
Mending the Sacred Hoop

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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★★ We have moved ★★

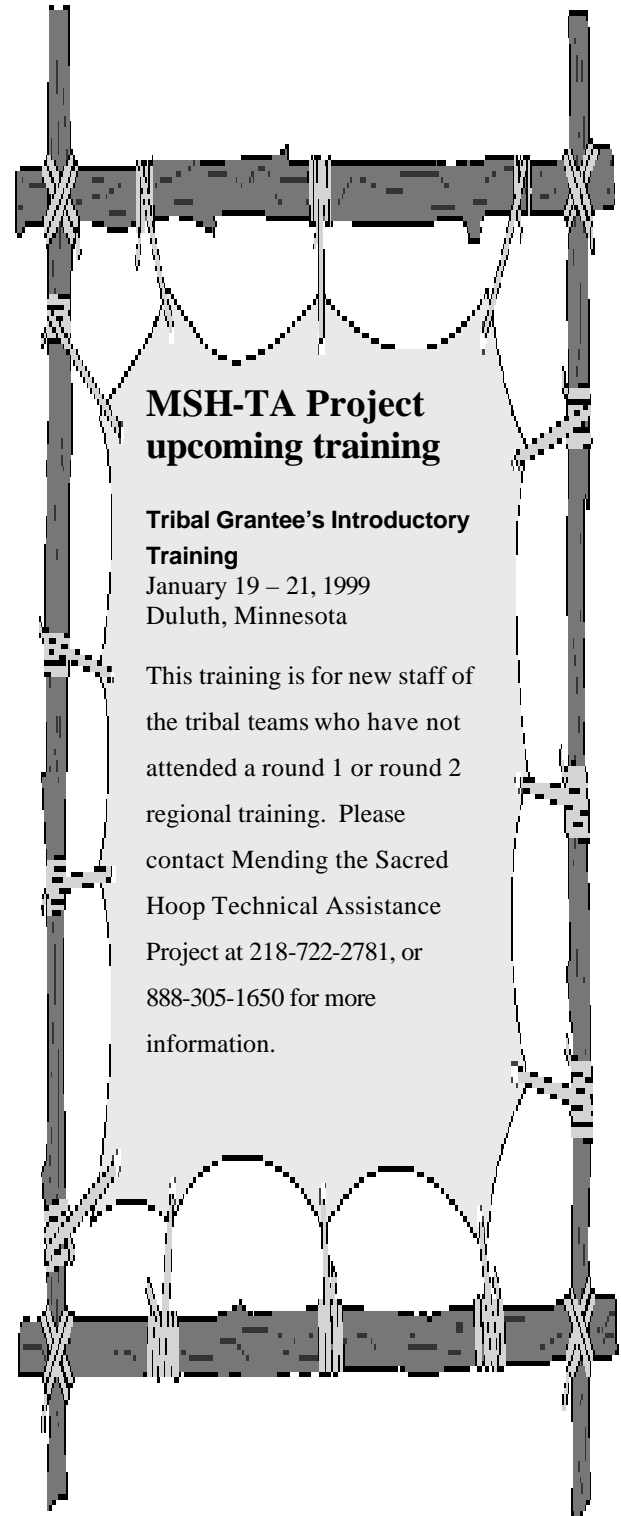
Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance project has moved 156 miles north from Minneapolis, Minnesota into the Center for Nonviolence in Duluth, MN. The Center for Nonviolence is the new home of Minnesota Program Development, Inc. MPDI is the Parent Corporation of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), the Duluth Family Visitation Center (BKA the Visitation Center), the National Training Project (NTP), and Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance project (MSH-TA).

The Center for Nonviolence is located at **202 East Superior Street, Duluth, MN 55802** in the historic "Old Downtown" section of the city. Centrally located, with a gorgeous view of Lake Superior from the training room, walking distance to shopping and hotels located in Canal Park, and across the street from Fond-Du-Luth Casino.

We can still be reached via the toll free line at 1-888-305-1650; this line is being transferred to Duluth. During the interim you may get the voice mail system, so please be patient during this time as there may be some delays. We can also be reached directly by calling 218-722-2781, and the fax number is 218-722-0779. Also note that the e-mail address mshtap@aol.com has been cancelled, the new e-mail address will be published in the next issue.

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THE WOMEN WHO HAS BEEN ASSAULTED MEETS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

(Part two: INDIAN COUNTRY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESPONSE continued from last newsletter)

The women who calls the police for assistance still encounters the law enforcement officer who, until recently, has been trained to be a mediator. They were trained to counsel the abuser, send him for a walk around the block, or slightly admonish him.

Forcing law enforcement to treat domestic violence as a criminal offence brings the violence into the prosecutor's office and courtroom and the woman will still also encounter the beliefs about women and violence against women that are built into that system and the individuals within that system.

Prosecutors often seem to be held hostage to the black and white ink of the "law". Tribal judges, when sentencing men to counseling, probation, or batterer's programs, will inevitable hear the offender whine, "well what about her? She needs help too!"

The common law enforcement and court response to woman beating is that everyone throws up their hands in frustration and cries, "well, she's just going to go back to him anyway." "She won't testify." And, "that's Indian Love." The assumption that the woman who is the victim of a crime is responsible for "doing something" about the offender. If she doesn't, then we say she is sick, crazy, stupid, etc.

It is not the responsibility of the women who is assaulted by an intimate partner to "do something" about him. (And, she couldn't do anything even if she wanted to. It is a fact that battered women are at greatest risk of being killed when leaving or after leaving the relationship than in staying.) It is the responsibility of those working in systems that are supposed "to protect and serve" to "do something" about the batterer's violent and criminal behavior.

When a women returns to an abuser, it is often an indication that she believes that anyone is capable of protecting her. To a woman being battered, the batterer often has more power than any of us in any system.

The woman who is battered has most likely been threatened with death. She also knows the capability of the batterer to carry out that threat. Police and judges will not be at her house at 2:30 in the morning when he breaks in. It is the responsibility of systems to prioritize safety and convince the woman who is battered that there is real help and hope in utilizing the criminal justice system.

It is imperative that Tribal court judges take the stance that a woman who has been a victim of a violent crime is not responsible for the violent behavior of her partner.

The person in front of the court who has committed the crime must be the focus of the proceeding. The judge has no authority to impose any type of sentencing or requirements on the woman. She has not committed a crime and is not available to the court for court imposed consequences.

It is inappropriate to ask the battered women, "well, what did you do?" This type of question treats a woman like a child (it's the question we ask of children when we try to be "fair" and mediate childhood disputes) and implies that she is somehow at fault for his violent and criminal behavior.

It is especially important that systems understand the dynamics of domestic violence if the women have reached the point of "fighting back." There are instances where women being battered are violent, usually in self-defense or retaliation. Often time's women who are being battered will say with pride that they are not going to take it anymore and will fight back.

We know that VIOLENCE MAKES MORE VIOLENCE. We must all be able to let her know that an escalation of violence is an indication that the situation has become lethal. We want her to know that it is wonderful that there is a spark inside her that wants to live. And we also know that her violent response will not stop but will instead increase the violence.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MSH-TA INTRODUCTORY TRAINING

DULUTH, MINNESOTA

JANUARY 19 – 21, 1999

Training for new staff of tribal grantees who have not yet attended a prior regional training

CREATING A PROCESS OF CHANGE FOR MEN WHO BATTER

FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

FEBRUARY 17 – 19, 1999

For men's non-violence class facilitators, call the National Training Project at 218-722-2781 for more information

IN OUR BEST INTEREST (FOR WOMEN ONLY)

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

MARCH 8 – 9, 1999

For battered women's group facilitators, call the National Training Project at 218-722-2781 for more information

CREATING A PROCESS OF CHANGE FOR MEN WHO BATTER

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

MARCH 10 – 12, 1999

For men's non-violence class facilitators, call the National Training Project at 218-722-2781 for more information

CD AND MEN'S RE-EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

MARCH 22 – 24, 1999

Combined workshop of chemical dependency issues and working with men who batter. Call Sacred Circle National Resource Center for more information at 605-341-2050 or toll-free 877-RED-ROAD

FOUR TRACK INSTITUTES

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

APRIL 12 – 16, 1999

Call Sacred Circle for more information at 605-341-2050 or toll-free 877-RED-ROAD

Tribal criminal justice systems must take responsibility in understanding that violence is a system of tactics and behaviors that are used to maintain control in a relationship. Tribal criminal justice systems must monitor themselves to ensure that the system is not participating in victim-blaming and further re-victimizing a women who has been battered.

Again, we all must be very clear in our attitude and response. She cannot "provoke" him and is not responsible for how he responds to her behavior. If he responds by assaulting her, he must be held accountable and hear that he has other behavioral choices that do not include violence.

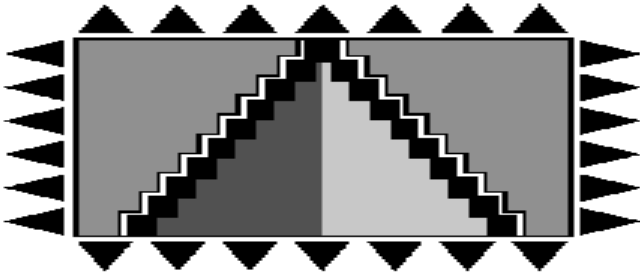
"Provocation" implies that it is his privilege to set the standards for the household and if the woman deviates from those standards (and even if she doesn't) then he is justified in "making" her "behave." (Again, the perception that women are "childlike" and should be treated as such.)

It may be true that he behavior of the woman has not been exemplary; maybe she was drinking, maybe she was with another man, maybe she was not caring for her children, maybe she was not behaving like a "lady." She certainly may have her issues.

However, there are many times when men behave in ways that women do not like. Men drink, run around with other women, are inadequate fathers, etc.; however; women will not typically rape him, give him a concussion or break his arm with a rake.

We may believe that self-growth is in the best interest of a battered woman and will enhance her life. However, it is her privilege to interact with the world in whatever manner she chooses. If she is passive, submissive, or has a "big mouth," it is still her privilege to walk down the street without fear and live in her home without fear of attack. (If he doesn't like how she is maybe he should just leave or divorce her?!)

It is appropriate to women know about what services are available in the community and to let women know that they have the right to the opportunity for self-exploration and self-growth. It may be very important for women to learn about the dynamics of domestic violence so as not to blame themselves for the abuse.



"Indian Country" continued from page 3

Family, friends, agencies, and institutions must send a clear message that a woman who is battered does not deserve the violence she has experienced in the relationship. If she receives the subtle messages that there is something wrong with her that "makes" him behave violently, she will continue to carry guilt, shame, etc., and the belief that maybe she deserved such treatment.

The safety of women and children who are being victimized by violence must always be the priority. Tribal criminal justice systems (and those systems are made up of people) must be flexible enough to take into account and incorporate methods that are sensitive to the effects of violence. Our systems must be able to effectively integrate out cultural values (as part of not in addition to) into that system so our culture becomes a source of strength in out healing.

Others' recognition of the right of women to make choices, even if we do not always perceive those choices as being "good," can be the beginning of a liberation process for the woman being battered.

THE MAN WHO ASSAULTS HIS PARTNER

The man who batters most likely doesn't understand that he is doing anything wrong. He does understand that he is in trouble and the most effective intervention is to use the authority of the tribal court to sentence him to jail time, probation, counseling, a batterer's program, etc., or a combination of these elements. If no services available, flat jail time will send the message that violence is not in harmony with the circle of all living things.

Again, tribal court judges must focus on the criminal behavior of the abuser. An assault has taken place. Men who batter must be told, in no uncertain terms, that this behavior is against the law and will not be tolerated

by the People. It is not his privilege to assault others. Men who battered must be held totally accountable for their violent behavior.

Sentencing may include alcohol treatment. However, tribal court judges must be clear that alcoholism and violence are two separate issues. Alcohol treatment and sobriety will not ensure non-violent behavior and sentencing that only mandate alcohol treatment is not appropriate or responsible.

It is also appropriate for tribal court judges to impose more stringent consequences if court orders are not followed or if the violence continues. It is often difficult for tribal courts to follow through on orders, i.e., no probation officers, overwhelming court dockets, etc. However, we must find ways to be vigilante in upholding consequences for violent behavior is not culturally acceptable.

IN CONCLUSION

It is a credit to the work of grass roots people and male dominated councils who have responded to domestic violence with the enactment of stringent codes recognizing assault of an intimate partner as a crime. The recognition of violence as a crime contrary to the cultural honoring of the feminine as life giving is a beginning.

Tribal councils and courts must assume leadership as we search for balance in our individual, family and community lives. That leadership must be creative and innovative. As sovereign nations we can reject the patriarchal white male system and free our energies to think beyond what society tells us is "reality" and "the way things need to be done." The development of more sophisticated and professional systems shouldn't mean that system becomes as white as the systems of a male dominated white society.

Tribal lifeways can teach and guide us into equitable and respectful methods of responding to the contemporary problem of violence against indigenous women.

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The MSH-TA web site will hopefully be ready by the next newsletter also.

To get more of the **“Women are Sacred”** posters to enhance public awareness of domestic violence contact **Mending the Sacred Hoop-TA project at 888-305-1650** and we'll send you some!

“Women are Sacred”

Conference brought together tribal nations from across the country and Alaska to look at innovative ways to end violence against indigenous women.

The “Women are Sacred” conference was held twice this past fall showcasing innovative work being done in various native communities in response to domestic violence. Sacred Circle National Resource Center and Mending the Sacred Hoop-TA project co-sponsored these four day conferences.

November’s conference repeated October’s agenda. There were almost 350 participants representing approximately 50 nations in attendance.

Tillie Black Bear, Executive Director of the White Buffalo Calf Women Society Shelter, delivered the opening keynote on a historical overview of protecting the safety of native women. Following the keynote was a panel focusing on full faith and credit projects in Indian country. Featured was Michelle Paquin – Battered Women’s Legal Advocacy Project, Judge Mary Wynne – Colville Tribal Court Chief Judge, Peggy Bird – DNA legal services, and Sam Deloria – American Indian Law Center.

Nationally know artist Sam English was on hand during a reception and resource fair on the evening of the conference opener to sign the public awareness poster he designed for MSH-TA.

The resource fair had material from the national resource centers, technical assistance providers, and state coalitions and DV programs from across the country. This was also the spot where lots of informal networking took place and people had the chance relax a little and enjoy some social time.

After the opening day and keynote presentations, participants had the option of attending the workshops of their choice, and there was a staggering 42 workshops a day to choose from. One of the most impressive ideas was the ‘workshop on wheels’, where you got a first hand experience and tour of the work being done in Pine Ridge.

After two days of workshops a banquet has held that evening. Flute music performed by Bryan Akipa accompanied dinner, after everyone got to show their pride in where their from in a little game of “That’s Me!” Cecilia Fire Thunder then delivered the evening keynote on renewing you commitment to end violence against women.

Thanks to everyone, the presenters, faculty and staff of Sacred Circle & Mending the Sacred Hoop, resource fair contributors, and all the people representing their Nations for coming together to end violence against women!

Project Newsletter Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance



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