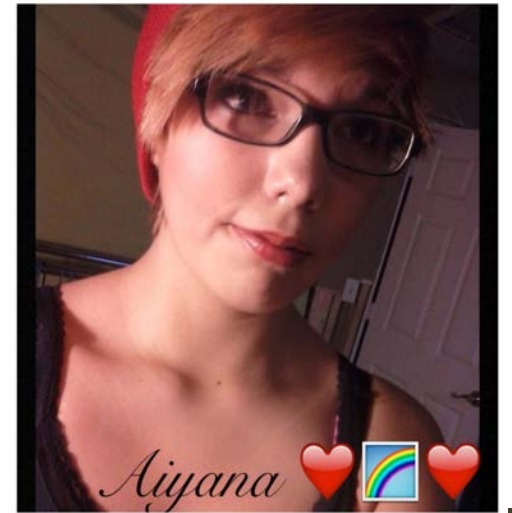


May 5th MMIW National Day of Awareness Event



LGBTQ/2S Relatives

- ▶ Jarrod Marks
- ▶ Aiyana Catherine-Germain
- ▶ Raina Autumn Demarrias
- ▶ Vernon K Renville
- ▶ Dallas Farmer



LaVerda Sorrell Missing since July 2002

 **MISSING PERSON**

LAVERDA SORRELL

July 4, 2002
Fort Defiance, Arizona



Photograph taken in 2001.

DESCRIPTION

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Date(s) of Birth Used: November 26, 1957 | Hair: Black |
| Eyes: Brown | Height: 5'11" |
| Weight: 110 pounds | Sex: Female |
| Race: Native American | |

REWARD

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 for information leading to the identification, arrest, and conviction of the person(s) responsible for the disappearance of Laverda Sorrell.

REMARKS

Sorrell wears glasses. She previously resided in Navajo, New Mexico.

DETAILS

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Albuquerque Field Office is asking for the public's assistance in determining the whereabouts of Laverda Sorrell.

Sorrell's husband reported his wife had been missing since July 4, 2002, when he dropped her off at an office in Fort Defiance, Arizona. A family member reported her missing to the Navajo Police, Window Rock District, on July 8, 2002.

If you have any information concerning this person, please contact your local FBI office or the nearest American Embassy or Consulate.

Field Office: Albuquerque

WANTED

**\$10,000 REWARD OFFERED
BY THE FBI**



LAVERDA SORRELL

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

| | | |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| DOB: 11/26/57 | Height: 5'11" | Weight: 110 |
| Hair: Black | Eyes: Brown | |

SORRELL was last seen in Ft. Defiance, AZ, on 07/04/02. The FBI is offering a \$10,000 reward to anyone providing information which results in the arrest and conviction of a suspect(s) involved in the disappearance of Sorrell. If you have any information regarding the disappearance or whereabouts of Sorrell, please call the FBI Gallup RA at (505) 726-6000, toll free at (866)373-2130, or the Albuquerque Division of the FBI at (505) 889-1300 (24 hours).

Issued 07/29/05/cay A87343/Ramirez

Indian Law Resource Center

- ▶ International Recognition
- ▶ UN Commission on the Status of Women



Christopher Foley, ILRC

“

The system is broken. I lost my daughter and I know my granddaughters face the same danger. We all do.

”

—MOTHER OF A MISSING NATIVE WOMAN FOUND MURDERED

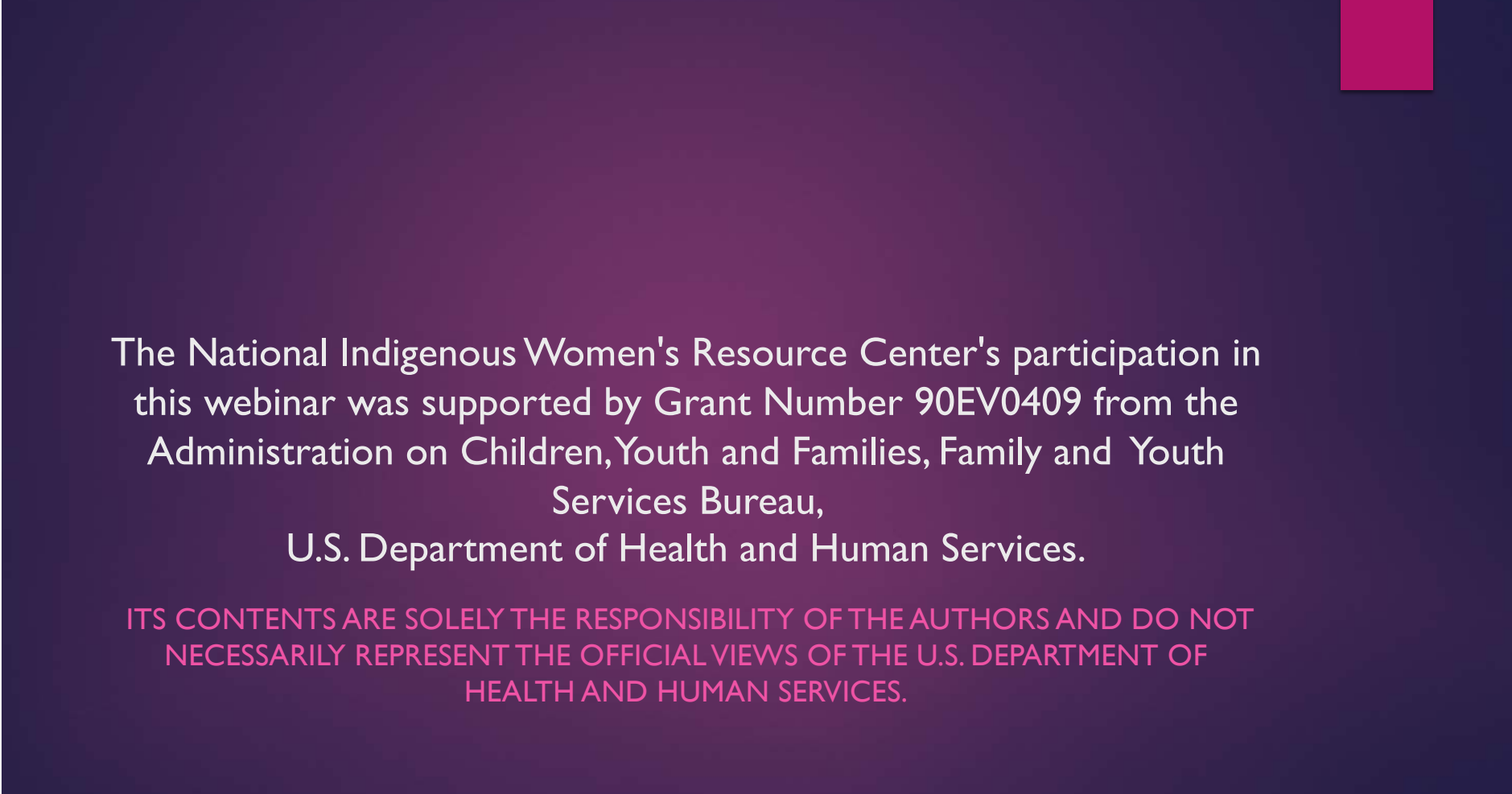
The Missing and Murdered Native Women Crisis

Resources

- ▶ National Indigenous Women's Resource Center: www.niwrc.org
- ▶ Alaska Native Women's Resource Center: www.aknwrc.org
- ▶ Indian Law Resource Center: www.indianlaw.org
- ▶ National Congress of American Indians: www.ncai.org
- ▶ Native Women's Society of the Great Plains: www.nativewomenssociety.org
- ▶ Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition: www.swiwc.org
- ▶ ATCEV: www.atcev.org
- ▶ StrongHearts Native Helpline: <http://www.strongheartshelpline.org/>
- ▶ S. 1441, designating May 5, 2019, as the **National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls** <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/sres/144/BILLS-116sres144is.pdf>
- ▶ Subcommittee Hearing: **Unmasking the Hidden Crisis of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW): Exploring Solutions to End the Cycle of Violence** link: <https://naturalresources.house.gov/hearings/unmasking-the-hidden-crisis-of-murdered-and-missing-indigenous-women-mmiw-exploring-solutions-to-end-the-cycle-of-violence>
- ▶ Senate Committee on Indian Affairs: **Missing and Murdered: Confronting the Silent Crisis in Indian Country** link: <https://www.indian.senate.gov/hearing/missing-and-murdered-confronting-silent-crisis-indian-country>

Additional Resources

- ▶ **READ: MMIW Update, Restoration**, Feb. 2020: <https://bit.ly/2GrRpBT>.
- ▶ **EXPLORE:** NIWRC's *Organizing a Groundswell to End the Injustice of Murdered and Disappeared Native Women and Girls* in the Advocate! Beyond the Shelter Doors e-newsletter and **NIWRC's Online Resource Library**.
- ▶ **DOWNLOAD:** *Tribal Community Response When a Woman is Missing: A Toolkit for Action* from the **NIWRC Resource Library**.
- ▶ **REPORT:** Report from Urban Indian Health Institute: *Missing And Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls: A snapshot of data from 71 urban cities in the United States* (2018).
- ▶ **REPORT:** *CDC Report | Racial and Ethnic Differences in Homicides of Adult Women and the Role of Intimate Partner Violence:* https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6628a1.htm?s_cid=mm6628a1_w.



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ITS CONTENTS ARE SOLELY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE OFFICIAL VIEWS OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.



Thank you
Feel Free to Contact Us

Paula S. Julian, Senior Policy Specialist, NIWRC

pjulian@niwrc.org

National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

515 Lame Deer Ave. | PO Box 99 (mailing)

Lame Deer, MT 59043

(406) 477-3896 | Toll-Free: (855) 649-7299

NIWRC.org