

# 3rd **Annual** National Tillie Black Bear 'Women Are Sacred' National Day of Awareness

Thursday, October 1, 2020

Facilitated by: Rose M. "Lashawaat" Quilt, J.D.  
Director of Policy and Research, NIWRC

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# Presented By:

**Connie Brushbreaker**, (Daughter of  
Tillie Black Bear)  
Program Director  
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**Taylor Brushbreaker**, (Grandson of  
Tillie Black Bear)  
Ranger, Department of Natural  
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**Cherrah Giles**, Chair  
Board of Directors, NIWRC

**Carmen O'Leary**, Executive Director  
Native Women's Society of the Great  
Plains and NIWRC Board Member

**Leanne Guy**, Executive Director,  
Southwest Indigenous Women's  
Coalition and NIWRC Board Member

**Rose M. Quilt**, J.D., Director of Policy  
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# Goals of Webinar

- Celebrate the milestones of our **ending violence against Native women** movement based on the leadership of Native women
- Share how tribal grassroots advocacy has increased the safety of Native women by strengthening tribal sovereignty
- Share how tribal teachings provide Indigenous solutions to ending violence against Native women
- Re-dedicate our efforts to end violence against Native women



# Cherrah Giles



- Citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and of Cherokee descendants
- Chair, NIWRC, Board of Directors
- Served over 10 years on the Muscogee (Creek) Nation National Council
- Co-founder of the Mvskoke Women's Leadership





# Welcome by Cherrah Giles Chair, NIWRC Board of Directors

## Welcome!

From 1978-2014, Tillie Black Bear played many leadership roles in our movement to end domestic violence. *Unci* Tillie is one of the grandmothers of our movement.

This October 1<sup>st</sup>, we launch DVAM and celebrate *Unci's* Tillie's legacy of organizing to end domestic violence as Indigenous woman and leader.



# DVAM 1987-2020

- Tillie Black Bear was a founding mother of the National Coalition to End Domestic Violence and organized nationally to establish DVAM.
- Originally **DVAM** started as a day with the goal of connecting advocates across tribal nations and the country who were working to end violence against women and children.
- The day of unity soon became an entire week devoted to a range of activities organized at the local, tribal, state, and national levels.
- These activities varied but included the common themes of mourning lives lost, celebrating survivors, and connecting those working to end the violence—themes that continue to shape October DVAM activities.
- The first DVAM was observed in October 1987, and in 1989, Congress designated October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.



# We Must Continue Organizing to End Domestic Violence



American Indian women residing on Indian reservations suffer domestic violence and physical assault at rates far exceeding other women.

A 2004 Department of Justice report estimates these assault rates to be as much as 50% higher.

Domestic violence is a leading cause of death for Native women.

Homicide is the 6th leading cause of death for Native women

In some tribal communities Native women are murdered at a rate ten times higher than the national average.



## Violence endured often takes place over a lifetime



The lifetime victimization rates for Native women is higher than that of Caucasian women on a national level.

4 in 5 Native women (84.3%), have experienced violence in their lifetime.

More than 1 in 2 Native women (56.1%) have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.

38.2% of Native women who needed services were unable to get the services they needed.



# Connie Black Bear-Brushbreaker

*“Ga’ Wiyan Sni Ye” Woman Who Doesn’t Look Back*

- Daughter of Tillie Black Bear
- Program Director, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Diabetes Prevention Program



# Connie Black Bear-Brushbreaker

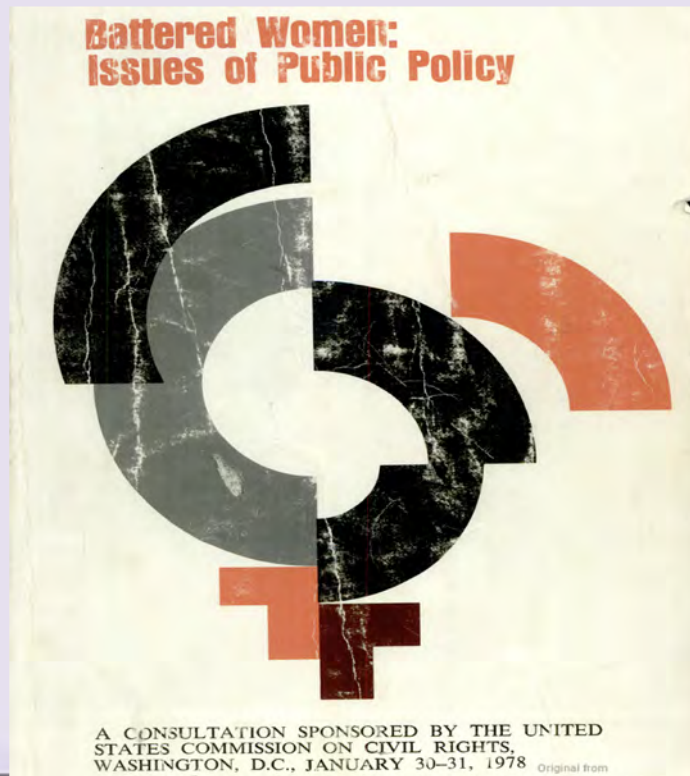
## Daughter of Tillie Black Bear



In 1978, my *Ina* traveled from our reservation to Washington, DC, to testify at a civil rights hearing on battered women. It marked the beginning of our journey, as a family, in the movement to end domestic violence.

# Early Beginnings of the National Movement

## January 30, 1978



A Consultation on  
Battered Women's Issues  
by the  
US Commission on Civil Rights in  
Washington, DC

Tillie Black Bear  
testified on issues facing  
battered women on reservations  
and rural areas





# Spiritual Foundation of the Movement



*“It is our belief that we are spirits on a human journey. In that way, every step we take in our human life is a spiritual act. Every word we speak is a conversation with the creator.”*



# Traditional Ways of Healing

“There has to be a piece about reclaiming traditional ways of healing, not only consequences for perpetrators but traditional ways of healing for the for victims. For the victim, there is a part of her that has been taken. How do we help her reclaim that part that has been taken? What do we need to do as tribal women to do that? There have been many times where we have taken women into the purification lodge as a foundation for healing. It is really important for women who believe in traditional spirituality because they are reclaimed by that. We pray with the women to help her reclaim parts of her body. We wipe her tears. We wipe her down with the sage to cleanse her that way. Often times, victims want some type of healing ... they want something to help them stop the pain they are experiencing. The feeling of fear not only for themselves but for family members. To help them put a closure to that. And women do not just come once, but they keep coming back for additional purification lodge ceremonies. It becomes a foundation and framework for how they take care of themselves in other situations ... other periods of their lives. It is about having a belief in something greater. After working here at Rosebud for over 25 years, we have to do something that is hands-on, tangible, that will give them the strength to know they are not alone.”—Tillie Black Bear, September 2006, Saint Francis, Rosebud Indian Reservation



# Taylor Brushbreaker

*"Ta' Anpetu Waste'"*

*His Day is Good*

## Grandson of Tillie Black Bear



# Traditional Teachings as Foundation of Respect

## *WaLakota* Being a Good Relative

“Growing up I learned so much from my *Unci*. My earliest memories as a boy were shaped by her. I learned our Lakota ways naturally from how she lived her life as our *Unci*, and as an *Ina*, sister, aunt, and member of our community. We learned the importance of relationships by being good relatives or *WaLakota* to our families and community.”



# Respect is the Foundation of Relationship



“I learned from my *Unci* how to treat my sisters and family. My *Unci*’s teachings of respect shapes who I am as a Lakota man. It shapes how I raise my children. And it also shapes how I do my work, especially how I respond to DV calls. By raising children with our traditional Lakota teachings they will understand abuse is not our way as a people.”



*“We teach it to our  
grandchildren.*

*We teach it to our kids so  
that the generations to  
come will know what is  
expected of them.*

*Those generations to come  
will also know how to treat  
each other as relatives.”*

*—Tillie Black Bear*



# Celebrating the Milestones of Our Movement

- Over three decades of systemic reforms increasing safety
- Increased recognition of the importance of tribal sovereignty in protecting Native women
- Recognition of tribally-based services to Native survivors

# Movement for Systemic Changes to Increase Safety For Native Women



*“As women of the movement we play many roles. One is to understand and reform those laws, policies, lack of resources, and so much more that continues to separate us as Native women. Another is to restore the sovereignty and protections that are original to our Indian tribes.”*  
—Tillie Black Bear



# Historic Milestones

**1984**

FVPSA as  
demo grants  
and VOCA

**1994**

Passage of VAWA  
including  
“4% tribal set-  
aside”  
\$1.4 million

**2005**

VAWA Title  
IX. Safety for  
Indian  
Women &  
10% set aside

**2017/2018**

VOCA Tribal  
Appropriations  
-Senate MMIW  
National Day  
Awareness

**1992**

FVPSA 10%  
formula  
tribal set  
aside

**2000**

VAWA 5% tribal  
set-aside;  
Tribal Coalition  
Program  
created

**2013**

VAWA Jurisdictional  
Amendment  
Restoring Partial  
Jurisdiction over  
Non-Indians

**2020**

Pending Re-  
authorization  
of VAWA/FVPSA





# Carmen O'Leary



- Citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
- Native Women Society of the Great Plains, Executive Director
- Recipient Tillie Black Bear Women Are Sacred Award
- Lay advocate for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Court
- Began in 1988 as a volunteer and advocate



# Shelter and Advocacy

Changes Over the Decades

“It's not trauma informed if it's  
not informed by trauma  
survivors.”

# A Social Justice Movement of Sister Helping Sisters

Originated as Movement of  
Resistance in the 1970's



1978 Emmonak Women's Shelter



# Tribal Domestic Violence Shelters

- Native Shelters, like White Buffalo Calf Women Society and the Emmonak Women's Shelter, are some of the oldest domestic violence shelters in the United States.
- Over the last 30 years programs have increased with additional federal funding.
- As a snapshot today the Native Women's Society of the Great Plains has 25 member programs serving domestic violence victims in the northern plains. There are also additional DV programs.
- Nationally it is estimated there are less than 60 tribal shelters.



# Shelter and Advocacy Programs Today

- Today's tribal shelters and advocacy grew out of the grassroots efforts to keep women and children safe.
- *Unci* Tillie's leadership and that of other Native women made these gains possible.
- Native led shelters, whether Tribal or Non Profit, are indispensable to our tribal communities.
- They provide safe places where Native women feel comfortable and have access to shelters created by and for Native women.
- While there are less than 60 tribal shelters, and we have to continue the struggle, we celebrate these programs!



# Advocacy

- Native advocacy includes cultural healings and understandings
  - Reaching out to the community to assist in cultural healing
  - Creating spaces and practices within advocacy that reflect our tribal values and culture
- Shelters respond to issues caused by domestic violence and often interconnected to a spectrum of violence including
  - Physical abuse
  - Sexual assault
  - Sex Trafficking

# Ever Changing Dynamics

- Many changes over the years often led by ever changing grant driven requirements including:
  - More oversight by government agency's demanding changes in common response practices
  - Some changes lack an understanding by government agencies of tribal governments and the needs of survivors
- Our movement has grown to recognize and provide advocacy to other populations including:
  - Male victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
  - LGBTQ populations



# Leanne Guy



- Citizen of the Navajo Nation
- Executive Director of the Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition
- Prior Executive Director of Ama Doo Alchini Bighan, Inc., community-based domestic violence and sexual assault services program on the Navajo Nation





## Closing by Leanne Guy

- Today we uplift and honor Tillie Black Bear as a grandmother of our movement to increase safety for Native women.
- We celebrate the milestones of our grassroots movement.
- Acknowledge the challenges ahead by re-dedicating our commitment to making the changes necessary to end domestic violence.

# Resources

Restoration Magazine - <https://www.niwrc.org/restoration-magazine>

Safety for Native Women: VAWA and American Indian Tribes  
<https://www.amazon.com/Safety-Native-Women-American-Indian/dp/1500918512> by Jacqueline Agtuca

[Link to TBB Podcast](#)



**Thank you  
from the NIWRC Staff & Board!**



# Wopila! Mvto! Ahéheé! Kwathlani! Thank you!

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