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Native Advocacy Organizations Release Joint Statement Recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness Month This October

(LAME DEER, Mont., October 1, 2020)—Today marks the first day of [Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#), which offers a critical opportunity to continue to shed light on the issue of domestic violence. The number of survivors is devastatingly high within Native communities: more than four out of five American Indian and Alaska Native women have [experienced violence](#) with more than half (55.5 percent) who have endured physical violence by an intimate partner. Over 90 percent of those committing such crimes against Native women are non-Native.

[Domestic violence](#) is one or multiple types of abuse, such as physical, emotional/verbal, sexual, financial, cultural, spiritual, or digital aimed at a relative. [Intimate Partner Violence](#) (IPV) is a form of domestic violence when a current or former spouse or intimate partner engages in a repetitive pattern of fear-inducing abuse toward their partner to maintain power and control in a relationship. This pattern of abuse can take place in relationships where couples are dating, married, living together, have a child together, or after the relationship has ended. The vast majority of victims of IPV are women with primarily male offenders.

In Indigenous societies, [violence is not traditional](#). Colonization imposes and promotes the domination and ownership of Native women by men, as reflected in the increasing rates of violence against Native women since first contact. This has laid the foundation for present-day violence. This violence ends when we reclaim Indigenous values of respect and compassion, and we honor the sacredness of women and children.

American Indians and Alaska Natives are [disproportionately impacted](#) by domestic violence with little to no access to lifesaving services and shelter due to the [failure of the](#)

[federal government to uphold its trust responsibility](#) to assist Indian tribes in safeguarding the lives of Native women. Native victim/survivors have a right to access trauma-informed, survivor-centered, culturally appropriate, non-judgmental advocacy, resources, and shelter services. [StrongHearts Native Helpline](#) (1-844-762-8483) provides a crucial connection to such services as a nationally available hotline designed by and for Native people.

Legislation providing urgent and critically needed funding streams for lifesaving tribal domestic violence shelters and supportive services—such as the [Family Violence Prevention and Services Act](#) (FVPSA)—currently remains unauthorized. Tribal domestic violence shelters provide critical advocacy, such as safety planning, resources, and support, to Native victim/survivors, yet there are [fewer than 45 tribal shelters](#) in Indian country, which points to an urgent, unmet need. Furthermore, [fewer than half](#) of all 574 federally recognized Indian tribes receive FVPSA funding for domestic violence services. Now is the time for Congress to reauthorize and [increase FVPSA funding for Indian tribes](#), tribal shelters, and supportive programs to ensure Native survivors have the necessary improvements and lifesaving enhancements so desperately needed.

Tribal leadership and the grassroots advocacy of sovereign Indian nations remains a critical part of strengthening and reauthorizing FVPSA. The [National Indigenous Women's Resource Center](#), [StrongHearts Native Helpline](#), [Alaska Native Women's Resource Center](#), [National Congress of American Indians](#), [Indian Law Resource Center](#), and the [Friends Committee on National Legislation](#) urgently call on Congress to reauthorize FVPSA and increase funding to help keep Native women and families safe from domestic violence. It is our responsibility to ensure the voices of Native victim/survivors are heard and respected.

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About the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center:

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Inc. (NIWRC) is a Native-led nonprofit organization dedicated to ending violence against Native women and children. NIWRC provides national leadership in ending gender-based violence in tribal communities by lifting up the collective voices of grassroots advocates and offering culturally grounded resources, technical assistance and training, and policy development to strengthen tribal sovereignty. niwrc.org

About StrongHearts Native Helpline:

StrongHearts Native Helpline was created by and built to serve Tribal communities across the United States. It is a culturally-appropriate, anonymous, confidential and free service dedicated to serving Native survivors, concerned family members and friends affected by domestic, dating and sexual violence. Dial 1-844-7NATIVE (1-844-762-8483) or click on the chat now icon at strongheartshelpline.org daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT. Connect with knowledgeable advocates who can provide lifesaving tools and immediate support to enable survivors to find

safety and live lives free of abuse. StrongHearts Native Helpline is a project of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center and the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Learn more at strongheartshelpline.org.

About the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center:

Organized in 2015, the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) is a tribal nonprofit organization dedicated to ending violence against women with Alaska's 229 tribes and allied organizations. AKNWRC board members and staff are Alaska Native women raised in Alaska Native Villages and have over 250 years of combined experience in tribal governments, nonprofit management, domestic violence, and sexual assault advocacy (both individual crisis and systems and grassroots social change advocacy at the local, statewide, regional, national and international levels), and other social services experience. AKNWRC's philosophy is that violence against women is rooted in the colonization of indigenous nations and thus dedicated to strengthening local, tribal government's responses through community organizing efforts advocating for the safety of women and children in their communities and homes against domestic and sexual abuse and violence. aknwrc.org

About the National Congress of American Indians:

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 in response to the termination and assimilation policies the US government forced upon tribal governments in contradiction of their treaty rights and status as sovereign nations. To this day, protecting these inherent and legal rights remains the primary focus of NCAI. ncai.org

About the Indian Law Resource Center:

The **Indian Law Resource Center** is a nonprofit legal and advocacy organization founded in 1978 (www.indianlaw.org). The Indian Law Resource Center provides assistance to Indian and Alaska Native Nations and other indigenous peoples throughout the Americas who are working to protect their lands, resources, environment, cultural heritage, and human rights. The Center's principal goal is the preservation and well-being of Indian and other Native Nations and Tribes. The Center's Safe Women, Strong Nations project works to end the extreme levels of violence against Indian and Alaska Native women and children and its devastating impacts on Native communities by raising awareness of this issue nationally and internationally, by strengthening the capacity of Indian and Alaska Native Nations and Native women to prevent violence and restore safety to Native women, and by assisting national Native women's organizations and Indian and Alaska Native Nations to restore tribal criminal authority and preserve civil jurisdiction.

About the Friends Committee on National Legislation:

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) lobbies Congress and the administration to advance peace, justice, opportunity, and environmental stewardship. Founded in 1943 by members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), FCNL fields an expert team of lobbyists on Capitol Hill and works with a grassroots network of tens of thousands of people across the country to advance policies and priorities established by our governing General Committee. FCNL is a nonpartisan organization that seeks to live our values of integrity, simplicity, and peace as we build relationships across political divides to move policies forward. fcnl.org