



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

June 2023 | Volume 20 | Issue 2



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Letter from the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

Dear Relatives and Friends,

It is our pleasure to share the June 2023 edition of *Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for Native Women Magazine*. Our hearts are full from the content in this edition as we make great strides in movement building for the safety of Native women and the sovereignty of Indian Tribal Nations. We thank all of you who have supported survivors, advocates, Tribes, Tribal coalitions, the growing number of Tribal and Indigenous organizations, NIWRC, and our larger grassroots movement. Your strong-hearted support—spiritually and financially—contributes to restoring the sovereignty of Indigenous nations that strengthens protections for Indigenous women and families across the country. Support includes a range of actions including sitting with survivors and their family members, listening to their tears, emotions, and stories to donating and fundraising—we are stronger together resisting abuse and violence, restoring Indigenous protections, and organizing for safer, healthier, loving families, communities, and Nations.

One of NIWRC's advocacy highlights over the last three months includes organizing discussions with our family advisory group and national partners for our May 1-7, 2023, National Week of Action, honoring missing and murdered Indigenous sisters. Please read through the MMIW section in this edition and visit niwrc.org/webinars for more information. A second highlight is our organizing discussions with cosponsoring Native organizations for the June 26-28, 2023, Women Are Sacred Conference. The Conference theme is We Are Born From Her: Protecting Earth Mother, Her Women, and Her Children. We look forward to reconnecting and meeting you at the Conference.

The STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center has also continued to engage in strong-hearted education and advocacy in response to housing insecurity and homelessness for Indigenous survivors of domestic violence. Please see updates from STTARS in this edition and go to niwrc.org/housing for more information.

We understand that we must honor the legacy of past generations and continue our advocacy to strengthen and defend Tribal sovereignty to end violence against Indigenous women and restore teachings that respect women and all life that comes from her. As our movement has done for the past three decades, we continue strategizing discussions with each other and our allies—old and new—to identify our political platform for social change for the next 10 years, including the systemic barriers and recommendations for removing these barriers. We will continue to center Indigenous survivors, their families, and Nations. We are stronger when we are united in organizing to restore Tribal sovereignty and increase Native women's safety.

From our board and staff, we must renew our commitment to our mission to support Indigenous-based advocacy, restore safety to Native women, and uphold the sovereignty of Native Nations. As we continue to organize our groundswell, identify our common ground, and provide training, technical assistance, policy development, systems engagement, and educational resources, we thank you for your ongoing advocacy and support.



Ahéhee',

Lucy Simpson, Esq.
Diné
Executive Director



PhilamayyaA,

Carmen O'Leary
Cheyenne River Sioux
Board Chairwoman



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

Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for
Native Women Magazine, 2003-2023

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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“No More Stolen Sisters” (2023) by Nick Alan and Kelsey Mata, an art piece commissioned by the NIWRC Policy Team to serve as the image of MMIW and the National Week of Action for MMIW. See tear out poster.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Paula Julian, Filipina, Senior



Since our February edition of *Restoration Magazine*, much has happened. In February, the Departments of Interior and Justice convened the first in-person session of the *Not Invisible Act* Commission. They've also held field hearings across the country to hear from American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) peoples about the injustice of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP). These hearings will inform recommendations for a Report to Congress "focused on improving intergovernmental coordination and establishing best practices for state, Tribal, and federal law enforcement"¹ on missing persons, murder, and trafficking of AI/AN. Please consider submitting written testimony, recommendations, or questions to the Commission at NIAC@ios.doi.gov. Include in the subject line: "NIAC Testimony" or "NIAC Question."

In March, the Pope and the Vatican Church repudiated the "Doctrine of Discovery" after Indigenous nations called on the Church to rescind the papal bulls. Papal bulls² "underpin the "Doctrine of Discovery," a legal concept coined in an 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision that has come to be understood as meaning that ownership and sovereignty over land passed to Europeans because they "discovered" it."³

It is no secret that many governments—including the United States—have relied on this doctrine to justify the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples and the taking of our lands. It is our sincere hope that today's announcement is more than mere words, but rather is

the beginning of a full acknowledgment of the history of oppression and a full accounting of the legacies of colonialism..."⁴

This mistreatment is reflected in all the disparities experienced by American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples, including violence against women. Numerous government and religious documents over the centuries attest to these injustices. The U.S. apologized in 1993 to Native Hawaiians (Public Law 103-150) and in 2009 to AI/AN (Section 8113, H.R.3326) for "years of official depredations, ill-conceived policies, and the breaking of covenants by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes" and the "violence, maltreatment and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States."

From May 1-7, the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) organized our 3rd National Week of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Action with our National Partners and MMIW Family Advisors. We reached 4.2 million accounts across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, educating the public about the truths about MMIW and our Advocacy in Action: 6-Point Action Plan to reform systemic barriers and restore the safety of Indigenous women.

The resistance and groundswell of Indigenous survivors, nations, communities, and allies to colonization and the spectrum of violence against Indigenous women have provided the political will for leadership of the U.S., Canada, and the Vatican to apologize for their crimes against Indigenous peoples and nations. We must continue to advocate for action that nourishes healing, resolution, and accountability balancing between the Western and

¹ bit.ly/3We5Csd

² Papal bulls are a type of public decree issued by a pope of the Catholic Church: bit.ly/45aEbnh

³ bit.ly/3MjmPf5

⁴ bit.ly/41PIK3v

Indigenous understandings of healing, resolution, and accountability.

Thank you to everyone around the world and in the U.S., including our NIWRC staff, Board, Tribes, numerous strong-hearted Tribal and Native Hawaiian partners, domestic and international allies, first responders, policymakers, and especially our survivors, their families and advocates who continue to resist and organize our groundswell 24/7 to respond to violence against women. Many of us respond not just because it's a job but because we understand and accept the responsibility of what it means to be a relative, to be human, to be (fill in the blank: an Indigenous person), to be spirits on a human journey as Tillie Black Bear would say. That understanding and responsibility fuels many of us across the country and reflects the resilience of Indigenous peoples.

We want and deserve to know what it is to have families, nations, and communities rich with love, hope, happiness, laughter, respect, compassion, caring, generosity, forgiveness, and so much more. We take care of each other no matter what. We leave no one behind. The articles in this edition speak to these truths, and I hope you see your truths reflected in these pages in some way. These pages glimpse the many strong hearts responding to violence against women everywhere—past, present, and future. Thank you. You are not alone or forgotten. You are connected. We are connected. As Tillie once told me, we belong to many communities, and it is in that belonging that we find life, purpose, actions, and meaning. *Restoration Magazine* documents the intent, actions, and importance of our work domestically and internationally to **restore**

sovereignty to increase Native women's safety. We are re-building Nations one Tribe and community at a time which nourishes our groundswell.

Since our 2015 Women Are Sacred Conference, we have awarded the Tillie Black Bear Women Are Sacred Memorial Award to honor Tillie's legacy and recognize outstanding grassroots advocates that exemplify the teachings and dedication that Tillie instilled in our movement to restore healing and safety for Native women. Working within a Tribal/Native community, the recipients are Indigenous women in the movement who advocate from a woman and survivor-centered, culturally grounded approach, are known for leadership in social change initiatives, and uplift our connections as relatives. We lift up and honor our past recipients—Colleen Clark, Carmen O'Leary, Leanne Guy, and Sandra Pilgrim-Lewis. Join us in honoring the new recipient on June 26, 2023, at our upcoming conference! Go to niwrc.org/was for more information.

Join and support local, Native, state, national, and international organizing to remove systemic barriers and restore Indigenous protections by strong-hearted survivors, their families, advocates, and others who understand that restoring sovereignty to increase Native women's safety is possible.

Paula S. Julian
(Washté Wiya, Good Woman), *Filipina*
Editor, *Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for Native Women* & Interim Director for Policy, NIWRC

REMINDER
Not Invisible Act (NIA)
Commission Hearings

JUNE
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Northern California
Albuquerque, New Mexico

JULY
Billings, Montana



By StrongHearts Native Helpline

Despite the horror of being physically hurt, and having their money or medication stolen, elders who are abused or neglected often endure the abuse without calling for help. As lifelong caregivers and protectors, many elders suffer in silence to maintain the well-being of their family and that may include their abuser.

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), a day to raise awareness and prevent elder abuse. It's a day to reflect on what it's like to become an Elder and the many challenges they are facing such as: losing strength, muscle, and bone mass. Mental clarity can deteriorate and lead to memory loss. Sadly, when an Elder becomes vulnerable, most abuse happens in the home and at the hands of family members.

“It’s unacceptable when elders silently suffer abuse and neglect at the hands of those who should be protecting them,” said Lori Jump, CEO, StrongHearts Native Helpline. “Many

elders refuse to report their abusers because they are closely related and want to protect their family, but there are so many more reasons that most people can’t imagine.”

- *Love:* Despite the abuse or neglect, victims continue to love their abusive partner or relative.
- *Fear and Embarrassment:* Elders may fear retaliation if they report abuse and worry about what others may think or do to make matters worse.
- *Lack of Resources:* Many elders depend on their abuser for shelter.
- *Accessibility:* Without access to cellphones, internet and/or transportations, Elders may not be able to report abuse.
- *Normalization:* For generations, Native people have endured multiple types of abuse at the hands of non-Natives—so much so that abuse seems normal—an everyday part of life.

Learn the Signs Of Abuse

The signs of abuse may be difficult to spot when an Elder may be suffering from disease, have side effects from medications, or similar reasons. However, if you suspect that an Elder is being abused, be patient, talk and listen to them. Be aware that they may say that they are being “disrespected” rather than abused. Pay attention to other signs of abuse such as:

- *Unexplained bruising or injury;*
- *Lack of interest in family or social events;*
- *Loss of weight; and*
- *Not having necessary medical aids (glasses, walkers, teeth, etc.) or adequate food, water or shelter.*

How Can You Help?

Every state has an Adult Protective Services division for those wishing to report abuse. Information can be found at www.napsa-now.org/help-in-your-area. On a more personal level, pay attention to the Elders in your life and ensure that they are properly cared for by visiting and checking in with them regularly. Offer caregivers a helping hand when needed and if you have a big family, start a rotating schedule to spend time with them.

For more information about Elder abuse and neglect, StrongHearts advocates are available 24/7 to provide support and advocacy, make referrals to Native centered service providers and connect our relatives to regionally available resources.



Every state has an Adult Protective Services division for those wishing to report abuse.

Elder abuse is never okay.

The National Adult Protective Services Association exists to strengthen the capacity of Adult Protective Services (federal, state, local) to serve elders and adults with disabilities.

napsa-now.org



NIWRC Welcomes a Deputy Director

Introducing Dorma Sahneyah

By Paula Julian, *Filipina*, Senior Policy Specialist and Editor, NIWRC
Restoration Magazine

The National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC) is excited to welcome Dorma Sahneyah (Hopi-Tewa) back as our Deputy Director. Dorma served as the Director of Training and Technical Assistance for NIWRC from 2016 to 2018 and as a Program Specialist from 2011 to 2016. Dorma has extensive experience working with Indian Tribes, Tribal court systems, law enforcement programs, and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault crimes in Indian Country and was honored by being presented the Bonnie Heavy Runner Tribal Victim Advocacy Award at the 2017 13th National Indian Nations Justice Conference.

Dorma recently served as Executive Director of the Hopi Tribe from 2018 to 2022. Prior experience includes being Executive Director for the Hopi-Tewa Women’s Coalition, Chief Prosecutor for over twelve years with the Hopi Tribe, where she implemented a Tribal domestic violence program with service components that included victim and child advocacy, batterer’s intervention program, intense domestic violence probation supervision, and comprehensive civil legal services for domestic violence and sexual violence survivors. Dorma has focused much of her career on addressing the unacceptably high violent crime rates in Indian country. She received her Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Arizona State University and her Juris Doctor degree from Arizona State University School of Law. She is the proud mother of five

adult children (four daughters, one son), grandmother of 15 grandchildren, and great-grandmother of one. Dorma is blessed to have her mother, who is almost 86 years old, to support her work and guide her family’s cultural education and activities. She resides in San Tan Valley, Arizona, with her husband, Calvin.



“
I understand how critically important it is to support Tribes to be self-sufficient by exercising and upholding *Tribal sovereignty* and to reclaim the culture, traditions, language taken wrongfully from them. I hope to be able to help enhance the work, which NIWRC has been at the forefront of over the past years.

—Dorma Sahneyah, *Tewa-Hopi*, Deputy Director, NIWRC

Thank you, *Erica Tremblay*,

For Your Donation

From the Making of *Fancy Dance*

“On behalf of the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center staff and board, we thank our strong-hearted sister, Erica Tremblay, for continuing to bring attention to violence against Indigenous women, including missing and murdered Indigenous women,” said Lucy Simpson (Diné), NIWRC Executive Director. “This gift from Erica will continue to help us expand on our 2S+/LGBTQ+ Toolkit for Family and Friends on Reconnecting with Native Teachings and Creating Spaces with and for 2S+/LGBTQ+ Victim-Survivors of Domestic Violence.”

Erica so humbly donated her salary as director/screenwriter of *Fancy Dance* to NIWRC.

Since her sister’s disappearance, Jax (Lily Gladstone) has cared for her niece Roki (Isabel Deroy-Olson) by scraping by on the Seneca-Cayuga Reservation in Oklahoma. Every spare minute goes into finding her missing sister while also helping Roki prepare for an upcoming powwow. At the risk of losing custody to Jax’s father, Frank (Shea Whigham), the pair hit the road and scour the backcountry to track down Roki’s mother in time for the powwow. What begins as a search gradually turns into a far deeper investigation into the complexities and contradictions of Indigenous women moving through a colonized world and at the mercy of a failed justice system.

Fancy Dance announces the arrival of a major directorial talent: Erica Tremblay. Her unflinching exploration of marginalization uses a mystery narrative as a springboard for an oblique coming-of-age story, lovingly and luminously enacted by Gladstone and Deroy-Olson. Tremblay’s juxtaposition of settler violence against the strength of Indigenous communities offers a nuanced account of the human costs of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women epidemic and the possibilities of healing for those left behind.¹

Erica Tremblay is an award-winning writer and director



Lucy Simpson, NIWRC Executive Director with Erica Tremblay at Sundance 2023. / Photo courtesy of Lucy Simpson.

from the Seneca-Cayuga Nation. Her short film *Little Chief* premiered at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival. She is a Sundance Screenwriters and Directors Lab fellow and an SFFilm Rainin Grant recipient. Tremblay was the executive story editor on *Dark Winds*, an AMC series produced by George R.R. Martin and Robert Redford. She is the executive story editor on season two of *Reservation Dogs* at FX and also directed an episode. Together with Sterlin Harjo, she will be co-writing and executive producing a series adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize finalist *Yellow Bird* for Paramount+. Tremblay lives on Cayuga Lake in upstate New York, where she studies her Indigenous language.

As importantly, Erica has been a sister to victim-survivors, families of MMIW, NIWRC, the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center, Healing Native Hearts Coalition, Yup’ik Women’s Coalition, and so many others helping to document our truths in video documentaries, and her labors of love, including but not limited to some of the following:



- bit.ly/3VWvg4K (YupikWomen.Org)
- bit.ly/3I0dHLO (YouTube)
- bit.ly/3pw0fsd (YouTube)

NIWRC thanks you, Erica, for your support and for lifting your relatives as humbly as you always have. We are proud of how hard you’ve worked and all your accomplishments as a writer and director.

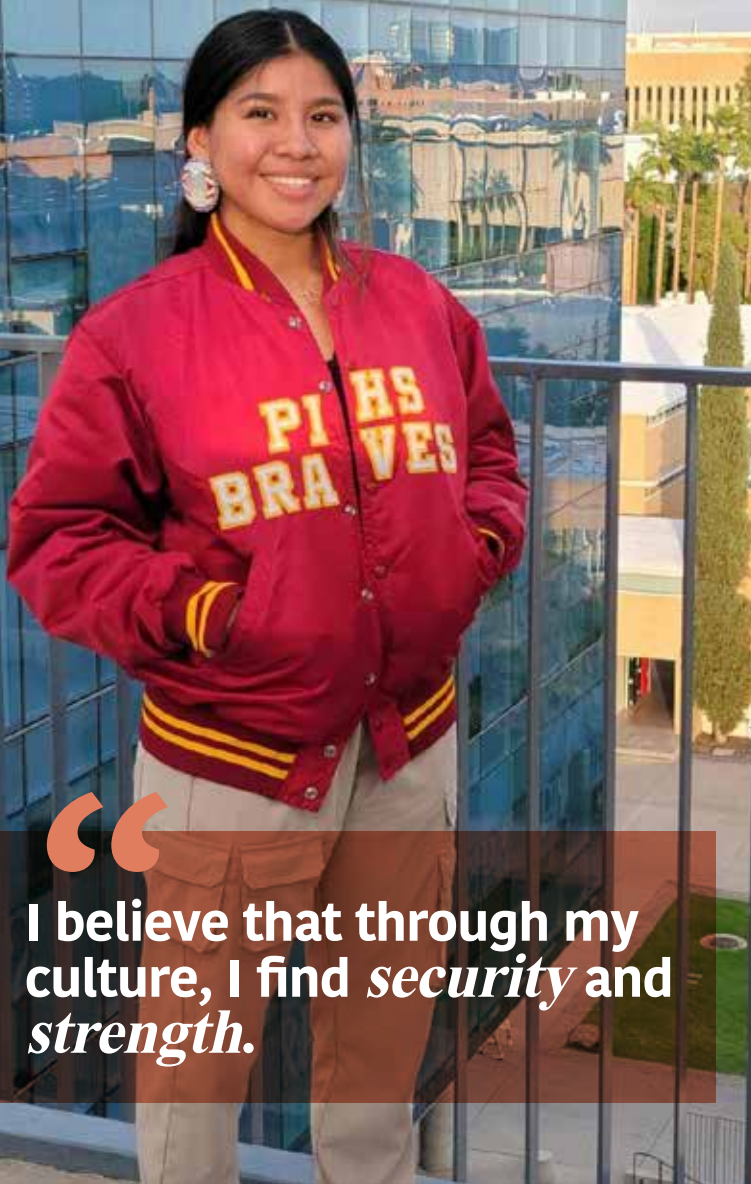
¹bit.ly/3BAXNTQ

My Relationship with *You*

By Sumaya Concho Quitugua, *Acoma Pueblo/Chamarro*

We are wet clay and our environment molds us into who we are as individuals. Girls are told that we look for a man that resembles our fathers and boys look for women that care for them like their mothers. What we aren't told is that we also look for those imperfections that our household created. An absent father. One may crave affection and approval from another. A judgmental mother. A person may have the inability to build an emotional attachment or demonstrate affection. Overworked parents. You may not see them often. A person may look for another that gives them the attention that they are missing at home. How we love someone is taught through our environment. The right and wrong way to love. Consent and boundaries are the foundation of any healthy relationship.

“They were asking for it”, “did you see what she was wearing?”, or even “boys will be boys” are sayings engraved in my mind like carvings on stones. Permanent. We are taught to detach the words from the meaning, such as “That means they like you”, “He thinks you're pretty”, and “She really, really likes you”. Just because she is pretty does not mean she gave you consent. A smile is not their way of opening the door to your touch. Consent is a valuable way of communication. “Yes”, “No”, and “Stop” are all forms of an agreement. However, do not get them confused with a contract. A “yes” can easily turn into a “no” and should not possess a statute of limitations. As the word escapes from their mouth, your touch leaves their body. “Stop” should not have to be repeatedly expressed or explained. In any form of relationship, consent is appreciated to avoid mixed messages.



“
I believe that through my culture, I find *security* and *strength*.”

Sumaya wears her Phoenix Indian High School Braves jacket to honor and remember Native students and the boarding school era. Photo courtesy of Sumaya.

“Do you want to talk about it?”
“Yes.”
“Can I give you a hug?”
“No, thank you.”
“Can I hold your hand?”
“Yes.”
“Can we move forward with our relationship?”
“No, I feel uncomfortable.”

Consent provides the line between uncomfortable and encouraging. When change occurs in a relationship or new boundaries are set, this is when asking for consent is vital.

I know uncomfortable spaces. My color and my ethnicity have been another’s fantasy. The uncomfortable way they feel comfortable speaking to me makes my skin crawl. I do not take consent lightly, because it is my permission that I am giving you. When a person asks for my consent it is as simple as “Can I give you a hug?”, “Do you want to talk about it?”, or even “Can I play with your hair?”. Asking for my consent is giving respect and value back to me. Something I appreciate greatly.

Boundaries. Invisible arms wrap around my feet, my legs, and my torso. Stop. Traveling up my body from my stomach, my chest, my neck. Too close. My lips, my eyes, my mind. I cannot speak; I cannot see; I cannot think for myself. There is the discomfort with not being in control of my own body, my mind, and my words, providing no assistance to my helplessness. Boundaries. My undisclosed boundaries do not need to be explained, they need to be respected. Boundaries are the blanket I lay in for comfort. What I rely on when people become too much to handle. When the world becomes too scary. I create boundaries as protection. To stay in control of my own life. I may not explain why the line in the sand becomes my boundary. There’s a possibility it may hold trauma and memories that are too emotionally difficult to recall; or disclose to another. But understand, boundaries are created when a person feels their individuality is being tested and morals compromised. If I share an explanation of any of my boundaries, care for them as you would with a butterfly. Admire the trust that has been given. The strength it took to even utter a single word to you. Hold it close, then let it go.

My boundaries are not your challenges to surpass. I’ve had people treat my boundaries as a new level to

a video game. Flaunting that they know a secret that others don’t. I have had people treat my boundaries as suggestions. I have had people call me sensitive for feeling uncomfortable by someone’s words, touch, and even their presence. When my boundaries are repeatedly treated in such a way, I become numb to the idea of an explanation. Trust appears as an allusion.

The first time I explained my boundary to a person it spread like wildfire. The second time I trusted someone with an explanation, they abused the knowledge. I noticed they would tease those around us not knowing they were ridiculing me. Maybe I am sensitive because those moments still stay with me. I feel hurt that they used my vulnerability. I feel disgusted that they cared about attention more than they did for me. The fact of the matter is that my boundaries are exactly that—mine. No one gets to say how I should feel and who I can let in.

I am a teenage girl who often worries about how I look to others. I feel the need to be on top of trends. Always flirting with someone new. I should feel comfortable. My vulnerability is my youth. However, I create boundaries in hopes it may prevent the unthinkable from happening. My awareness and sense of sacredness is my strength. I believe that through my culture I find security and strength.



About NativeLove

NativeLove encourages open conversations with youth about healthy relationships. NativeLove is NIWRC’s Native youth program focused on preventing and ending dating violence by empowering Native youth to reclaim healthy relationships.

NativeLove offers training and technical assistance. If you would like training or technical assistance from NativeLove you can fill out a request on our NIWRC website or email our Native Youth Program Specialist, Jovita Belgarde, at jbelgarde@niwrc.org.

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[facebook.com/nativeloveis](https://www.facebook.com/nativeloveis)

What We Want *Adults* to Know

By Noeli Pacheco, Victoria Quintana, Isaiah Tenorio and Anonymous
Robert F. Kennedy Charter Middle School, Alphabet Soup Club, Albuquerque, NM
and Jovita Belgrade, *Ohkay Owingeh, Isleta Pueblo, and the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Nation*, NIWRC

NativeLove connected with an LGBTQ2S+ club called the Alphabet Soup Club at Robert F. Kennedy Charter Middle School in Albuquerque, NM. We asked the students to write about what they would like adults to know about consent, boundaries, and healthy communication. We are proud to elevate their responses:

Recognizing the importance of proper pronoun use helps us to identify with who we are on the inside. Someone's correct pronouns should be used right away and should not be seen as corruption in the human mind. Respecting pronouns is an easy way to make youth feel happy and safe. It is as easy as learning to use the singular "they/them."

Other ways to help youth feel safe and less anxious are healthy boundaries and communication with us. For example, understanding that physical touch is not the only way to show affection, even if you have a close relationship with someone. Boundaries can be set by anyone at any age and should be respected especially if they come from a young person.

Using phrases such as "Can we talk?" or "I have been feeling left out," is an easy way to start a conversation. When communicating with youth, do not doubt what is being said and check in before having heavy talks. Healthy communication and boundaries with youth allow us to know where we can also improve.

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month Zine Challenge Participants with Nativelove prize packs. / Photo courtesy of advisor teacher Señora Mahalia Aponte.

NativeLove appreciates the opportunity to uplift youth voices around support for the LGBTQ2S+ community. Young people deserve to have their pronouns, boundaries, and voices respected and honored. NativeLove centers Native and LGBTQ2S+ youth advocacy in messaging like this article from Alphabet Soup. We strive to build strategic relationships with LGBTQ2S+ programs to support their work that creates safe and healthy communities for Native youth across Turtle Island. Two-Spirit people have always existed in Indigenous communities and were accepted and integrated into our nations prior to colonization. **We assert that LGBTQ2S+ people are essential to the health and wellness of our shared future.**

We honor them first by ensuring they are safe, loved, and supported. Some ways you can care for Two-Spirit youth in your community is by seeing them for who they are, listening to them, honoring their pronouns, respecting their boundaries, affirming them, and offering support to help them thrive.





The Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

By Caroline LaPorte, *Immediate Descendant of the Little River Band Of Ottawa Indians*, Director of STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center, and Associate Judge, Little River Band Of Ottawa Indians

On April 19, 2022, the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations in New York City hosted a planning meeting for the Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls (Trilateral WG). Selected participants were:

- **Nicole Matthews**, Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition
- **Dawn Stover**, Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence
- **Whitney Gravelle**, Bay Mills Indian Community,
- **Dr. Diane Gout**, Gray O.A.K., LLC
- **Mary Kathryn Nagle**, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
- **Justice Anne McKeig**, Minnesota State Supreme Court
- **Angel Charley**, Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women
- **Erica Pinto**, Jamul Indian Village
- **Shanna Parker**, Angels Go To Work
- **Christina Love**, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- **Caroline LaPorte**, STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center, and Little River Band of Ottawa Indians.

The planning meeting is expected to inform the program for the Trilateral WG, which will be held in Canada in September of 2023.

The group last met in July 2022, hosted by the Biden Administration's White House. The Trilateral WG, which is a convening between the United States, Mexico, and Canada, was initially created as an outcome of the North American Leaders' Summit (2016) to affirm each country's commitment to addressing gender-based violence impacting Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse individuals.

The last convening focused on three main areas:

1. Strengthening access to justice.
2. Addressing the root causes of gender-based violence.
3. Advancing Indigenous women's leadership.¹

¹bit.ly/3VY7iG9

For this initial meeting of 2023, selected participants were asked to think about four specific event concepts and themes:

1. Human trafficking (including root causes and early intervention/prevention).
2. Leadership development of Indigenous women, young women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse peoples.
3. Data collection (data tracking and developing a tool/mechanism for MMIWG and human trafficking of Indigenous women and girls).
4. Access to justice (including culturally respective practices).

President Whitney Gravelle provided a traditional opening for the planning meeting, and the group began a private dialogue without the presence of government officials.

Many of the conversations were thematic, meaning that the Indigenous Women leaders from each country spoke on overwhelmingly and concerningly similar issues. This bolsters the need for the Trilateral WG and the cross-collaboration between all three countries. Some of the issues that arose during the private discussion as well as the discussion with government officials were:

- The hyper-sexualization of children.
- The risk of digital violence.
- The frustration of being unable to access cultural resources/utilize cultural responses.
- The systemic violence.
- The racial injustice.
- The femicide.
- The urgent need for data.
- The absence of emergency shelters.
- The concern around reproductive health/access to justice.
- The ongoing forced and coerced sterilization.
- The inability of gender-diverse individuals to receive help.
- The concerns about the United States Supreme Court.
- The rate of incarceration experienced by Indigenous women.
- The lack of language access.
- The over-generalization of data.
- The economic issues that put Indigenous peoples at risk for trafficking.
- The pay inequity.
- The homelessness.

- The high rates of out-of-home placements for Native youth.

The meeting ended with the United States, Canada, and Mexico ensuring participants that there would be an opportunity to convene again before September so that all comments that would assist with planning can be best utilized. Participants from Canada requested that the governments provide some concrete steps for institutionalizing the information shared at previous meetings and to ensure that future meetings can build upon that knowledge. There was a request to form the Working Group into a living, breathing collective that would continue to work beyond the official convening.

We want to thank the United States government representatives who hosted the individuals listed above and who tirelessly coordinated this planning meeting:

- **Rosie Hidalgo**, White House Gender Policy Council
- **Miranda Baxter**, White House Gender Policy Council.
- **Catie Kenyon**, US Mission to the United Nations.
- **Dr. Nancy Levine**, National Institute of Justice.
- **Heidi Todacheene**, Department of the Interior.
- **Sherriann Moore**, Department of Justice.
- **Cailin Crockett**, White House Gender Policy Council.
- **Elizabeth Reese**, White House Domestic Policy Council.
- **Leora Falk**, Department of State.
- **Miranda Carman**, Department of Health and Human Services.
- **Liz Carr**, White House Office of Management and Budget.
- **Lynn Rosenthal**, Department of Health and Human Services.

We greatly appreciated the space you all created for us to come together in our shared work. We look forward to September and to supporting these efforts in the many months to come.



NIWRC Opposes Anti-Transgender Legislation, Legislators

A Native-led, Women-led Response to the Passing of SB 180 in Kansas and the Mistreatment of Zooney Zephyr

By NIWRC

Despite opposition from the state's governor, Laura Kelly, Kansas passed SB 180 in Kansas. This bill, passed Thursday, April 27, is arguably the most anti-transgender bathroom legislation in United States history. The law prohibits transgender women from using any public space designated for "women," including restrooms, locker rooms, and prison facilities, among others; additionally, it bars transgender women's ability to seek safe shelter in cases of abuse by denying them access to domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers.

In addition to the aforementioned legislation, we were appalled to learn of the treatment of Montana State Representative Zooney Zephyr earlier this month, who was "formally punished" and banned from entering the House floor for the remainder of the session due to her remarks on the crucial status of transgender rights and safety.

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) vehemently condemns transphobic, anti-women legislation demonstrating a complete and

reprehensible disregard for our nation’s most vulnerable. We oppose these policies that can fuel hate crimes and lead to abuse, violence, and death. **It is our mission to end violence against Native women, which is not limited to colonial western standards of gender, and is inclusive of our transgender, non-binary, and Two-Spirit (2S+) relatives.**

The existing anti-woman, transphobic rhetoric that insists that a person must have been born with the ability to produce eggs in order to be considered a “woman” and have access to public spaces is abhorrent. Any attempt to limit transgender individuals’ access to public spaces, such as domestic violence shelters and housing, is a direct affront to the autonomy, safety, and bodily integrity of all women and all 2S+/LGBTQ+ relatives. Such measures will only serve to exacerbate the existing problem of gender-based violence. Therefore, we call on lawmakers to not be silent. This is a multigenerational, multiracial issue. As a national Native women-centered organization, we see and fight against hateful policies that are an affront to the human rights of our most vulnerable and attempt to erase and silence our relatives.

We acknowledge that domestic violence and sexual violence affects individuals of all genders, including our 2S+/LGBTQ+ relatives, who experience these forms of violence at disproportionately high rates. Our work to raise awareness of gender-based violence includes a commitment to honoring traditional Indigenous teachings that promote respect for all identities and celebrate diversity.

As relatives, we have a responsibility to speak out against harmful beliefs and attitudes towards our 2S+/LGBTQ+ relatives and use our Indigenous values and sacred teachings of love, respect, and compassion to advocate for their safety and well-being. Together, we can create a culture of inclusivity and support where all individuals, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, are valued and protected from violence and abuse.

Research

Transgender and Two-Spirit individuals face an elevated risk of domestic violence and sexual assault, largely due to the discrimination, stigma, and financial and housing insecurity experienced by the transgender

community. The U.S Transgender Survey highlights that 54% of transgender individuals will encounter domestic violence in their lifetime. Additionally, according to a study conducted by the Williams Institute, 8% of transgender adults were homeless in the past year, compared to 2.5% of cisgender gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults. Moreover, transgender individuals are three times more likely to experience homelessness than their lesbian, gay, or bisexual counterparts.

Given the vulnerability of our transgender relatives experiencing violence and homelessness, it is essential that spaces for survivors, including shelters, prioritize inclusivity and support for them. Shelters must remain a safe and nurturing refuge, and gender identity should never be used to discriminate against anyone seeking help.

Resources

- [Statement: The Los Angeles LGBT Center Condemns Kansas Passing The Broadest Anti-Trans Bill In US History](#)
- [Transgender Health Program from the Los Angeles LGBT Center](#)
- [Toolkit: Reconnecting with Native Teachings and Creating Healing Spaces with and for 2S+/LGBTQ+ Victim-Survivors of Domestic Violence - A Toolkit for Family and Friends](#)
- [Conversation with the Field: Reconnecting with Native Teachings and Creating Healing Spaces with and for 2S+/LGBTQ+ Victim-Survivors of Domestic Violence](#)
- [Restoration Magazine: Reconnecting with Indigenous Teachings to Create Healing Spaces with and for Native 2SLGBTQ Survivors of Violence](#)
- [Two-Spirit Identity from StrongHearts Native Helpline](#)
- [LGBTQ2S \(Two-Spirit\) Resources by the Southwest Indigenous Women’s Coalition](#)
- [Two-Spirit People from the National Congress of American Indians](#)
- [Two Spirits, One Heart, Five Genders from Indian Country Today](#)
- [A Spotlight on Native LGBT from the National Congress of American Indians](#)

Please view statement and linked resources at niwrc.org/news.



Tribal PERSPECTIVES



STTARS Invited to Gates Foundation for DV Housing First Symposium

Learn More About the DV Housing First Model and Study

By Caroline LaPorte, *Immediate Descendant of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians*, Director of STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center



Aerial view of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation building in Seattle, WA. Photo taken in 2018. / Photo usage donated by Kelsey Foote.

On March 23, 2023, the STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center traveled to the Gates Foundation in Seattle, WA to participate in the DV Housing First Symposium hosted by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV). Director Caroline LaPorte sat on a panel, moderated by Nan Stoops with Grace Huang, Heidi Notario, Ruby White Starr, and Ruth Glen.

This convening was vital because it dissected a new model for addressing housing insecurity and homelessness for survivors of gender-based violence. The DV Housing First Model comprises three main

components: Mobile advocacy, Flexible financial assistance, and Community engagement. The approach focuses first on getting survivors of domestic violence into stable housing as quickly as possible and then providing the necessary support needed to rebuild their lives.¹ This model asks survivors what their needs are and seeks to meet them, rather than placing an emphasis on what services an advocacy program can offer.² The idea that survivors could have unrestricted funds to support any of their needs, which might impact their housing stability, is one of the main policy reforms that STTARS supports. Often survivors simply need help with car payments to ensure they have reliable

¹bit.ly/3BAT6tl

²Id.

“Flexible funding options reinforce a core belief of STTARS: Survivors know best what they need, and they unconditionally deserve our trust.”

transportation to and from work or school, they need help affording childcare, they need help with a medical or legal bill, or just a few payments to their landlords. Flexible funding options reinforce a core belief of STTARS: Survivors know best what they need and unconditionally deserve our trust.

Finally, with this model, community engagement is met via advocates building lasting connections with community members to better support survivors’ safety and housing stability.³

During the symposium, Dr. Cris Sullivan (Michigan State University), a beloved ally of ours for many years, reviewed the findings of the evaluation project. These findings indicated that the DV Housing First Model is more effective than services as usual in helping survivors achieve housing stability, safety, and improved mental health over two years.⁴ The study followed 406 unstably-housed domestic violence survivors who had recently sought services from one of five domestic violence agencies in the Pacific Northwest.⁵ Of the participants, 12% identified as “Indigenous.”⁶

During the panel conversation, Caroline LaPorte stated that when talking about unhoused relatives from Indian Country and in off-reservation communities, it is imperative to center historical and ongoing land dispossession and other historical policies that have impacted American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) survivors’ access to safe shelter and housing. Further, while the model represents a new option for survivors, it remains unclear what the impact on Tribal communities and AI/AN survivors will or could be (especially given several serious limitations around funding for housing in Tribal communities, the lack of housing inventory

and shelter, and the historical context and root causes for homelessness and housing insecurity in our communities). Survivors in our communities state that there is a persistent and overwhelming need for Tribal domestic violence shelters and that the overall lack of housing inventory inevitably affects models’ ability to be accessible to AI/AN survivors.

The symposium concluded with Dr. Funmi Ayeni (National Resource Center on Domestic Violence) and Dr. Gabriela Lopez-Zeron (Research Consortium on Gender-based Violence Michigan State University) helping us think about moving forward in our shared work addressing homelessness and housing insecurity in partnership with domestic violence survivors. Stating that “communities know what is true and communities hold their knowledge” and that community needs are clear, unwavering, and unchanging, Dr. Ayeni closed us out by having us think about what we do with the stories people share with us. She asked us to hold ourselves accountable and firmly stated, “I hope that, especially for federal partners and philanthropists in the room, that you leave asking communities what questions they want answered, rather than the questions you want answered.”

STTARS wishes Linda Olsen from WSCADV a happy and much-deserved retirement. Linda was one of our first key informant interviews as a new resource center, and we have been honored to know her and share this space with her.



³Id.
⁴bit.ly/41GdpjG
⁵Id.
⁶Id.



About the Conference Artwork: "Interconnectedness" by Joanne Brings Thunder

Joanne Brings Thunder, an enrolled member of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe/Wind River Indian Reservation of Wyoming, is a versatile artist and award-winning architect. Introduced to Shoshone art at a young age, her grandmother, renowned regalia maker Eva McAdams, encouraged her to hone her skills in drawings, beadwork, and creativity.

Joanne's artwork, titled "Interconnectedness," has been selected to represent the 2023 Women Are Sacred Conference, symbolizing the core Shoshone belief that everything in the universe is interconnected. This worldview encompasses respect and care for all living beings, recognizing their purpose and vital role in the script of life. It emphasizes the tight bond between all people, communities, ancestors, future generations, and the land and environment they inhabit, as well as their sacred connection to animals, plants, and the elements.

26
JUN

**WOMEN
ARE
SACRED
2023**

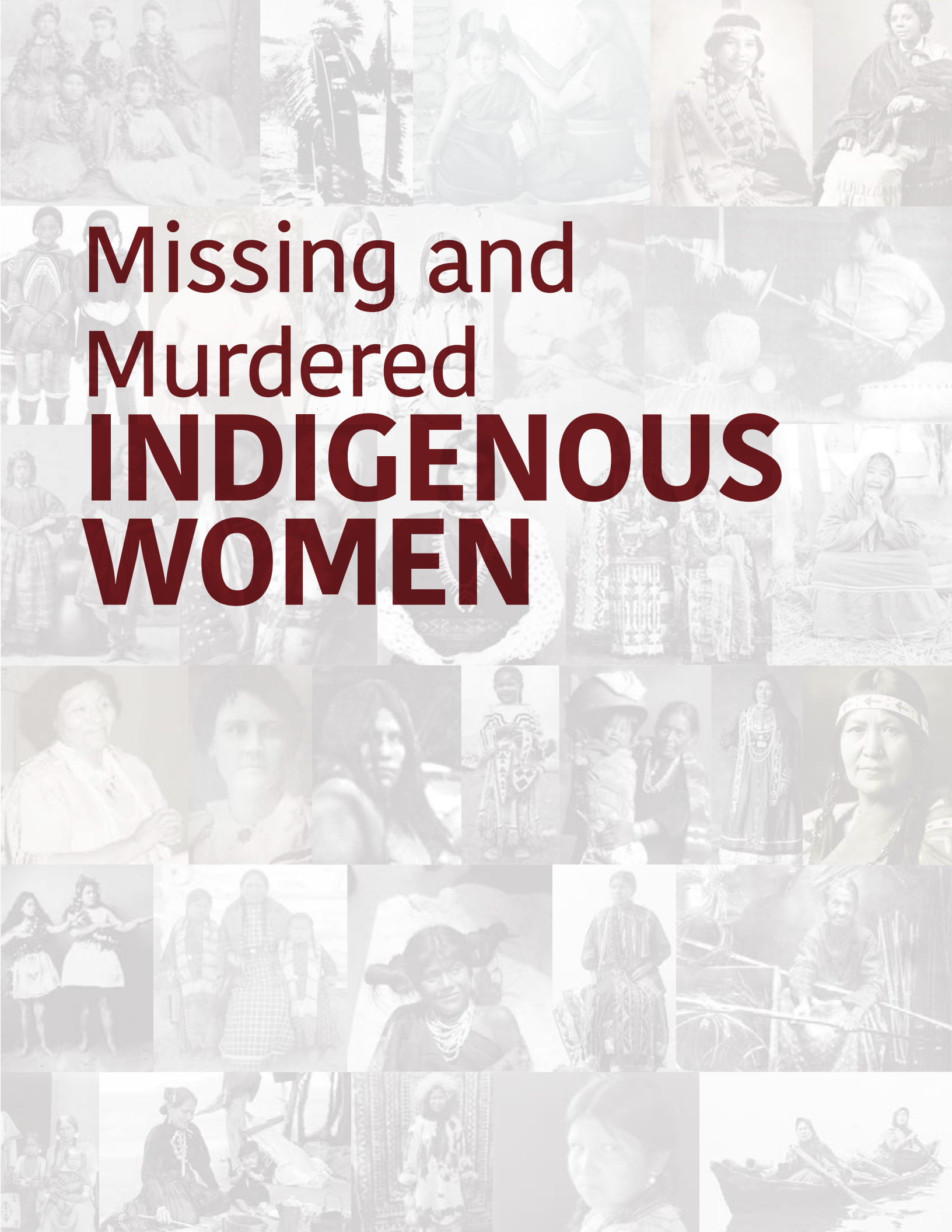


We Are Born From Her:
Protecting Earth
Mother, Her Women,
and Her Children

LOCATION
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

DATES
JUNE 26-28, 2023

niwrc.org/was



Missing and Murdered **INDIGENOUS WOMEN**

By the *Numbers*



**2023 NATIONAL WEEK
OF ACTION FOR MMIW**

From May 1 through May 7, the National Partners Work Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and the MMIW Family Advisors organized a National Week of Action to call the nation and the world to action in honor of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

We express our gratitude to our partners, contributors, panelists, and participants for their unwavering support in making this week possible.

The pursuit of justice is a tireless journey for advocates; we shall persist in amplifying each other's voices until there is healing and justice for our stolen sisters.

we've created a Red Dress Bundle from each unit sold from May 5th will be donated to the National Women's Resource Center!"

2023 NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION FOR

WE URGE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO REAFFIRM AND SUPPORT INDIGENOUS PROTECTIVE SYSTEMS BY RESTORING THE FULL AUTHORITY OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE NATIONS TO PROTECT INDIGENOUS WOMEN.

—JUANA MAJEL DIXON
CO-CHAIR OF THE NCAI TASK FORCE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN

WE
ACT

UN Human Rights Council

Advocacy by Native nations and indigenous women's organizations at the Council include:

Participation in Annual Full-Day Discussion on Women's Human Rights (June session) and Annual Half-Day Discussion on Indigenous Peoples Rights (September session)

Work on improving Annual resolutions on violence against women, including indigenous women and girls and on the rights of indigenous peoples

Delivery of written and oral (in person or video) statements and meeting with UN staff, experts, and states

Need more news, info, resources? Visit [Statement September 2022](#)



10

Virtual Sessions

Presented by NIWRC, ILRC, ATCEV, AKNWRC, STARS, and PONW.

837

Total Registered Individuals

485

Cities Represented Across the United States & Canada

46

Posts Published

Across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram from May 1 through May 7, 2023.

4.2m

Accounts Reached

Across Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram from May 1 through May 7, 2023 via the use of hashtags #MMIW

75,288

Webpage Views

Of the pages niwrc.org/mmiwnatlweek23, niwrc.org/mmiwawareness and the Restoration Magazine: MMIW Edition from May 1 through May 7, 2023.



Speaking Our Truth: Families Taking Action in the Face of MMIW

MMIW Podcast Series

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

In honor of the May 5 Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and the National Week of MMIW, NIWRC's MMIW Family Advisory Group created a five-episode podcast series as part of "Speaking Our Truth, Podcast for Change: Families Taking Action in the Face of MMIW." The series features interviews with families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls who advocate for justice, safety, and healing for their loved ones and communities.

Native victims and their families must confront and navigate a complex legal system and face extreme barriers to justice, including a lack of resources, shelters, law enforcement, and media attention; they are often forced to act as first responders, advocates, and investigators when a relative goes missing. By listening to the stories of families and survivors and learning from their experiences and recommendations for change, we can work to achieve lasting reform to protect Indigenous women and communities.



“We’ve conducted our own searches, we’ve put up posters, we’ve done webinars, we’ve put up a billboard around the Gallup area... The only thing you can do is just continue to fight and hope that the authorities really get on this, and you also hope that they arrest the perpetrator or perpetrators and bring them to justice. That is our goal.”

- CHARLES GUY, *DINÉ*,
SPEAKING OUR TRUTH PODCAST, EPISODE 2

As you listen to the podcasts series, we encourage you to reflect on the powerful words of these families and answer these questions:



WHAT DO JUSTICE AND HEALING MEAN TO YOU?



HOW DOES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR COMMUNITY CHANGE AFTER YOU OR A LOVED ONE EXPERIENCES VIOLENCE?



WHAT IS ONE CHANGE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS OF MMIW?

SEND YOUR FEEDBACK
SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE
SURVEY CLOSES AUG 31

05.55 24.30



Kaysera Stops Pretty Places was reported missing on August 24, 2019, just ten days after her 18th birthday. Her family has repeatedly tried to bring justice for Kaysera. A portrait of Pocahontas hangs in the distance just beyond Kaysera. The portrait, whose artist has yet to be discovered, was painted sometime after 1616 while she was in England. Photo provided by Heather Bruegl.

Not Invisible

Raising Awareness of MMIW Through Art

By Heather Bruegl, *Oneida Nation of Wisconsin/Stockbridge-Munsee*, Policy Specialist, NIWRC

Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, a member of the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Tribes of Montana, should turn 22 this year. Like many other Indigenous women and girls nationwide, Kaysera went missing and was found murdered, with no one held accountable after four years.

Kaysera Stops Pretty Places grew up in Big Horn County, MT and on August 14, 2019, she celebrated her 18th birthday. Ten days later, Kaysera was reported missing.¹ Her body was recovered on August 29. However, her family was not notified until September 11.² There are still many questions concerning Kaysera's disappearance and death. Her family continues to advocate for justice and is still awaiting answers. The circumstances of her death have been described as suspicious. Although her family has shared the evidence they gathered with the authorities,

her case remains unsolved today. A new exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., hopes to shed some light on this crisis and lift Kaysera's name.

When the National Portrait Gallery was founded in 1962, it was tasked with gathering portraits of those who "have made significant contributions to the history, development, and culture of the people of the United States."³ The museum is home to over 23,000 works of art, including a new piece by artist Anna Tsouhlarakis (Diné/Muscogee Creek) titled "A Portrait of an Indigenous Womxn [Removed]."⁴ The piece features a missing poster for Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, who was murdered in 2019.

The museum's *Kinship* exhibition explores the work of eight contemporary artists who look at

the complexity of close, interpersonal relationships.⁵ There are over 40 works in the collection, including Tsouhlarakis' piece featuring Kaysera. "Each of the artists explores intergenerational dynamics and the crucial role of storytelling and memories in fostering connections beyond physical and symbolic thresholds," said Leslie Ureña, curator of photographs at the National Portrait Gallery.⁶

When approached about the *Kinship* exhibition, Anna knew she wanted the piece to be meaningful and impactful. As Anna thought about what the museum already housed and having visited the museum before, she was shocked to see that there weren't many contemporary portraits of Indigenous peoples.

In 2018, the Urban Indian Health Institute released an extensive study on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) crisis. As of 2016, there were 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women. Still, only 116 were logged into the Department of Justice's database, the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs).⁷ The report examines various factors that lead to the MMIW crisis — an issue within reservations and urban Indian populations.

Anna mentions how that study sparked something in her. "I realized that I could contribute to that [MMIW] movement through this performance, and then the idea came to me, that initial idea of doing something with MMIW."⁹ Incorporating images of MMIW into a space like the National Portrait Gallery shows that these stories are just as important to tell in this national space. When coming up with what she would contribute, Anna talked about how she heard of Kaysera's case and then met Grace Bulltail, Kaysera's aunt.

Knowing she wanted to include Kaysera in this exhibition, Anna approached Grace. Anna's work focused on highlighting stories that don't get told. But Anna does not want to stop there. The National Portrait Gallery is just the beginning of the visual and performance work that Anna will be doing around MMIW. She hopes to highlight others who have been lost to this crisis of violence. Aubrey Dameron, a transgender Cherokee woman who went missing in 2019, and Ella Mae Begay, an elder from Navajo Nation who went missing in 2021, will also have pieces done by Anna to help bring awareness to this crisis and highlight that Indigenous women experience violence disproportionately and disparately.

"I've learned a lot through Anna and through the work that she's been doing. I've learned a lot about the people and the families and that families are real activists and at the forefront of the movement and advocating for their family members," said Charlotte Ickes, Curator of Time-Based Media and Special Projects at the National Portrait Gallery.¹² Charlotte looks at the piece on Kaysera as part of a more significant project to bring awareness surrounding MMIW. She also speaks about how the work is curated in the collection and how the placement is critical. "So our early collection, throughout the museum, contains pieces from 1600-1900, and *Kinship* runs perpendicular to the early works. And the site line is such that if you're approaching Anna's work, which features...the poster of Kaysera, in your sight line, there's a portrait of Pocahontas in our collection, a painting—probably taken from life when she was in London. She is considered one of the first missing girls. The position was powerful that this history is not new."¹³

A piece that brings awareness to the MMIW crisis in a national museum is powerful for helping galvanize justice, accountability, and social and systemic changes. Kaysera's family, like so many others, is still waiting for answers. They continue to fight for justice and accountability and bring awareness to her case, which, like all other MMIW stories, is preventable.

Please see www.justiceforkaysera.org for more information.

Kinship will be on display until January 7, 2024.

¹ "Justice for Kaysera: Sovereign Bodies Institute, NIWRC and Pipestem Law unite in call for justice for Kaysera Stops Pretty Places." accessed February 8, 2023, <https://www.niwrc.org/restoration-magazine/november-2020/justice-kaysera-sovereign-bodies-institute-niwrc-and-pipestem>.

² "About the Case", accessed February 8, 2023, <https://www.justiceforkaysera.org/general-5>.

³ "About", National Portrait Gallery, accessed January 31, 2023, <https://npg.si.edu/about-us>.

⁴ National Portrait Gallery. "National Portrait Gallery Presents "Kinship". National Portrait Gallery Press Release, September 28, 2022.

⁵ "Current Exhibitions", National Portrait Gallery, accessed January 31, 2023, <https://npg.si.edu/exhibition/portraiture-now-kinship>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Urban Indian Health Institute, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: A snapshot of data from 71 urban cities in the United States (Seattle, WA: Seattle Indian Health Board: 2018).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Anna Tsouhlarakis, interviewed by author, via Zoom, December 16, 2022.

¹⁰ Andre' B. Rosay, "Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men", *NIJ Journal* 277 (2016): 38-45, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249822.pdf>.

¹¹ Urban Indian Health Institute, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: A snapshot of data from 71 urban cities in the United States (Seattle, WA: Seattle Indian Health Board: 2018).

¹² Charlotte Ickes, interviewed by author, via Zoom, December 16, 2022.

¹³ Ibid.

An Interview with Journalist and Advocate *Luella Brien* on MMIW

Founder, Executive Director, and Editor-In-Chief of Four Points Media and featured in the Showtime Docuseries, ‘Murder in Big Horn’

By Liane Pippin, *Cherokee Nation*, Communications Specialist, NIWRC



(from left to right) Luella Brien, Matthew Galkin, Razelle Benally, Mary Kathryn Nagle, and Lucy Simpson at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2023. / Photo is courtesy of NIWRC

WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOU WORKING ON RIGHT NOW?

It’s a series of biographies and case studies of MMIW cases from before 1990, so cases in our community. We actually are going to take the time to tell a full, developed life story and put that on the website well before any case study goes up. I think a lot of times, especially with the older cases, people have forgotten who they were as a person and they’re just remembered as a photo or a statistic of someone who has been a victim of the crisis. But for those of us in the community that is incredibly hard sometimes to read these stories. So, we wanted to separate the life of someone and then their case.

IF AN ARTICLE IS WRITTEN ABOUT SOMEONE, JUST THE NATURE OF HOW IT’S WRITTEN AND FORMATTED CAN CAUSE HARM.

Yes, we wanted to reduce that harm and be as sensitive to our readers as possible and give them as much control in what they are consuming as possible. I’ve gotten a big push from the community to tell these stories, especially since the “Murder In Big Horn” documentary has come out. So, we were able to get a \$5,000 grant from the International Women’s Media Fund, MMIW News Grant to pay a reporter. Even in how we’re approaching the writing and the research into these articles is different because part of the budget in our grant goes towards the mental and spiritual health of our reporter. Say, they need

to go into a sweat, because, encountering the case study is really affecting them spiritually. We built into the budget giving them mileage, an allowance for wood for the sweat, or for a counseling session if they feel like they need to talk it out. We're protecting our writer on both fronts. It's a really different way to approach harm reduction from not only the reader's perspective but also the writer and editor's perspectives.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION OR MISTAKE REPORTERS MAKE WHEN WRITING ABOUT MMIW OR MMIP?

Probably the biggest mistake they make is only talking to law enforcement. Slowly I think that they are learning more that you have to talk to family and friends as well because the narrative that law enforcement spins sometimes is not the same narrative that the family has and that can be problematic.

WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE AN INDIGENIZED POINT OF VIEW IN JOURNALISM?

I feel like there's a shorthand we have in our own communities. Not necessarily just in Indigenous communities, but people who grew up in small rural communities understand small rural communities. People who grow up in big cities understand big cities, so, you're a good representative of that community. You can kind of navigate the world in those communities. But to have Indigenous reporters covering Indigenous communities is super important because of that shorthand but also because of the trust factor. We've been covered by so many "outsiders" and they've done it wrong so many times that oftentimes people in the community don't want to talk to an outside media company.

COULD YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT DOING IT WRONG WOULD LOOK LIKE?

There are local TV people here that come with interns, and the intern will come and tell a simple story but they'll get names or towns wrong, or the lead of their story will not be 100% accurate, or it'll be a little bit accurate so that if you're not from that community you

don't necessarily realize it's inaccurate. Those tiny things build up over the years and people are done with it.

WHAT DOES JUSTICE LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR ROLE, IN TELLING THE STORY?

The more information I get out into the world, the more the public knows what's going on. Maybe that will spur someone into talking or helping in some way. So, I don't even know if I'm chasing after justice, if that's the right phrase, or if I'm just passionate about information. If I could, I'd tell everybody's story. It's incredibly hard to go talk to family members, to talk to law enforcement, to get the story done right, and then do it all over again for someone else. But, I always tell myself, you know, my family included, if these people had to live through it the least I can do is tell the story.

HOW DO YOU KEEP YOURSELF GROUNDED IN THIS WORK?


Our cultural teachings in our clan system, we have one clan that prays for us, and one clan that keeps us humble, teases us, and we can go to them for advice. I know that there's always people praying for me. It helps me realize that I'm not out here by myself and there's a whole system in place for me as a Crow. My kids keep me humble, that's for sure. I do have moments where I'm incredibly sad over all of it. But that's what counseling is for. It's a weird position to be in sometimes, to be the storyteller of other people's stories. It's a huge responsibility.

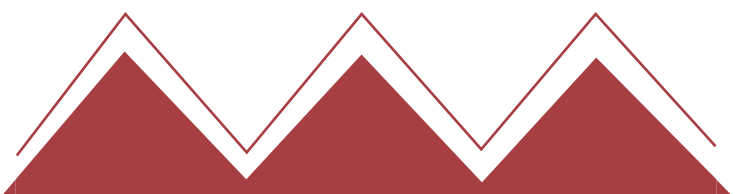
HOW CAN WE SUPPORT YOU?

The two best things would be to visit our website FourPointsPress.com, read our content, and donate money. We are currently looking for funders to get us through 2024. It's really hard to do in a community where our poverty and unemployment levels are so high it's hard to make the ask in our community.

Donate by going to www.fourpointspress.com/donate.

 *Listen* to Luella's Podcast! Go to bit.ly/45d48C0.

 *Watch* "Murder in Big Horn"! Visit bit.ly/30gfnEb.



Weaving a Path to Healing

Heidi Vantrease Embraces Tradition of Ravenstail Weaving to Honor Our MMIW

By Kelsey Foote, *Tlingit (Taakw.aaneidí)*, Communications Specialist, NIWRC



In Kake, AK small village that hugs the coastline of Kupreanof Island, the traditional art of weaving has long been a symbol of storytelling and precise patience. For Heidi Vantrease, a Tlingit weaver and former Tribal advocate for the Village's domestic violence and sexual violence program, weaving has become a means of empowering and healing Native women experiencing trauma.

The Organized Village of Kake Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Program (OVK) DVSAP was founded in 2011 after the Office on Violence Against Women approved their application for funding under the Grants to Indian Tribal Governments Program. This award allowed for the creation and development of strategies to address violence against women across Southeast Alaska—a rural area disproportionately impacted by exceptionally high rates of violence.

Vantrease, who worked for the program since its inception, dedicated several years to providing emergency shelter for survivors, attending medical appointments and court hearings, organizing violence prevention measures, and bringing awareness to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) crisis throughout their smaller communities. In communities like Kake, accessibility is limited to boats or small planes, with little or no local law enforcement. Despite making up only 19% of the population, 47% of the state's reported sexual assault victims are Alaska Native, and over 40% of Alaskan villages are without full-time law enforcement¹:

¹Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC), & Demmert, M. VAWA 2022 and Alaska Indian Tribes: Now That VAWA Is Reauthorized, What Next? Aknwrc.org. Retrieved April 2023.

The apron features the several silhouettes of the red labret, a spruce root basketry pattern symbolizing Kake's missing and murdered. Photo courtesy of Heidi Vantrease.

“The job was challenging from the beginning. Violence against women sadly has been a part of many families’ and communities’ stories within Alaska,” said Vantrease. “Despite our many challenges, we persisted in advocating, training, learning, testifying, planning, collaborating, doing community outreach, and working to make a positive difference. The stories of women, girls, and men we advocated for have forever left an imprint on my heart.”

Following her retirement from the program and relocation to Washington State, Vantrease remains devoted to strong-hearted advocacy, utilizing her weaving to raise awareness toward ending violence against women. She has recently finished a Ravenstail apron over several months, inspired by the need to honor and raise awareness of the MMIWG of Kake. The apron features the silhouettes of the labret, a spruce root basketry pattern, symbolizing the village's eight missing and murdered. In Tlingit culture, labrets were once regarded as symbols of beauty and distinction among women. Therefore, it is fitting that the labret symbols were chosen to honor the lives of the women and girls and commemorate them as such.

Vantrease was encouraged by other advocates to be bold, that one should always speak from the heart in the name of advocating for women, children, and communities at local, state, and national levels. These advocates include Paula Julian of NIWRC, Tami Jerue of AKNWRC, the late Shirley Moses of Healing Native Hearts, Jax Agtuca, Isabel Mills, the first Program Coordinator of the OVK DVSAP, Sitkans Against Family Violence, Joel Jackson, OVK President, the late Ann Jackson-Director of Social Services, Mike Jackson the former Kake magistrate, the OVK DV Task force members, the Emmonak Women’s Shelter, and numerous others.

“This weaving project is me, speaking from the heart,” Vantrease said. “From conception to completion, it tells multiple stories and has many prayers woven into it for the women and girls who were taken as well as their families and friends who are still here. It is my way of honoring the women and girls, their families, my community, and all who have been impacted by violence against women and girls.”

The Ravenstail weaving style is a traditional technique used by the Tlingit people to create robes, aprons, bags, and headbands. The method traditionally involved weaving goat wool as interlocking strands to make twine, used in black, white, and occasionally yellow



Vantrease pictured with the in-progress Ravenstail apron as she begins weaving the red labrets. / Photo courtesy of Heidi Vantrease.

shades, producing geometric woven designs. Today, the vast majority of weavers now employ merino wool as their preferred weaving material due to its widespread availability and accessibility.

After Vantrease's brother initially encouraged her to learn this art form, she sought guidance from numerous weavers within the Southeast Alaska community, such as Della Cheney, Evelyn Vanderhoop, Holly Churchill, Kay Parker, and Lily Hope.

For Vantrease, the impact of the weaving and weaving spaces extends far beyond the craft. It is a symbol of hope that we may create a ripple effect of healing and empowerment that will benefit the lives of survivors and families affected by violence.

“The project itself has many points of inspiration woven into it,” Vantrease says. “One, I recall reading an article on the traditional Tribal values and how elders came together to form this list. Have honor, have patience, hold each other up, speak with care, be strong, and have courage are just a few of the values that came to mind as points of inspiration for the weaving of this piece.”

By incorporating the stories of stolen sisters into her design, Vantrease created a tangible reminder of the ongoing fight to end violence against Native women, to hold the stories of our sisters with us like interwoven threads, twined together with purpose and an unwavering connection to our communities. “Each woman and girl, you are beautiful and honored.”

Vantrease intends to debut the MMIW apron in Kake, AK later this year.

Excerpt From *Searching for Savanna: The Murder of One Native American Woman and the Violence Against the Many*

By Mona Gable

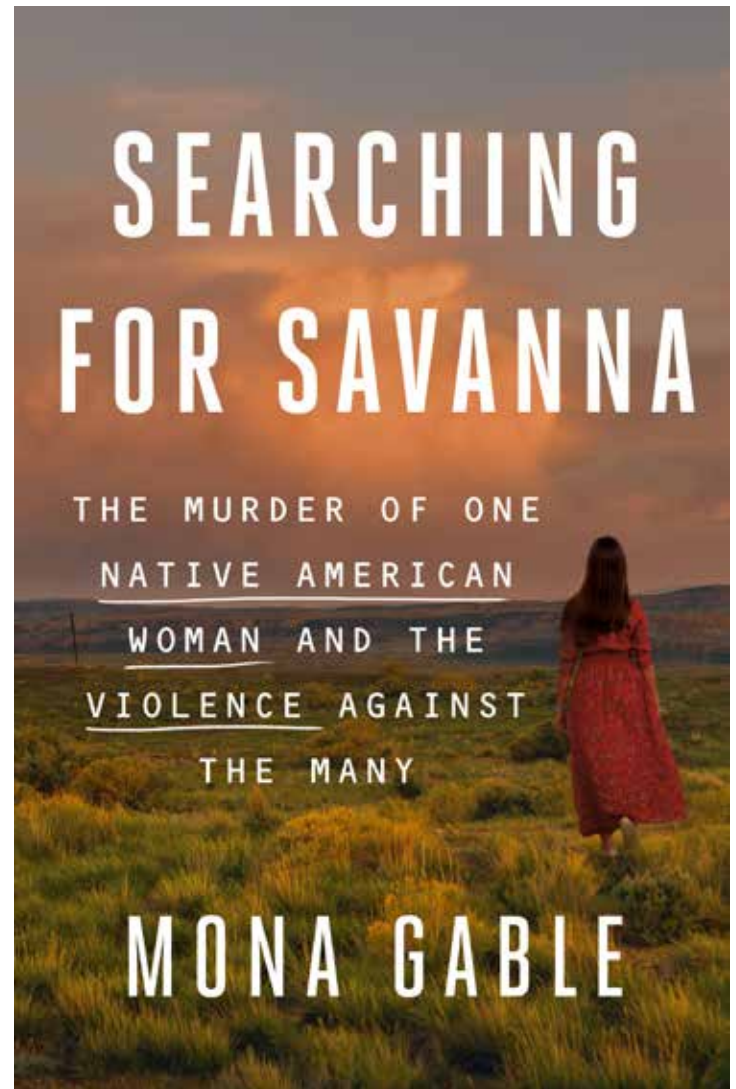
Chapter Thirty-One: Red Dresses

They flew in the freezing winter wind, flapping like birds' wings. Forty red dresses. They hung from bare tree branches, along pale limestone walls, stood in pools of clear trickling water. As people walked past, bundled in scarves, knit caps, heavy coats, they glanced at the silhouettes outside the curvilinear National Museum of the American Indian, in Washington, DC. Some young women, arrested by the eerie display, stopped, took the dresses in. Touched them.

It was March 2019, Women's History Month, and an installation called "The REDress Project" was premiering in the United States. Curated by Canadian artist Jaime Black, who is Métis, the dresses represented missing or murdered Indigenous women. Rich in meaning, the color red was "our sacred lifeblood," Black told an interviewer. "It's where our vitality comes from and our energy and our power as human beings." It also alluded to the loss of that lifeblood through violence.

Since Black had begun soliciting dresses for her project, hundreds had poured in. Isolated, shed of women's bodies, they were meant to command attention, elicit awareness of the MMIW issue in Canada and America, stir discussion. To offer a healing space for Native women who'd suffered violence, for families with missing or murdered loved ones to grieve.

A few blocks away on Capitol Hill the same week, awareness of MMIW and its complexities seemed to be regressing. A bill to renew the Violence Against Women



Act, which expired in 2018, was being discussed in a hearing by the House Committee on the Judiciary. At issue was the groundbreaking 2013 provision that allowed

tribes to prosecute non-Indians for domestic violence on tribal lands. Although it didn't extend to other violent crimes like sexual assault, rape, and sex trafficking that Native advocates wanted, it was viewed as a crucial step in protecting women in Indian Country. After VAWA13 was put into effect by certain tribes, prosecution of non-Indian men who'd committed domestic violence against Native women rose significantly. But there were also acquittals, indicating the tribal justice system worked for non-Native defendants.

As he addressed the judiciary committee, Representative Jim Sensenbrenner, a Republican representing Wisconsin, appeared not to know, to apprehend, this. He argued the reauthorization bill was unconstitutional, wanted to scrap the tribal jurisdiction provision entirely. To that end, the white-haired conservative proposed an amendment to H.R.1585. "I have been on this committee for forty years," he said emphatically. "We have never had a hearing on whether we should take away the constitutional rights of non-Indians who ended up being charged in tribal court."

Representative Jerry Nadler, the chair of the committee, a Democrat from New York, urged bipartisan support. But every GOP member sided with Sensenbrenner, voting for his amendment. Native advocates were blindsided. Juana Majel-Dixon, the secretary of the National Congress of American Indians, and cochair of a national task force to prevent violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women, told reporters, "I was disheartened, and frankly appalled, to see an amendment offered that would have stripped tribal governments of their inherent authority to hold non-Indians accountable for domestic violence crimes on tribal lands."

In the end, Democrats had the majority, so Sensenbrenner's amendment failed, H.R.1585 was approved. But not a single Republican voted for it.

Two days later, an historic event occurred in Washington, DC. The first-ever hearing in the House of Representatives on the "hidden" MMIW crisis. It had been called by the House Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States.

At 9 a.m., about two dozen people gathered in a room in the Longworth House Office Building. The mood was quiet, somber. Representative Deb Haaland of New Mexico, a committee member, had made MMIW her signature issue. Recently elected, one of only two Native female members of Congress, she had already helped push two bills that

addressed the crisis: Savanna's Act and, her own measure, the Not Invisible Act. Her presence was strong. In honor of missing and murdered Indigenous women, she told her colleagues this morning, she had worn red.

Within minutes, Representative Ruben Gallego of Arizona, the committee chair, mentioned the murder of Savanna, the fate of other Native women and girls. There were some expert witnesses testifying. Sarah Deer, a citizen of the Muscogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma, the professor of women, gender, and sexuality studies at the University of Kansas. The lawyer also served as chief justice for the Prairie Island Indian Community Court of Appeals. In her prepared statement, she thanked the committee for inviting her in the Mvskoke language.

Sitting at a table, she emphasized the historical underpinnings of the MMIW crisis. "Native women and girls have been disappearing since 1492," she said, "when Europeans kidnapped Native people for shipment back to Europe. The targeted killing of Native women is also not a new phenomenon."

She highlighted the stunning lack of numbers, the absence of any "formal government-funded national database" that tracks cases of MMIW.

There was, she noted without irony, an Indigenous-led organization doing precisely that: the Sovereign Bodies Institute (or SBI). Since 2015, the nonprofit had been culling data from family members and through open-source reporting, trying to grasp the problem's scope.

About the Author

Mona Gable is a writer/author who has covered violence against Indigenous women over the years, including releasing her recent book *Searching for Savanna: The Murder of One Native American Woman and the Violence Against the Many* and an article honoring Tillie Black Bear in the Smithsonian Magazine. She released her book April.

For more information or to purchase *Searching for Savanna*, please check out www.mona-gable.com.



Housing as a Mitigating Factor for MMIWG

STTARS MMIWG Practical Responses for Housing Authorities, Property Managers, Residents, Tribal Council/Leadership, and Community

By Caroline LaPorte, J.D., *Immediate Descendant of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians*, Director, and Gwendolyn Packard, *Ihanktonwan Dakota*, Senior Housing Specialist, STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center

The STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center (STTARS) thanks the National Workgroup on Safe Housing for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Survivors of Gender-Based Violence for their input on this document. STTARS prioritizes our Workgroup in an advisory capacity because it centers lived experience and brings together advocates and survivors at different points on the intersection of gender-based violence and housing insecurity. Requests for training and technical assistance that STTARS has responded to over the past year and a half have centered on the practical approaches that housing entities, Tribal leadership, residents, property managers, advocates, and communities can do to prevent gender-based violence—particularly missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG). This article is based on past training and our Practical Responses Brief (see bit.ly/42KORr7).

STTARS prioritizes safe housing and shelter for Indigenous survivors of gender-based violence. Safe housing and shelter access are key to preventing MMIWG. This is a serious and pervasive issue that impacts Indigenous peoples in both on and off-reservation communities. The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) and countless other families, advocates, organizations, and researchers address MMIWG from a framework that considers prevention, intervention, and postvention. At times, the law enforcement response and the collection of data have been prioritized to address MMIWG. These responses are critical to analyze and implement. However, the prevention framework must be urgently prioritized.

STTARS holds that housing is a critical preventative response to MMIWG. Being an unsheltered relative represents an incredible risk for victimization, and there is a strong correlation between domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, stalking, and MMIWG. Survivors of domestic violence rely on safe housing and shelter access when experiencing abuse. In fact, 63% of all homeless women are survivors of domestic violence. It means that most individuals who utilize public housing, Tribal housing, and emergency shelter services have unique needs related to their experiences of violence. It also means that Tribal Housing Authorities, Tribal Designated Housing Entities, property management companies, and other employees must be aware of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, sexual assault, violations of protection orders, and human trafficking.

It is also necessary to view the safe housing and shelter crisis on and off-reservation within its historical context. Colonization introduced the violent thought that land and bodies could be owned. All of this is rooted in white supremacy. The same mindset that says black and brown bodies are inferior and should be owned or assimilated is the same mindset that says land should be put to its best use to serve imperial or commercial purposes. This same mindset upholds extraction with no regard for the next generations, our drinking water, our airways, or how Indigenous peoples in the U.S. can continue to practice culture and tradition on our lands. It is the same mindset in which imperialist governments enter and break treaties. It is a mindset that fully ignores consent, autonomy, and sovereignty on the part of Tribal Nations

and Native women's bodies. Acts of violence against Native women and violence against the Land cannot be viewed as randomized or even consequential occurrences but as manifestations of a larger goal: Eradicating Indigenous people from their lands.

This mindset is best seen perhaps in the MMIWG space, where the violence has culminated in death. MMIWG is about more than the law enforcement response or lack of response to violence in Indian country though those pieces are certainly detrimental and a critical component of both intervention and response to violence. The crux of MMIWG is the length of time in which AI/AN people have been continuously devalued, fetishized, dehumanized, and discarded and how genocide and colonization have informed and served as underpinnings in federal policy. MMIWG is also a symptom of the culmination of the federal government's failure to fulfill its trust responsibilities, including the obligation to assist Indian Tribes in safeguarding the lives of Indian women and its role in historically degrading Tribal sovereignty.

Violence against the land, the treatment of land as a commodity, the dispossession and expropriation of land, and violence against Native women are tethered. Framing this as state violence is fair. If we consider the arch of the United States' history in regard to safe housing and shelter for Native people, we see massive land theft from the Indigenous populations that existed here long before 1776, forced removal of Indigenous people from their homelands, Supreme Court opinions that memorialize and create precedent out of the now denounced Doctrine of Discovery and manifest destiny, the Indian Civilization Act (1819), the Homestead Act (1862), the Dawes Act (1887), the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (1920), the Indian Relocation Act (1956), failed consultation, unpermitted pipelines, failed responses to natural disasters, failure to appropriate congressional dollars to Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (1996), failure to allocate Victims of Crime Act dollars to Tribal governments until 2018, the federal relocation of Tribes and villages due to the climate crisis and so on. These laws and policies are an abject failure of the United States to meet its obligation to Indian people, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiians.

This article provides best practices and outdated code provisions. For a full copy of this article, please see the full, online version.

Best Practices

Housing Authorities

- Hire Native property managers.
- Employ flexibility in requiring application fees/credit checks.
- Remove barriers for survivors who have past convictions.
- Prioritize gender-based violence survivors on housing waitlists (identify and implement a process for identifying survivors that keeps their information confidential as federal law requires).
- Have a language access plan.
- Create policies that support survivor safety and confidentiality.
- Receive training from Native domestic violence and sexual assault organizations.
- Be community aware.
- Implement practices and policies that create safety and security.
- Avoid making survivors feel surveilled, which can harm their sense of security.
- Employ flexibility in resident requirements and compliance with rules (i.e., enforcement of fines).
- Advocate for a change or clarification if an agency standard impacts survivors of gender-based violence in a disparate way.
- Require and provide all employees with ongoing training on culturally appropriate assistance/services and why they are ESSENTIAL for responding to intersectional issues in both on and off-reservation communities.
- Do not conflate Diversity/Equity and Inclusion with direct action in response to Anti-Indigeneity/Oppression.
- Understand intersectional issues (like child welfare impacts, legal issues encompassing criminal and civil frameworks, PPO access, substance misuse, mental health issues, etc.) and strive to make policies and practices reflect this understanding.
- Accountability is both a practice and a response.

Property Managers

- Be a good relative.
- Know the law around filing a missing person's report. Be aware of the implications of filing a report for special populations (i.e., juveniles with prior foster care involvement).

Safe Housing for All Our *Relatives*.

- Language barriers create serious safety impacts and make spaces inaccessible, so have a language access plan.
- Trust survivors.
- Collaborate with Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault advocates, programs, and shelters.
- Bring in non-domestic violence and sexual assault-related organizations that address interrelated/intersectional issues as needed.
- Utilize policies that screen in rather than screen out.
- Locate or develop culturally appropriate screening tools that are local-specific.
- Ensure that leadership and staff are engaged in intentional internal work around bias/prejudice.
- Create safe and secure spaces for documents (IDs, social security cards, Tribal IDs/enrollment documentation, medical records, court records) and make sure that temporary residents have meaningful access.
- Diversify staff so they represent the community they serve.
- Stop evicting/fining for infractions such as noise complaints/residents being behind in utilities/having other individuals in the unit.
- Make sure staff receive cultural safety training.
- Know the resources in your community in particular, culturally rooted resources that address gender-based violence.
- Craft policies that create a strong sense of community and prioritize safety.
- Seek out and receive ongoing training from Native domestic violence and sexual violence organizations.
- Post hotline information and have support readily available.
- Know the requirements in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) around confidentiality and ensure that you comply if required.
- Practical considerations such as good lighting in common spaces, ring doorbells (or alternatives), key fobs, community safety supports, and creating common time together (meals, ceremony, etc.).
- Receive ongoing training on harm reduction/trauma-informed care.
- Hiring practices should emphasize lived experience.
- Ask yourself these questions: If you are culturally appropriate, what do you do? What does it look like in daily practice?

Residents

- Be a good relative.
- Be aware of surroundings and routines.
- Observe and report but do not surveil fellow residents.
- Lead awareness activities.
- Document barriers.
- When possible, provide mutual aid and support.
- Advocate for necessary changes.
- Claim the power of your voice in the community and public spaces on legislative and policy issues.

Tribal Council

- Be a good relative.
- Fund housing projects.

- Start a domestic violence shelter or other emergency safe place.
- Apply for Rapid Rehousing and Transitional Housing Funds.
- Fund domestic violence and sexual assault programming and services.
- Support the needs of families when someone goes missing, such as creating space to work, making copies, giving access to a communications/media specialist if you have one, and bringing in coordinators and therapeutic services.
- Pass laws that promote prevention ensuring access to safe housing/VAWA compliance/domestic violence leave policies.
- Avoid political interference in Court processes/law enforcement/community or family services.
- Be aware of the vulnerabilities experienced by some families, even if it is not the experience of most of your community members.
- Enhance and expand Tribal member service programs and victim/survivor services that include legal services.
- Seek out and receive ongoing training from Native domestic violence or sexual assault organizations.
- Commit to hiring practices to sufficiently vet individuals with access to vulnerable community members.

Community

- Advocate for increased housing options and lower barriers access to housing/shelter.
- Organize.
- Locate pro bono lawyers in your community.
- Create a “Know your rights” campaign.
- Be community aware.
- Educate others on the intersection of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, stalking, dating violence, and homelessness/housing insecurity.
- Address trauma.
- Care for your community/your people (mutual aid where available).
- Ensure that you are familiar and up to date with local resources.
- Claim the power of your collective voice in the community and public spaces on legislative and policy issues.
- Build relationships with Tribal, local, state, and federal policymakers (Tribal council, city

commissioners, city council, local agency leads, and Congress members).

Additionally, through our review of some Tribal housing codes, STTARS has compiled some provisions (illustrative) that are outdated and impact survivors’ experiences. STTARS operates from a sovereignty framework, and just as we hold true that safe housing is not a negotiable need of survivors, we also maintain that Tribes are in the best possible position to care for and govern their people. We encourage Tribes to locate their housing and related codes and to review them for any of the following:

- Nuisance Ordinances.
- One-Strike Laws.
- Expedited Eviction Codes (usually related to substance misuse).
- Requirement of certain disclosures (prior convictions/other application disclosures regarding systems interactions).
- Financial barriers to accessing housing (application fees, prior evictions, lack of employment).
- Access to information can be limited or restricted by internet access/sometimes not publicly available;
- Rigid rules around care/maintenance of housing units.
- Rigid rules regarding pets (prohibition).
- Limitations regarding who can reside in a unit.
- Citations/fines for garbage/maintenance/upkeep.
- Lack of ADA compliance or similar regulations/ordinances.
- Substance abuse/misuse policies (clean urine analysis).

The major issue with many of these provisions is that emphasis is placed on the protection of an asset rather than on the survivor. This lens has a detrimental impact on survivors living within these units. Additional barriers include decentralization of codes/ordinances and regulations, rules relating to children (curfews), non-Native Organizations serving as Tribally Designated Housing Entities, and views of survivors generally.





Legislative **REFORMS**





Legislative UPDATE

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

NIWRC.QUORUM.US

May 5 National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Resolutions and Presidential Proclamation Introduced

U.S. Senators Steve Daines (R-MT) and Jon Tester (D-MT) introduced S.Res 194, a resolution to designate May 5, 2023, as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls, which passed in the Senate by Voice Vote.

Representatives Dan Newhouse (R-WA-4) and Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-7) also introduced H.Res.353, a resolution to designate May 5, 2023 as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.

President Biden signed a Presidential Proclamation for May 5, 2023 as Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day. The proclamation highlights the need for coordination between jurisdictions, agencies, and borders to address the crisis of violence against Indigenous people.



Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety (BADGES) for Native Communities Act

On February 16, Senators Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) and John Hoeven (R-ND) introduced the bipartisan *BADGES for Native Communities Act* (S. 465) in the Senate. On March 1, Representatives Ruben Gallego (D-AZ-3), Dan Newhouse (R-WA-4), and Sharice Davids (D-KS-3) introduced the *BADGES Act in the House* (H.R. 1292).

The bill would promote recruitment and retention of federal law enforcement, address inefficiencies in federal missing persons data systems, increase Tribal access to the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs), and establish a grant program to improve coordination efforts between states, Tribes, and Tribal organizations on cases of missing and murdered persons.



Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)

On April 13, 2023, Representatives Lucy McBath (D-GA-7), Gwen Moore (D-WI-4), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-1), and Young Kim (R-CA-40) reintroduced the *Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act of 2023* (H.R. 2604). FVPSA provides critical funding for shelter and supportive services for victims of domestic violence, including those in Indian Country.

The FVPSA reauthorization bill provides critical support for shelters, coalitions, training and technical assistance centers, children's services, emergency response hotlines, and prevention initiatives. The FVPSA is also the only federal grant program solely dedicated to domestic violence shelter and supportive services. It is the primary source of funding for these services for Indian Tribes.

The FVPSA would expand grant programs and make many needed improvements so that more survivors have access to support and safety, including:

- Adjustment of the funding distribution formula to increase the amount that Tribes receive from 10% to 12.5%;
- Dedicated funding for Tribal coalitions to provide culturally-appropriate technical assistance to Tribes;
- Permanent funding for the national Indian domestic violence hotline;
- Permanent funding for the Alaska Native Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce disparities facing Native victims; and
- Permanent funding for the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence.



Strengthening Protections for Domestic Violence and Stalking Survivors Act of 2023

On February 9, Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Representatives Debbie Dingell (D-MI-6), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-1), and Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18) introduced the bipartisan, bicameral *Strengthening Protections for Domestic Violence and Stalking Survivors Act of 2023* (S. 321/H.R. 905).

The bill would close what is known as the “dating loophole” or “boyfriend loophole” by preventing convicted stalkers and former dating partners convicted of domestic violence from purchasing or owning firearms. Current law prohibits spouses, former spouses, those cohabitating together, and those who have a child in common from owning a firearm if there is a protective order against them. The *Strengthening Protections for Domestic Violence and Stalking Survivors Act* would add convicted stalkers and dating partners convicted of domestic violence to this list to close those gaps that embolden abusers and put women in danger.



The *Restoration* of Native Sovereignty and Safety of Native Women

A Name and Strategy

By Paula Julian, Kerri Colfer, and Heather Bruegl, NIWRC Policy Team

Every name has a story, and every story has a beginning. Such is true of the name, story, and beginning of *Restoration Magazine*.

The story of the magazine's name—*Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety of Native Women*—reflects a strategy for increasing the safety of Native women through strengthening the sovereignty of Indian Nations. Why such a long name for a magazine that began with only 21 pages? The answer can be found on the pages of the first *Restoration*:

“

We dedicate this publication to our relatives, the seen and unseen. Our grandmothers and grandfathers suffered and died so that we might live. We feel the spirits of our ancestors every day and are thankful for strength and fortitude they bring to this call for action.

—*Restoration Magazine*
February 2004, Volume 1 Issue 1,
“Acknowledgements”

Restoration was born in February of 2004 as a way for the movement to win the inclusion of a separate

¹ *Restoration Magazine*: Volume 1, Issue 1. February 2004.

title within the 2005 *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)*—today known as Title IX. Safety for Indian Women. From its birth, it saw the world through the eyes of the American Indian and Alaska Native women and Tribal Nations who created it—content developed and written from their lived experience. In this way, *Restoration*'s story is that of a political magazine created to make fundamental social justice changes based on the experience of their movement to live free of violence. Its long life is a testament to the importance of the stories between its covers.

In the '90s, the movement's founding grandmothers knew the roadblocks to safety were far greater than the need for federal grant dollars and law enforcement. While funding was desperately needed, a much larger problem existed. Holding individual abusers accountable was blocked by the governmental system that allowed abusers to walk free. A government system signaling to the world that violence committed against Native women is tolerated—it is just the way things are.

“While increased resources to Indian tribes have saved lives, fundamental legal reform essential to the safety of Native women remain unresolved. Legal barriers and lack of resources to Indian tribes limit the ability of tribes to address violence against Native women. The ability of a government to protect its citizens from the violence of rapists and batterers rests at the heart of sovereignty.”¹

If responding to individual violence is like climbing a steep and rugged mountain, then reforming the

government system and allowing the violence to occur is like moving that same mountain. It requires digging deep to uncover the federal laws dating back to the 1800s and their implementation that exacerbate such violence.

“The safety and status of Native women have never been about just one offender and the criminal justice system. The oppression of Native women is reflected in continuing and drastic poverty, extreme levels of homelessness, lack of medical care, food, transportation, employment, childcare, and other lack of resource dilemmas faced by Native women attempting to escape violence.”²

The reality of the inhuman treatment of Native women in the U.S. is a lived experience, and systemic changes are needed.

“The questions aren’t ‘Why do women go back? Or why don’t they report or cooperate with law enforcement?’ The question is, ‘How in the world do Native women who are battered or experience violence ever survive?’”³

Where to begin? What exact laws and policies needed to be changed? Since 2004, *Restoration* has supported the movement by creating a space to discuss and understand the lived experience of Indigenous women, their Nations, and peoples and the systemic changes needed.

Dissecting Colonization, the Rule of Law, and Safety of Indigenous Women

In the first meeting with the U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Grants Office in March of 1995, Tillie Black Bear and other advocates clearly stated their worldview for implementing the new VAWA; we are sovereign women of sovereign Nations. This position held two overarching themes: domestic violence is not traditional, and domestic violence is an extension of U.S. colonization.

This political approach guided the twist and turns over the years of struggle to win and implement federal reforms and strengthen sovereignty.

This view faced many challenges, but three were constant: First, a challenge to sovereignty. Second, to the legitimacy of the reforms being proposed. Third, to how changes in law or policy should be implemented.

Restoration played an essential role in offering an Indigenous counter position to each of these challenges. It explained how a reform specifically increased or decreased the safety of Indigenous women from abusers, rapists, and other predators. In this way, survivors of abuse and their advocates directly provided leadership using their individual experiences as living examples of why the reform was needed and how it would increase or decrease the risk of violence.

Restoration became a resource in national discussions of legal and policy reforms, annual consultations mandated under VAWA 2005, etc. It offered answers from an Indigenous view of proposed government positions and changes. The testimony of Diane Millich during U.S. Senate Hearings during the VAWA 2013 struggle to pass the Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction is one of many examples. Diane’s testimony of the injustices she faced by the federal and state governments countered the opposition to returning Tribal jurisdiction over non-Indians. This struggle and many others are given a voice on the pages of *Restoration* to support building the movement “beyond the shelter doors” and informing national policymakers.⁴ This content is why, for nearly 20 years, many look to *Restoration* to understand current issues.

On February 23, 2004, the first *Restoration Magazine* was published to inform and educate national policymakers of the importance of a separate tribal title within the VAWA 2005.



² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ ClanStarVideos. (2014, July). *Beyond the Shelter Doors with Tillie Black Bear*. YouTube: bit.ly/3Myu4S3.



“Sovereignty and safety are hand and glove. The sovereignty of Indian tribes is connected to the safety of Native women. This connection is the natural relationship of a people to their nation; it is also the natural relationship of a government to protect and safeguard the lives of its citizens.”⁵

—Former Chairwoman Terri Henry,
Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians,
Supreme Court of The United States

The movement was fortunate to have the leadership of women who understood the foundational role of U.S. law in normalizing the ongoing spectrum of violence committed against Indian Nations and women. In the middle of intense efforts to discredit calls for change through misinformation, this leadership kept their “eyes on the prize.” Understanding change is step-by-step. The key ingredient being political clarity by defining the difference between American Indian and Alaska Native viewpoints versus a Western viewpoint. In this way, steady progress occurred from 1994-2013.

The movement struggled to reform the Federal Indian Law, that while unjust and biased, was generally assumed by lawmakers and federal agencies to be unchallengeable. And yet the movement—Native women, their advocates, and Nations—knew that Indian Nations never agreed to these laws. The “Rule of Law” principle of U.S. democracy is based on the “consent of the governed.” There was no consent to the set of laws they demanded to be changed to restore safety to the lives of Native women.

Fundamentally, these old laws are based on the 550-year-old Doctrine of Discovery, pronounced on May 4, 1493, by Pope Alexander and later expanded. It granted European nations the right to claim the lands they discovered on behalf of Christendom. The legal foundation of the U.S. is bound to the Doctrine of Discovery, justifying the genocide and forced

assimilation of Indigenous peoples. For example, in 1823, Chief Justice John Marshall’s opinion in the landmark case *Johnson v. M’Intosh* invoked the Doctrine, and as recent as the 2005 Supreme Court decision ruling against a land claim by the Oneida Indian Nation.⁶ On March 30, 2023, Pope Francis renounced the Doctrine of Discovery. The Vatican released a press statement stating,

“The Catholic Church therefore repudiates those concepts that fail to recognize the inherent human rights of Indigenous Peoples, including what has become known as the legal and political “Doctrine of Discovery.”⁷

How will this repudiation by the Pope impact the legal foundation for the theft of lands and governmental policies under the rule of law? Will the U.S. now repudiate the Doctrine and amend old laws that endanger the lives of Indigenous women and diminish Tribal and Native Hawaiian sovereignty? To date, a deafening silence appears to be the response. It poses a historic question for the movement’s future: How should the Indigenous grassroots organize to hold the U.S. government accountable?

Political Clarity as Legal Barriers Change: Repudiation of the “Doctrine of Discovery”

All social justice movements face the challenge of identifying a clear path forward to remove the specific injustice faced. To win victories requires both an analysis of why the law or policy is unjust and a way, a vehicle, for sharing the analysis. *Restoration* helped in both ways.

The overarching strategy of strengthening sovereignty to increase safety came naturally as part of the struggle for survival of Indigenous women within their Nations against colonization. The movement’s history has a specific story, response to injustice and violence, as it unfolded in the ‘70s, ‘80s, ‘90s, and into the new millennium.

The injustices facing Indigenous Nations and Peoples appear endless because the reach of colonization is multilayered and over 400-years-old. Individual safety cannot be disconnected from the social system—including, but not limited to, the justice, health,

⁵ Brief of Amici Curiae National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center and 104 Additional Organizations, p. 20.

⁶ *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation*, 544 U.S. 197 (2005).

⁷ Joint Statement of the Dicasteries for Culture and Education and for Promoting Integral Human Development on the “Doctrine of Discovery.”

educational, and economic response—in which we live. Thus, the broadest context for the safety of Native women is the overall safety of Indigenous peoples within the United States.

To understand everyday safety for Native women living in the intersection of the federal government and Tribal Nations, it is essential to raise discussions and analysis to an abstract level, to determine the milestones needed next to allow continued progress. In the early years of the *Restoration*, these themes were summarized as lessons drawn from reality that could be applied to organizing efforts. These themes were published in *Restoration* from 2008 to 2015 as lessons.

Lessons of the NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women

The grandmothers of the movement built a grassroots response of Tribal women anchored by advocates—most of whom were survivors. The strategy of restoring sovereignty to strengthen safety was at the heart of the movement. It focused on federal reforms because Indian Tribes are separate sovereigns with the authority of governments, but limited over time by the U.S. government. A tangled web of illogical, legal, and policy limitations bind the authority of Tribal governments to protect their peoples.

Restoration provided a communication link for new and ongoing issues necessary to act. Content for *Restoration* reflected an organizing approach for change. The policy team of NIWRC, working in partnership with the movement, wrote articles offering analysis essential to political clarity. From 2012 to 2015 an entire page was printed in *Restoration* titled: “Lessons of the NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women.” These four lessons offered general themes for organizing under the broad umbrella of the National Congress of American Indians Task Force on Violence Against Women. Two focus on defending sovereignty and two on building the movement.

American Indians and Alaska Natives: Recognition of the sovereign relationship of Indian Tribes in the lower-forty-eight, to the 227 Tribes located in Alaska

Native villages. In 2004, this emphasis was critical to defending the sovereignty of the 227 federally recognized Indian Tribes in Alaska. The Task Force saw the attempt to separate Alaska Native Villages as less than the lower-forty-eight Tribal Nations, threatening the sovereignty of all Indian Nations. While still facing many challenges, changes from the mid-1990s to 2023 (including the recent inclusion of the Alaska Subtitle of VAWA 2022) clearly state the progress that must continue.

Addressing Public Law 83-280: In 1953, during the termination era, Congress enacted what is known as PL 280, transferring federal criminal justice authority to specific state governments without the consent of the Indian Tribes impacted. The federal and state misinterpreted PL 280 to grant sole jurisdiction to the state governments versus shared Tribal/state jurisdiction. Unfortunately, it was not corrected until 2000 under Attorney General Janet Reno. This misinformation impacted the development of Tribal criminal justice systems within PL 280 states. The Department of Interior, as a policy interpretation, denied Indian Tribes in PL 280 states access to federal funds to develop Tribal justice systems.⁸

Balancing Western and Indigenous Justice Approaches⁹: The strategic goal of the NCAI Task Force is to increase safety and restore the sacred status of American Indian and Alaska Native women. A dual approach to achieving this goal exists. One approach is to reform the Western justice system’s response to crimes of violence against Indian women. The other approach is strengthening and restoring the full authority of Indigenous justice systems, whose Tribal beliefs and practices operate as protectors of women within their Tribal Nations.

Broad Communication: *Restoration* was published to inform and share with Tribal leadership, advocates, and Tribal communities emerging issues impacting the safety of Native women. The magazine continues to serve as an information bridge for the thousands of Tribal leaders and community members to understand and participate in the national movement. *Restoration* recognizes that to understand the ongoing changes in law and policy affecting safety, Tribal leaders, advocates, and community members need a bridge to access the necessary information.

⁸ Memorialized in February 2014 *Restoration Magazine*, “SCIA Oversight Hearing: Supporting Local Control, Removing Barriers in VAWA 2013.”

⁹ “Culture is our Best Protective Factor and Healing Practice,” *Restoration*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, at 20 (June 2021).

The Twist and Turns to Win Historical Victories, 2000 to 2023

The pages of *Restoration* for nearly 20 years provided information on crucial legislative victories. At times, *Restoration* coverage provided steps forward, other times steps backward, and often a delay or pause. These articles document and provide a record and analysis to support the movement's organizing efforts to inform and educate Congress and the administration. The issues addressed are national in character and frequently embedded into the structure of the United States. In many ways, they threaten the safety of future generations of Native women, and potentially, all Native peoples.

Discussions focused on how each issue endangered everyday safety and created roadblocks to addressing other legal and policy matters that prevent a woman's safety. In 1995, five issues of the law and policy were prioritized as critical roadblocks. First, the lack of jurisdiction over non-Indians committing violence against Native women—partially resolved by the VAWA 2013 and 2024. Second, the sentencing limitation on Tribal courts to impose a maximum of one year per offense—resolved by the passage of the Tribal Law and Order Act in 2010. Third, the failure of the U.S. to provide adequate federal funds to enhance the tribal response, specifically safety centers for Native women—partially resolved by amendments increasing the tribal funding levels under the VAWA 2005 and the Victims of Crime Act. Fourth, strengthening the federal-Tribal response—partially resolved by creation of the Tribal Law and Order Act Commission. Fifth, Tribal access to the National Criminal Justice Databases—resolved by the creation of the VAWA 2013 Tribal Access Program.

All five issues were raised consistently, beginning with the amendments proposed to VAWA 2000, and lacked congressional support for inclusion in the draft VAWA. However, through grassroots organizing efforts, this opposition changed over time to support in 2005, 2013 and 2022.

In addition, the issue of the United States fulfilling its federal trust responsibility to Indian Nations and the safety of Native women while ongoing was significantly improved by raising the percentage of funds dedicated to Indian Tribes under specific VAWA grant programs beginning in 2005. The funding level was lifted from the initial 3% to 10%, creating a new standard of allocating

resources to address specific issues under VAWA and subsequently impacting other federal grant programs.

Amicus Briefs to the Supreme Court of the United States: After the passage of VAWA 2013 restoring partial jurisdiction over non-Indians, it became clear that winning legal victories also required defending legal victories. The NIWRC then launched the VAWA Sovereignty Initiative to protect VAWA 2013. The amicus briefs filed reflect the reality of Native women under the U.S. government. These briefs are the Indigenous position on essential legal issues under review by the U.S. Supreme Court. *Restoration* provides space for this initiative and for each *amicus* brief filed.

In summary, since its birth in 2004, *Restoration* consistently supported the movement's growth by providing a political and Indigenous worldview for addressing violence against Indigenous women. It offered a space to understand the political analysis of the twists and turns, advances and setbacks, of injustices against Native women and proposed reforms to correct them. The movement and *Restoration* remained as new staff and newly elected officials came and went from federal agencies and from Congress. When a new administration asked, "What issues to address?" the general answer was the documented, decades-long list of foundational issues called for from the pages of *Restoration*. All the major legal obstacles identified in the mid-1990s were amended. While more is needed, these changes highlight the importance of political clarity in tearing down the walls of ignorance and injustice. Since its beginning, *Restoration's* life carried the belief of the "right of Native women, as Native women, to live free of violence."

Where do we go in the next 20 years? What exact reforms, laws, and policies need to be changed? How do we continue to inform, communicate, and provide the political will through *Restoration* to move mountains, effect systemic change, and restore respect for Indigenous women? How do we develop a strategy to understand and address intimate partner abuse, sexual violence, and sex trafficking of our Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ relatives? How will the next generation of advocates honor this legacy and deepen the restoration of Indigenous women's safety to address systemic roadblocks? How will we support Native Hawaiian advocates as they organize to develop their specific Indigenous grassroots response?

18th Annual Tribal Government-to-Government Consultation On Violence Against *Women*

Priority Issues to Address Violence Against Indian Women

By NIWRC



Tribal Nations and advocates identified the following issues, concerns, and recommendations during past annual consultations (2006 – 2022), through National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) resolutions (2000 – 2022), through regional Tribal organization resolutions, at numerous national meetings, Congressional hearings, and Hill briefings. Tribal leaders and advocates continue to raise concerns about barriers preventing the protection of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women at numerous national meetings with the administration, federal departments and agencies, with their respective Congressional delegations, and in NIWRC’s VAWA Sovereignty Initiative’s amicus briefs. A review of statements made by Tribal leaders during consultations over the years and before other state and federal policymakers demonstrate that many of the issues raised are not new but instead illustrate the complicated legal and policy barriers embedded in the layers of federal Indian law. These issues are monitored continuously and compiled by the NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women.

The concerns and recommendations raised by Tribal Nations are extensive, as documented in oral and written testimonies of Tribal Nations and past VAW Consultation Reports to Congress. The following pages discuss some of the priority issues. Articles concerning Alaska Natives, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, the Prevention of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and STTARS HUD Consultation Guidance discuss additional issues.

Issues Regarding Implementation of VAWA

- **Tribal Jurisdiction Over Non-Indian Offenders and Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction (SDVCJ)**. Limited jurisdiction over non-Indian offenders on Tribal lands exacerbates the disproportionate violence against AI/AN women. The 2013 reauthorization of VAWA addressed this issue for certain crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, and certain protection order violations for some Tribal Nations. The 2022 VAWA reauthorization expanded the list of covered crimes to include sexual assault, stalking, sex trafficking, child violence, obstruction of justice, and assault against justice personnel. VAWA 2022 left no Tribal Nation behind by restoring jurisdiction to all Nations that choose to participate, including those in Maine, and establishing an Alaska Pilot Project. While a pivotal step forward, the most recent reauthorization did not address protections for elders or serious crimes that co-occur with domestic and sexual violence, such as financial crimes and homicide. Perpetrators will continue to slip through the cracks until Congress fully restores every Tribal Nation's complete jurisdiction over non-Indians.
- **The federal government has a trust responsibility to fund Tribal public safety in Indian Country**. While we celebrate the historic wins in VAWA 2022, Tribal Nations cannot meaningfully exercise restored jurisdiction and make Indian Country safer if the federal government does not live up to its trust responsibility to provide public safety funding and resources to Tribal Nations. Tribal Nations spend significant time and resources to prepare their justice systems and victim service programs to meet the needs of their communities; however, many Tribes are limited by a lack of flexible, consistent, and sustainable funding for their justice systems, leaving many without the ability to implement the VAWA 2022 restored criminal jurisdiction. For example, costly healthcare expenses for non-Indian inmates sentenced by Tribal courts often strain Tribes' already limited budgets. The 2022 VAWA Tribal reimbursement program will help with many of these costs. Still, the federal government must live up to its trust responsibility by providing consistent and sustainable upfront funding for Tribal public safety and justice systems. Restoring Tribal

criminal jurisdiction will not help to make Tribal communities safer without the necessary resources and funding to exercise that jurisdiction properly.

Recommendations for the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Interior (DOI)

DOJ and DOI should coordinate and collaborate to implement the provisions of VAWA 2022 and support Tribal Nations in implementing their restored jurisdiction over non-Indian perpetrators. We recommend the following next steps for DOJ and DOI regarding implementation:

- DOJ, DOI, and all other federal agencies should live up to their trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations and include annual, consistent, and sustainable noncompetitive funding for Tribal Nations for all public safety and victim services needs in their annual budget requests;
- In the President's Budget, DOJ should request the full amount of funding authorized for Tribal programs in VAWA 2022, especially the \$25 million for the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) grant program and reimbursement for FY 2024 and FY 2025;
- DOJ and DOI should offer joint training opportunities for Tribal and federal law enforcement on the implementation of VAWA 2022 in Indian Country;
 - DOJ and DOI must be on the same page regarding Alaska Native Villages' restored jurisdiction. Tribal and federal staff will need training on this new area of restored jurisdiction. How will the Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) confusion over the Alaska Native Village Statistical Area be addressed? What resources do DOJ and DOI have for Tribal law enforcement training, and will those resources also apply to the Alaska Pilot Program?
 - DOJ and DOI should also build on the June 28, 2019, DOJ law enforcement emergency declaration for rural Alaska under the Emergency Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Program, which led to additional justice resources for the area; however, most of the funding never reached Alaska

Native Villages. DOJ should build on that declaration and work with the DOI to provide comprehensive justice and public safety funding directly to Alaska Native Villages rather than the state of Alaska.

The Department of Justice and Department of the Interior must not pull vital resources out of Indian Country after the Castro-Huerta Supreme Court decision.

- Ensure the STCJ grant program and the STCJ Reimbursement Program are streamlined and easy for Tribal Nations to apply for. Additionally, the programs should be culturally-appropriate and responsive to the needs of Tribal Nations and not locked into a rigid list of allowable costs or requirements. VAWA 2022 notes that the reimbursement expenses shall include “costs incurred, relating to, or associated with,” the four designated reimbursement areas. This flexible language allows DOJ to be much more expansive than only the four designated areas in the law. For example, there are dire infrastructure needs across Indian Country, and Tribal Nations cannot prosecute perpetrators if they do not have roads to drive on or courthouses for trials. We urge DOJ to include this flexibility in their reimbursement regulations. DOJ should also take into account the recommendations Tribal leaders presented during the various consultations on the Tribal Reimbursement Program;
- DOJ and DOI should fund the VAWA 2022 Alaska Pilot Project sufficiently and make building infrastructure allowable for all Alaska Native Villages interested in exercising STCJ going forward
- The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) should overhaul its Tribal prisoner program to make it easier for Tribal Nations to submit inmate placement requests and ensure they have BOP staff to respond to Tribal Nations’ inquiries. Additionally, BOP should cover transportation costs for Tribal Nations to transport inmates to designated facilities and coordinate with Tribal Nations to provide federal transportation to the facility;
- DOJ and DOI should support legislation that would fully restore Tribal Nations’ jurisdiction over non-Indians for any offense on Tribal lands; DOJ and DOI should support legislation that would remove the limited number of Tribal Nations eligible to exercise restored jurisdiction under the VAWA 2022 Alaska Pilot Project; and
- Increase funding for Tribal Nation implementation of STCJ for DOJ, DHHS, and the BIA.

- Since the 2022 Castro-Huerta U.S. Supreme Court decision, Tribal Nations have been concerned about the federal government pulling much-needed justice-related resources from Indian Country. Tribal Nations have already reported seeing this trend on the ground in Oklahoma. Tribal Nations have shared that Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents and staff have been removed from the state since the 2022 decision and that some U.S. Attorneys in the state are declining to take on cases against non-Indians in favor of sole state or local government prosecution. These decisions are made without coordination with Tribes or government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations in Oklahoma or throughout the country. This is especially concerning after Congress and the Administration sought to invest more justice resources in Indian Country in Oklahoma following the 2020 McGirt decision.
- In its 2018 Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans Briefing Report, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights noted that the “unequal treatment of Tribal governments and lack of full recognition of the sovereign status of Tribal governments by state and federal governments, laws, and policies diminish Tribal self-determination and negatively impact criminal justice, health, education, housing, and economic outcomes for Native Americans.” The removal of federal staff and resources from Indian Country and ignoring the need for Tribal input when pulling such resources is what the Commission warned against. We urge DOJ and DOI to contact their staff in Indian Country to ensure this retreat stops.
- On September 2, 2022, Monty Wilkinson, Director of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, issued a memorandum to all U.S. Attorneys, Criminal Chiefs, Tribal Liaisons, and Victim Witness Coordinators. In the memo, Director Wilkinson states that the ruling in Castro-Huerta “does not alter federal jurisdiction to prosecute crimes in Indian country pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §§ 1152 and 1153. Nor does the decision diminish the federal government’s trust responsibility to Tribes.” The Director went on to direct U.S. Attorneys to “not alter referral

practices without formal consultation with Tribes in their districts, bearing in mind the important principles of Tribal sovereignty, [DOJ's] government-to-government relationship, and the importance of partnership and open communication.” He stated that “the Department [of Justice] considers it a priority to address the disproportionately high rates of violence experienced by American Indians and Alaska Natives by promoting public safety in Indian country. The Castro-Huerta decision does not alter this mission, and communication, collaboration, and coordination among federal, Tribal, and state partners will help meet that goal.” We fully support the directives in this memorandum and the Director’s express recognition of the link between Tribal sovereignty, Tribal consultation, and safety in Indian Country.

Recommendations for DOJ and DOI

- DOJ must fully implement the September 2, 2022, directives on the ground in Indian Country; DOJ must ensure that not only are U.S. Attorneys following the direction of Director Wilkinson but that FBI Director Christopher Wray issues a similar statement and direction to FBI agents to stop the FBI retreat from Indian Country;
- DOJ should provide training and education for U.S. Attorneys, FBI personnel, Criminal Chiefs, Victim Witness Coordinators, and any additional relevant DOJ staff on the directives from Director Wilkinson.
- DOI should issue a similar memorandum to relevant DOI and BIA staff located in Indian Country and provide training to those individuals.
- We urge DOJ and DOI to reverse the course and instead pour more staff, resources, and education/training into Indian Country to ensure that safety is increased rather than decreased.
- In his memo, Director Wilkinson notes that “[i]f, after Tribal consultation, your [U.S. Attorney] office refers certain matters to state or local partners, you should maintain a list of all such cases.” DOJ should make public those lists of Tribal consultations and cases referred to states after Tribal consultations took place. This list should include the time and date of the Tribal consultation, the time and date of each case referred to state or local government, and the reason.



Official PONW office opening on Oahu, HI. Pictured PONW Founding members, staff, and Board of Directors. / Photo courtesy of Wanette Lee.

Pouhana O Nā Wāhine Opens Oahu Office and Welcomes Staff

By Paula S. Julian, *Filipina*, Editor, Restoration Magazine

The Pouhana O Nā Wāhine (PONW) serves as the statutorily created Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NHRCDV) to reduce domestic violence disparities facing Native Hawaiians. The award is administered by the Family Youth and Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which is responsible for administering programs funded by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA). On April 23, the PONW organized an opening ceremony for their new office on Oahu and welcomed new staff introduced below.

Based on experiences in our Native Hawaiian communities, we see the devastating impact of domestic violence and how our people struggle especially with

non-Native Hawaiian services and system responses—both government and nonprofit. “The Pouhana represents the voices of the Native Hawaiian grassroots organizing to restore our culturally appropriate practices passed down through generations that will end the disrespect and violence against our wāhine (women) and our ‘āina (homelands). The seed we’ve planted with the Pouhana will only grow across all of our communities in the state and stateside. We can achieve what we want for ourselves, our families, and Ka Lahui Hawai‘i (Hawaiian Nation) together and with our American Indian, Alaska Native, Indigenous and non-Indigenous relatives around the world,” said Wanette Lee PONW Founding Member and NIWRC Board member, who represented the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC) April 23rd.

PONW is committed to enhancing the capacity of its stakeholders to be versed in culturally appropriate responses to domestic violence—Native Hawaiian (NH) communities, domestic violence programs, state and federal governments, policymakers, and others. PONW is dedicated to restoring NH traditions, beliefs and ceremonies that help increase survivors’ safety through technical assistance and training (TA/T), partnering at the community, state, and national levels, and developing policies and resources. None serve as resource centers that are designed, led, and managed by NHs or rooted in NH solutions like PONW that contribute to the fulfillment of the federal trust responsibility to assist NHs in safeguarding women’s lives. Join NIWRC in celebrating their opening and meeting new staff on our webinar on July 24. More information to come via niwrc.org/events.

Nikki Cristobal is from the island of Kaua‘i. She holds her Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Policy. Nikki is the Co-Founder and Executive Director for the grassroots NH culture, education, and public arts nonprofit, Kamāwaelualani. Nikki is also the Principal Investigator for the Missing & Murdered Native Hawaiian Women, Girls, Māhū Report, a ka pae ‘āina wide report mandated by the Hawai‘i legislature and part of the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S) international movement. Nikki serves as the Policy & Research Specialist for Pouhana O Nā Wāhine.

New Staff



Nikki Cristobal



Jaki Knaus



Dr. Dayna Schultz



Vernon Viernes

Jaki Knaus is a skilled graphic designer and illustrator based in Oahu. After graduating from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa with a B.A. in Psychology, Jaki developed a successful career in marketing and started a design company in 2015. With over 10 years of experience in the field of design, Jaki has cultivated a robust skillset in various areas of creativity and technical know-how. One of Jaki's most notable accomplishments was his part in the development of the University of Hawai'i STAR GPS application which is currently used across all campuses by both students and faculty. A vast majority of his skills are self-taught and he continues to learn new forms of technology. During his free time, he enjoys fishing, training jiu-jitsu, playing video games, training his therapy dog, and spending time with his friends and family. Jaki is a member of the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), an Audio/Visual Technician for the Cathedral of St. Andrew, an Episcopal Church founded by Queen Emma and King Kamehameha IV, and a proud advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights across the nation as an openly Queer Transgender Man. Jaki serves as the Communications Specialist for Pouhana O Nā Wāhine.

Dr. Dayna Schultz, Psy. D., LSW, CSAC (Kanaka 'Ōiwi) is the founder and Executive Director of Pouhana O Nā Wāhine. "To understand with your heart is Aloha." Dayna believes that everyone has a story to tell and possesses the ability to change their narrative as they grow. Being in the field for over 20 years, she has had the privilege to work with and serve individuals and families from diverse backgrounds and circumstances such as suicide and crisis intervention,

domestic violence, trauma and addiction, along with the incarcerated population and those dealing with housing insecurities. Dayna welcomes individuals to share their stories with her in a safe space and at their own pace. She provides a sense of warmth, compassion, and Aloha that fosters a "Kākou" (together) effort. As a Native Hawaiian Survivor of various traumas, Dayna continues to be guided by her na'au and ancestors daily in efforts of working toward ending violence from and within her people that will lead to peace, harmony, and sense of Aloha in all ways, always.

Vernon Viernes was born and raised on the island of Oahu with a passion to serve and help others. With over 20 years of experience in social work, he has touched the lives of individuals that come from diverse backgrounds. Vernon has worked in the field of addictions and incarceration, while primarily focusing on the NH family unit. He has volunteered with prison ministries, Hawaiian health groups, Camp Agape which serves children of incarcerated parents, and malama 'āina (respecting and caring for the land) work. His latest journey is with Pouhana O Nā Wāhine as their Training and Technical Assistance Specialist. His desire and love for the NH culture lead him to Malama aina work which includes growing malama kalo (taro). Malama Haloa (protect the taro) above all — Vernon believes in gratitude and guidance from his ancestors. "I need to mahalo ke Akua and numerous kumu/teachers, kupuna, mentors and role models who helped me develop my abilities and gifts so that I can serve and malama communities and ka Lahui (the Hawaiian nation). Live aloha aku, aloha mai (give aloha, receive aloha).

Healing-Centered Engagement, a Relational Pathway for Advocates Walking Alongside Alaska Native People Healing from Violence

By Rebecca Ipiaqruk Young, *Kawerak Iñupiaq*, Clinical-Community Psychology Doctoral Candidate, University of Alaska Anchorage and Dr. LaVerne Xilegg Demientieff, *Deg Xi'tan*, Department Chair, Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Rebecca Ipiaqruk Young, is quyaruk (Iñupiatun/grateful) to the Dena'ina People, where she lives and raises her family. / Photo courtesy of Rebecca Ipiaqruk Young.



Dr. LaVerne Xilegg Demientieff works on the Troth Yedha' campus and lives on the land of the Tanana Athabascan people. / Photo courtesy of Dr. Demientieff.



At the end of the summer of 2022, the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) hosted their Healing Summit: Standing Together, We Take Our Power Back. This gathering, on the land of the Dena'ina (Anchorage, AK), brought together Elders, advocates, policy leaders, and Tribal, state, and federal agencies motivated to end violence against Alaska Native women and promote lasting healing of Alaska Native People and communities. Presentation topics ranged from laughter as resilience and a collective act of resistance, keeping families safe, culture as a protective factor, and updates on technical assistance. Dr. LaVerne Xilegg Demientieff presented her work on Healing Centered Engagement (HCE).

This paper highlights HCE as a pathway for advocacy centered on the wisdom of Elders and Alaska Native Values. Over time, walking alongside Elders (co-teaching social work curriculum and co-facilitating community training) and connecting with Deg Xi'tan Elders to understand Deg Xi'tan wellness, Dr. Demientieff observed the following five components (Five Cs) of HCE: compassion, connection, community, curiosity, and ceremony (2022)¹. The Five Cs are rooted in and reflect the collective spirit of our ancestors, Elders, community, and wisdom. Alaska Native People and communities flourish when we are in relation. The Five Cs honor and enhance our interaction with each other, our environment, and our spirit. Dr. Demientieff invites us to apply the Five Cs in our lives and work contexts.

In the context of violence and trauma, advocacy as Alaska Native relatives is especially difficult. We often show up as informal advocates for our friends, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and grandparents. Given the incredulous rates of violence targeted on Alaska Native and American Indian People, it is not surprising that for Alaska Native advocates, as we do good work together in this area, advocacy can be a challenging, painful trigger of our own lived experiences and our own stress. Advocacy is a reminder that we too are healing, and we are also healers. The following section offers a walk through the Five Cs of HCE from an advocate perspective. As you walk through these Five Cs, I invite you to relate to the ways the Five Cs are described here and to reflect on additional ways the Five Cs are present in aspects of your life.

Compassion. As advocates of Alaska Native people, we are aware of the historical and contemporary context of

¹Demientieff, L. & Frank, P. (2022). I Remember Who I Am: Deg Xi'tan, Athabascan Perspectives on Wellness. In D. Danto & M. Zangeneh (Ed.), *Indigenous Knowledge and Mental Health: A Global Perspective* (1st ed.). Springer Nature Switzerland.

trauma against our women and communities; this yields compassion for ourselves and each other. Practicing compassion for ourselves and others helps us to navigate intense emotions related to fear, anger, shame, and grief. It also fosters a safe healing environment that builds the potential for transformation through advocacy.

Connection. Violence, by nature, is a disruption to connection. As advocates, we model connecting and reconnecting with all aspects of ourselves (i.e., mind, body, heart, spirit, and environment). We also model connecting and reconnecting with our culture, family, community, spirituality, and environment. Advocacy in this context can look like being a companion for someone wanting to attend a community gathering who is struggling to connect or is feeling shame for not being connected with others. In this example, compassion helps an advocate anticipate the need for companionship in our relative healing from violence.

Community. Alaska Native People and communities, as with many Indigenous communities worldwide, had sustainable communities of care. For thousands of years, we have understood the sacred medicine that community offers and that our well-being and healing are possible through relationships with others. Today, advocates are united and are part of intentional efforts to create, nurture, and protect safe communities of care.

Curiosity. Our Elders and ancestors were cunning in their relationship with curiosity. They were and are scientists, observing, experimenting, listening, and sharing their knowledge with others. In the face of perceived obstacles, through curiosity, they were able to navigate the ocean, rivers, and sea ice. We are not bound or restricted to obvious sources of strength or knowledge when we are curious. Curiosity for advocates helping Alaska Native People heal from violence has the potential to focus on the silver lining in difficult situations and to connect to the light in a dark place. In the context of advocacy and the spirit of Alaska Native values, advocates are curious about the necessary healing for those who commit violence while promoting justice and accountability for those who commit violence.

Ceremony. Ceremony in the Five Cs honors the legacy of ceremony in the survival of Alaska Native People and our culture. Ceremony allows us to access ancestral wisdom for healing and greater connection on this earth journey. Those who walk alongside Alaska

Native Peoples are given the chance to learn the healing practices and ceremonies that have proven effective. An Elder once told me, "...our spirituality was practical." Deep, slow, intentional breathing is a form of ceremony and has the potential to settle all aspects of our being.

HCE centers not only Indigenous People, but HCE is available to center all human beings on the path toward relational harmony and connectedness. HCE is comforting as we navigate systems created by the occupying culture, which are foreign by design to Indigenous sensibilities. After attending both the AKNWRC Healing Summit and Advocate Training, I observed the healing impact of the transformational power of compassion, connection, community, curiosity, and ceremony. The Five Cs helped us be in a state of compassion and enjoy companionship in communities of care we are part of. Although the pilot advocate training in February 2023 did not explicitly speak to the Five Cs, the Five Cs were embodied and expressed. The Five Cs have since been formally incorporated into the AKNWRC Advocate Training Modules. I experience the Five Cs as elements of prayerful gratitude for how compassion, connection, community, curiosity, and ceremony are present in my life, as a prayerful request for how I can model and inspire healing-centered engagement with those in my life now, and as ways not yet revealed to me in the future.

**View the NCAI Research
Policy Update:**

**State of the Data on Violence
Against American Indian and
Alaska Native Women and Girls**

Go to bit.ly/42G8ksU.



The Medicine of Advocate Organizer Training for the Safety and Healing of Alaska Native Women and Future Generations

A Collaborative Approach to Addressing the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Relatives (MMIWG2S)

By Rebecca Ipiaqruk Young, *Kawerak Iñupiaq*, Clinical-Community Psychology Doctoral Candidate, University of Alaska Anchorage

The Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC), in their commitment to nurturing Village-based, Tribal advocacy, hosted a 40-hour pilot advocate training on the land of the Dena'ina (Anchorage, AK) for advocates across the state in February. This training was funded by the Office on Violence Against Women. It was guided by a Steering Committee of Alaska Native Advocate Organizers, who have been advocates and mentors to rural and urban communities for decades. Advocacy training developed by and for the occupying cultural majority generally focuses on behavioral dynamics in relationships and does not acknowledge the history or the source of the unprecedented rates of violence Alaska Native women experience compared to non-Alaska Native women. The AKNWRC pilot training was the first ever training that centered on the well-being and advocacy of Alaska Native women healing from violence (domestic violence and sexual assault) from the perspective of Alaska Native history and Alaska Native values and world views. Advocate attendees and Elders of the training were invited to provide feedback to further shape and improve this training for future advocates.

Twenty-nine advocate participants completed a survey that captured the communities served, their role as advocates, years of experience, suggestions, and feedback on future training, and the impact of the training on their confidence as advocates. Except for one attendee, all attendees were women. The advocates present served the following communities: Emmonak, Nenana, Pilot

Station, Port Heiden, Pitka's Point, Buckland, Juneau, Craig, Hydaburg, Kasaan, Angoon, Huslia, Igiugig, Dena People of the Lower Tanana River (Fairbanks Interior), Marshall, Mountain Village, Koyukuk, Tanana, Kipnuk, and Dena'ina (Anchorage).

With the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC), Paula Julian has walked alongside the AKNWRC to develop this training and other components of organizing a sustainable Indigenous women's resource center. As a practicum student working with the AKNWRC, I was invited to attend the training to observe attendee experiences, and incorporate feedback collected from attendees. I hope to shine a light on the heart and spirit of AKNWRC, the Advocate Organizers, and the Tribal advocates who gathered for this training. This article is offered as a gift so that other Indigenous communities may steward safety and healing in culturally appropriate and sustainable Indigenous ways.

As with our Indigenous relatives around the world, Alaska Native women continue experiencing unrelenting violence that is traced back to early colonizers of what is known as the United States. The AKNWRC and the Advocate Organizers affirm that an advocate's role in the community is to promote the safety and healing of women and help women restore Alaska Native protections. An advocate can also recognize opportunities to collaborate with others to reform and transform existing responses and systems to remove systemic barriers to Alaska Native

Advocate Organizers from right to left in community with Alaska Native advocates at AKNWRC Advocacy Pilot Training in Anchorage February 6-10th: Tasha Paukan, Joann Horn, Janelle Chapin, Priscilla Kameroff, Bryana Angulo, Tami Truett Jerue, and Paula Julian. Photo courtesy of Paula Julian.



women's safety. The role of the Tribal advocate is unique in these ways.

The role of a Tribal advocate is also complex. Upon request and consent of victim-survivors, Tribal advocates collaborate with Tribal, state, and federal agencies toward safety, healing, and justice for Alaska Native women victimized by domestic violence or sexual assault. Tribal advocates work with these systems to fortify a just and efficient system that reflects Alaska Native values and honors the healing power of Alaska Native culture.

The AKNWRC Advocate Training recognized that Tribal advocacy work has a bidirectional impact. Commonly, Tribal advocates are themselves direct or indirect victims of violence. When we, as advocates, engage in the safety and healing of our sisters in crisis from violence, we also heal as advocates. As Tribal advocates, our advocacy is fluid. Tribal advocacy reaches beyond the walls of a formal advocacy center as we attend to survivors who are our relatives and members of our tightly woven community as sisters, daughters, in-laws, cousins, nieces, and granddaughters. The warmth of Tribal advocacy radiates beyond the constraints of funding to help relative-survivors, and is not exclusively defined by state and federal protocols, policies, or laws. Tribal advocates embody compassion and the Alaska Native value of presence as a human being with one another, being and modeling relational harmony and connectedness.

The AKNWRC Advocate Training offered a safe space for healing to happen. In small circles, advocates were moved to cry and share personal experiences of sexual violence that they had not shared before and about the vulnerability and difficulty of helping a close friend who

survived an assault. As a large group, Tribal advocates were invited to participate in a smudging ceremony to help cleanse the heavy and deeply personal energy of the topic of violence against Alaska Native women and gathered for the singing of two traditional songs. Acknowledging that engaging in cultural practices restores Tribal sovereignty, Tribal advocates at the AKNWRC training shared cultural activities they found helpful in sustaining their healing journey, including beading, Alaska Native dancing and singing, being outdoors, spending time with friends gathering berries, being in nature.

Tribal advocacy extends to responding as relatives and deepening our understanding of advocate responsibilities to each other as relatives, which are reflected in Alaska Native languages and cultural teachings with love, care, and compassion. Tribal advocacy includes compassion and healing for those who commit abuse/violence, and it promotes growth and healing that aligns with Alaska Native perspectives on being a human being. Advocates and Elders at this training observed that we, Alaska Native People, are more than our trauma history, we are not defined by trauma. During the training, Yup'ik Elder Elsie Boudreau requested that this truth be shared as an advocate statement. Our legacy as Alaska Native People is our ability to adapt and persevere as our ancestors did, and our future generations will. Our legacy is strength through our culture and our togetherness. By uniting in their strength and vulnerability, advocates have liberated their voice, thus bringing to fruition a vision: This collective statement. This collective unity has resulted in a stronger force that enables us and future generations to stand together.

Parity Through Process? Challenges, Successes, and the Future of Full Faith and Credit Recognition of Tribal Domestic Violence Protective Orders in Alaska

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



Official badge of the Alaska State Troopers. / Photo usage donated by Kelsey Foote.

Since moving to Alaska in 2018, I've had the pleasure of working with Alaska Native (AN) Tribes, courts, and justice systems to improve service delivery, infrastructure, and to help raise their voices and priorities on the state, national, and international stages. I've also had the unique experience of serving as a District Court Magistrate Judge for the Alaska Court System (ACS), based in Aniak and Hooper Bay—both predominantly AN off-road system communities.

As a Judge, I presided over criminal cases and domestic violence protective order (DVPO) petitions from 25 AN villages. The importance of my professional journey is to highlight my experiences and understanding of how the ACS processes state DVPOs within the Alaska Department of Public Safety (DPS), as well as challenges

with recognition and enforcement of Tribal DVPOs in our state public safety systems.

I left the court in 2021 and began working with AN Tribes again. For me, working with AN Tribes was a more meaningful personal and professional pathway and use of my education and experience. In 2021, I was presented with a request from a Tribe seeking enforcement of a Tribal DVPO and contacted three Alaska State Troopers (AST) posts that I worked with as a Judge to receive guidance on enforcing Tribal DVPOs that have not been registered with the ACS.

These conversations yielded alarming and hugely varying responses, none of which were consistent with the spirit and requirements of the Violence Against

Women Act (VAWA). In particular, I was advised that:

- AST could enforce a Tribal DVPO, however, a Tribe is required to pay a \$60 fee for enforcement.
- AST was not authorized to enforce Tribal DVPOs. That AST jurisdiction and authority only allowed for enforcement of Alaska State court DVPOs.
- AST was unsure whether they had the authority to enforce Tribal DVPOs.

From these alarming responses, a working group emerged consisting of the DPS, the Alaska Department of Law, the AST, and three non-profit organizations, including the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center, the Alaska Native Justice Center, and RurAL Cap. The working group met to discuss federal requirements, enforcement of Tribal DVPOs, and systemic challenges to recognizing and enforcing Tribal DVPOs.

For those unfamiliar with Alaska, the AST are primarily responsible for public safety in areas with no dedicated police agencies, which includes most AN remote rural communities. Although there are 42 trooper posts throughout Alaska, AST cites a lack of staffing for not meeting their goal of “providing a trooper presence in every community that desires full-service law enforcement.”¹ As of 2017, AST was “operating with approximately 40 vacant trooper positions” and cited “reduced trooper positions...and a lack of equipment to effectively respond to calls for service in rural Alaska... reduced ability to respond to routine calls for service.”² It is not difficult to see that challenges in DPS staffing leave rural villages unprotected, vulnerable, and in dire need of public safety.

It’s no secret that Alaska ranks within the top five states with the highest rates of domestic violence.³ Congress found, in Section 811 of Title VIII of the Violence Against Women Act 2022 Reauthorization, that AN women are:

- Overrepresented in the domestic violence victim population by 250%.
- Comprise 19% of the population in Alaska, but comprise 47 % of reported rape victims in the state.
- Compared to the populations of other Indian Tribes,

they suffer the highest rates of domestic and sexual violence.

A 2022 report by the Alaska Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC) also found that nearly half (48%) of Alaska women over the age of 18 experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime and that AN people were disproportionately represented among both victims (60%).⁴

The Violence Against Women Act’s Full Faith and Credit Recognition Requirement

The VAWA 1994 marked the first comprehensive federal legislative package designed to end violence against women. VAWA has been reauthorized four times, most recently in 2022. Each reauthorization reaffirmed the legal relationship and commitment of the U.S. to Tribes, the safety of Native women, and Tribal sovereignty.⁷

Included in VAWA is the requirement that DVPOs issued by a Tribe or state receive full faith and credit recognition by other Tribes or states.⁸ Full faith and credit recognition requires sovereigns respect the laws and judgments of courts from other sovereigns, attempting to prevent conflict and ensure the dependability of court decisions.

What this means is that any DVPO issued by an AN Tribe is required to be recognized and enforced by the state of Alaska and other Tribes as if the DVPO were issued in an Alaska state court or Alaska Tribal court. In theory, full faith and credit recognition of Alaska Tribal protective order respects and upholds Tribal sovereignty. However, in practice, it results in an unreasonable burden on Tribal survivors of domestic violence, especially considering the variety of responses received from AST when attempting to gain information on how to receive help with the enforcement of a Tribal DVPO.

¹ “Alaska Department of Public Safety Recruitment and Retention Plan Overview: 2018-2023.” Alaska Department of Public Safety, Alaska State Troopers, bit.ly/3Wkx87D.

² *Id.*

³ “States with the Highest Domestic Violence Rates,” bit.ly/42VaBjv.

⁴ “Domestic Violence in Alaska (2022).” Alaska Criminal Justice Commission, 1 Apr. 2022, bit.ly/318180f.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Agtuca, Jacqueline. Safety For Native Women: VAWA and American Indian Tribes. 1st ed., National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, 2014. p. 51.

Enforcement of Alaska Tribal DVPOs Today

Currently, AN survivors who receive a Tribal DVPO have two options available when seeking assistance and enforcement from the DPS: Their Tribal court may register the DVPO with the ACS or may forward a copy directly to the AST. One process is identified, while the other lacks formal processes and procedures, placing the burden of knowing local procedures on the survivor and Tribal court.

Registration with the Alaska Court System. A Tribal DVPO may be registered through the ACS for recognition and distribution to state public safety and law enforcement officers (LEOs). To register with the ACS, no forms are required if registering in person at a local district court. However, because Alaska courts are located in “hub communities” and urban areas, registering a Tribal DVPO in person for those located in off-road and rural communities is not always possible.

To address this issue, the ACS provides a centralized procedure for registering Tribal DVPOs by fax or email that requires using specific forms. The ACS requires a “verification form” to be filled by the Tribal court requesting registration that details specific contact information about the court seeking registration, which is helpful if the ACS Clerk of Court (Clerk) has questions or requires additional information. Additionally, verification and signature are required from the Tribal court.

Once a Tribal DVPO is registered with ACS, the Clerk will assign the Tribal DVPO a state court case number. The Clerk will then distribute the DVPO to state LEOs for enforcement and entry into the Alaska Public Safety Information Network’s (APSIN) Central Registry as a “domestic violence protective order.”

VAWA prohibits any Tribe or state from requiring registration or filing as a prerequisite to full faith and credit recognition and enforcement. However, registration of Tribal DVPOs through the ACS should be considered best practice for Tribes seeking full faith and credit recognition of a Tribal DVPO.

Recognition and Enforcement through the AST. A Tribal court may also forward a Tribal DVPO directly to their local AST post for recognition and enforcement. Unlike the ACS, the AST does not have a centralized process for recognition and enforcement of Tribal DVPOs and relies on each AST post to develop its own policy and method of receiving Tribal DVPOs.

What this means is that the responsibility of knowing the preferred method of delivery and process for each of AST’s 42 posts falls on the survivor or Tribal court. In addition, the burden and responsibility of keeping updated on any changes in procedure, policy, and delivery remain on the survivor and the Tribal court issuing the Tribal DVPO.

Without a centralized process, survivors and Tribal courts are left navigating over 40 different requirements and methods of delivery for Tribal DVPOs not registered with the ACS.

Tribal DVPOs forwarded directly to the AST are entered into APSIN as a “locate only.” This categorization leads to additional challenges with the exchange and retrieval of information, which leads to difficulties and gaps in enforcement.

The Alaska Public Safety Information Network (APSIN)

The APSIN is a database maintained by the DPS, used to track arrests, criminal histories, warrants, and other information for LEOs, including state and Tribal DVPOs. Although APSIN can be used to input data relating to both state and Tribal DVPOs, the categorization and data differences when recording each highlights systemic differences in input, information sharing, and enforcement efficacy.

When a state DVPO is forwarded to DPS, it is entered into APSIN as a “domestic violence protective order.” This means that APSIN data fields will contain vital information about the parties and protections ordered by the state court, which are viewable and retrievable by all LEOs statewide.

By contrast, Tribal DVPOs are entered as a “locate” only, which does not allow all relevant information to be entered into APSIN, including detailed information about

⁸ “18 U.S. Code § 2265 - Full Faith and Credit Given to Protection Orders.” Cornell Law School, Legal Information Institute, www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2265.

⁹ “Enforcement of Tribal Court Protective Orders.” *State of Alaska, Department of Law, Criminal Division*, 31 Jul. 2017, law.alaska.gov/pdf/criminal/170731-TribalProtectiveOrders.pdf. Accessed 18 Apr. 2023.

the parties and protections ordered by a Tribal court. It also means that the Tribal DVPO is not entered in the central registry, leaving gaps in viewable and retrievable information by state LEOs. Therefore, a Tribal survivor is required to carry and produce a valid Tribal DVPO to any LEO when seeking assistance and enforcement. Survivors of domestic violence often operate in many stages of a crisis, constantly worrying about safety, security, and well-being. Requiring survivors to have a readable copy of a Tribal DVPO with them is an added burden that survivors should not have to bear.

The Future of Alaska Tribal DVPOs

In response to our working group, the DPS has committed to implementing changes to APSIN processing of Tribal DVPOs. These changes will allow Tribal DVPOs to be entered in parity as state DVPOs.

The APSIN system is an antiquated system requiring specialized programming expertise to make needed changes. DPS has been reprogramming its APSIN system since early 2022. When APSIN is updated, it will allow Tribal DVPOs to be entered in the same manner as state DVPOs and will require Tribal DVPOs to contain mandatory data fields and information that match current APSIN-required data fields, including personal and contact information of the Petitioner and Respondent and protections that are identical (or similar) to state protections found in AS 18.66.100(c)(1-7).

If a Tribal DVPO cannot be entered in APSIN under the substantive changes because the information in the Tribal DVPO does not match the required APSIN data fields, that Tribal DVPO will continue to be entered as a locate only. When this happens, the survivor seeking enforcement will be required to follow the current “locate” process and always carry on them a valid Tribal DVPO to present to LEOs, when seeking assistance and enforcement.

In addition to APSIN substantive changes, DPS is committed to reviewing and implementing changes to their internal processes and procedures and is considering establishing a centralized office for delivery and enforcement of Tribal DVPOs. Currently, DPS does not have a centralized procedure for delivery of Tribal DVPOs to AST for enforcement. Some Trooper posts prefer to receive Tribal DVPOs by fax, while others

prefer email. The lack of a centralized process forces Tribes to comply with different standards of delivery across the state. To help make this process more efficient statewide, DPS is considering creating a centralized email for Tribes seeking enforcement of Tribal DVPOs. DPS would manage the centralized email address and would enter all Tribal DVPOs received statewide through this email address.

It’s important to mention that throughout the last two years AKNWRC and other partners have engaged in difficult conversations with the DPS, the AST, the DOL, and other stakeholders regarding the enforcement of Tribal DVPOs. Although conversations have sometimes been difficult, DPS and other stakeholders have listened meaningfully and implemented many of the recommendations put forward by Tribal stakeholders.

Although we still have much work to do in Alaska with our state and state agencies, we celebrate the changes we’ve secured, ensuring parity of Tribal DVPOs within the current DPS systems.

Crystal Shannon (Rice) McDonald (pictured in the frame), a Tribal citizen of the Village of Emmonak and a loving mother of 3, was a victim of domestic violence and homicide. The 1st degree murder charges against Crystal’s husband were dismissed. / Photo courtesy of Jessie Rice, AKNWRC Crime Victim’s Program Specialist and sister of Crystal McDonald.



MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group

A Collaborative Approach to Addressing the Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit Relatives (MMIWG2S)

By Kendra Kloster, *Tlingit (Kiks.a'di)*, Tribal Citizen of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, Co-Director, Law and Policy, Alaska Native Women's Resource Center



Annual Heartbeat of the Drums hosted by the MMIWG2S Working Group to remember our loved ones and support families. Photo courtesy of MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group.

Our Alaskan Native families continue to face injustice and experience high rates of violence. A study funded by the National Institute of Justice cited that 80% of American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) women will experience violence in their lifetime. The Urban Indian Health Institute led research on MMIWG2S, citing that murder is the third leading cause of death among AI/AN Women. Alaska is not alone in this injustice. Indigenous people across the Nation and the world face the same story—losing our loved ones and experiencing violence at alarming rates. We must have a collective effort to address the safety of Indigenous people. It is the responsibility of our state government, Tribes, organizations, and individuals to work together to end MMIWG2S and to ensure the safety and well-being of Native people.

Creating the MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group

Indigenous organizations in Alaska have taken steps

to create change and bring awareness and education on MMIWG2S; one way is through the creation of the MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group, where members coordinate, share communications, strategize, take action, and build community to address this crisis. The working group is an Indigenous Peoples-led statewide group supported by partner organizations: Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC), Alaska Native Justice Center, Alaska Native Heritage Center, Data for Indigenous Justice, and Native Movement. Across these organizations, we support this group through a policy subcommittee, community organizers, cultural education, research and data, and communications. As Indigenous peoples leading the change we want to see, we are rooted in our shared values and commitment to the safety and well-being of our people.

Advocacy, Education, and Outreach

To effectively address MMIWG2S and missing and murdered Indigenous people (MMIP), we must address the interconnected issues related to public safety reforms and find ways to reduce violence. The Working Group provides education and outreach, gathering and sharing information on MMIWG2S/MMIP to ensure policymakers understand different strategies to address this issue affecting many Alaskan families. Some actions taken include presentations to local assemblies, Alaska State Legislature, hosting policy forums, and writing letters to local, state, and federal policymakers sharing information and policy recommendations.

Our policy and budget recommendations have been developed through conversations with communities and individuals who have identified gaps and issues within the current systems, discussions with public safety officials, and sharing ideas within our working group. Direct

action items are important to identify and share with our policymakers so they understand the specific changes needed. We are responsible for sharing the knowledge we have gained through lived experiences, whether our own or those shared with us, to effect change. Some of the recommendations we have shared include specific MMIP Investigators, a designated MMIP Statewide Attorney, non-competitive grant funding for Tribes, an increase in the collection and processing of DNA, an increase in funding to support upgrades to the severely outdated 911 system, and increasing support and funding for public safety, especially in rural Alaska where many of our villages lack any or minimal public safety.

Successful Changes for MMIWG2S/ MMIP

Our collective advocacy and the efforts of Alaskans have resulted in these successes:

- Two new MMIP investigators at the Department of Public Safety.
- The creation of the MMIP Statewide Council.
- MMIP Awareness Day proclamations at state and local levels.
- Increased funding for the village public safety officers in rural Alaska.

The Working Group also holds several events, including partnering with the Anchorage Opera to bring the “Missing” opera to Anchorage, our annual 5k awareness run/walk, self-defense classes, policy forums, vigils, rallies, and other education, outreach, and healing events.

Our organizations within the working group have been instrumental in providing community resources such as the AKNWRC toolkit “Why We Wear Red”, which guides communities to develop an action plan that includes awareness, prevention, and intervention strategies. Data for Indigenous Justice released “We Are Calling to You” in 2021, the first Alaska baseline research and data report specifically for Alaska. The Alaska Native Heritage Center has been deeply involved with unboxing the history of boarding schools in Alaska and the interconnectedness of trauma within our communities related to violence and MMIWG2S.

As a working group, we elevate all these efforts to educate and amplify this work, creating a central space to share this work with our communities and continue

collaborating on action items we host as a collective. More work remains, but this is HeartWork: we support and lift each other up.

Growing Presence

Since the start of the working group in 2018, we have seen not only changes in our state and federal policies but also the expansion of our work group as we welcomed our first two full-time staff members, an upcoming launch of a new website that will include a more expansive list of resources for individuals and communities. We have experienced increased requests for presentations, training, and participation in meetings related to MMIP and public safety. A number of our working group members have joined federal and state MMIP councils and commissions, including the Not Invisible Act Commission created by then-Representative Deb Haaland and the Alaska Statewide MMIP Council.

HeartWork

This work is deeply personal to us, our communities, and many people across Alaska who experience acts of violence and lose our loved ones at alarming rates. It is important our work centers around supporting each other, our communities, and our people. Each year we host a heartbeat of the drums and vigil to remember and uplift our loved ones who are missing and murdered and create a space for people to heal together. We do this work to bring justice to families, interrupt this systemic violence, and end this MMIP crisis. We are all concerned for the well-being of our children and future generations. It is our responsibility to do all we can to create a safer Alaska where Indigenous people thrive.

*Group photo of the MMIWG2S Alaska Working Group.
Photo courtesy of MMIWG2S Alaska working group*





Mary Kathryn Nagle (*Jean*) in *On the Far End* at Round House Theatre. / Photo courtesy of Margot Schulman.

VAWA Sovereignty Initiative Update

June 2023

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

As summer begins and the Supreme Court's 2022 Term comes to a close, we are all waiting with eager anticipation for the Court's decision in *Brackeen v. Haaland*. Because *Restoration* goes to print in May, we will not have the opportunity to revise this VAWA Sovereignty Initiative Update to include any analysis of the Court's actual decision. For a breakdown of the issues in the case and the potential consequences, please see the February 2023 issue of *Restoration*, Volume 20.1. And in the meantime, we continue to pray for the right outcome in *Brackeen*. Nothing less than our children and the sovereignty of our Nations depend on it.

In the meantime, we continue our work to educate and inspire our non-Native allies to understand why we fight to preserve Native culture and sovereignty and provide the political will for federal policy makers to fulfill the federal trust responsibility. This spring, I was honored to perform a play I had written about my mother-in-law, Jean Hill Chaudhuri, at the Round House Theatre, in Washington, D.C.. *On the Far End* ran from April 1

to May 7, sharing the story of an incredible Mvskoke matriarch who survived some of the worst of the United States' assimilation policies to live a life full of activism and community power. As the *Washington Post* noted in its review of the play:

Moving around this environment with stately posture, Nagle's Jean looks back on her life's personal and professional turning points, including her marriage to Bengali scholar Joyotpaul Chaudhuri and the time she persuaded Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) to oppose a corporation's plans to develop a site steeped in Native history.

Jean's account aches with awareness of the federal government's centuries-long betrayal and mistreatment of Native Americans, and she copes regularly with bigotry. In one early scene, her grandfather recalls surviving the Trail of Tears. Later, Jean is chased by dogs when she repeatedly runs away from one of the federal boarding schools

that aimed to erase Native American identity and culture.

The play contains humor, too, as when Jean's 7-year-old son, obsessed with the Beatles, speculates that he and his younger brother might be mistaken for two of the Fab Four.

The play is named *On the Far End* for the first four words of the Supreme Court's decision in *Oklahoma v. McGirt*, a 2020 Supreme Court decision declaring that the Muscogee Nation's Reservation remains in existence. As you may recall, the NIWRC filed an *amicus* brief in that case, explaining to the Court the harmful consequences that would result for Native women and children if the Court were to accept Oklahoma's invitation to judicially disestablish the Muscogee Reservation. Thankfully, the Court declined Oklahoma's request to depart from hundreds of years of precedent, and ultimately, Justice Gorsuch authored an opinion that maintained the existence of the Muscogee Reservation, declaring that "on the far end of the Trail of Tears, was a promise."

In *On the Far End*, audiences learn about the Supreme Court's decision in *McGirt* from the perspective of a Muskogee woman whose ancestors fought for generations to make the victory in *McGirt* possible. Although the play is clearly political, it is also deeply personal.

In 1977, Jean received the National Jefferson Award for Public Service. It was a very prestigious award, given by individuals from the Pulitzer Group, Supreme Court Justices, and Jackie Kennedy. The award ceremony was held in the United States Supreme Court, and Jean received her award, personally, from Justice Byron White. As she told her husband Joy, when she stepped up to the podium and Justice White gestured for her to speak, she was without words. For the first time in her life, she didn't know what to say. But then she heard her Grandpa. She heard her Dad. And her Mom. Their voices filled her head. And so she sang the song her Grandpa sang as he walked the Trail of Tears. When she finished, she was told that was the first time anyone had ever heard a "Native song" in the Supreme Court.

Forty-three years later, that same Court affirmed the continued existence of her Nation's Reservation. And although Justice Byron White was not there to reject



Mary Kathryn Nagle and Ambassador Jonodev Chaudhuri with Ian Gershengorn and Riyaz Kanji, both of whom argued *McGirt v. Oklahoma* in the United States Supreme Court. Photo courtesy of Ryan Music.

Oklahoma's attempt to extinguish her and her Nation, the decision in *McGirt* was authored by Justice White's law clerk, Justice Neil Gorsuch. The play poses a question: Did Justice White ever tell Neil what he witnessed on that fateful day in 1977 when Jean sang the song her ancestors sang on the Trail of Tears? What began as a prayer before one generation, manifested in the next.

As advocates, we fight for justice. We file *amicus* briefs in the Supreme Court. We write letters to the FBI, asking them to investigate the deaths of Native victims. We walk the halls of Congress, advocating for the restoration of Tribal jurisdiction to protect our own people in their own homes.

And when we are victorious, we know the victory goes far beyond our contemporary efforts. Today's victories are generations in the making. Our ancestors have been with us every step of the way. Hold that thought, and that prayer, as we await an outcome in *Brackeen*.

Indigenous Women-Led Discussion on Violence Against Rural Indigenous Women

67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

By Jana L. Walker, *Cherokee, Delaware, and Loyal Shawnee*, and Christopher Foley, *Cherokee*, Senior Attorneys, Indian Law Resource Center



Dakota Access Pipeline protest camp near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, 2016. Photo courtesy of ILRC.

On March 8, the Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC) cosponsored a virtual parallel event with seven other Indigenous organizations, *Violence Against Rural Indigenous Women: Brazil, Guatemala, Peru, the United States*, as part of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women's 67th (NGO-CSW67). Jana Walker, ILRC senior attorney, explained, "This event provided space for Indigenous women to address the UN and the public on how violations of Indigenous peoples' land rights and rights of self-government expose Indigenous women to gender-based violence and other severe human rights violations, and how living in rural communities intensifies these problems," said Jana Walker, ILRC senior attorney.

Judite Guajajara (Guajajara Indigenous people) is a Legal Advisor for the Coordination of the Indigenous

Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), Brazil's largest regional Indigenous organization. She discussed how COIAB defends Indigenous peoples' rights, noting specifically their work to break the silence on topics like gender-based violence. She explained that a principal cause of violence against Brazilian Indigenous women is illegal extraction, including mining, causing a humanitarian crisis in the Yanomami territory and other Indigenous lands.

Maria Caal Pop, an Ancestral Maya Q'eqchi' leader, has served seven years as Second Vice President of the Women's Committee in the Chapín Abajo community in Guatemala. Maria described recent violent attacks by the military and police to evict her community from their ancestral lands. Today, these lands that are today claimed by a palm oil corporation. Maria called on the

international community to investigate these crimes. he concluded by exhorting the audience to join her struggle for Indigenous rights by saying, “To those who are always in resistance, I ask you not to give up.”

Juanita Cabrera Lopez (Maya Mam) is the Executive Director of the International Mayan League, which works to promote, preserve and transmit the culture, history, and contributions of the Maya in defense of Mother Earth and to address root causes contributing to discrimination, inequality, and oppression of the Maya. She described how transnational corporations and extractive industries are leading the 4th wave of dispossession that Mayan communities have endured since contact, and she called for the respect of Indigenous peoples’ rights to self-determination and their lands and territories.

Teresita Antazú López (Yanesha Indigenous People) spoke on behalf of the Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon (AIDSESEP), the leading Indigenous organization for peoples of the Peruvian Amazon. AIDSESEP defends and advances Indigenous peoples’ collective rights by strengthening their self-government and reclaiming the territorial integrity of Indigenous lands. Teresita spoke about how AIDSESEP preserves and advances the traditional cosmology of the Indigenous peoples it represents. It also makes space for Indigenous women to assume new leadership roles in their communities and within the broader Indigenous rights movement.

Paula Julian (Filipina), Senior Policy Specialist with the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC), noted that the disproportionately high rates of violence Native women face in the U.S. are due to the taking and exploitation of Indigenous homelands and resources by non-Indigenous governments, industries, and people. She also described how these human rights violations are linked to the failure of the U.S. to meet its legal and moral obligations.

Tami Truett Jerue (Anvik Tribe), executive director of the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center, discussed how enormous, rural spaces of Alaska combined with the state and federal governments’ systematic underinvestment in justice services, leaves Alaska Native women largely unprotected. Much of the violence they face is rooted in resource extraction and land theft—a theme that recurred in several other presentations. Tami

called on the U.S. to meet its federal and international law obligations to provide resources to Tribal governments so Indigenous peoples can govern themselves.

Sadie Young Bird (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation), executive director of the MHA Nation Tribal Victim Service Program, also sits on the board for the Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains, Reclaiming Our Sacredness, a coalition of domestic violence and sexual assault programs. She described how rural Native women must travel long distances to access sexual assault exams and medical care and how jurisdictional questions about the land where a crime is committed and whether the perpetrator and/or victim are Indian impedes justice for survivors. Sadie also discussed how the oil boom on Indian reservations had driven major increases in trafficking and sex crimes against Native women.

Dr. Dayna Schultz, (Kanaka ‘Ōiwi), executive director, and Dolly M.I. Tatofi, (Kanaka ‘Ōiwi), board member vice president, spoke for the Pouhana O Nā Wāhine “Pillars of Women” (PONW). The PONW seeks to reduce disparities faced by Native Hawaiians and to preserve Hawaiian culture to help families and communities heal from violence and colonization. They spoke about the impact of colonization, including the ongoing trauma arising from the loss of their traditional monarchy and the resulting forced assimilation and the need to reclaim traditional family relationships and rebuild Hawaiian language and naming practices to restore cultural protections.

Christopher T. Foley, ILRC senior attorney, closed the event by emphasizing common themes, particularly how work to secure Indigenous land rights and rights of self-government is essential to end violence against Indigenous women. He also presented joint recommendations to the CSW from the co-sponsors, urging the CSW first to hold a formal discussion about “implementing Indigenous women’s individual and collective rights to lives free of violence and discrimination” and second to call on national governments to protect the collective rights of Indigenous women, including rights to land and self-government.

For further information, including video links, visit <https://indianlaw.org/story/violence-against-rural-indigenous-women-brazil-guatemala-peru-and-us> or bit.ly/42ACZYD.

Upcoming International Events

JUNE 19 - JULY 14, 2023

Annual Discussion on Women's Rights in Geneva, Switzerland

The **UN Human Rights Council** will hold its 53rd session at UN Headquarters in Geneva on June 19-July 14, including an annual discussion on women's rights, and its 54th session in September, likely including a yearly discussion of Indigenous rights.

JULY 17-21, 2023

UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The **UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** will meet in Geneva July on 17-21. The Expert Mechanism provides the Human Rights Council with advice on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It serves as the implementing and monitoring body of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



Front door of the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Photo taken in October 2016. / Photo usage donated by Kelsey Foote.





NO MORE STOLEN SISTERS

by Nick Alan and Kelsey Mata

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) embraces the intersection of art and advocacy through several partnerships. Most recently, NIWRC considered artists to create a piece for this year's National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). Artist Nick Alan Foote was eventually chosen to create an MMIW piece as a collaborative project alongside his sister, fellow artist Kelsey Mata, as the supporting NIWRC staff member.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Native communities continue to face the highest rates of assault, abduction, and murder of women; American Indian and Alaska Native women suffer the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault, with more than 4 in 5 — a staggering 84.3% — having experienced violence in their lifetime. In addition, 96% of American Indian and Alaska Native female victims of sexual violence experienced violence at the hands of a non-Native perpetrator (i.e., individuals of other races). The most disparate rates of intimate partner violence are experienced 50% higher by Native Hawaiian women aged 45-59 years old than non-Hawaiian women (12.6% vs. 21%). This violence continues to be multi-layered, occurring over a lifetime.

The pervasiveness of this injustice represents a dire need to: (1) address the systemic barriers that allow this horrific reality to persist and (2) amplify the voices of advocates and families that work tirelessly to share their stories, demanding justice and the restoration of safety.

In response to the critical and ongoing MMIW crisis across the nation, the creation of *No More Stolen Sisters* was undertaken with the intentional reflection on what has persisted for generations and what it means to stand in solidarity with the daughters, sisters, mothers, and aunties who were taken from their nations and communities.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

This piece was a digital collaboration by sibling duo, Nick Alan and Kelsey Mata, both *Tlingit, Taakw.aaneidí*. Despite their geographic separation of over 2,000 miles, the artists engaged in an extended process of reflection and discussion on the impact of the MMIW crisis in their Southeast Alaska hometown. They shared multiple drafts and compositions over the course of five months.



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

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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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