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.
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
VictimConnect Helpline

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

Confidential referrals for crime victims 855-4-VICTIM

Resources For Survivors of Crime and Abuse tribalresource.com
Resources

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