
Mending the Sacred Hoop

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MSH-TA project is on the World Wide Web

Web site will provide information to grantees and faculty while enhancing the resource quality of the project

The TA project has a preliminary site on the Internet that can be visited at www.msh-ta.org. This site will hold information on future trainings, faculty, staff, newsletters, as well as available resource materials.

We are also planning to develop an on-line resource library as well as a "Promising Practices" section. The library would contain all the articles we have on file here in the office and would be available for downloading and printing. The "Promising Practices" section would highlight the grantee projects utilizing innovative strategies to help end violence against Indian Women.

The site is still under construction so some information on the project is basic, but there are some nice graphics including the "Women Are Sacred" poster by Sam English, "Culture" and "Creator" wheels and a colored version of the MSH turtle. When you have a moment go visit this site!❖

Secrecy and denial: Facing Spiritual and Sexual Abuse in the Native Community

By Marcie R. Rendon

Heavy blankets shroud the windows. The tiniest sliver of light cannot invade this sacred space. Ikwe (not her real name) sits in the darkness nearest the altar. This is her first ceremony and she has diligently prepared the necessary number of tobacco ties. Each knot in the red string encloses a prayer, one for each of the sacred directions – prayers for the spirits who have gone on before, another for the spirits yet to come. Ikwe sat up half the previous night praying, tying, praying. The other half of the night she prepared the food the guests would eat after the ceremony. Tears fell as she prayed for healing; this tiny square of material representing a plea for relief from the sorrow of the break-up of her marriage, and this tiny bundle for the child lost to miscarriage.

Now she sits where her elder has directed - nervous, scared, a little unsure. She had been raised Lutheran and this ceremony marked the return, or the beginning, of her journey into traditional ways. She feels a twinge of guilt as the Lord's Prayer comes unbidden into her thoughts. She is Indian. Next semester she will begin to learn her language at the college. May be then she won't feel so unsure sitting in this circle and the Grandfathers will hear her prayers more clearly when she is able to speak them in the language they were most familiar with.

Ikwe listens intently while the songs are sung. The doctoring begins. She thinks, maybe, she sees a spirit light. She's sure she feels the light breeze that fans. Has she been touched by a spirit? Something softly touches her breast, lingering. Frozen, moments pass before she dares to reach out into the darkness, confused hands searching for a

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human being. Surely the spirits wouldn't touch her there? Senses heightened, body stiffened, she breathes with relief as the last prayer is said, the last song is sung and the electric lights turned on.

Ikwe goes into the kitchen and begins to set out the food. She eavesdrops as the other participants talk softly about spirits they had seen, the eagle that had entered the circle. As people eat, talk becomes louder, laughs erupt and mundane everyday events being to be discussed. No one else mentions any inappropriate advances made in the dark. Thus, Ikwe begins the process of denying the reality that she has been violated.

Five years later, at a sweat, a young woman approaches her with a tobacco offering, searching for advice. She wants Ikwe to help her overcome feeling of jealousy. She knows the elder she was sleeping with was also sleeping with other women. But she understands that this was just a test of her spiritual strength, and that the spirits had told him in ceremony she was to have his child - a special child of the spirits. She has to overcome this jealousy. Would Ikwe help her be a strong Native woman like Ikwe? Knowing she doesn't know the answer, Ikwe asks, "Who is this elder?" The name the young woman gives twists a knife in Ikwe's heart. She, too, had been told this message, but it was she, Ikwe, who is supposed to bear his child.

Since that night, Ikwe's denial has dropped, layer by layer, tear by tear. What began as a journey to spiritual awakening ended in a personal hell of mistrust and doubt. Unable to continue the denial, Ikwe listened to a friend's advice: "It's not okay for someone to say they love you while they're hurting you."

Ikwe decided to face the truth. But with no place to go for help, she sought the comfort of a Native advocate at a women's shelter.

Sexual abuse runs the gamut from child molestation to marital rape, from sexual harassment on the job to sexual exploitation by "spiritual elders." According to Bonnie Clairmont, Assistant Program Coordinator with the Sexual

Offense Services of Ramsey County, the largest problem the Native community faces in addressing sexual abuse is the secrecy that still surrounds the issue. She says, "Children are living in terror as long as the silence is there. The community has huge denial about this issue."

Clairmont goes on to add that along with the denial there is also the backlash that occurs when a victim speaks out. Young children are told by their perpetrator they will be killed or hurt if they tell, that they will lose their mom or dad if they tell. A young child does not want to be responsible for dad, grandma, or uncle being locked away. Employees are threatened with loss of jobs and livelihoods. Seekers of spiritual truth are threatened with bad medicine. By making the victim responsible for the perpetrator's freedom or a loved one's life, the perpetrator holds the victim emotionally captive and ensures unwilling compliance.

Clairmont says her agency is seeing the backlash from a conference they sponsored in May titled "Breaking the Silence."

"Education, outreach, networking is so important. Yet with each disclosure, ranks in the community close. It's the survivors who are bearing the brunt of this backlash," she says. "People are being threatened as a result of the conference. One woman called and the medicine man who is perpetrating on her told her he was going to use medicine on her if she came to the conference. Although she knows she is being victimized and she didn't attend the conference, she is afraid there is no way the spell he has on her is going to be broken."

Whether children or adults, victims tend to be those most vulnerable. Children want to be loved and accepted by family members. Adults who are under someone's power for employment or livelihood are also vulnerable. Within the spiritual framework, people whose lives are in trauma and who seek assistance from spiritual leaders (ministers, psychic counselors, or medicine people), individuals experiencing loss of loved ones through death or family disruption, those physically sick, people in early stages of recovery from chemical addictions of sexual abuse are considered vulnerable adults. Victims also tend to be those who are

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THE NEXT MILLENNIUM CONFERENCE: ENDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

HYATT REGENCY O'HARE, ROSEMONT, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 29, 1999 – SEPTEMBER 1, 1999

The conference will offer six workshop tracks focusing on: Prevention; Intervention; Economic and Social Justice; Youth; Research; and Undeserved Communities. For more information call 800-281-9519 or visit their web site at www.dvmillennium.org.

SACRED CIRCLE: FOUR TRACK INSTITUTE

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

OCTOBER 25-29, 1999

This institute offers four tracks of training: Advocacy; Criminal Justice Intervention; Law Enforcement; and Batterer's Intervention. For more information call Sacred Circle at 877-RED-ROAD.

Second National Native Conference Showcasing Promising Practices and Key Issues In Indian Country Coming in December 1999

Mark your calendars and get set to travel to the S.T.O.P. grantees promising practices conference Flagstaff, Arizona. The conference will be held at the Little America Hotel December 6 – 9, 1999.

This conference will offer multiple workshops for participants to choose from, many being presented by grantee programs showcasing their work. There will be a Workshop on Wheels being hosted by the Hopi team. The workshop on Wheels will be a tour of the Hopi Nation with presentations on the work that has been done in their community, and the opportunity to see how they coordinate a community response to domestic violence.

More information will be provided in future newsletters and mailings as the date gets closer.

Notice: To all S.T.O.P. Violence Against Indian Women Discretionary Grant Programs

Request for Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, & Stalking Codes

The National American Indian Court Judges Association (NAICJA) has received funding for the Computer Repository of Tribal Family Violence Codes Project. As part of the project advisory committee, Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance Project is assisting in the effort to compile existing codes.

We need your help in identifying the status of your family violence codes and would like to have a copy for the Computer Repository of Tribal Family Violence Codes Project and our resource library. Please respond to the following questions and return this information by fax to Eileen Hudon or Tina Olson at 218-722-5775. Mail codes to Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance Project, 202 East Superior Street, Duluth, MN 55802.

Tribe/Grantee: _____

Address: _____

Phone/fax/e-mail: _____

Judge(s): _____

Prosecutors(s): _____

	Yes	No	Pending
Do you have a domestic violence code?			
Do you have a sexual assault code?			
Do you have a stalking code?			
Other family violence code?			

Seattle based agency offers spiritual DV/SA info

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence has specific educational material for religious groups in U.S. and Canada, and around the world

CPSDV is a private non-profit organization founded by Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune in 1977 as an inter-religious resource addressing the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. The goal of the agency is to engage religious leaders in the task of ending abuse, and to serve as a bridge between religious and secular communities.

The Center's programs promote institutional and social change, and advanced healing and justice, with the emphasis on education and prevention. The materials are inter-religious; multicultural/multiracial and their videos have won numerous awards.

Since 1977, the Center has worked with over 85,000 religious, lay and secular leaders in an effort to end sexual and domestic violence. CPSDV offers a variety of services and products consisting of:

- Training's, workshops and seminars
- Consultations to professionals
- Videos for use in training and educational presentations (free previews available for most videos)
- Specialized curriculum materials
- Books, brochures, and publications for sale
- Newsletter

The programs and products are designed for clergy and lay audiences, religious professionals, counselors, battered women's programs, legal advocates, social service agencies, health care providers, child abuse prevention councils, and sexual assault programs.

For more information call or write the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence at 936 N. 34th Street, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98103. Phone (206) 634-1903, Fax (206) 634-0115 (24 hours). The Center can also be reached by e-mail cpsdv@cpsdv.org or visit their web site <http://www.cpsdv.org>.

accessible and easily isolated by offenders.

In addition to physical trauma, the effects of sexual abuse can be many and varied. There is emotional confusion. The victim does not understand what is happening or why it is happening to him or her. Victims often internalize the abuse as their fault. This internalization leads to feelings of pervasive shame: "I must be a bad person for this to happen to me." Due to a lack of time to realize that what is occurring is abuse.

For Ikwe, what began as fondling in ceremony progressed to sexual and financial exploitation as her financial resources were channeled into providing transportation, gifts, and hotel lodging for the elder to continue his "spiritual work." Ikwe was led to believe this was her duty as a spiritual Indian woman and that there was something wrong with her if she questioned the elder's motives.

Fear of retaliation keeps many victims silent. Fear of being labeled a troublemaker, fear of being isolated from the larger Native community, fear of being seen as disloyal to Native traditions and ways, keeps many people – victims and professionals - silent about the extent of the abuse in the Native community. The majority of Native people in chemical dependency treatment say they have been sexually abused.

Recovery starts with the individual naming what is occurring. The next step is finding someone who believes the survivor's reality. Parents of young survivors have expressed frustration at professionals in the community organizations who have responded to disclosure of familial sexual abuse with comments such as "Are you sure? Kids at this age experiment a lot. Kids pick up a lot from TV or videos these days." One mother said, "I told the child advocate that my child comes home from visits with his father and acts out sexually on our other children. Her response was that he has rights as a father and nothing has been proven. Like he's going to rape him in front of her! These people are supposed to be helping us, but they're locked into their own denial."—

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Additional Resources and Partnership Initiatives in Indian Country

The Office of Assistant Attorney General (OAAG) has policy coordination and general authority over OJP. The activities of the office focus on attaining the goal of reducing crime and improving the criminal justice systems. Four program offices, which address corrections, drug courts, empowerment of local communities, and domestic violence, are located within the OAAG. Additionally the Indian Desk was established in June 1995 to facilitate effective grant funding services to Indian tribes and Alaska Native Villages.

The Indian Desk provides assistance in coordinating current tribal funding among various OJP components through the coordination of grant programs, training, and technical assistance. Assists in the planning and development of new program initiatives throughout DOJ bureaus and executive program offices in ways that address the needs of tribal governments. The Indian Desk also works with DOJ's Office of Tribal Justice and other federal agencies to improve and increase services to tribes, tribal governments and organizations.

Corrections Programs Office

The Corrections Program Office encourages states, units of local governments, and Indian tribes to develop strategies that will assist correction's agencies in dealing with the challenges confronting the nation's prison system. The office provides leadership on corrections issues and policy direction for the implementation of congressionally mandated grant programs. Programmatic Partnership Initiatives:

- *Violent Offender Incarceration and Truth-in-Sentencing Incentive **Formula** Grant Programs.* These programs are for states and states organized as regional compacts for holding federal prisoners. VOI/TIS funding may be used to build or expand 1) correctional facilities for violent offenders; 2) temporary or permanent correctional facilities for non-violent offender to free space for violent offenders; and 3) jails. Total allocations were \$391.6 million in FY 1996 and \$471.4 million in FY 1997. States may make awards to units of local government, including Indian tribes, although as of January 1997, no Indian tribe had applied for funding from any state grantee.
- *Violent Offender Incarceration and Truth-in-Sentencing Grants for Indian Tribes.* This **discretionary** grant program provides Indian tribes an opportunity to build or renovate jails on tribal lands for the incarceration of offenders subject to tribal jurisdiction. Annual available grant funds for Indian

country represent 0.3 percent of the total annual appropriation.

- *Boot Camp Initiative.* Boot camp provides short-term confinement for non-violent offenders, many of whom are substance abusers. Education, job training, and substance abuse counseling or treatment to help offenders prepare for a productive life in the community. An important feature of the Boot Camp Initiative is a requirement that programs provide post-incarceration aftercare services so offenders will receive follow-up care when they return to their communities.

Executive Office for Weed and Seed

The goal of this program is to "weed out" violent crime, drug dealers, and gang activity from targeted neighborhoods and "seed" the community with social economic revitalization efforts. The four basic elements are enhancement of law enforcement, community policing, prevention/intervention/treatment, and neighborhood restoration. Each applicant must work with its local U.S. Attorney's Office to develop a strategy and apply for Official Recognition and funding.

- *Operation Weed and Seed Indian Pilot Site Project.* In cooperation with the Criminal Division's Indian Country Initiative, the Executive Office for Weed and Seed (EOWS) set aside \$600,000 in FY 1996 **discretionary** funding for two pilot projects in Indian Country. Tribal representatives of Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico and Northern Cheyenne, Montana were invited to attend and participate in the weed and Seed training session in August 1996, initial awards for pilot projects were granted in spring of 1997.
- *Developing Strategies Initiative.* EOWS strongly encourages interested Indian tribes to organize a Weed and Seed Steering Committee with their local U.S. Attorney's Office and apply for Official Recognition. As of 1997, four Indian are were working with their respective U.S. Attorney's Office to explore the possibilities of developing Weed and Seed programs.

This year forty-two tribes received more than \$4 million in funding to improve services to Indian women who are victims of domestic violence through the STOP discretionary grant program. More information about OJP, DOJ, and other violence against women efforts is available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov or call the National Criminal Justice Reference Service toll-free at 800-851-3420.

*Information provided on agencies, organizations, or individuals are for informational purposes only and are not intended to endorse any particular group, business, or person. Articles and information provided in this publication may not represent the views of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Violence Against Women Office, Minnesota Program Development, Inc. or any program thereof.

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