



# 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION

February 2024 | Volume 21 | Issue 1



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





# Letter from the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

Dear Relatives and Friends,

We are excited to celebrate *20 years of Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for Native Women Magazine (Restoration)* with this February 2024 edition. On February 23, 2004, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Sacred Circle National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women, and Clan Star, Inc. united to organize a reception to launch *Restoration* and organize through the NCAI Violence Against Women Task Force to restore safety and dignity to Native women.

*Restoration* serves as an essential communication bridge dedicated to informing Tribal leaders, advocates, and communities of issues impacting the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women. Over the past two decades, the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) has expanded this reach with our partners, contributors, allies, and readers to help inform policymakers and share advocacy and organizing efforts of Native Hawaiian advocates, organizations, and projects that have opened their doors over the last decade. This includes NIWRC's Violence Against Women Act Sovereignty Initiative, the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC), StrongHearts Native Helpline, Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence, NIWRC's STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center (STTARS), and Pouhana O Nā Wāhine (Pillars of Women).

Communication of priority issues has helped to effect the changes that Indigenous women, families, and Nations deserve. These social changes have helped to increase safety, justice, and access to advocacy and supportive services, as reflected:

- Reauthorizations of the Violence Against Women Act of 2005, 2013 and 2022,
- Reauthorizations of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act in 2005 and 2010,
- Passage of the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010,
- Appropriations of the Tribal Victim Services Set Aside from the Victims of Crime Act funding since 2018,<sup>1</sup>
- Passage of the Not Invisible Act and Savanna's Act in 2020, and
- Changes in Tribes' and states' laws, policies, and responses related to violence against women.

We are rebuilding Tribal Nations, strengthening sovereignty, and restoring the safety of Native women. We will continue to organize with survivors, their families, Tribal Nations, our Native Hawaiian relatives, the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, other allied organizations, policymakers, artists, and media. We celebrate 20 years of *Restoration* and continue to monitor and work together to remove systemic barriers impacting Native women, Tribes, and Native Hawaiian communities.

We honor the legacies of our movement grandmothers and push onward to deepen and expand our groundswell. A heartfelt thank you to Carmen O'Leary. Carmen, who stepped back as Chairwoman of NIWRC and continues as a Board member. We look forward to another year and decades of strong-hearted advocacy to restore sovereignty and women's safety.

In strength and solidarity,

<sup>1</sup> <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/tribal/tribal-victim-services-set-aside/tvs-sa-distribution.pdf>



Ahéhee',  
*Lucy*  
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*Jtaisimpson*  
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Nimiipuu Nation  
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**OF NATIVE  
SOVEREIGNTY AND  
SAFETY FOR NATIVE  
WOMEN**

**Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for  
Native Women Magazine, 2003-2024**

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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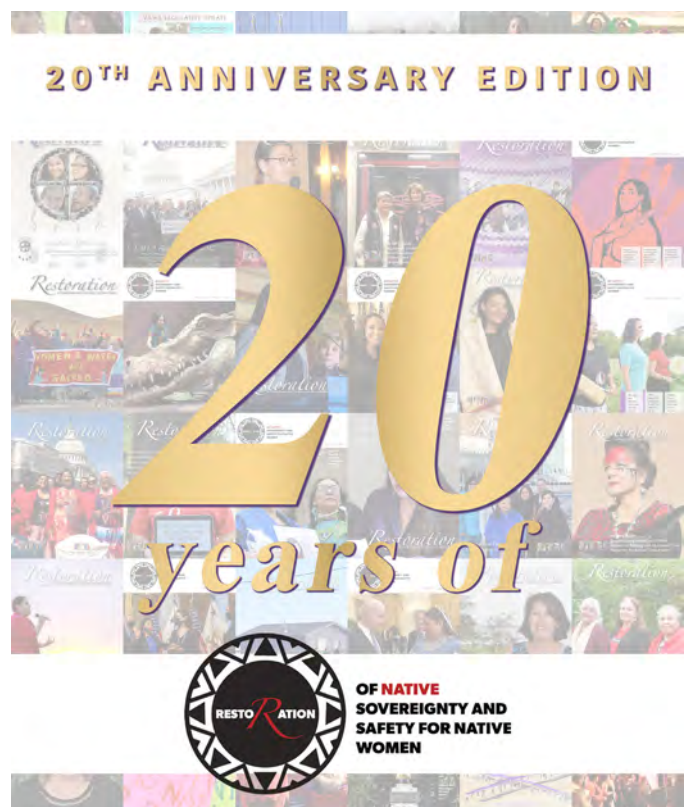
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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

On behalf of our NIWRC staff, Board of Directors, and especially our *Restoration Magazine* team—Liane, Kelsey, Tang, LeAnne, and I—please join us in celebrating 20 years of *Restoration*! We thank everyone who began *Restoration* in 2004—Sacred Circle, Clan Star, Inc., and the National Congress of American Indians. Thank you to our past Editors—Jacqueline “Jax” Agtuca, Terri Henry, and Mallory Adamski—and our many supporters and contributors who shared “information necessary to create the changes needed”<sup>1</sup> to help with our advocacy to restore Tribal sovereignty and increase the safety of Native women.

*Restoration* was launched in 2004, during the campaign to reauthorize the *Violence Against Women Act* of 2005, when national organizations came together to take a stand, calling for the inclusion of a VAWA title for Native women. These organizations recognized that for Tribal leaders, advocates, and Tribal communities to participate in the national movement fully, they needed continuous political briefings on issues impacting the safety of Native women and emerging legislation...At the time, the magazine was a primer on violence against

Native women...Looking at the theft of the land and resources of Indigenous nations and the use of violence against Indigenous women in the United States, the questions to ask in the struggle for survival strategically is (sic), what goal is achieved through the oppression and how we can win our struggle of resistance. Understanding the foundation of any emerging issue returns to these questions. Over the years, *Restoration* has contributed to understanding and answering these questions article by article, providing analysis to make systemic reforms, and working with the national movement to create the changes needed to the law or policies.<sup>2</sup>

As we look to 2024, we must continue asking what goals are achieved through the oppression of Tribal Nations and Native Hawaiians, and how can we win our struggle of resistance? Our struggle of resistance is reflected in restoring protections for women rooted in Indigenous voices, languages, and teachings and reforming and transforming federal and state/local responses to violence against women. Our alliances with non-Native organizations, including the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, have also played an important role in effecting the changes in federal laws and policies for Native women and Tribes, immigrant women, LGBTQ2S+, and women of color.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/files/magazine/restoration.18.1\\_1.pdf](https://www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/files/magazine/restoration.18.1_1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.niwrc.org/restoration-magazine/october-2021/editors-note-vol-18-issue-3>



Following my Editor's Note, we have re-printed Jax Agtuca's Editor's Note from February 2021, as Jax's analysis and call to action remain our challenge:

“Acknowledgement of injustices must be connected to changes that structurally correct the injustice...a far greater challenge is altering the dominant societal view of Native women...how current departments and agencies of the federal government maintain structural inequalities separating Native women.”

In partnership with the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) and the Pouhana O Nā Wāhine (PONW), we recently spent two days on Moloka'i Island for a community engagement session. Participants described our time together as inspiring, authentic, meaningful sharing of mana'o (thoughts), a safe space that created deep conversations, and one participant shared a quote from Jaiya John. Most importantly, we planted a seed with Native Hawaiians

“

**Perhaps your greatest challenge each day is not to stand up against the forces of oppression, but to resist the ever encroaching tendency to feel that you are too small to stop the forces of oppression. Remember, if your soul and its actions are sourced from Love and from your ancestors of kindred spirit, not only are you not small, you are immense infinity. When you are rooted in the sanctity of collective life and liberation, your soul size is legendary.**

---

DR. JAIYA JOHN

on Moloka'i to begin addressing violence against Native Hawaiian women.

While many Tribes and Native communities across the country have developed responses to violence against women, Moloka'i reminded me that many more need support across the country. We must do more to connect survivors, advocates, and community leaders with each other. I remembered what Terri Henry shared about how much stronger we are when working together—the story of an individual stick being easier to break than a bundle of sticks. Community organizing that includes gathering and sharing mana'o and information, developing analyses of systemic barriers from Indigenous perspectives, strengthening relationships and alliances, and identifying recommendations for changes in laws, policies, and practices must continue to be our strategy for increasing Indigenous women's safety. So much of our social change work is also about what some believe is impossible to change. As the late Yup'ik Elder Rose Borkowski from the Alaska Native Village of Emmonak shared, “Nothing is ever impossible. Everything's possible.” The grassroots movement from the 70s to the present reflects the impossible made possible.

For 30 years I have been blessed with making relatives and understanding my responsibilities as a relative. They include never giving up hope for healing, safety, and justice as Native women, their families, Tribal Nations, and Native Hawaiians define these. While traveling has challenges, connecting and making new friends and relatives is rejuvenating and nourishing. We turn our attention to Moloka'i to help the seed germinate and grow and encourage others to do the same across the country. Because we united and bundled our advocacy efforts, we changed laws and policies and increased resources over the last 20 years for American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and others.

***Paula S. Julian***

*(Washtë Wiya, Good Woman) Filipina  
Editor, Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety  
for Native Women, Senior Policy Specialist, NIWRC*

# EDITOR'S NOTE

Through the courageous stories of sisters like Elsie Boudreau, Louise Charbonneau Aamot, Malinda Limberhand, and from personal experience, we know that healing is possible.

Our larger challenge as a social justice movement is creating structural change within the United States government in the hope of preventing future violence against Native women and the generations to come.

Throughout 2020, police killings generated a groundswell across a broad spectrum of American society calling for systemic change to address structural inequalities.

Will such change be inclusive of justice for Native women and the crisis of missing and murdered Native women—the victims and survivors of domestic, sexual, trafficking, and hate crimes?

Rose Burkowski, a friend, beloved elder, and lifelong advocate, lived her life in remote Alaska and encountered the harsh reality of violence committed against her Yup'ik sisters. Rose always carried a deep sense of hope and often shared, “Nothing is impossible. Everything is possible.” Her words can light our path, our efforts, in 2021.

## The Challenge of Addressing Structural Inequalities

The question before us is—How do we prioritize and integrate addressing structural inequalities into our ongoing organizing efforts to increase safety and justice for Native women?

Structural inequalities for Native women are interwoven with the current political, economic, and social institutions of the United States. Through its authority as a government, the U.S. enacted laws, developed policies, funded programs, and supported social practices to eradicate and forcibly assimilate Indigenous peoples.

These structural inequalities created by colonization are not just historical facts but are alive today in the laws and policies that separate Native women from

## REPRINT from Editor's Note | Vol. 18 | Issue 1 (February 2021)

By **Jacqueline “Jax” Agtuca**,  
*Filipina and Cherokee*, Former  
Editor of *Restoration Magazine*

other populations, increasing their vulnerability to violence in a multitude of ways.

Indigenous women face both the structural inequalities resulting from the colonization of their nations and also gender-based inequalities and violence.

The litmus test of structural change is more than acknowledging the barriers. It must be removing and replacing the laws, policies, and programs separating Native women from living lives free of violence. While this includes accessing meaningful justice-related services, it also requires the full range of governmental departments and services—healthcare, housing, education, and others.

Beyond targeted reforms of the government, safety is linked to inclusion and fairness in the political, economic, social, and cultural institutions of the U.S. as a nation.

In 2021, and going forward, acknowledgment of injustices must be connected to changes that structurally correct the injustice. To the call for ongoing public awareness, we add the task of informing the public of the specific reforms required to dismantle systemic barriers. These reforms include reforms within the *VAWA Reauthorization Act* such as restoring tribal jurisdiction over non-Indians committing violence against women and children and resources to support services such as shelter, housing, and advocacy for survivors of domestic and

sexual violence. Public awareness must be linked to intentional reforms.

Federal laws and policies created broad social permissions and tolerance of violence committed against Indigenous women. And while the struggle to correct the structural inequities are challenging, a far greater challenge is altering the dominant societal view of Native women.

#### Reaching Beyond Addressing Individual Violence

In preparing for this April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, we aim to share information beyond the statistics that one in three Native women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime by offering recommendations from survivors. In organizing for the May 5th National Day of Awareness to honor Native women who are missing or have been murdered, we identify and share recommendations from family members of our missing and murdered sisters to reform and remove structural barriers.

We raise the question of—Why? And to the answers, the reasons given, we call for systemic reforms.

The answers to Why? are not simple, but they are not ‘mysteries.’

The recurring violence committed against Indigenous women spanning generations is not natural. Domestic and sexual violence is not natural. These are the products of humans using the structures of governments to impose and achieve specific purposes through laws and policies. Essential to the creation of structural inequities are laws and policies reflective of specific beliefs and goals. One example is the Code of Indian Offenses criminalizing specific Indigenous spirituality; another is the *Indian Civilization Act* authorizing the forced removal of children from their parents to the horrors of government boarding schools.

Looking forward to 2021, the central question for the movement for safety is less the government’s role in the past but how current departments and agencies of the federal government maintain structural inequities separating Native women. Understanding

and removing structural inequalities do not occur in the abstract but in the everyday functions and policies of government impacting the lives of Native women—the decisions, relations, and mandates of government.

Achieving these structural changes requires partnerships within the federal, state, and local governments because these employees are the people who implement the changes step by step, day by day. The structures that must be changed are currently considered the ‘normal’ operations of departments and agencies—the everyday policies separating Native women as invisible, less than, and vulnerable.

For these reasons mass public education is essential to establishing a new social standard of intolerance and accountability for violence against Indigenous women for the United States as a nation.

### **The New Administration’s Potential to Create Systemic Change**

In this sense, 2021 presents a political season of hope.

President Joe Biden signed two executive orders on his first day of office addressing priority issues intersecting with changes required to increase safety for Native women—racial equity and the climate crisis...

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**Read the full article at [NIWRC.org](https://niwrc.org)!  
Scan the QR code below.**



## *Many Voices, Many Traditions:* **A FVPSA Toolkit for Working With Indigenous Partners**

**By the Indigenous Peoples Toolkit Work Group Members**

As advocates, our goal is to end domestic and sexual violence. In 2017, a group of staff from The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), The National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC), and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) had a discussion at the Domestic Violence Resource Network (DVRN) meeting that led to the idea to create a practical guide for FVPSA state administrators and state domestic violence coalitions on engaging and working with Tribal communities, programs, and coalitions.

Why focus on Tribal communities, programs, and coalitions? There are so many underserved populations that deserve equal access to quality services. This is a true statement that no one can deny or argue with. However, there was a recognition in this conversation that achieving the goal of ending violence can only happen if we focus on engaging and working with Tribal communities, who often have the least access to resources. If we, as a field, can assist those who have the least access to resources and services, then, as a field, we would be able to reach every survivor and every community. The outcome of that conversation was the creation of this toolkit.

### **The Process**

A working group convened by NNEDV, comprised of representatives from Tribal coalitions, the Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence (ATCEV),

NIWRC, the Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center (AKNWRC), and the Pouhana O Nā Wāhine (PONW), the newly created and federally funded Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

From the beginning, there was a commitment to centering the voices of Tribal advocates and the experiences of Indigenous Nations. This group of dedicated advocates brought the toolkit to life by sharing their histories and stories, and by identifying culturally specific resources.

The workgroup also agreed that the guide should provide practical information. The purpose of the toolkit is to assist administrators and state coalition staff with fulfilling the requirement from FVPSA to forge meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities and support and fund services for Native survivors of domestic violence and their children.

The needs of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian (AI/AN & NH) communities were identified through technical assistance calls, webinars, listserv conversations, and other meetings that were held over the years. Members of the workgroup recounted a multitude of expressed needs for resources from state coalitions and FVPSA state administrators and what they would like non-Native advocates and partners to know to better serve and



partner with Tribal programs and support AI/AN & NH survivors of domestic violence.

## The Focus

As the two primary state-based entities responsible for supporting and engaging AI/AN & NH communities, state domestic violence coalitions (SDVC) and FVPSA state administrators have a clear need to have a deeper understanding of Tribal Nations in their states. These two entities are required by FVPSA to work with, outreach to, and support AI/AN & NH survivors of domestic violence and AI/AN & NH programs, regardless of a Tribe's federal or state recognition status.

The toolkit is divided into sections that correspond to the information that state domestic violence coalitions and FVPSA state administrators need to begin to understand Tribal Nations and learn ways to engage. While no single document or source can cover the history of AI/AN & NH peoples, one of the goals of this project was to be a starting point for learning about the AI/AN & NH communities in each state.

As the toolkit came together, it became apparent that information was necessary for Tribal programs on how to access funding from both the state and federal governments. While it is important for Tribal programs to understand how to access funds, it is even more important for states and coalitions to work to provide funding opportunities for Tribal Programs and Native Hawaiian programs.

## How to Use the Toolkit

The toolkit includes sections on the history of Tribal Nations, with break-out sections for Hawaii and Alaska, funding, statewide needs assessments, and state planning, and a section specifically for SDVCs on how to reach out to engage and partner with Tribal programs and Tribal coalitions. Each section is written in an FAQ style to make it easier for the reader to find what they are looking for and digest the information. It is the hope of the workgroup that advocates and administrators will take the time to go

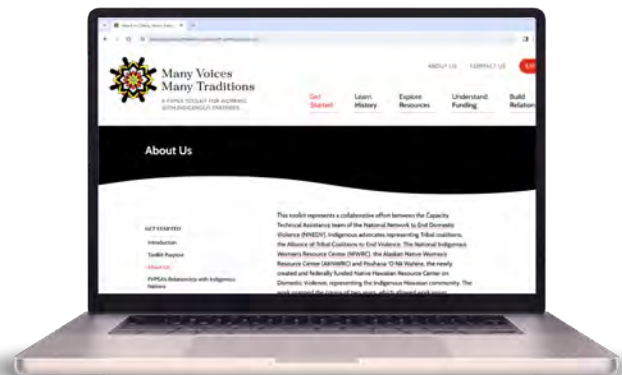
through the history section as that provides a context on how racism and colonialism have and continue to impact AI/AN & NH peoples.

At the end of the toolkit, there is a glossary of terms that are important to understand the language and terms to use when working with communities that are not our own. Using correct terminology is one way to show respect.

It should be acknowledged that no one source can cover everything you need to know about a particular Tribal Nation, nor can it fully cover the general history of trauma and atrocities that AI/AN & NH peoples have suffered, but it is our hope that this toolkit represents a starting point for learning and provides a foundation to outreach to, fund, engage and partner with Tribal Nations in your state.

## The Future

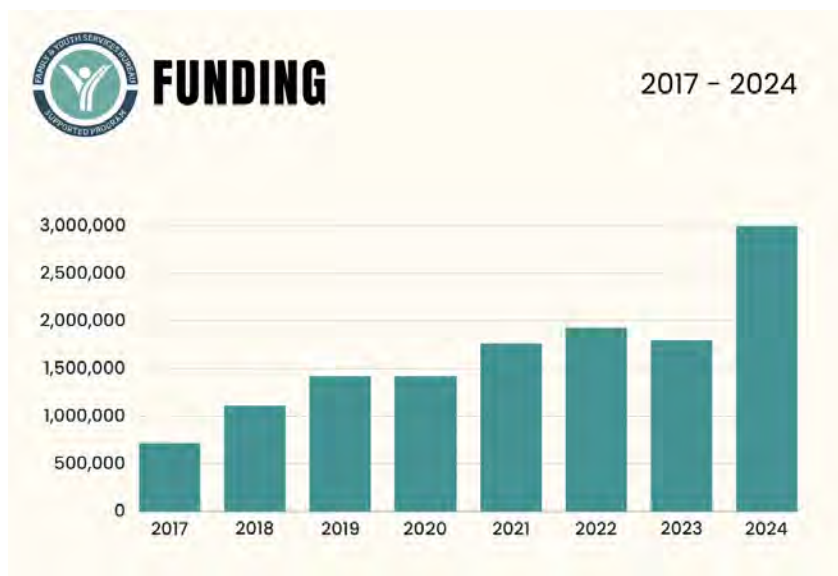
It is the vision of the working group that the toolkit becomes a go-to resource for domestic violence coalition staff, advocates, and FVPSA state administrators when looking for information on outreach, engagement, and partnering to fund AI/AN & NH programs. **The toolkit will be updated yearly to ensure that it stays a current and useful website.**



Go to  
[manyvoicesmanytraditions.com](https://manyvoicesmanytraditions.com)  
to view the toolkit!

# Vital Funding Increases *Culturally Appropriate Support* and Advocacy

By StrongHearts Native Helpline



*Seven years of access to funding has increased culturally appropriate support and advocacy. / Chart courtesy of StrongHearts Native Helpline.*

On the cusp of its seven-year anniversary, StrongHearts Native Helpline is building partnerships and gaining support from grants awarded to sustain culturally appropriate support and advocacy for Native Americans impacted by domestic and sexual violence.

“The service we provide is being felt by our relatives in a good way and enhanced by newly forming partnerships dedicated to ending violence against Native Americans and Alaska Natives. As the beneficiaries of generous donations—our advocates are better trained and more readily available to meet the needs of our people,” said CEO Lori Jump, StrongHearts Native Helpline. “It’s hard to deny culturally appropriate support and advocacy is a top priority.”

## Seven Years of History

Over the course of seven years, StrongHearts established the first-ever phone and internet-based

national helpline for Native Americans impacted by domestic and sexual violence.

To begin with, the need for a national helpline was recognized by The National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline) in 2012, realizing that Native Americans were not reaching out for help. This fact became even more disturbing when a study conducted by the Department of Justice (2016) revealed that Native Americans and Alaska Native women and men suffer violence at alarmingly high rates and predominantly at the hands of non-Natives.

With seed money from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Verizon, The Hotline provided a training ground for StrongHearts in Austin, Texas, where culturally appropriate support and advocacy was developed by and for Native Americans.

*StrongHearts has become a lifeline to support, advocacy, and resources in all 50 states. However, the top five caller locations may have greater Native populations. / Chart courtesy of StrongHearts Native Helpline.*

Since March 6, 2017, StrongHearts has continued in growth and development with funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and an increasing flow of charitable donations as StrongHearts became more recognizable in Tribal communities across the nation.

### **San Manuel Band of Mission Indians Donates \$100,000**

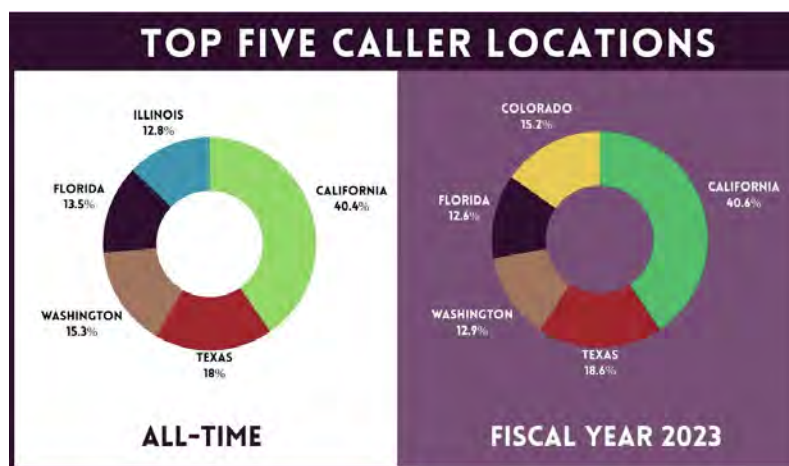
On November 28, 2023, for Giving Tuesday and in honor of Native American Heritage Month, the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians of Southern California donated \$100,000 to StrongHearts to facilitate a great impact on underserved communities.

“California is home to the largest population of Native Americans in our nation,” said Jump. “Our demographics are a reflection of Native peoples being pushed from the east to west. California has consistently been in the top five locations from where our relatives are reaching out for help.”

The San Manuel Band of Mission Indians recognized StrongHearts as a viable resource by providing support for building infrastructure, expanding community outreach, and increasing training opportunities for staff and advocates.

### **Together Rising Donates \$50,000**

Together Rising also donated \$50,000 as part of their mission to transform collective heartbreak into effective action. Together Rising is a non-profit organization entrusted by donors to identify and provide support services for those in need.



“These generous donations signify a deep and mutual appreciation for the well-being of our relatives,” said Jump. “All donations will be used to support our vision to eradicate domestic and sexual violence against all Native peoples and a return to our traditional lifeways where our relatives are safe and sacredness is restored.”

### **Helping All of Our Relations**

StrongHearts advocates provide culturally appropriate support and advocacy to every contact, including non-Natives who reach out for help. We understand that domestic and sexual violence originated from sources outside of our communities and that by helping those who would do us harm, we also help ourselves.

StrongHearts Native Helpline serves all individuals who reach out for their services regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or any other factor protected by local, state, or federal law. Call or text 1-844-762-8483 or chat online at [strongheartshelpline.org](https://strongheartshelpline.org)



# StrongHearts Native Helpline Reaches *Goal*

By StrongHearts Native Helpline

## Final Phase of Development Reached

In almost seven years, StrongHearts Native Helpline opened call lines, developed a training curriculum steeped in Native American culture and tradition, expanded hours of operation to 24/7, and increased access by offering options to text or use online chat.

“A critical phase of development has been reached as we announce the hiring of two key positions: Deputy Executive Officer and Quality Assurance Manager,” said CEO Lori Jump of StrongHearts Native Helpline. “These key positions will support StrongHearts advocates, identify areas of improvement, and provide guidance to meet the needs of our people.”



*DEO Rachel Carr-Shunk, StrongHearts Native Helpline. Photo Courtesy of Carr-Shunk.*

## Deputy Executive Officer

Rachel Carr-Shunk is the Deputy Executive Officer for StrongHearts Native Helpline. She came to StrongHearts with more than 10 years working in the field of domestic and sexual violence: six years as Executive Director and four years as Policy Specialist for Uniting Three Fires Against Violence—a state-wide Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition located in Michigan.

A proud citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Rachel earned a Master of Social Work (2017) and a Bachelor of Science in Human Biology (2009). She has dedicated her career to the betterment of her Tribe and others in the State of Michigan. She seeks to make an even greater impact on the national level to eradicate domestic and sexual violence against Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

Rachel’s work in Tribal communities included providing workshops to improve Tribal systemic response to domestic violence and sexual assault, including the impact of historical trauma. She has also advocated for anti-violence legislation, including the Violence Against Women Act (2013, 2022), on the Tribal, local, state, and national levels.

## Quality Assurance Manager

Nana Tiwaa Dadzie, MAS, PMP, is the Quality Assurance Manager for StrongHearts Native Helpline. In this position, Nana will oversee the Quality Assurance Department and work with StrongHearts advocates and staff to strategize and implement a continuous quality improvement plan, data analysis, and grant compliance. She will foster a culture of accountability with full transparency to strengthen foundational values and principles.

Nana came into her profession initially thinking she wanted to be a medical doctor but realized her passion for healthcare and quality improvement was a career where she could make a difference. Her attention to detail led her into a world of quality improvement. She received her undergraduate degree in Health



*QAM Nana  
Tiwaa Dadzie,  
StrongHearts Native  
Helpline. / Photo  
courtesy of Dadzie.*

Administration and Health Systems Management. She completed her graduate education at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and School of Medicine, focusing on quality improvement and clinical informatics.

Nana has previous work experience with hotlines, healthcare systems, and non-profit organizations, where her in-depth expertise and knowledge in performance improvement contributed to successful clinical and organizational outcomes. In her spare time, Nana enjoys reading, interior design, and traveling to beautiful countries as a source of relaxation.

**“The next phase of development is to hold space for improvement and professional development. We have built a strong foundation to ensure StrongHearts staff and advocates are meeting the needs of relatives.”**

*– Lori Jump, Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa/  
Anishinaabe, CEO, StrongHearts Native Helpline*



**STRONGHEARTS**  
Native Helpline

StrongHearts Native Helpline is a **24/7, confidential, and anonymous** domestic and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

Call **1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483)** or go to **strongheartshelpline.org**.



*Lori Jump*

**Chief Executive Officer  
StrongHearts Native Helpline**

*Photo courtesy of StrongHearts Native Helpline  
Communications Department.*

# Thank you: *Lily Gladstone*, Power of Women Honorees, and *Variety*



*From Left to Right: Liane Pippin (Communications Specialist), Kelsey Foote (Director of Communications), Carmen O'Leary (Board Chairwoman), Leonardo DiCaprio, Lily Gladstone, and Lucy Simpson (Executive Director).  
Photo courtesy of NIWRC.*

## By NIWRC

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The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) congratulates Lily Gladstone as an honoree of the Variety's Power of Women 2023 award.

This year, Lily Gladstone was among five women in entertainment honored for their work as advocates. As part of this event, each honoree chooses to highlight the work of a non-profit organization or charity with which they share a special connection, showcasing their mission and collaboration as part of the ceremony. With a humble heart, we express gratitude to our sister, Lily, for seizing this moment

to uplift NIWRC as part of this year's Power of Women Award.

In 2011, our relationship with Lily began through her participation in a workshop where she led Native youth through "acting as activism" workshops in Montana. Unbeknownst to us at the time, this workshop became the catalyst for her crossing paths with playwright and NIWRC Legal Counsel Mary Kathryn Nagle and later, accomplished writer and director Erica Tremblay, who would cast her in future productions. This serendipitous connection with Lily serves as a poignant illustration of the interwoven



connections within our Native communities. It highlights the profound impact that shared advocacy spaces, such as workshops and task forces, can have on fostering collaboration and unity.

As Lily reminds us, art is a powerful catalyst for social awareness and change. We are so grateful to Lily for not merely raising awareness of NIWRC, but also the MMIW crisis, the connection between land and body violence, the value of our Native women and children, and the ongoing need to not only improve the response to violence against Native women but also to center prevention work.

“Native women, four out of five in our lifetimes, will experience some form of violence at the hands of a romantic partner,” Gladstone said during her acceptance speech. “One thing that NIWRC is doing is bringing these stories forward of survivors in front of lawmakers, in front of Congress, in front of people who have the power to enact real change, to give our people just what we need to protect ourselves — bare minimum.”

We are deeply grateful and humbled upon receiving recognition for our work to end violence against Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women; however, we must always remember that our impact is strengthened by partnerships with grassroots advocates and organizations. Together, we work to address the systemic changes that are needed so that our Native sisters and relatives can live their lives free from violence, such as safe housing, economic security, childcare, healthcare, legal services, and perpetrator accountability.

The voices and leadership of survivors of violence and grassroots advocates are at the root of organizing for social, cultural, and legal changes. NIWRC would not be here if it were not for stronghearted advocates providing direct services and support to survivors and their families.

Our appreciation forever extends to our partners, without whom we could not serve effectively.

We are proud also to share a list of this year’s recipients and their chosen charities. Please take a moment to learn about these organizations:

- **Fantasia Barrino**, Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter, actress, and NYT best-selling author, highlighted the work of Salute 1st Global.
- Grammy and Academy Award-winning singer-songwriter **Billie Eilish** brought awareness to Support+Feed’s dedication to combating food insecurity and the climate crisis.
- Academy Award-nominated actress **Carey Mulligan** spoke about her work with War Child UK and Children in Conflict, an organization protecting children from the brutal impact of conflict-stricken areas.
- Rising star **Lily Gladstone** highlighted the work of the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, which aids in ending violence against American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women.
- The Producer of the Year Award was presented to **LuckyChap** for its continued commitment to championing female storytellers and filmmakers, strong female characters, and opportunities for female HODs across every facet of production.
- Power of Women Alumni Award to **Emily Blunt** for her work with the American Institute for Stuttering.





# Tribal PERSPECTIVES

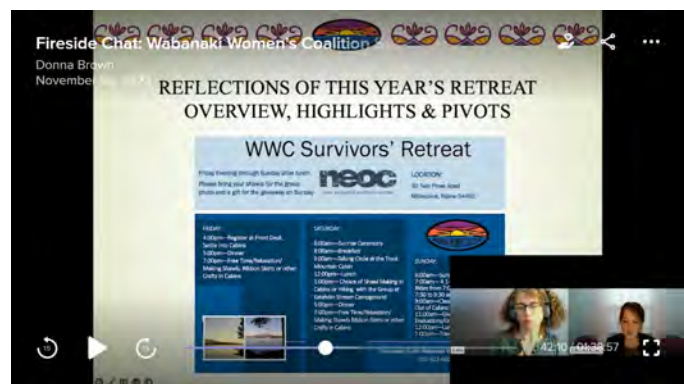




By Tia Bahozhoni, *Diné*, Policy Specialist, NIWRC

In October 2022, the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC) launched a series of virtual Healing Camps webinars in honor of Tillie Black Bear and her legacy as the grandmother of the movement to end violence against Native women. The virtual series, created with the help and guidance of Tillie’s daughter, Connie Bushbreaker, featured 11 sessions focused on community care and healing for survivors and advocates like Tillie. Throughout the past year, NIWRC has presented seasonal Healing Camps. We are honored to carry Tillie’s work forward as we transition the Healing Camps into Fireside Sessions. This new iteration of virtual gathering will provide communal healing spaces for advocates and survivors by highlighting and uplifting Indigenous organizations’ work for healing.

During the Healing Camp events, held from October 2022 to August 2023, we could see how Tillie continues to inspire each of us as advocates. Here, we would like to share with you our reflections on the last two events: “Tillie Black Bear Women Are Sacred Seasonal Healing Camp: Biboon Anishinaabe-Mshkiki: Winter Anishinaabe Medicines” and “Fireside Session: Wabanaki Women’s Coalition Survivors’ Retreat Creation and Overview,” which carried Tillie’s spirit of advocacy. The knowledge shared within these events showcased how healing is varied and that all efforts to help ourselves and communities at large are essential.



A screenshot from the “Fireside Chat: Wabanaki Women’s Coalition Survivors’ Retreat.” Recording available in the Resource Library: [bit.ly/47WH8Id](https://bit.ly/47WH8Id).

Carmen Harrington (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians) presented the “Biboon Anishinaabe-Mshkiki: Winter Anishinaabe Medicines” Healing Camp on August 23, 2023. Carmen shared her knowledge and resources with attendees by introducing the traditional plant medicines by their traditional and Latin names and reinforcing the importance of proper harvesting procedures when collecting and using plant medicines in terms of identification and ethical harvesting. As Carmen listed and displayed each plant collected from her community, she described ways to create tinctures or teas to help maintain health during the winter. The medicines identified were specific to the Upper Michigan Peninsula region and for the winter



season. Carmen advocated finding local resources and creating connections with local plant knowledge keepers. Attendees were encouraged to seek out traditional medicines in healing journey spaces specific to their region. We acknowledge that finding ways to connect within Indigenous cultures is in and of itself a healing practice. As a communal space for healing, several attendees shared their knowledge of local and cultural plant medicine. Within Indigenous communal spaces, commonalities, connections, and stories are all part of healing journeys and heart-strengthens as a way for advocates, survivors, and an array of organizations to gather through Indigenous culture and perspectives.

Donna Brown (Penobscot Nation and Algonquin First Nation of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg), Executive Director of the Wabanaki Women's Coalition, presented the "Wabanaki Women's Coalition Survivors' Retreat Creation and Overview" Fireside Session. The Wabanaki Women's Coalition (WWC), located in Maine, was created in 2013 and has five domestic violence programs in its membership. Donna gave an overview of this year's Survivors' Retreat, which the WWC hosts annually. This retreat is specific to the region and focuses on the connection between survivors and advocates. The WWC Survivor's Retreat is an entire weekend dedicated to survivors' healing through cultural connection, connection to the land and water, and connection with each other as relatives. An elder opens and closes the retreat, and activities such as shawl-making, hiking, and kayaking encourage relatives to connect with one another. The overarching theme is giving survivors agency in deciding on what they participate in while in the safe company of relatives.

After giving an overview of the retreat itself, Donna discussed the process for planning such an event. She listed each part of the planning process to empower organizations and advocates to create similar events for their communities. Logistics such as deciding on a venue/location and transportation were touched on, as well as other considerations like making sure survivors felt safe and supported while away from home. Throughout each presentation, people commented with their own perspectives

unique to their region, Indigenous background, and professional experience.

Programs and organizations like the WWC are crucial in implementing prevention services rooted in Indigenous perspectives and culture. Federal grants can assist in these efforts. For example, the Office on Family Violence Prevention and Services (OFVPS) provides funding to Tribes and Tribal organizations to assist Tribes in efforts to increase public awareness about and primary and secondary prevention of family violence, domestic violence, and dating violence and to provide immediate shelter and supportive services for victims of domestic violence and their dependents. In 2023, OFVPS made awards to over 250 federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations totaling \$26,637,500. The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) funds Tribal coalitions with the Grants to Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions Program, "In 2023, OVW gave out 20 awards totaling over \$7.64 million."<sup>1</sup> Funding and other resources directed toward programs like the Wabanaki Women's Coalition can strengthen communities within Indian Country by providing education, support, and technical assistance. Culturally specific programs can create more opportunities for Tribal communities that target their unique needs and pathways to healing.

As NIWRC transitions from the virtual Healing Camps into Fireside Sessions, the continual thread of creating healing spaces for advocates and survivors is ever-present. In these spaces, we will also continue with the mission of addressing disparities Indigenous women face and bringing efforts to restore sovereignty to strengthen the safety of Native women.

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PART OF THE  
**FIRESIDE SESSION**  
SERIES

*NIWRC has developed graphics to denote sessions and webinars that align with the Fireside Session framework and facilitation, helping identify events within the series. See logo above.*



# Missing and Murdered **INDIGENOUS WOMEN**





*Enough  
is enough.*

**NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION 2024**

APRIL 29 - MAY 5, 2024



[niwrc.org](http://niwrc.org)



## When a Loved One Goes Missing

A Quick Reference Guide for Families of Missing Indigenous Women: What to Do in the First 72 Hours

By NIWRC, Policy Team

As of January, the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) Policy Team is delighted to share the re-release of the quick reference guide, **When a Loved One Goes Missing**. This guide is now accessible and downloadable in PDF format via our website.

This guide is a part of our MMIW Toolkit for *Understanding and Responding to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women for Families and Communities*.

The full toolkit includes a downloadable PDF of When a Loved One Goes Missing, a customizable missing person flyer, an MMIW awareness poster for Tribal programs, and an online database of local emergency contacts, hotlines and other resources, which can be accessed online at [niwrc.org/mmiwtoolkit](http://niwrc.org/mmiwtoolkit).

This guide is not meant to encourage families to take on law enforcement responsibilities, including collecting and preserving evidence. Families can keep records and documentation to share with law enforcement, such as a timeline, a record of a person's first-hand experience, court documents, or prior police reports. Chain of custody issues may arise from interference with a potential crime scene.

Due to the historic and often inadequate response from law enforcement, this guide was designed to assist families and advocacy organizations in responding when a Native woman goes missing. It provides information about immediate steps that can be taken in the first 72 hours after a person goes missing, especially where the law enforcement response is non-existent or non-responsive.

### Contents of the Reference Guide

Time is of the essence when someone you love goes missing. Do not delay – make every second count. The guide is broken down into four (4) steps or sections:

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(1) Contacting local law enforcement.

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(2) Gathering information and keeping concise records.

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(3) Asking friends and family for the support for yourself.

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(4) Enlisting the help of your family, community, victim services, and Tribal coalitions.

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# Legislative REFORMS





# Introducing The Not Invisible Act Commission (NIAC) Hub

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) is proud to introduce a dedicated webpage hub for the *Not Invisible Act* Commission. By establishing this hub, we aim to serve as a comprehensive resource for stakeholders, advocates, leadership, and Tribal communities, providing easy access to this critical information.

This hub features definitions and essential documents, such as the "*Not One More: the Not Invisible Act Commission*" *Final Report*, a list of findings and recommendations to address and reduce the tragic consequences of the crisis of missing, murdered, and trafficked American Indians and Alaska Natives.



Go to [www.niwrc.org/not-invisible-act-commission](http://www.niwrc.org/not-invisible-act-commission)



SCAN ME

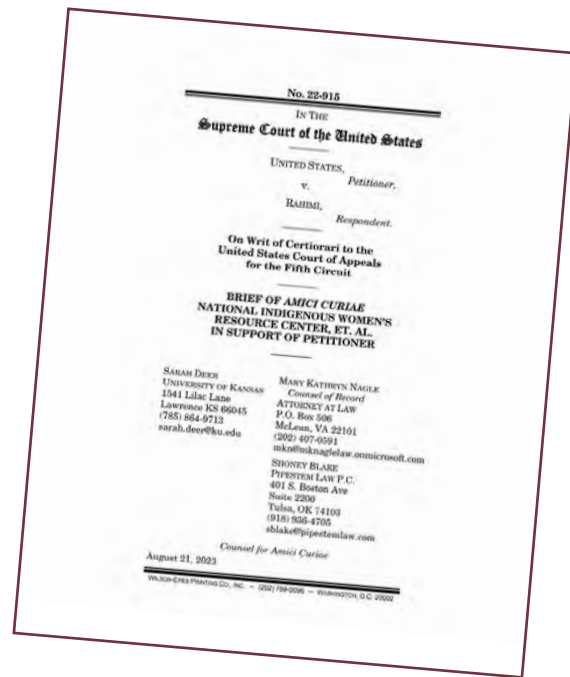


# Legislative UPDATE

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

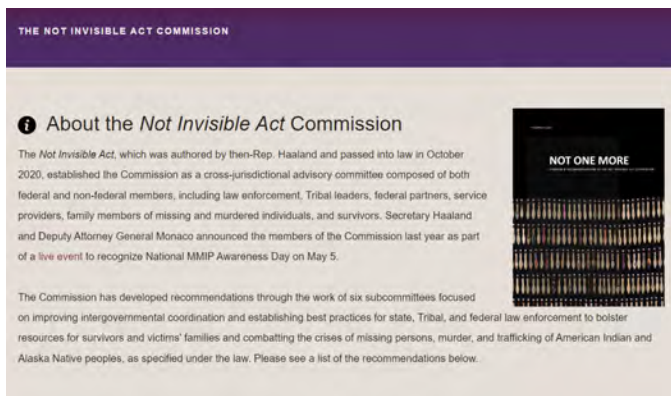
## Not Invisible Act Commission Report and Resource Hub

On November 1, the *Not Invisible Act* Commission transmitted its report for actions the federal government can take to address the crisis of missing, murdered, and trafficked American Indians and Alaska Natives to the Department of the Interior, Department of Justice, and the United States Congress. The Department of the Interior and Department of Justice must respond to the recommendations in writing within 90 calendar days. To learn more about the *Not Invisible Act* and the Commission, please read NIWRC’s **fact sheet** ([bit.ly/49fJjHJ](https://bit.ly/49fJjHJ)). NIWRC also created a hub to host the Commission’s report, important resources, and any future materials or updates related to the Commission’s work (see previous page, *Page 21*).



## United States v. Rahimi Oral Arguments

On November 7, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *United States v. Rahimi*. This case will determine the constitutionality of prohibiting the possession of firearms by individuals subject to domestic violence protective orders. NIWRC filed an *amicus* brief in *Rahimi* in August as part of our VAWA Sovereignty Initiative. A decision on the case is likely to be issued in June 2024.



*A screenshot from WhiteHouse.Gov press release webpage, "Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Actions and Historic Progress Supporting Tribal Nations and Native Communities Ahead of Third Annual White House Tribal Nations Summit."*



## Action Alert: VOCA Funding Cuts

The proposed 40% cut to the *Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)* for FY24 would cause thousands of victim service providers nationwide to cut programs or close their doors, and millions of victims to lose access to lifesaving services.

**TAKE ACTION NOW** by sending a **prewritten letter asking Congress to maintain adequate funding.** See banner and QR code below.

## White House Tribal Nations Summit

On December 6 and 7, Tribal leaders from across the country attended the White House Tribal Nations Summit to meet with senior Administration officials about key priorities and issues facing Tribal Nations. In anticipation of the Summit, the Administration released a **fact sheet** ([bit.ly/42hYY7b](https://bit.ly/42hYY7b)) outlining new actions and progress in supporting Tribal Nations, including the announcement of OVW's first Notice of Reimbursement under the VAWA 2022 Tribal Reimbursement Program for expenses incurred exercising expanded criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians under VAWA.



Ready to  
**take action?**

WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO GET STARTED.

[NIWRC.QUORUM.US](https://NIWRC.QUORUM.US)



SCAN HERE

# Overview of the Resolutions Passed at NCAI's Annual Convention Related To Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW)

By Laura Van Oudenaren, Manager of Leadership Development, NCAI



Page one (1) of the The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Resolution #NO-23-001

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) thanks everyone who could travel to its 80th Annual Convention & Marketplace in New Orleans in

November 2023. In addition to celebrating 80 years of advocacy, the Annual Convention witnessed the passage of several resolutions critical to the prevention and protection of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW).

NCAI resolutions are one of the policy mechanisms used to express the organizational positions on Tribal, federal, state, and/or local legislation, litigation, and policy matters that affect Tribal governments and communities. Over its 80-year history, NCAI has passed more than thirty resolutions relevant to the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)* and the MMIW crisis, and hundreds that aim to protect the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women and peoples.

The three resolutions related to the MMIW crisis passed at the 2023 80th Annual Convention include:

## **NO-23-001: To Establish a National Federal Communications Commission Event Code for Missing and Endangered Persons**

In acknowledgment that the existing Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Event Codes for missing persons fail to account for the unique circumstances and challenges faced by



missing and endangered American Indian and Alaskan Native adults, NCAI urgently petitions the FCC to establish a National Emergency Alert System (EAS) event code specifically designated for AI/AN Missing and Endangered Persons (MEP). Such a code would ensure that missing and endangered AI/AN adults who are over the age of 21 and thus not subject to Amber alerts are promptly identified and alerted via the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) to radio, television, and both wireless and wireline internet platforms. Establishing a specific event code for missing and endangered AI/AN adults would guarantee that these cases receive the alerting attention and the resources they rightly deserve, and would improve the likelihood of locating and protecting the endangered individual in a timely and effective manner. In addition to the creation of the code, the resolution calls for Congress to establish the necessary funding to support the implementation of this life-saving event code and sustain ongoing efforts to address the pressing issue of missing and endangered AI/AN adults.

**NO-23-024: Opposing Federal or State Actions That Result in the Creation of a Mancamp On or Near Tribal Lands Without First Requiring the Development and Implementation of an Enforceable Community Safety Plan**

In this resolution, NCAI calls on the United States Congress, federal offices and agencies, and state governments to require the development of an enforceable community safety plan as a condition of any permit issued that would result in the development of a mancamp on tribal lands or near AI/AN communities. The Congressional Research Service defines “man camps” as “areas of temporary housing for oil and gas workers who are characteristically well paid, male and non-Indigenous.” In 2023, the Congressional Research Service found that “[l]aw enforcement often does not have the resources to serve these temporarily inflated populations and struggle to address the increase in crime” and that the “[r]ates of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human

trafficking doubled or tripled in the Bakken oil-producing region of North Dakota and Montana where extractive industries were present.” This resolution aims to reduce the impact of these man camps on the surrounding AI/AN communities.

**NO-23-070: Add Additional Tribal Coordinator for the Not Invisible Act Commission**

NCAI supports the recommendations in the *Not Invisible Act* Commission report released on November 1, 2023, but it also recognizes that the work of the commission is not complete. In this resolution, NCAI calls upon Congress to extend the work of the Not Invisible Act Commission through reauthorization of the legislation. At least two full time employees are needed in the role of Coordinator to carry out the work of the Commission. The original Commission had only one Coordinator. Therefore, NCAI calls to add a second coordinator to carry out the work of the Commission and specifies that at least one of the two coordinators should be American Indian/Alaskan Native.

All three resolutions were passed on the General Assembly floor during the 80th Annual Convention in New Orleans. NCAI staff and partner organizations are committed to taking action to transform the resolutions into undisputable policies. For more information on these resolutions, email Laura Van Oudenaren at [lvanoudenaren@ncai.org](mailto:lvanoudenaren@ncai.org).



# COMING SOON

THE ALL NEW  
NCAI Violence Against Women  
Task Force Resource Center



VISIT [NCAI.ORG](https://www.ncai.org) IN FEBRUARY 2024





# - You Are Invited -

Join NCAI and NIWRC on **February 12, 2024**, as we celebrate 20 years of our grassroots organizing to restore Tribal sovereignty and increase Native women's safety through the Violence Against Women Task Force and the Restoration Magazine.



Twenty years ago on February 23, 2004, as Senators and Representatives entered room 902 of the U.S. Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill for a briefing on violence against American Indian women, they were greeted and handed a copy of the first Restoration of Native Sovereignty and Safety for Native Women. While systemic barriers remain disproportionately impacting Native women and Indian tribes, we take a moment to celebrate the work and progress of the last twenty years.



Monday, February 12, 2024 | 7:00 - 8:30 PM (ET)

The Westin Washington, DC Downtown  
999 Ninth Street NW • Washington, D.C.



# STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center Launches Third Year With *Three New Colleagues*

## Greeting 2024 and Celebrating the Movement With Renewed Energy

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

The STTARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center (STTARS) joins The National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC) in celebrating over 20 years of strong advocacy through *Restoration* to increase safety for Native women and children and through the strengthening of Tribal sovereignty through the Violence Against Women Task Force at the National Congress of American Indians.

STTARS is proud to enter its third year of funding in partnership with the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services to further its important vision of “Safe housing for all our relatives.” The intersection of gender-based violence and housing insecurity/homelessness is detrimental to the health of Tribal Nations, and we are honored to address this critical issue in our shared work with many survivors, advocates, Tribal Nations, Native organizations, and allies. In furtherance of our vital mission and vision, we are overjoyed to announce three new staff members who are already bolstering our internal capacity to provide culturally grounded national training and technical assistance for Tribes, Tribal organizations, Native not-for-profits, Alaska Native Villages, Native Hawaiian communities, and off-reservation Tribal communities.



*Photo courtesy of Clarice Hubbard.*

### **Clarice Hubbard** STTARS Safe Housing and Shelter Specialist

Clarice Charlie-Hubbard (she/her) is the dedicated STTARS Safe Housing and Shelter Specialist. Clarice is a proud member of the Te-moak Tribe and belongs to the Western Shoshone community. Originally from Bishop, CA, she now calls Sparks, NV, her home. Clarice’s remarkable journey in advocating for survivors of domestic violence began with her volunteer work in her local community. Eventually, she relocated to Reno, Nevada, where she joined the Domestic Violence Resource Center (formerly known as the Committee to Aid Abused Women) before discovering her true calling in supporting Native

communities. Clarice’s unwavering commitment to her Native people led her to the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada’s Family Violence Prevention Program (ITCN-FVPP). Over an impressive 17-year tenure as Program Director, she took the lead in various crucial initiatives, including providing essential emergency services, securing vital federal funding, fostering collaborative partnerships, and expanding the program’s statewide reach. Her tireless efforts resulted in significant improvements to safety resources for Native survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and other forms of violence. Clarice’s leadership extends beyond her role; she also served as a board member for the Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (NCEDSV).

In recognition of her outstanding contributions, she received the prestigious National Visionary Voice award from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center in 2019. Clarice holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from the University of Nevada, Reno. In addition to Clarice’s work at the Center, she is also a training and technical assistance provider with Gwendolyn Packard on the Capacity Building Consortium with the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and we could not be more excited that she decided to join our team, especially considering her extensive experience and expertise.



*Photo courtesy of Paloma Sanchez.*

**Paloma Sanchez**  
**STTARS ARP Coordinator and Specialist**

Paloma Haapnaažiwiga Sánchez (they/them) is the ARP Coordinator and Specialist for STTARS, bringing a wealth of expertise and commitment to their role. They are a proud member of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska and also identify as Latinx and Two-Spirit. Paloma’s academic journey includes obtaining a Master’s in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, focusing on Indigenous archaeology and community-based participatory research. Paloma is furthering their education at the University of Denver, pursuing a Master of Social Work to expand their impact on Indigenous communities.

In their prior roles, Paloma demonstrated an unwavering passion for providing culturally tailored support to unhoused and housed relatives in the Denver metro area. Their commitment extends beyond direct support, as Paloma has played a crucial role in developing and facilitating Indigenous Cultural Humility trainings. These trainings were designed for direct service providers engaging with unhoused Indigenous populations and behavioral health staff, emphasizing a respectful and culturally responsive approach.

As a survivor with significant lived experience, Paloma draws on their personal and professional insights to advocate for and support their Indigenous relatives. Their mission is to provide assistance and drive meaningful change that is inclusive, respectful, and driven by the needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities.

Paloma has been a member of our National Workgroup on Safe Housing for American Indian and Alaska Native Survivors of Gender-Based Violence, where they have been instrumental in representing numerous intersections of the work and have assisted the workgroup in developing responsive policy recommendations to the needs of our unhoused relatives. They have also participated in presentations and trainings that STTARS has provided as a national training and technical assistance provider.

As a part of STTARS, Paloma will coordinate our American Rescue Plan Dollars, particularly the

funding we are sub-awarding to organizations and Tribes looking to address COVID-19 mitigation/public health, housing insecurity/homelessness, and gender-based violence.

Please reach out to [housing@niwrc.org](mailto:housing@niwrc.org) or request technical assistance here: [www.niwrc.org/housing/contact](http://www.niwrc.org/housing/contact). Please see [bit.ly/3Om5sfK](https://bit.ly/3Om5sfK) for more information about applying for our ARP Funding.



*Photo courtesy of Brianna Cervantes.*

### **Brianna Cervantes** STTARS Program Assistant

Brianna Cervantes, (she/they) Chumash, is excited to be a part of STTARS as our esteemed Program Assistant. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Forensic Behavioral Science with a minor in American Indian Studies from California State University, Fresno. Her goal is to use her education to support Indigenous survivors, whether through survivor advocacy or mental health services. After graduation, Brianna worked for a non-profit organization offering programs and services to incarcerated individuals, emphasizing restorative practices. This experience deepened her understanding of trauma's impact on people's life journeys and highlighted the importance of community and survivor-centered approaches. Brianna also expresses gratitude to her family and communities, particularly those in her homelands and Fresno (Yokut and Mono homelands), for their constant love and support. Since Brianna has been with STTARS, they have consistently shown that

they are aligned with our mission and vision and bring an infusion of commitment and enthusiasm to the work.

### **Our Third Year Ahead**

Our STTARS Staff has a strong reputation for consistent advocacy and dedication to our shared movement work in centering the voices of survivors. As a newer resource center, STTARS is intentional about developing our capacity. With the addition of these three individuals, we continue to build upon the integrity and strength of our work.

We look forward to this third year of funding and acknowledge and appreciate the support and partnership of survivors, our sister organizations, our MOU partners, the Domestic Violence Resource Network, the Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium, and the Office of Family Violence and Prevention Services.

### **Get In Touch**

To request training and technical assistance, please visit our website at [www.niwrc.org/housing](http://www.niwrc.org/housing) or email [housing@niwrc.org](mailto:housing@niwrc.org).

Please sign up for our newsletter, Lodestar, to keep up to date on upcoming events, important announcements, and to receive resources created or shared by the Center. **Scan the QR code below!**



**STTARS Listserv**



# *Pouhana O Nā Wāhine: The Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence*

By the Pouhana O Nā Wāhine Staff



*Kekoa, Vernon & Dolly presenting at the Hawaii Community College Domestic Violence Awareness event, 'Auamo Kuleana (It's our responsibility), October 2023. / Photo courtesy of Dr. Dayna Schultz, Psy.D., LSW, CSAC.*

In 2022, the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence, Pouhana O Nā Wāhine (PONW), underwent a significant period of growth, emphasizing the development of our team's capabilities to address domestic violence effectively. This expansion exceeded numerical increases, symbolizing our collective dedication to instigating positive change within the Hawaiian community. Our commitment centered on nurturing diverse skills and perspectives and establishing a strong foundation for a more resilient and impactful team.

The strength of our team lies in its diverse composition, bringing together individuals with expertise in social work, policy, communications, traditional Hawaiian cultural practices, and healthcare. This diverse skill set enabled us to approach the issue of domestic violence from multiple angles, ensuring a comprehensive and

culturally sensitive strategy. As a team, we pioneered Papa 'Ōlelo, an Indigenous approach that seamlessly integrated insights from our diverse backgrounds, creating a powerful platform for survivors and service providers.

At the core of our efforts was the facilitation of "Conversations with Communities," where the richness of our team's backgrounds became evident in the inclusive dialogue we fostered. Acknowledging the importance of "a holistic approach, we actively engaged with communities in Kahalu'u and Hilo, leveraging our diverse skill sets to tailor programs that addressed specific needs. Our technical instruction and facilitation of Native Hawaiian approaches reflected the depth of our team's expertise.

As a result, Pouhana O Nā Wāhine evolved into a trusted resource, frequently called upon in moments

demanding change when violence occurred in Hawai'i. Our growth and collaborative efforts, rooted in the diversity of our team, showcase a powerful model for building capacity and effecting positive change in addressing domestic violence within the unique Hawaiian context.

In the initial year, PONW received grant objectives that included the creation of a curriculum for designated communities, with Hilo in east Hawaii Island being a primary focus. Recognizing the significance of pilina, or relationships, in Hawai'i, we established a valuable connection with Renee Rivera, a professor at Hawaii Community College specializing in Human Services and the Executive Director of "He Ho'omaka Hou Ana O Puna," a non-profit serving underrepresented women in rural Puna. Renee's existing connections with community navigators in Hilo proved invaluable, and her generous contribution of cooking traditional Hawaiian foods enhanced the success of our events.

Renee's promise of 'ai pono, or nourishing healthy Hawaiian cultural foods, became a powerful incentive for the community to participate. At each gathering, the shared meal created a sense of peace and contentment for many women who hadn't experienced such feelings in a while. Renee's support was instrumental in the success of the Hilo Curriculum building, and we extend our sincere gratitude to her.

Another key contributor to our curriculum-building success is Lahela Kruse, a formidable figure working on the ground level with those rehabilitating from substance use. Lahela, a trusted figure in the community, provided valuable insights during the curriculum development process. Her advice to keep it simple and culturally grounded, drawing on the principles of "kaulana mahina", the moon phases, significantly influenced the creation of the Kumu Kukui, the candlenut tree, model guiding the curriculum's development. Pouhana O Nā Wāhine is grateful for the strong relationship shared with Lahela Kruse.

The "Conversation with Communities", a facilitation

tool developed by NIWRC for organizing national dialogue related to the domestic violence movement, was adapted and transformed by Pouhana O Nā Wāhine into Papa 'Ōlelo. This Indigenous approach, incorporating Native Hawaiian beliefs, values, and cultural practices, proved essential in gaining insight, knowledge, and understanding of the concerns and needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence within specific communities.

The pilina (connections/relationships) and aloha with these communities also paved the way for Pouhana O Nā Wāhine to implement community curriculum development, further strengthening our commitment to fostering positive change in addressing domestic violence within the Native Hawaiian context by hearing and centering Native Hawaiian solutions and voices—individually and collectively.

Pouhana O Nā Wāhine's journey in 2022 exemplifies the power of collaboration, diversity, and cultural sensitivity in addressing domestic violence within the unique context of the Hawaiian community. Our team's remarkable growth and development underscore our commitment to fostering positive change, and our success in becoming a trusted resource reflects the impact of our collective efforts.

As we move forward, Pouhana O Nā Wāhine remains dedicated to pursuing innovative and culturally informed approaches to combat domestic violence. Our experiences in Hilo and Kahalu'u demonstrate the effectiveness of building strong connections with the community, grounded in the principles of pilinahā and aloha. These relationships facilitate the development of tailored programs and create a supportive environment for survivors.

The adaptation of "Conversation with Communities" into Papa 'Ōlelo signifies our commitment to Indigenous methodologies, ensuring that our strategies align with Native Hawaiian beliefs and values. The Papa 'Ōlelo approach, rooted in diverse perspectives and cultural practices, continues to be instrumental in understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by victims and survivors of domestic violence.

As we express our gratitude to individuals like Renee Rivera and Lahela Kruse, whose unwavering support and expertise have played pivotal roles in our success, we also acknowledge the broader community that stands with us in the fight against domestic violence. The shared meals, conversations, and collaborative efforts have created a sense of unity and purpose that will propel Pouhana O Nā Wāhine forward.

In the years to come, Pouhana O Nā Wāhine envisions a Hawai'i where domestic violence is met with a comprehensive and culturally sensitive response. We commit ourselves to continue learning, adapting, and evolving our approaches to better serve the needs of our community. Through the strength of diversity, the power of relationships, and the richness of cultural practices, Pouhana O Nā Wāhine remains steadfast in its mission to effect positive change and create a safer, more supportive environment for all. Together, we can heal!

‘Ōlelo No’eau/Native Hawaiian proverb: *“He kehau ho’oma’ema’e ke aloha”*. O.N. #683 Love is like a cleansing dew...the cleansing power of aloha can soothe and heal; hurt, pain, and suffering yield to the healing power of aloha.”

# POUHANA



## O NĀ WĀHINE *Pillars of Women*

For more information on the Pouhana  
O Nā Wāhine (PONW), go to:

[www.pouhanaonw.org](http://www.pouhanaonw.org)



# *A Retrospective* on the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

By the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC)



*Alaska Native Women's Resource Center Staff (2023). Photo courtesy of the AKNWRC.*

Since our humble beginnings as a grassroots, Alaska Native non-profit organization, the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (AKNWRC) has grown to become a leading voice for Alaska Native survivors of gender-based violence on the Tribal, federal, state, and international stages. Officially established in 2015, a group of long-time Alaska Native Advocates and allies with over 150 years of combined experience delivering life-saving advocacy in remote Villages and urban settings had the resiliency to envision an Alaska Native Women's Resource Center designed to provide technical assistance and training to Tribes and Tribally based advocacy programs supporting establishment or growing of gender-based violence programs specific to the needs of that community or Tribe.

The AKNWRC remains at the forefront of the battle against gender-based violence impacting Alaska Native women and Alaska's 229 federally recognized Tribes. Our vision, which guides our work each day, is violence against Alaska Native women is rooted in the colonization of Indigenous Nations, and reversing these devastating effects lies in the exercise of Tribal sovereignty and traditional ways. AKNWRC exists

to work in partnership with Tribes to address gender-based violence by providing uniquely Alaska Native-designed and delivered technical assistance and training that is rooted in each Tribe's distinct voices, languages, and teachings.

## **Nine Years of Advocacy, Support, and Success for Alaska Tribes (2015-2024)**

### ***Highly Specialized and Individualized Policy Monitoring and Training and Technical Assistance to Alaska Tribes***

Providing highly specialized and collaborative policy monitoring, training, and technical assistance to Alaska Tribes has always been the foundational bedrock of AKNWRC. Since 2015, AKNWRC has supported Alaska Tribes with technical assistance to develop and sustain Tribally determined, gender-based violence programs and strategies—rooted in the Tribe's voices, languages, and teachings. We've also helped to increase national and international awareness about the systemic barriers Alaska Native Tribes have fought in isolation for too long.

Although the training and technical assistance needs of Alaska Tribes have changed, the basis of how AKNWRC provides training and technical assistance to Alaska Tribes remains firmly rooted in Tribes' voices, languages, and teachings. Today, just as we did in our early beginnings, AKNWRC provides targeted, one-on-one, Tribally driven, and highly specialized training and technical assistance to Alaska Tribes, assisting with both short and long-term planning and solutions.

Over the past nine years, AKNWRC has provided training and technical assistance to over 150 of Alaska's 229 federally recognized Tribes, representing outreach to over 65% of Alaska's Tribes. This breadth of assistance to Alaska Tribes has naturally required an increase in the professional staff of AKNWRC. Today, the AKNWRC family has grown from just two staff in 2015 to over 15 full-time staff, which includes Alaska-Native advocates, technical assistance program specialists, policy makers and professionals who understand Alaska's unique jurisdictional, legal, geographical, and survivor services landscape and the importance of balancing Western-defined justice and Alaska Native-defined justice.

### ***AKNWRC's Advocacy Institute***

Numerous Tribes nationwide, including those in Alaska, are actively establishing and improving victim service programs as standalone services or integral components of comprehensive justice system advancement. While each program is tailored to the specific needs of its Tribe or community, including advocacy services is pivotal. Victim advocates, regardless of their designated titles, play a crucial role in assisting victims and survivors in navigating various systems that provide essential services. They also contribute to fostering better outcomes for victims, systemic improvements, and aiming for enhanced services and streamlined processes.

Before developing and delivering AKNWRC's first advocacy training, numerous victim advocacy training courses offered excellent content. But, none were tailored to the Alaska Tribal cultural context with a victim-centered approach. AKNWRC's advocacy training program and curriculum goes

beyond 40 hours of in-person training, incorporating a mentorship component to connect participants with Advocacy Organizers and experienced Tribal victim advocates.

In partnership with Native advocates in the lower 48, AKNWRC's advocacy curriculum has been designed by on-the-ground Tribal advocates with extensive experience in working in isolated and remote Alaska Native Villages for many years, often predating the establishment of formal programs in these communities. Throughout Alaska, there exists a lack of law enforcement, shelter, and other support systems for victims and survivors. AKNWRC is committed to offering our advocacy training program multiple times annually to ensure that numerous rural advocates can access training tailored to their needs.

We aim to create a network of advocates across Alaska, facilitating mutual support and peer connections. This network aims to assist Tribal programs in working within their justice systems to establish safety, support, and long-term healing for victims and survivors. A key aspect involves pairing more experienced advocates with newer ones to provide support, encouragement, and knowledge transfer and to foster sustainability in Tribal victim services staffing across the state. Many Tribal Advocates, particularly those in rural Alaska, operate as one-staff programs with limited support and guidance. AKNWRC's advocacy training program addresses these unique needs, striving to enhance services for Alaska Native victims and survivors.

In 2024, we will continue the delivery of our AKNWRC Advocacy Institute training to Alaska Tribes—a 40-hour OVC, OVW, and FVPSA-approved Alaska Native-centered Advocacy Training for Tribal advocates developed and delivered by seasoned Alaska Native advocates on the AKNWRC staff and board, as well as other partners.

### ***The 2022 Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization and Subtitle B – The Alaska Public Safety Empowerment Subsection***

The 2013 reauthorization of the *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) included historic provisions

that restored Tribal jurisdiction over non-Native offenders who commit certain domestic violence crimes on Tribal lands. However, because of how Indigenous land claims were settled, this particular jurisdiction, tied to federally defined “Indian country,” categorically excluded 228 of Alaska’s 229 federally recognized Tribes from exercising the special criminal jurisdiction conferred.

Since 2013, Alaska Native leaders and organizations and our partners in the lower 48, including AKNWRC, the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, the National Congress of American Indians, and the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence have vigorously advocated for VAWA to be reauthorized and, more importantly, for Alaska Tribes to be in parity with our lower 48 brothers and sisters. An Alaskan fix was needed to overcome the “Indian country” requirement created by VAWA 2013. Our Alaskan fix was included in the 2022 VAWA reauthorization. It resulted from many years of advocacy with our federal delegation, including former Alaska Representative Don Young and current Senator Lisa Murkowski.

With the recent reauthorization of VAWA and the inclusion of Subtitle “B,” Alaska Tribes now have the opportunity to criminally prosecute non-Natives who commit certain “covered crimes” within our Alaska Native Villages. The inclusion of Subtitle “B” and the reaffirmation of our Alaska Tribes’ civil and criminal jurisdiction over Native and non-Native offenders represents a significant success for Alaska and the future healing of our Alaska Native survivors of gender-based violence.

### ***The Ongoing Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women***

AKNWRC continues to be at the forefront of addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) within Alaska and nationally. In addition to the continued education and advocacy with our state and federal legislators, AKNWRC is a founding member of the MMIWG2S Alaska Working group—an Indigenous Peoples-led statewide group supported by five Alaska Native partner organizations.

Alaska continues to remain one of the epicenters of the National MMIW crisis. In Data for Indigenous Justice’s (DIJ) 2021 baseline report, “We Are Calling to You,” DIJ found 229 cases of MMIW in Alaska, representing 149 missing and 80 murdered Alaska Natives. In addition, a 2018 Urban Indian Health Institute Report found that of all the states, Alaska had the 4th highest MMIW cases by state and that Anchorage, Alaska’s largest urban area, had the 3rd highest MMIW cases by cities. That report also found that Anchorage ranked in the top five cities with the highest number of cases, not in law enforcement data.

Our collective advocacy and efforts have resulted in successes that will help to offer healing and additional protections to Alaska Native and American Indian women, including:

- Two new MMIW dedicated investigators within the Alaska Department of Public Safety;
- A dedicated MMIW Assistant Attorney General within the Alaska Department of Law;
- The creation of an Alaska Statewide MMIW Council;
- MMIW Awareness Day Proclamations at the State and local level; and
- Increased funding for the Village Public Safety Officers that serve rural Alaska.

In addition, AKNWRC was instrumental in assisting the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Alaska with the promulgation of Alaska’s *Savanna’s Act* Guidelines and continues to play an integral role in supporting the efforts of our federal and state law enforcement officers who are investigating, responding, and addressing the MMIW crisis in Alaska.

Finally, AKNWRC’s Executive Director, Tami Truett Jerue, and former AKNWRC Director of Law and Policy, Michelle Demmert, served as *Not Invisible Act* Commissioners representing Alaska. They dedicated countless hours and time away from family to host and attend public hearings surrounding MMIW nationally, detailing findings and recommendations in a final report titled “Not One More”<sup>1</sup> released November 2023 to Secretary Haaland, Attorney General Merrick Garland, and Congress.



## ***AKNWRC's Resource Book - Alaska Native Women: Ending the Violence, Reclaiming a Sacred Status***

In 2023, AKNWRC published a groundbreaking resource: An impactful book providing a distinctive Alaska Native perspective on the pervasive issue of violence against Alaska Native women. This literary achievement and labor of love is a tribute to the memory of Shirley Moses and signifies AKNWRC's steadfast dedication to addressing this crucial matter with cultural sensitivity.

The publication by AKNWRC stands as the first comprehensive attempt to elucidate the intricate problem of violence against Alaska Native women from the viewpoint of Alaska Natives. This book delves deeply into the socio-historical context by going beyond the mere documentation of individual incidents by detailing the disturbingly disproportionate rates of violence experienced by Alaska Native women across generations. Within its pages, readers will discover a pathway towards healing, gaining insight into how this crisis of violence has evolved due to systemic barriers and the inadequate protection afforded to Alaska Native women.

After decades of unwavering advocacy for survivors, the board and committed staff at AKNWRC possess a profound understanding of violence against women. They also acknowledge the sacred status of Alaska Native women within Indigenous Nations. Tracing the roots of the ongoing crisis of violence back to colonization's impact on Alaska Natives, the book's title advocates for necessary legal and policy reforms. It encapsulates the vision of putting an end to violence against Alaska Native women, intricately tied to the restoration of the sacred status of women within sovereign Indigenous Nations.

This newly revealed resource provides insight into the essential changes needed to eliminate domestic violence and sexual assault, ultimately paving the way for a future where Alaska Native women can live free from fear and violence.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.justice.gov/d9/2023-11/34%20NIAC%20Final%20Report\\_version%2011.1.23\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/d9/2023-11/34%20NIAC%20Final%20Report_version%2011.1.23_FINAL.pdf)

## **Looking Forward**

AKNWRC looks forward to continuing to serve Alaska Native Tribes with policy monitoring, training, technical assistance, and gender-based violence program support. We will continue to develop Alaska-specific resources based on first-hand knowledge and understanding of the uniqueness of Alaska Tribes and look forward to strengthening partnerships and programming.

In the upcoming decade, AKNWRC is poised to continue cultivating relationships and meaningful collaborations with state, Tribal, federal government, and international agencies. This success involves the exchange of vital information and the establishment of platforms where Tribes can identify and share their culturally specific approaches to addressing domestic violence and sexual assault. The focus remains on reaching out to isolated and underserved Tribes, emphasizing the importance of tailoring interventions that include our uniquely Alaska Native cultural contexts.

AKNWRC remains steadfast, committed, and focused on the success of Alaska Tribes through our advocacy, programmatic, and justice work to support the changes identified by Alaska Native Tribes to heal and address the disproportionate rates of violence affecting our Alaska Native women, families, and Tribal communities.

 [www.aknwrc.org](http://www.aknwrc.org)

 **Law and Policy** - [tribaljustice@aknwrc.org](mailto:tribaljustice@aknwrc.org)

 **Programmatic** - [ttarequests@aknwrc.org](mailto:ttarequests@aknwrc.org)

 **AKNWRC Resource Book** - [bit.ly/48POi2n](https://bit.ly/48POi2n)



*The launch of AKNWRC's Resource Book at the Women Are Sacred Conference 2023. Photo courtesy of the Kelsey Foote, NIWRC.*



Photo of Mary Kathryn Nagle.  
Photo courtesy of Mary  
Kathryn Nagle.

## Honoring *Ten* Years of NIWRC's VAWA Sovereignty Initiative

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

On the 20th anniversary of the *Restoration Magazine* and the founding of the NCAI VAWA Task Force, it is incredible to stand back and survey how the Movement has grown and all that the Movement has accomplished. The last two reauthorizations of the *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) alone have brought historic restorations of Tribal sovereignty unmatched by any other movement throughout all of Indian Country. From Tillie Black Bear to Diane Millich and from Tami Jerue to Lisa Brunner, our Native women survivors and advocates have worked tirelessly to restore the inherent right of our Nations to protect our own women and children in our own homes, and those efforts have rendered historic results.

At this time, I'd like to reflect on the important work of the VAWA Sovereignty Initiative (VSI). Conceived by NIWRC in 2013 to protect and preserve the historic victory Indian Country won in the 2013 reauthorization of VAWA, the VSI surveyed cases trickling up through federal courts and monitored developments for any case that might target VAWA

or the foundation of a Tribe's sovereignty to protect women and children from domestic violence and sexual abuse. Over the past 10 years, the VSI has made a tangible and real difference in several cases where nothing less than the right of our Nations to protect our women and children was on the line.

The first case in which the VSI filed a brief was *Dollar General v. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians* in 2015. In this case, the Dollar General corporation argued that the Supreme Court should extend the Court's decision in *Oliphant* to Tribal civil jurisdiction and hold that no Tribe could exercise civil jurisdiction over non-Indians on Tribal lands. The case itself involved a situation where a non-Indian store manager repeatedly sexually assaulted a young Choctaw boy interning in the store on the Mississippi Choctaw Reservation. Dollar General argued it could not be held responsible for its negligent supervision of its predatory store manager because the Tribe had no jurisdiction over the non-Indian corporation. NIWRC rallied, filing an *amicus* brief through the VSI, and organizing hundreds of Native women

survivors, advocates, and Tribal leaders to come to the footsteps of the Supreme Court and hold a prayer vigil.

The NIWRC's hard work paid off. In June of 2016, the Supreme Court issued its decision. In a 4 to 4 tie (Justice Scalia had passed away and did not participate in the final decision), the Court upheld the Fifth Circuit's decision—which, in turn, had upheld the exercise of Tribal civil jurisdiction over non-Indians who sexually assault Indian children on Tribal lands. Indian Country had successfully stalled Dollar General's efforts to extend Oliphant to civil jurisdiction, and the VSI had played a major role.

We continued the work of the VSI in 2016 by filing several briefs in support of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in its litigation against the Dakota Access Pipeline. The NIWRC understood very well that the pipeline's proposed increase in oil extraction in the Bakken Region would bring additional violence against Native women and children in a region already facing epidemic levels. Ultimately, the Tribes and national Native non-profits prevailed in the Courts, but not before the pipeline was built and the State of North Dakota waged a war against the Water Protectors who had engaged in a historic peaceful protest.

The VSI also filed an *amicus* brief in *Voisine v. United States*. This case was not directly linked to federal Indian law but instead dealt with the federal definition of "domestic violence" for purposes of the federal firearm prohibition and thus had implications for Tribes' implementation of VAWA 2013's restored Tribal criminal jurisdiction. NIWRC's *amicus* brief played a pivotal role in this case and was actually mentioned during oral argument. The Court ultimately issued a favorable ruling.

In 2017, the NIWRC filed an *amicus* brief in *Bryant v. United States*—a case where a defendant was challenging the constitutionality of the habitual offender provision passed in VAWA 2005, whereby the United States Attorney gains jurisdiction to prosecute an Indian offender who repeatedly and habitually commits domestic violence against a Native victim on Tribal lands. Justice Ginsburg wrote

the majority opinion, upholding the constitutionality of the law, and she used, cited, and extrapolated extensively from the *amicus* brief the NIWRC's VSI filed in the case. Undoubtedly, the NIWRC's *amicus* brief played a huge role in this historic victory.

In 2018, the VSI filed an *amicus* brief in *United States v. Gamble*. In this case, a non-Indian defendant challenged the constitutionality of the dual sovereigns doctrine that allows more than one sovereign to prosecute an individual for the same crime without running afoul of the U.S. Constitution's Dual Jeopardy Clause. The case had potential implications for the application of the Dual Jeopardy Clause to prevent Tribal prosecutions filed subsequent to state or federal prosecutions (since Tribes always have criminal jurisdiction that is concurrent to another sovereign), and the result was ultimately positive and upheld the dual sovereigns doctrine. The NIWRC's *amicus* brief was mentioned during oral argument.

The NIWRC's VSI filed *amicus* briefs in both *Murphy v. Oklahoma* and *McGirt v. Oklahoma*. On July 9, 2020, the Supreme Court issued a decision rejecting Oklahoma's efforts to convince the Court to disestablish the existence of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's Reservation. Both VSI *amicus* briefs highlighted the challenges Tribal Nations would face in implementing VAWA's restored Tribal criminal jurisdiction if and when courts begin disestablishing reservations that Congress itself has never eliminated. *McGirt* is one of the most significant victories Tribal Nations have ever achieved in the Supreme Court.

Following Indian Country's monumental victory in *McGirt*, Oklahoma immediately began to pour millions of dollars into a campaign to convince the Court to reverse itself. Notably, Oklahoma filed more than 30 cert petitions asking the Court to reverse *McGirt*. In *Castro-Huerta*, the Court granted cert on one of those petitions, denying Oklahoma's request to reconsider *McGirt*—but agreeing to consider whether States should be judicially granted criminal jurisdiction over crimes committed against Indian victims on reservations lands—a category of jurisdiction Congress had never granted to States. The NIWRC filed a critical *amicus* brief, explaining that the only way to secure true safety for Native victims



would be for the Court to overturn its decision in *Oliphant* and fully restore Tribal criminal jurisdiction. In a very upsetting decision issued in June of 2023, the Court granted States criminal jurisdiction over crimes committed against Indian victims on Tribal lands. This decision has created significant confusion and obstacles for Tribal Nations attempting to protect their own citizens on Tribal lands, and the NIWRC has joined forces with the National Congress of American Indians, the Native American Rights Fund, other Native non-profits and scores of Tribal Nations to advocate that Congress legislatively fix *Castro-Huerta* by fully restoring Tribal criminal jurisdiction, eliminating the *Indian Civil Rights Act's* limitation on the inherent sentencing authority of Tribes, and adopting the "Gorsuch Fix" outlined in Justice Gorsuch's dissent in *Castro-Huerta*. A resolution was passed at NCAI in November 2022 supporting this legislative proposal (SAC-22-043), and the proposal is currently being written into a draft bill.

More recently, the NIWRC filed an amicus brief in *Brackeen v. Haaland*, informing the Court of the consequences Native women and children would face if the *Indian Child Welfare Act* (ICWA) were to be declared unconstitutional. Thankfully, in June of 2023, the Court upheld the constitutionality of ICWA in another historic win for Indian Country.

The latest case in the Supreme Court that the VSI has participated in is *Rahimi v. United States*. This case again constitutes a constitutional challenge to the federal firearm prohibition, this one couched in a Second Amendment Argument that the federal government's prohibition precluding individuals with a DV conviction from possession or accessing firearms violates the Second Amendment. The VSI filed an amicus brief this past summer, and the case was argued in November. We are still awaiting a decision.

Finally, the VSI has filed two amicus briefs in *L.B. v. United States*—a case where a Northern Cheyenne victim of a rape committed by a BIA officer is suing the United States under the *Federal Tort Claims Act*, asking for damages to pay for her pain and suffering caused by the rape. The case is currently before the

Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The United States, and specifically the Department of the Interior and the BIA, is arguing it can't be held liable for its law officers actions (he was responding to a Native woman's call for help and was on duty when he committed the rape) because he committed the rape for "his own enjoyment," and not to "further the interests of his employer." It is a despicable, deplorable argument that contributes directly to the large rates of violence against Native victims in this country. If Native women calling BIA law enforcement for help have the choice between calling for help and being raped or not calling for help and not being raped, they are in a no-win, incredibly violent, unjust situation. The BIA and DOI should publicly apologize to L.B. for the rape she endured, and they should pay the damages she is owed. They also need to instigate programs geared towards training officers to report other officers who rape Native women. The officer who raped L.B., Officer Bullcoming, bragged in his deposition that he had done the same thing to at least 12 other women. There is no way he has done this to so many women, and his fellow officers and supervisors did not know. Why didn't the BIA do something about Officer Bullcoming's behavior? This situation is inexcusable, and the fact that DOI and BIA won't accept responsibility for their wrongdoing here is beyond the pale.

As you can see, NIWRC's VSI does important, critical work. Please consider making a donation to the NIWRC specifically to support the ongoing advocacy of the VSI. Oftentimes, the VSI is the only voice Native women and children survivors have in a court proceeding concerning their safety and welfare. As a non-profit, the NIWRC relies on donations from individuals who believe in its mission.

We have worked so hard over these past 20 years to achieve historic victories in the restoration of Tribal sovereignty not once—but twice! But VAWA 2013 and VAWA 2022 are under attack in the courts, and the inherent right of our Tribal Nations to protect our women and children from those who seek to harm them remains vulnerable. Give today and support the next 20 years of the NIWRC VSI!



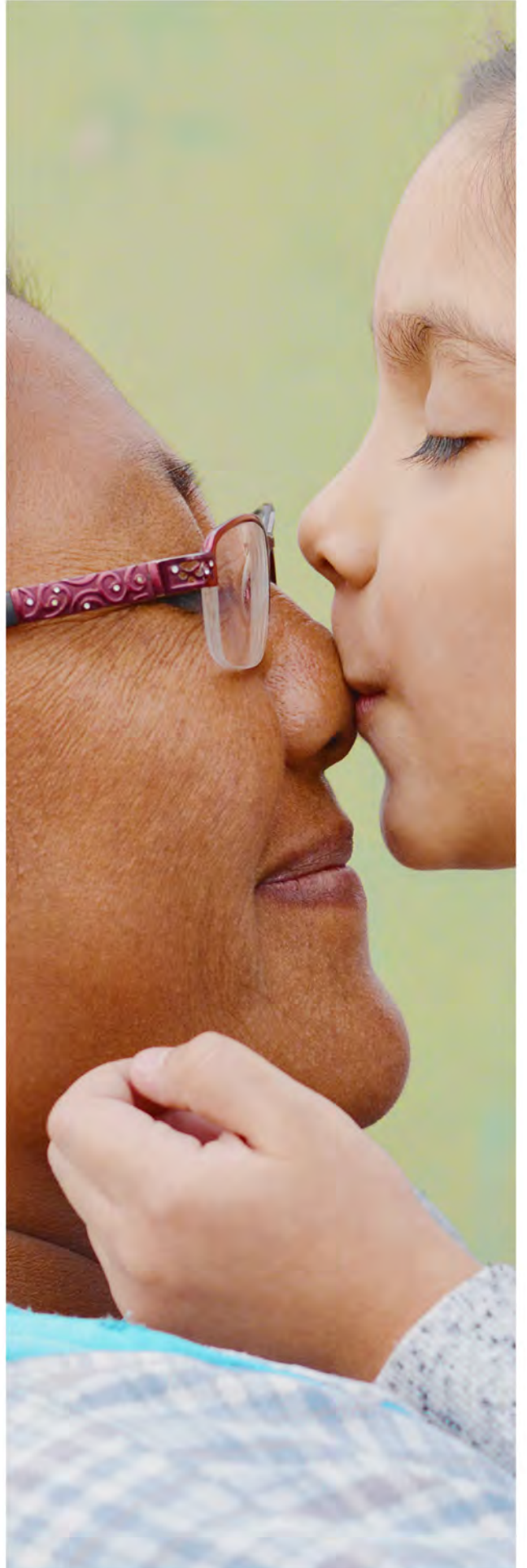
**NATIONAL  
INDIGENOUS**  
WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

# Help us make a difference in the lives of Native women.

Each gift made to the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) strengthens our mission to end violence against Native women and vision of restoring sovereignty for Tribes to hold perpetrators accountable.

We are committed to providing national leadership in this work by lifting up the collective voices of grassroots advocates in Tribal communities.

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# Advancing *Indigenous* *Women's* *Rights Using* International Advocacy

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

The epidemic of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women shines a spotlight on the United States' failure to respect Indigenous women's rights. This is a failure under the United States' own law, including the trust responsibility to assist federally recognized Indian and Alaska Native Nations in safeguarding the lives of their women, but also under international human rights law. The right to be free of violence is arguably the most basic human right recognized under international law.

Indigenous women's organizations and Tribes have collaborated for nearly two decades on a national strategy reframing violence against Native women as a human rights issue, not just a law enforcement matter, and combining domestic and international advocacy to raise global awareness, generate support, and urge strong federal action to restore safety to Native women.

The United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS) offer American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women important advocacy opportunities to raise global awareness about the epidemic of violence against Indigenous women in the US. Participation in international advocacy spaces

helps American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women connect with allies worldwide, human rights bodies and experts, and Indigenous women's organizations who can all help put top-down global pressure on the United States to meet its international human rights obligations.

International advocacy at the UN and the OAS also adds significant leverage to our domestic efforts to strengthen Tribal sovereignty to restore safety to Native women and girls. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Report No. 112-265 (2012) on the *Stand Against Violence and Empower Native Women Act (SAVE Native Women Act)* explains:

"It is important that the United States consider recommendations from experts with the United Nations and the Organization of American States as it begins to take action. A report to the U.N. General Assembly in 2011 concluded that the United States should 'consider restoring, in consultation with Native American tribes, Tribal authority to enforce Tribal law over all perpetrators, both native and non-native, who commit acts of sexual and domestic violence within their jurisdiction.'"

The report goes on to also acknowledge:

"The global reach and international human rights law is a strong push on Congress to act and remove the legal barriers in the United States that affect Native women. According to one advocate, 'Native women must not continue to suffer disproportionately higher rates of rape, sexual assault, and murder, and lower rates of enforcement, prosecution, and punishment just because they are Indian and live on an Indian reservation or in an Alaska Native village.'"

For nearly two decades, the Indian Law Resource Center has helped Indigenous women's organizations access the UN and OAS, has helped prepare Indigenous women to work in those spaces, and has worked with our partners to develop oral statements, written submissions, and panel presentations to educate the world about the situation in Alaska and Indian country. The Center and its partners have raised awareness about violence against Native women in the US in many UN



bodies, including but not limited to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Human Rights Committee, Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Permanent Forum

on Indigenous Issues, Commission on the Status of Women, and the Human Rights Council.

The following timeline highlights some of the collaborative international advocacy over the years.

**2007** The UN General Assembly adopts the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) on September 13, 2007. Four countries in the world opposed the adoption, including the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

A coalition of Indigenous individuals and organizations submits a report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which oversees compliance with the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). The report emphasizes high rates of rape and violence experienced by Native women in the U.S. by non-Indians over whom Tribes lacked criminal jurisdiction and the U.S.'s obligations to Indigenous peoples.

**2010** The United States announces its support for the UN Declaration, which no longer is opposed by any country in the world. The UN Declaration is significant for Indigenous women, affirming their rights as individuals and as members of Indigenous communities, including rights to security of the person, gender equality, and access to justice. Article 22 calls on countries to “take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children are protected against all forms of violence and discrimination.”

**2008** Indian and Native women's organizations, Tribes, and others file an amicus brief with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in *Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) v. United States* supporting the plaintiff in the first case brought by a domestic violence survivor against the United States for violations of human rights under international law.

A delegation of Native women leaders and other experts attend CERD's meetings in Geneva to raise the shocking rates of violence against Native women in the United States and the government's failure to provide even basic law enforcement in so many Indian communities. During its 72nd session, CERD issues concluding observations, expressing concern over the high levels of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and urging the United States to prevent and punish such violence and abuse against Native women.

Rashida Manjoo, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences (SRVAW), visits the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to study violence against American Indian women, the first such visit on Tribal lands in the U.S. The SRVAW's final report to the UN General Assembly recommends that the U.S. prevent and remedy the epidemic of violence against Native women by restoring Tribal authority over all perpetrators committing sexual violence or domestic violence on Tribal lands.

The IACHR, at the request of the ILRC, NCAI Task Force on Violence Against Women (NCAI Task Force), Clan Star, Inc., and National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC), holds its first-ever thematic hearing on violence against Native women in the U.S. The IACHR urges the United States and other countries to address such violence through laws, policies, and programs in collaboration with the women affected.

The IACHR issues a landmark decision in *Jessica Lenahan (Gonzales) v. United States*, the first case brought by a domestic violence survivor against the U.S. for violations of human rights. The IACHR found that the U.S. violated international human rights laws by failing to protect Ms. Lenahan and her daughters from her estranged husband. The IACHR took notice of the amicus brief filed by Indian and Native women's organizations in 2008 and acknowledged the disproportionate impact of domestic violence on Native women.

The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs publishes its Report on S. 1763, the *SAVE Native Women Act*, acknowledging the worldwide reach of international human rights law as "a strong push on Congress to act and remove the legal barriers in the United States that affect Native women."

Terri Henry, Tribal Councilwoman for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and Co-Chair of the NCAI Task Force, appears as an invited expert at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues' (PFII) Expert Group Meeting on violence against Indigenous women and girls.

James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (SRRIP), conducts a mission to the U.S. to examine the situation of Indigenous peoples, including Indigenous women, related to the implementation of the UN Declaration. A joint paper to inform the SRRIP about violence against Indigenous women in the U.S. is submitted by ILRC, NCAI Task Force, Clan Star, and NIWRC. The SRRIP submits a report to the UN Human Rights Council calling on the U.S. to immediately address violence against Native women through legislation.

Two UN human rights experts—Special Rapporteurs Rashida Manjoo and James Anaya—issue a press release calling on the U.S. to reauthorize VAWA with Tribal provisions that would enhance protections for American Indian and Alaska Native women.

The UN holds the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in New York City. Over 1,000 Indigenous peoples attended, with some 38 Indigenous peoples from the U.S., including 15 Native women. Five American Indian and Alaska Native women are selected to speak. The UN General Assembly adopts an outcome document calling on the UN to advance the rights of Indigenous peoples by addressing violence against Indigenous women.

2011

2012

2013

2014

**2015** ILRC delivers statements to the UN Human Rights Council, cosponsored by NCAI and NARF, addressing violence against Indigenous women by carrying out decisions in the World Conference outcome document aimed at the realization of the rights of Indigenous peoples, including their women and children, as set out in the UN Declaration.

**2017**

Terri Henry, the then Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Secretary of State and Chairwoman of the Indian Law Resource Center Board of Directors, begins her term of service on the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The IACHR publishes *Indigenous Women and Their Human Rights in the Americas*. This report discusses discrimination faced by Indigenous women and how discrimination increases their exposure to violence and limits their access to justice and their economic, social, and cultural rights.

**2016**

During the Commission on the Status of Women's (CSW) annual session, U.S. and Canadian Indigenous organizations co-host a parallel event on Indigenous women's movements to end violence, featuring speakers from the lower 48 states (Terri Henry), Alaska (Tami Truett Jerue), and Canada (Dawn Lavell-Harvard).

The UN Human Rights Council organizes, for the first time, a panel on violence against Indigenous women and its root causes and adopts its annual resolution on accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women, which also, for the very first time, included a focus on violence against Indigenous women and girls and references to the UN Declaration and the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

On June 15, 2016, after nearly 30 years of advocacy, the Organization of American States (OAS) adopts the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article VII of the Declaration addresses Gender Equality, the commitment that "States shall adopt the necessary measures, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination, particularly against Indigenous women and children."

**2018**

The IACHR holds a thematic hearing to investigate human rights concerns related to the extreme level of violence against Indigenous women in the United States. The request for the hearing was filed by AKNWRC, ILRC, NCAI, and NIWRC, and representatives from each organization participated. The Commission "asked the U.S. authorities to take appropriate measures to fully understand the causes of this phenomenon and comply with their obligation to prevent such crimes against women."



*Christopher Foley, ILRC and Caroline La Porte, NIWRC at UNCSW 2018. / Photo Courtesy of Christopher Foley, ILRC.*



**2019** AKNWRC, ILRC, NCAI, and NIWRC organize a panel discussion during the annual meeting of the UNPFII, titled “Violence against Indigenous women in the United States: How Indigenous nations and women are leading the movement to end the epidemic of violence in Indian country and Alaska Native villages.”



*Terri Henry, Independent Expert for North America and Tami Jerue, AKNWRC at UNPFII 2019. / Photo Courtesy of Christopher Foley, ILRC.*

**2021**


During the CSW’s annual session, the ILRC, along with AKNWRC, Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon, International Mayan League, NCAI, NIWRC, and the Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains, co-sponsor a virtual parallel event to discuss the grassroots movements to advance Indigenous women’s rights, including their human right to be free of violence and discrimination.

The Human Rights Council views and broadcasts the video statement of the ILRC delivered by Tami Truett Jerue, Executive Director of AKNWRC. The statement discusses how the pandemic illuminates the shocking inequalities still facing Indigenous women regarding safety, health, life expectancy, and almost all other measures of social well-being—inequalities rooted in the United States’ failure to respect Indigenous peoples’ rights for more than 200 years.

**2020**

AKNWRC, ILRC, and NIWRC file a statement with the UN Human Rights Council showing how the COVID-19 “pandemic has magnified historic, pervasive human rights abuses such as the extreme levels of violence experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native women and the crisis of and missing and murdered indigenous women.”

To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, UNESCO, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, asks the ILRC to participate in a high-level roundtable on “Engaging men and boys to address root causes of violence against women.”



**2023** The ILRC cosponsors a CSW virtual parallel event with seven other Indigenous organizations, “Violence Against Rural Indigenous Women: Brazil, Guatemala, Peru, the United States.” This event provided space for Indigenous women to address the UN and the public on how violations of Indigenous people’s 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.

The U.S. State Department gives international ally and advocacy partner Judite Guajara one of the first annual Global Anti-Racism Champion Awards in recognition of her work to protect and promote Indigenous rights in Brazil. Judite (Guajajara Indigenous people) is the Legal Advisor for COIAB, Brazil’s largest regional Indigenous organization.

**2022** The ILRC and partners organize a virtual parallel event during the CSW’s session, “Climate Change and Indigenous Women’s Rights: Brazil; Guatemala; United States.” The event features an international panel of Indigenous women discussing how climate change may increase and fuel violations of Indigenous women’s rights, including violence against Indigenous women, and the strategies they are pursuing to restore safety in their communities through policy reform.

The ILRC and Indigenous women’s organizations file an alternative report, “Violence Against Indigenous Women in the United States, including the Crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women, and Lack of Safe and Adequate Housing for Indigenous Survivors,” with the UN CERD. In concluding observations, CERD “reiterat[ed] its concern that Indigenous women are denied the right of access to justice and reparation, as a result of factors such as the failure to prosecute perpetrators at the state and federal levels, and because tribes lack full jurisdiction, in particular over non-Indigenous perpetrators.” CERD also was concerned by the lack of adequate shelters and services for victims and called on the U.S. to “[t]ake additional measures and provide funding to implement statutes and policies that address [MMIW].”



# Call for Proposals

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC) and the STARS Indigenous Safe Housing Center (STARS) are dedicated to supporting grassroots advocacy programs and uplifting the voices of those determined to end violence against Native women and children.

Through our funding opportunities, we aim to bolster initiatives led by strong-hearted programs and organizations, empowering them to create meaningful impacts within their communities.



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STARS has a unique funding opportunity for programs addressing housing insecurity and homelessness for survivors of gender-based violence. We have pass-through ARP funds for Tribal domestic violence programs and shelters and Tribal not-for-profit organizations. Eligible programs can receive up to [\\$15,000 per award](#) and can reapply for additional funds.





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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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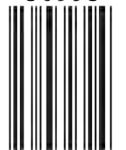
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