



# Historical Trauma in AI/AN Communities: Elder Abuse & Barriers to Service

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# National Center for Victims of Crime

- Mission: Forge a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives
- Through collaboration with local, state, and federal partners, the National Center:
  - Advocates for stronger rights, protections, and services for crime victims
  - Provides education, training, and evaluation
  - Serves as a trusted source of current information on victims' issues



# Overview

- The Basics
- Historical Trauma
- Working with AI/AN Communities
- Elder Abuse
- Existing Services
- Barriers to Services
- Resources



# Poll Questions

1. Who is in the room?
2. Have you had training on historical trauma?
3. Do you work with AI/AN communities?

# Terminology

- Interchangeable terms most commonly used:
  - Tribal nations
  - Tribes
  - Alaska Natives
  - Indigenous peoples
- General terms to reference an individual:
  - Indian
  - American Indian
  - Native American
  - Alaska Native



# American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States

- 5.2 million of the nation's population identify as American Indians and Alaska Natives
- There are 573 Federally Recognized tribes, including 229 in Alaska
- There are over 200 state recognized and unrecognized tribes



# Working with AI/AN Communities

- Understanding victimization in Indian Country
- Jurisdiction issues - Tribal, State, or Federal
- Historical Trauma
  - General distrust of outside communities
  - Need to listen to the needs of each specific tribe and community: all are different
- Understanding Historical Trauma Response
  - Survival guilt, fixation to trauma, internalization of ancestral suffering



# Victimization in Indian Country

- 83% of AI/AN experience some form of violence in their lifetime
- Crime rates are 2.5 times higher than that of the general U.S. population
- When the available victimization data are disaggregated by location- urban, suburban, and rural- AI/AN experience higher rates of victimization in each subgroup
- Understanding historical trauma informs
  - what happened in Native America
  - why statistics relating to AI/AN well-being are so dismal
  - how services to crime victims must provide healing for both the immediate victimization and intergenerational trauma experienced by the survivor.



# Historical Trauma

- The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over one's lifetime and from generation to generation following loss of lives, land, and culture
- 3 Eras
  - Relocation and Removal (1815-1868)
  - Assimilation and Acculturation (1871-1924)
  - Termination (1953-1964)
- $\frac{1}{5}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of indigenous adults reported thinking about historical loss daily or several times a day which lead to negative emotional consequences

# Epigenetics

- Unique to those facing traumatic events
- The study of changes in organisms by modifications in gene expression and genetic code
  - Environment can change your health and health of your kids, grandkids, and further
- “The Epigenetic Revolution”- a study that found severe psychological damage can be passed through generations and manifest itself across generations
- Stress and diet are the two biggest things effected



# Elder Abuse

- No set age to be considered an elder - specific to tribes/villages
- Trusted member of the community/family member
- Abuse of elder requires the attention/involvement of the entire community
- Abuse is seen as a social ill

# Elder Abuse

- Physical, psychological, social, spiritual, sexual, neglect, financial exploitation
- Social abuse is intended to devalue the individual, isolate them, and take advantage of their status
- Spiritual or cultural occurs when there is disregard for a person's spiritual beliefs, ideals or practices (ex. Taking and selling ceremonial items, not performing end of life ceremonies)
- “He’s bothering me” - sexual assault, “lack of respect” “harm” “mistreatment” - abuse

# Barriers to Service

- Desire to protect loved ones/fear of retaliation
- Fear of loss of independence/being forced out of the community
- Unable to report due to physical limitation, isolation, cognitive impairment
- Lack of services/ease of access to those services
- Spiritual - some may believe abuse is a result of insufficient prayer or bad medicine
- Jurisdiction issues - a large portion of violence against Native women is committed by non-Native men

# Barriers to Service

- Almost twice as many AI/AN aged 50+ are uninsured as others of the same age in the US population
- IHS (Indian Health Service) has been responsible for carrying out federal trust responsibility since 1955
- IHS is supposed to provide primary and public health and facility construction and maintenance
  - Number of facilities is greatly under the amount needed
  - Facilities that exist are understaffed and not cared for
- IHS funding only covers 50% of needs



# Existing Services

- APS does not have authority on tribal lands
- NIEJI (National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative) has created a Tribal Elder Protection Team Toolkit
- Services are specific to each tribal nation



# Tribal Resource Tool - A solution

- The development of a comprehensive resource and mapping tool identifying victim services will help connect victims with appropriate services by ensuring that wherever victims are, they are able to readily access information about culturally-appropriate crime victim services.
- Lay the foundation for addressing the needs of AI/AN crime victims across the United States by revealing strengths and deficits in the current crime victim service system.





TRIBAL RESOURCE TOOL

Resources For Survivors of Crime and Abuse

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR  
**Victims of Crime**



National  
Congress of  
American  
Indians

Resources For Survivors of Crime and Abuse [▶ tribalresourcetool.com](http://tribalresourcetool.com)



# The Plan

- Convened in person meetings and webinars with over 20 tribal stakeholders
- Ensure the tool is **USER FRIENDLY** and **SAFE** for victims and service providers
- Ensure the tool is **ACCESSIBLE** to AI/AN living in remote locations or living with disabilities



# Tool Development

- Used input gathered at focus groups, web-meetings, in-person meetings, and one-on-one calls to develop the following:
  - Provider Survey Questions and Data Collection Fields
  - Program Inclusion Criteria and Guidelines
  - Official website
  - Map



# We need your help!

- Input your organization's information into our tool by filling out our provider inclusion form at <https://www.tribalresourcetool.org/provider-inclusion/>
- Take some of our flyers and palm cards to pass out to organizations at home



TRIBAL RESOURCE TOOL

Resources For Survivors of Crime and Abuse

# VictimConnect Helpline

- 100% anonymous
- Call/chat/text
- Resource & Referrals
- All crimes



*Confidential referrals for crime victims*



**855-4-VICTIM**



# Resources

- Tribal Resource Tool ([tribalresourcetool.org](http://tribalresourcetool.org))
- National Resource Center on Native American Aging ([nrcnaa.org](http://nrcnaa.org))
- National Indigenous Elder Initiative ([nieji.org](http://nieji.org))
- National Indian Council on Aging ([nicoa.org](http://nicoa.org))
- StrongHearts Native Helpline ([strongheartshelpline](http://strongheartshelpline)) 1-844-7NATIVE
- Reclaiming What is Sacred: Addressing Harm to Indigenous Elders Project (NCALL)