



2020



GIDAGAAKOONS RESEARCH

A
SURVIVOR'S VIEW ON
MISSING AND
MURDERED
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE:
A HEALING JOURNEY
OF RAISING SURVIVOR
AND GRASSROOTS
WARRIOR VOICES

MCNAIR SCHOLAR PROGRAM 2020
THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-
SUPERIOR

MENTORS: ALLI WILLINGHAM & KAT
WERCHOUSKI

Land Acknowledgement: this research and report were done on Ojibwe land,
Chi Miigwech.

#LANDBACK

About the cover



"Resilience: Warrior Within"

This cover art represents the strength and resilience of Indigenous people. Each person pictured represents a portion of our Indigenous people who have gone missing or who have been murdered, the children who have been ripped from their homes and stripped from their culture. A woman, a girl, a two-spirit person, a boy, and a man. All are wearing ribbon skirts and shirts, because ribbon skirts and shirts are medicine. They are scared, and they bring strength to whoever is wearing them. The people are holding hands in solidarity, standing around the sacred fire. The warrior fist rising from the fire, to represent the fight that Indigenous people have been fighting since colonial contact.

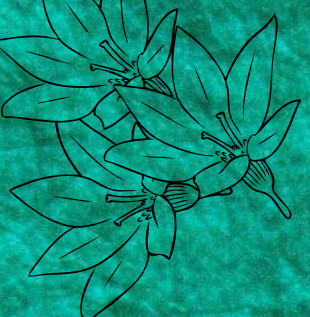
We are Warriors. We are Strong. We are Resilient. We are still here.



Survivor Leaders

Annita Lucchesi of Sovereign Bodies Institute and Lissa Yellowbird-Chase of Sahnish Scouts North Dakota

This report is dedicated to Annita Lucchesi and all of the amazing women on the Survivor's Leadership Council of Sovereign Bodies Institute. Their strength, beauty, resilience, and wisdom have inspired me in ways that I cannot fully put into words. Our sisterhood has become the missing piece I never knew I needed on this healing journey. The world is a better place because of all these women. I thank the Creator every day for you. This is for you, I love you and I honor you.



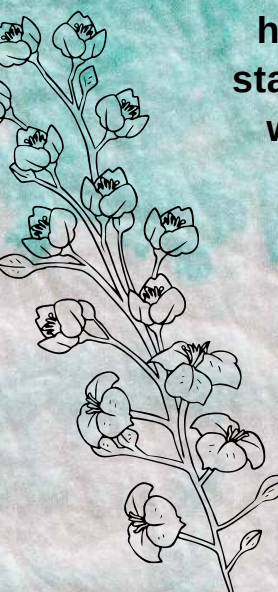
At the first interview
for this study, I was
gifted this Abalone
shell



At the last
interview
I was told this
story...

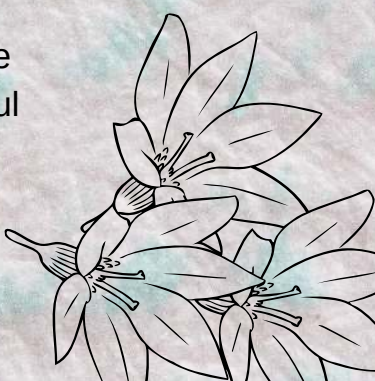
OWNING OUR VOICES AS COMMUNITY LEADERS, AS RESEARCHERS IS A FORM OF CULTURAL HEALING. LIKE TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING OUR SURVIVORS, IT DIDN'T MATTER WHAT YOU HAD BEEN THROUGH. YOU ALWAYS HAVE SOMETHING VALUABLE TO GIVE TO THE PEOPLE. THERE'S A STORY FROM THE YUROK & WIYOT PEOPLE THAT I REALLY LOVE ABOUT AN ABALONE WOMAN:

An abalone woman fell in love with a man from a neighboring tribe. She walked all along the beach to his village to go marry him. When she got there, he agreed to marry her, but he wasn't convinced that that was the woman that he had seen from far away. She looked so beautiful from far and up close, she wasn't the same. But he married her anyways, but he just really treated her badly and he was becoming abusive to her. So eventually she left, she packed her things and she was going to go back to her parents and he caught her walking along the beach with her stuff. He stabbed her in the back and murdered her. She ran into the waves and she became abalone and that's why abalone shells have red on the back.



So for me, that story teaches us that no matter what you've been through, you're always sacred. You're always beautiful and you always have something to give to the people.

Annita Lucchesi





ABSTRACT

Native people are at exceptionally high risk for poverty, homelessness, and sexual violence, which are elements in the trafficking of Native people. They are at extremely high risk for violence and emotional trauma, and the needs of Native people are generally not being met. I review the underlying issues of historical and multi-generational trauma that contribute to women and girls being vulnerable to sex traffickers. I review colonialism and how the loss of Culture has affected Indigenous people, playing a role in the high rates of violence among them. I review statutes and criminal charges for traffickers, safe harbor laws, and the need for a nationwide statute to protect victims. I review the dimensions of how technology plays a part in sex trafficking, stalking, and online harassment. I review current resources for survivors or the lack thereof, and how survivors can begin to rebuild their lives, reclaim their voices, and start the healing process.

Keywords: Sex trafficking, violence, healing, two-spirit, missing and murdered, grassroots, Indigenous people, Native people



Sex trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault directly correlate with the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous people. There is a lack of literature that comes from the standpoint of an Indigenous two-spirit woman who is a survivor. I am adding to the literature from a different perspective than most, and heightening and empowering other survivors as well. I am contributing to a rising survivor movement, which we have already begun with Annita Lucchesi creating the survivor leadership council for the Sovereign Bodies Institute.


The trend in opinion in my topic is that Native American people are at higher rates of violence but have fewer studies done on them to highlight the high statistics. Many things contribute to the higher rates of violence, like historical and multi-generational trauma, poverty, colonialism. This is not a new thing for Indigenous people. My view on it is different than most of the literature that is out there because I have personally lived through these traumas, and I know the needs of survivors because they are my needs, too. Survivors have critical expertise on this topic that non-survivors do not, and it is crucial that survivor voices be heard.





REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE AS IT RELATES TO CURRENT STUDY

It is widely known that colonizers forcibly relocated Native people from their land, committing massive amounts of crime and killings, bringing disease, and forcing the starvation of Native people (Amnesty International, 2010, p.15). Historical and multi-generational trauma are linked to intimate partner violence in many ways. Although this is widely known and documented, it is not widely discussed in history classrooms, social justice discussions, or even academic literature. According to the Administration for Children & Families, historical trauma is multi-generational trauma experienced by a specific cultural, racial, or ethnic group. It is related to major events that oppressed a group of people because of their status as oppressed, such as slavery, the Holocaust, forced migration, and the violent colonization of Native Americans. While many will experience no effects of the historical trauma, others may experience poor overall physical and behavioral health, including low self-esteem, depression, self-destructive behavior, violent or aggressive behavior, substance misuse and addiction, and high rates of suicide and cardiovascular disease.





The Garden of Truth report is research by the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and Prostitution Research & Education. It supports these findings, and it also highlights Indigenous women's PTSD when coming out of trafficking. The report highlights statistics of a high percentage of the women who participated in the study having family members who attended Native American boarding schools. Farley states that more than two-thirds of their family members who attended boarding schools were physically and sexually abused there (Farley et al., 2011, p. 41). Sarah Deer wrote her perspective on boarding schools, which was shocking yet so clear. She wrote about Native children that were taken from their homes, forced to live hundreds of miles from their homes in abusive and demeaning circumstances. Many boarding school experiences included widespread sexual abuse. Mandatory boarding schools were actually human trafficking by the U.S. government (Deer, 2010, p. 665-667). That is a view on trafficking and boarding schools that I never thought about before, but it is so true.



There is a significant link between childhood maltreatment and intimate partner violence. Childhood maltreatment is associated with higher rates of depression, and depression is linked to intimate partner violence. This study is beneficial to my research because I know from experience that these findings are valid. Certain types of childhood maltreatment may be stronger predictors of fearful attachment and intimate partner violence (Kong et al., 2016, p. 2840-42). Depression is primarily the reason behind me getting trafficked and being so vulnerable that I fell for a sex trafficking trap. Most people have misconceptions about how people end up getting trafficked. Trafficking is not like in the movies. It is generally between two people who know each other, and typically the trafficker poses as a boyfriend or grooms the person into trafficking by trickery and lies.

Generational trauma, as cited above, exacerbates Native American women's vulnerability to traffickers. According to Logan, generational trauma of Native people still exists today, and there are no indications that it will stop. In addition to generational trauma, living conditions of many tribes create optimal conditions for trafficking (Logan, 2015, p. 8).

Annita Lucchesi found in her 2019 report that the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girl's crisis has occurred since the first contact with colonial forces. This violence has enormous impacts on Indigenous children. Indigenous girls are over-represented in missing, and runaway child reports. Indigenous children experience high rates of trauma due to the impacts of losing their families to trafficking and disappearance. This can lead to poverty, incarceration, and disappearance and creates a ripple effect within the cycle of intergenerational trauma (Lucchesi, 2019, p. 3-6).



Halinka Malcoe & Duran found in their 2004 report that Native people have been subjected to a long history of colonization that has resulted in the loss of land and resources and has severely disrupted traditional gender roles and family structure. Without historical and culturally specific data, it is not possible for tribes to design effective programs to address the needs of their people experiencing this violence. Colonialism has not only affected the rates of violence but how we research it and how we address it (Halinka Malcoe & Duran, 2004, p. 1-2-3). Kong finds that collective trauma and systematic oppression experienced by Native Americans throughout history highlight the vulnerability of Native Americans who are experiencing victimization (Kong et al., 2016, p. 2841). Logan states that because of colonialism, Native Americans have a lack of trust in the government, which leads to underreporting (Logan, 2015, p.2). Sovereign Bodies Institute is the home of the missing and murdered Indigenous people (MMIP) database that Annita Lucchesi created because no government entity has undertaken such an effort.

Colonialism contributes to the lack of law enforcement response to violence against Indigenous women and girls. There are decades of publicly known but rarely formally reported incidents of sexual assault against Native women at the hands of police (Lucchesi, 2019, p.11).

Native American men attribute violent behaviors to the loss of Culture and colonialism. All nine men within Matamonasa-Bennett's study expressed that the loss of traditional tribal family structure is a significant factor in intimate partner violence. They all believe that serious social problems can be solved through reconnecting with traditional tribal values and identity (Matamonasa-Bennett, 2014, p.1). Boarding schools took away the traditional family structure, and colonial violence still has its effects on Indigenous people.

According to Razack, in Canada police negligence is attributed to the MMIWG epidemic. Police let girls slip through the cracks. An inquiry into police negligence and looking at police as perpetrators and instigators is called by Razack to be made. Also, according to Razack, colonialism exacerbates the issue of sex trafficking, and it places Indigenous women and girls on the front lines of sexual assault and human trafficking (Razack, 2016, p. 2-4).



In a report by Amnesty International called “Maze of Injustice,” the authors highlight the jurisdictional maze that delays and prolongs the process of investigating and prosecuting crimes of sexual violence. There are three main factors when determining jurisdictional authority: whether the victim is a tribal member, whether the accused is a tribal member, and whether the crime took place on a reservation. Jurisdiction often overlaps, causing confusion and uncertainty (Amnesty International, 2010, p. 27).

Several people that were interviewed by Amnesty International expressed concern about the failure of the FBI to respond to and investigate crimes against Native women. FBI investigations are rare, and oftentimes there are lengthy delays (Amnesty International, 2010, p. 42). According to Logan, statutes on human trafficking have survivor obstacles that need to be addressed. Jurisdictional issues contribute to the lack of reporting among Indigenous survivors. The statutes make it very difficult to prosecute traffickers and buyers. Cases must meet very high burdens of proof to be prosecuted, and many people go unarrested and uncharged (Logan, 2015, p.2-7). Lucchesi found that jurisdictional issues, law enforcement negligence and incapacity, gender violence by law enforcement, and the difficulty in accessing data are all known barriers to justice. Policymaking processes are abusive to survivors and can be re-traumatizing and unsafe (Lucchesi, 2019, p.16).

According to Lucchesi & Echo-Hawk, the challenges and barriers in accessing data severely affect the ability of the communities, tribes, and policymakers on how to best address violence. It is problematic for grassroots organizations that are often first responders to families. Most importantly, continued research on racial and gender bias in police forces needs to be done. Agencies cannot track or report data on cases that they are not responding to (Lucchesi & Echo-Hawk., 2019, p.20).



Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin found that domestic minor sex trafficking is one of the most hidden forms of abuse and exploitation of children in the United States. Teen girls are often tricked into trafficking by thinking the traffickers are their boyfriends (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014, p.522). According to Farley, high numbers of women do not know what they are getting themselves into because of the trickery and deception involved (Farley et al., 2011, p.26).

According to Bailey & Shayan, trickery and deception often take place online on social media platforms. Digital technology intersects with the MMIWG epidemic in numerous ways. Technology facilitates multiple forms of violence against women and girls, including stalking, intimate partner violence, human trafficking, pornography, child abuse images, and online hate and harassment. Social media sites are used to locate vulnerable women, and girls and then sites like *Craigslist* and *Facebook* have been used to advertise sexually trafficked youth (Bailey & Shayan, 2016, p. 329-340).

Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin found that there is a need for social workers, direct care providers, researchers, policymakers, funders, and other justice providers to become educated on the risk factors, nature, and extent of sex trafficking (Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014, p.535). Survivor needs are not being met, especially in culturally informed services for survivors (Farley et al., 2011, p.55). Amnesty International found that culturally based services such as sweat lodges in shelters, access to traditional medicines like sage, tobacco, and cedar are needed. Services such as testing for sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy testing, emergency contraceptive, and culturally based services are inadequate (Amnesty International, 2010, p. 75).





Kong states that depression and the mental health of Indigenous people must be focused on because these mental health problems exacerbate the problem with intimate partner violence (Kong et al., 2016, p 2843). Logan states that survivors should be consulted to develop services and to have a better understanding of human trafficking. Survivors are some of the strongest weapons there is to combat human trafficking (Logan, 2015, p.23).

According to Lucchesi, policymaking must be survivor informed. Current policies victimize survivors and cause them to be re-traumatized. Survivor safety is not a priority, and it needs to be. In the four states studied in Lucchesi's 2019 report, it is found that these miscarriages of justice are racialized and gendered. Nearly two-thirds of alleged murderers who were not held accountable are non-Native, and 94% of them are male. Two-thirds of Black and Latinx alleged perpetrators were convicted or have pending charges, while 79% of Indigenous alleged perpetrators were convicted or have pending charges. This is a rate approximately 150% higher than that of alleged white perpetrators, of which only half are charged or convicted. White women alleged murderers are twice as likely to be charged or convicted as white male alleged murderers (Lucchesi, 2019, p.16).

Matamonasa-Bennett states that cultural reconnection can heal survivors and help stop the cycle of intimate partner violence. Rebuilding traditional tribal families must be at the forefront of healing (Matamonasa-Bennett, 2014, p.13-14).

According to Sapiro, survivor leadership is a major principle in healing and must be implemented. Trauma-informed approaches to services must affirm survivor needs for safety, respect, and acceptance. Trauma-informed care must support the rights of survivors. These principles can form the bedrock of survivor-led and survivor informed programs (Sapiro et al., 2016, p.107-109). Amnesty International states that all governments should support the need for funding for support services, which includes shelters. These shelters must provide culturally appropriate, sensitive, and non-discriminatory support to Indigenous women (Amnesty International, 2010, p.89).





The trafficking of Indigenous women and girls is a problem that is not properly being addressed. It is a problem that has been forced upon Native people since colonial contact. The historical trauma and effects of colonization need to be healed for the cycle of violence amongst Indigenous people to even begin to see an end. There is a significant need for trauma-informed care and survivor-led services. Survivor leadership is the beginning of a monumental shift from violence into healing survivors and entire communities. Trauma is too often pushed under the table and children are falling through the cracks. There must be work that empowers survivors and gives them back their voices. Out of all the literature I reviewed, the common theme is a call for survivor-based research and survivor leadership. With the help of Sovereign Bodies Institute, I am answering that call. My study and report will have similar aspects of reports on these topics, including Amnesty International's "Maze of Injustice." Still, the main difference is mine comes from a survivor's point of view. The Survivor Leadership Council from Sovereign Bodies Institute is the leadership and support that we as survivors need. My work with them and the support that I have received from them has been the most important healing aspect that I didn't even know I needed.





As I previously wrote in the MMIWG2 Organizing Toolkit out of Sovereign Bodies Institute that I made a small contribution to as an author, the way that SBI lifts survivors is unparalleled. This is what healing looks like and it is not possible without the amazing support I have received. It is so important to support survivors, to turn survivors into leaders, and to allow them to be the voice of change is crucial. No one has better expertise on these issues than someone who has lived through it. This is what needs to be implemented in programs across the country, survivor leadership. It is a powerful thing and a beautiful thing. I am beating all the odds because of the people who believe in me! My university and SBI took a broken girl who was lost for so many years and have helped turn me into the powerful leader that our ancestors are proud of. Imagine a world where everyone lifts up and supports survivors in this way. There are so many strong, resilient, Indigenous leaders out there and it is crucial to let their voices be heard. That support is what took me from merely surviving to ABSOLUTELY THRIVING! We all need to be supporting each other like this, it is OUR TIME to RISE above our traumas. It is up to us to break generational curses. When someone says “It runs in the family”, you tell them “This is where it runs out!”

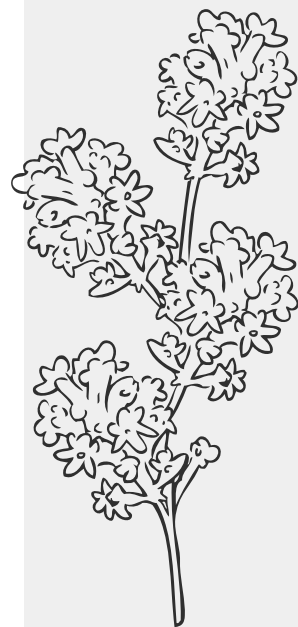
(Sovereign Bodies Institute, 2020, p.41).



Sutton King of Urban Indigenous Collective

CURRENT STUDY

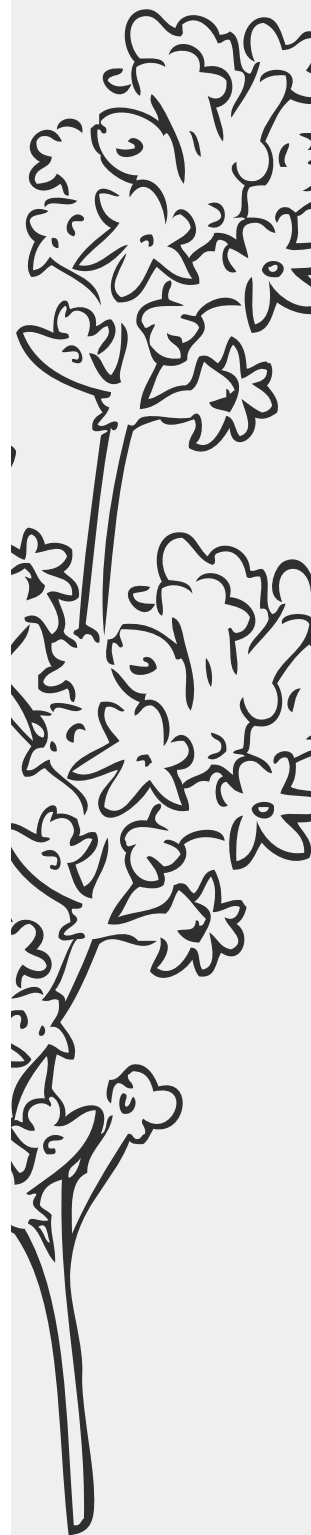
I surveyed 35 Indigenous people across the United States and Canada. I also interviewed 12 people from various aspects of life and different areas ranging from California to New York to Minnesota, and all the way to British Columbia and Manitoba, Canada. The people interviewed were women, men, and two-spirit individuals. The purpose of this research is to get a sense of how survivors feel about their experiences and the availability of services that are accessible to them, with a focus on cultural healing, trauma-informed care, grassroots organizations, and survivor leadership.



I took the data and responses from the survey, found the needs that survivors and problematic issues Indigenous people face, and turned around to provide them with resources and people who can help them.

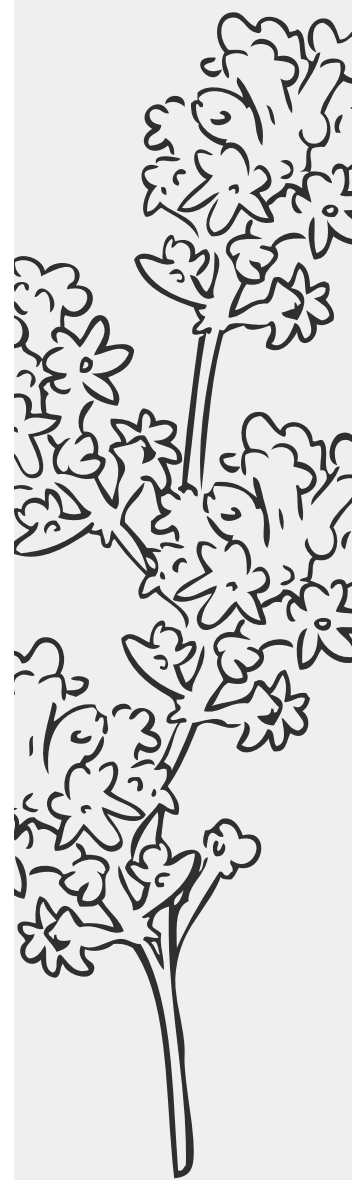
I introduced them to these grassroots and non-profit organizations which many people within the survey stated they feel more comfortable working with. Some federally funded work and advocacy are highlighted too because some of the survey respondents and people reading the report could really benefit from some of these services. As a survivor of human trafficking, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault myself, and as a researcher of these issues, I have found that this type of literature is very much needed to raise the voices of not only the people who have been silenced, but those warriors who are fighting for justice within our reservations, our cities, our states, and across Canada and Latin America.

Most of the people interviewed are survivors who publicly identify as a survivor and all are very active in their survivor leadership roles within their communities. Four of the people interviewed are serving on the Survivor Leadership Council of Sovereign Bodies Institute along with myself. Areas of work represented in interviews include Minnesota's Safe Harbor Northeast Regional Navigator, a sex trafficking coordinator for the National Sex Trafficking in Indian Country grant by The Office of Violence Against Women, a case manager working with commercially sexually exploited children in California, a Tribal representative who has many years of law enforcement experience, who is also serving on the task force for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Minnesota, the Executive Director of Sovereign Bodies Institute which is home of the national database for Missing and Murdered Indigenous People, the founder of Urban Indigenous Collective and co-founder of ShockTalk, a traditional woman healer, multiple grassroots activists, a chemical dependency health and marriage counselor who advocates for sexually abused men and boys and two-spirit individuals, and a powerful survivor leader from Canada who has fought for Indigenous rights, speaking out against trafficking and violence against Indigenous people in Canada.





The MMIW movement began in Canada, so it was important to include the First Nations people of Canada in this report. I refer to the movement in this report as missing and murdered Indigenous people (MMIP) because it is not just our women that are going missing and getting murdered. It is our women, our children, our men, and our two-spirit people. Some other acronyms it is commonly referred to as are MMIW, MMIWG, and MMIWG2S. The MMIP epidemic is happening in Canada, the United States, and Latin America. Before colonialism, our First Nations people had no borders. Borders are a product of colonialism just in the same way that reservations are. Also, before colonialism, two-spirit people were considered sacred. The term two-spirit was coined in 1990 in Winnipeg, Canada, as a means of unifying various gender identities and expressions of Indigenous individuals. The term is not a specific definition of gender or sexual orientation but rather an umbrella term. Two-Spirit people have both a male and female spirit within them and are blessed by their creator to see life through the eyes of both genders. (Enos, 2017) Now two-spirit people are fighting for their rights to be who they are, they are fighting for space in cultural ceremonies, and they are fighting for their voices to be heard. It was important to include two-spirit people in this report because they have some of the strongest voices that have also been silenced. There is not much research that has been done with two-spirit people. Literature like this and the work of Sovereign Bodies Institute is opening spaces that two-spirit people have historically been shut out of.





Roxanne White, Frontline Warrior

METHODOLOGY

I gave a questionnaire to Indigenous survivors of sex trafficking and intimate partner violence. I also conducted interviews with practitioners who work in grassroots organizations that work with families of missing and murdered Indigenous people. I am personally a member of Sovereign Bodies Institutes Survivor Leadership Council. This study qualifies as exempt from IRB because the subjects that will be taking the survey are all going to be adults and there is less than minimal risk involved. This study has been determined to meet the guidelines for exempt status, not requiring further review by the IRB. No minor children were directly involved with any of this research. The survey is focused on healing and the lack of culturally based services for survivors, as well as the need for survivor-led and survivor-informed policymaking.

I created a website www.gidagaakoonsresearch.com that has an overview of the study and my email address where people who were interested in being a part of the study could email me. I used Qualtrics for the survey and a full consent form and explanation was included on the first page of the survey. People could choose to stop taking the survey at any time should they feel any discomfort and numbers for services to help them be provided. I also conducted interviews of people who do grassroots advocacy, tribal leaders, community leaders, advocates, and people who are culturally connected in culturally healing practices. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and full consent was given by all participants. It is important to know that this is a healing study. The main focus is cultural healing. These are my traumas too because I am a victim of sex trafficking, domestic violence, rape, and domestic abuse through my childhood and adulthood. I am focusing on healing therefore there is minimal risk.

PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY & ANONYMITY

The participants of this survey will be anonymous, and their names and identifying information will not be used. The only identifying information is that what is already public. The Sovereign Bodies Leadership Council, and any grassroots organizations, tribal entities or government funded programs that choose to partake in my interview process will not be anonymous because it is aimed to raise awareness of their work and survivor voices.

LIMITATIONS

Time was the most significant limitation with this study and report. Because of the structure and deadlines of the program, I did not get enough time to interview every person I wanted to. It is important to note that many of the grassroots organizations and people who are culturally connected were unavailable during the time frame because they were busy doing the work that needs to be done for healing and for our people. The other limitation would be getting a late start with IRB approval, and again not having time to get a full review to broaden the study by making the survey public and reaching a broader scope of participants. Further research and a continuation of this study will be done in further research. Another limitation was what I limited myself on in this research. The MMIP epidemic has a very large number of things that contribute to it. I limited myself on focusing on intimate partner violence and sex trafficking. In further research I will expand that and cover different aspects.



RESULTS

A total of 35 Indigenous people were surveyed across the United States and Canada. Altogether, 87% are enrolled members of tribes, and 13% are descendants. Also, 69% live outside of the reservation and 31% live on a reservation. A total of 86% of the people surveyed were women, 14% identify as two-spirit.

Not everyone who has been abused identifies as a survivor. Some people own that title, and some people do not. Owning and publicly identifying as a survivor is sometimes an indicator of where someone may be at in their healing journey. It takes a lot of courage to publicly identify as a survivor. Of the people surveyed 75% publicly identify as a survivor.

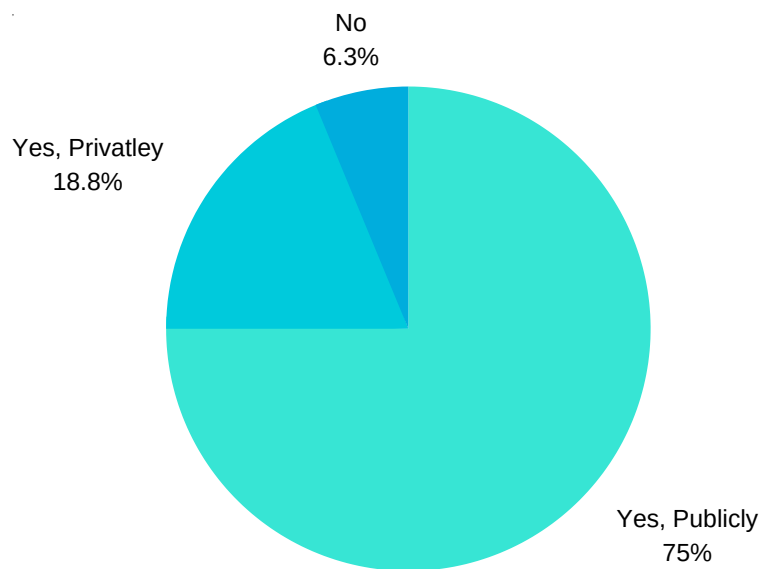


Figure 1: Percentage of people who identify as a survivor

The entire group of people surveyed, 100% believe that historical trauma has serious effects on their lives, and 100% believe that colonialism has contributed to the ongoing violence against Indigenous people that still very much has its impact today.

Also, 45% have been victims of violent crimes that they reported, 50% have been victims of violent crimes that were not reported, and 5% were never the victim of a violent crime.

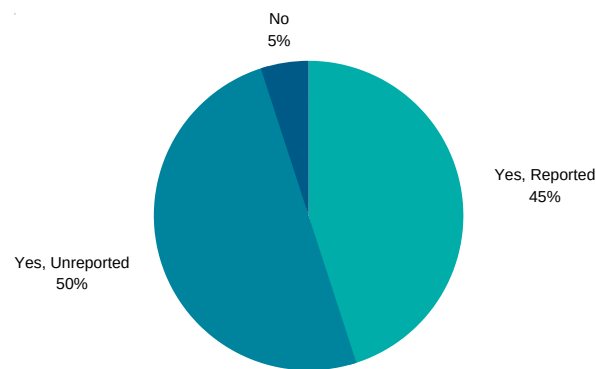


Figure 2: Percentage of people who have been victims of violent crimes

When asked if they knew the person who victimized them, 19% said yes, this person was a family member, 44% said this person was an intimate partner, 22% said the person as a friend, and 15% said the person was a stranger.

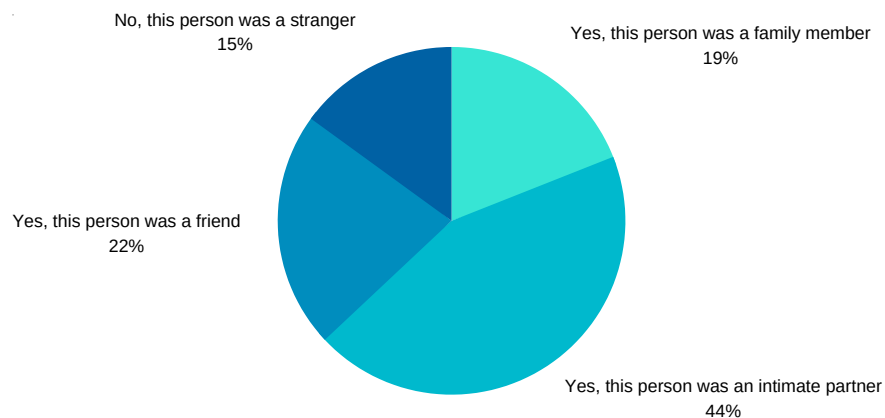


Figure 3: Percentage of people who knew their abusers

When asked if they were exposed to domestic violence during childhood, 53% said yes, all the time, 22% said yes, but seldomly, and 25% said not at all.

When asked if they were abused as a child, 29% said yes, sexually, 22% said yes, physically, 38% said yes, emotionally, and 10% said no. These were “select all that apply” answers and several people were abused in more ways than one as a child.

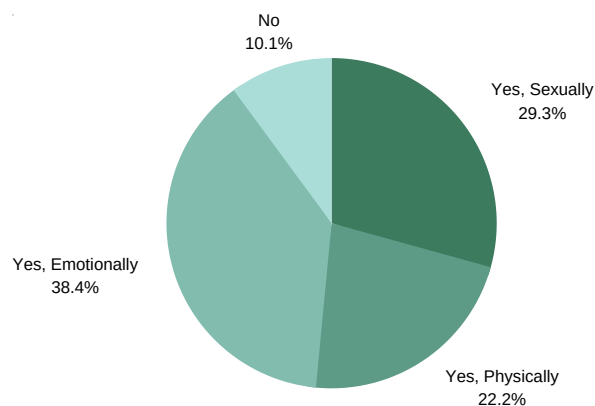


Figure 4: Percentage of people who were abused as a child

Of the people surveyed 25% have been personally arrested for violent crimes and 84% have been diagnosed with depression, anxiety, or PTSD.

Also, 87% have sought counseling services and 40% have sought victim advocacy services.



When asked if they know what grooming is 90% said yes, and 10% said no. When asked if they have ever been groomed into sex trafficking, 21% said yes online, 15% said yes, in person, and 63% said no.

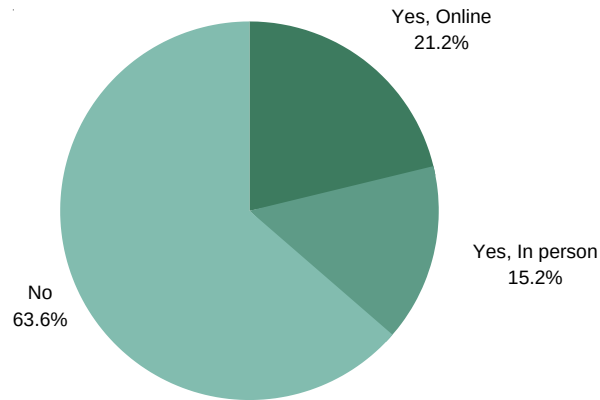


Figure 5: Percentage of people who have been groomed into sex trafficking

Out of the people who were trafficked, 60% were trafficked for less than 1 year, 10% were trafficked between 1-3 years, and 30% were trafficked for 5+ years.

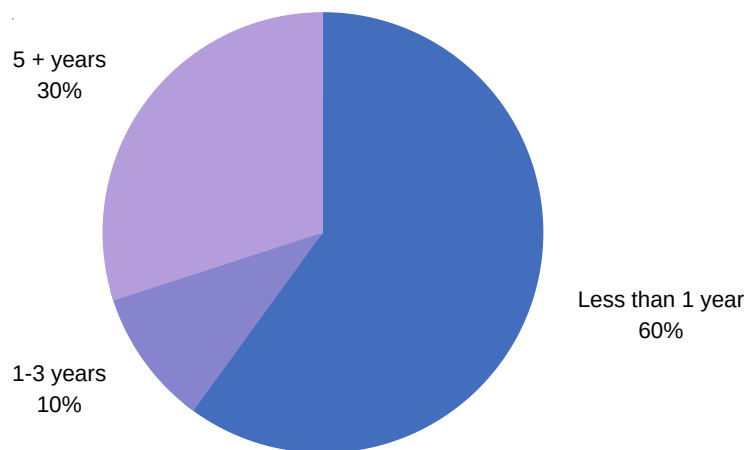


Figure 6: Percentage of people of the length they were trafficked

A total of 13% have been arrested for trafficking as a result of prostitution stings. Only 3% had their trafficker arrested and charged with crimes against them. Also, 25% testified against their traffickers/abusers and only 6% felt like the testimony process was tailored to their needs for protection.

When asked if they feel confident and trusting of the justice system, if they were to report a violent crime would they feel safe in the system? Only 6% said definitely yes, they would feel safe.

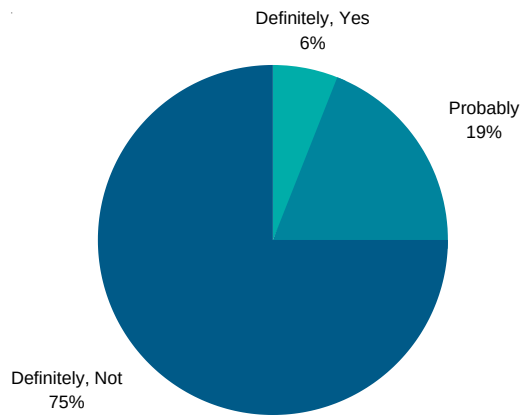


Figure 7 :Percentage of people who feel safe in the justice system

Of the people surveyed, 97% have been in a relationship with someone who was abusive, and 50% never reported the abuse.

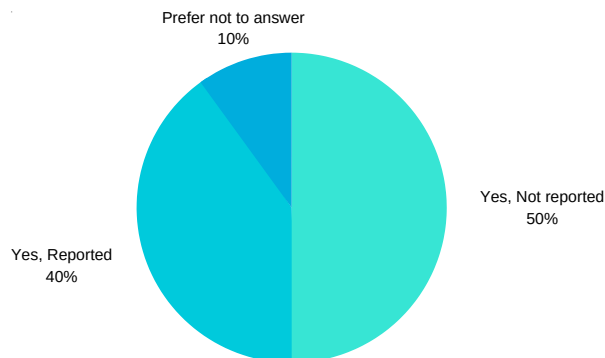



Figure 8: Percentage of people who reported abuse from an intimate partner

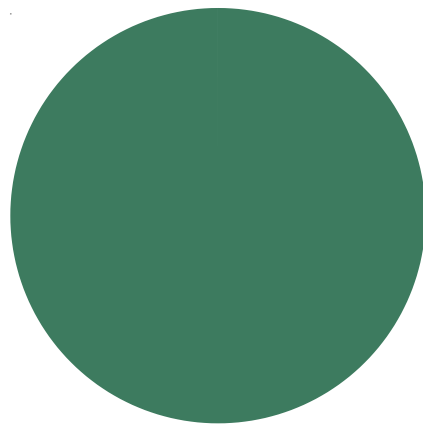


An important finding is that 15% are not even aware of services that are available for them to leave abusive situations. When asked if they feel comfortable with these services if they are not culturally informed, 65% said no, they prefer culturally informed services. Also, 31% have worked with grassroots organizations for help leaving abusive situations, 62% have not worked with grassroots organizations, and 6% are part of a grassroots organization. The purpose of this report is to bring attention and light to grassroots organizations, many people do not realize so many of these organizations exist. Their services and voices must be amplified. The data shows that people are more comfortable with Native survivors.

When asked if they would feel more comfortable with grassroots organizations or public organizations 68% said grassroots. 88% said they would feel more comfortable with a Native advocate and 85% would feel more comfortable with a fellow survivor.

Also, 43% feel that there is an inadequate amount of services available to them; 47% say that health insurance has been a barrier for them to receive these services.

The entire group, 100% highly supports the need for survivor leadership, trauma-informed care, and culturally based services.



Very Much Support
100%


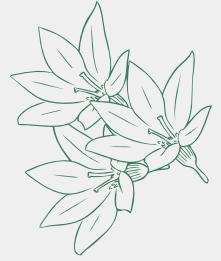


Figure 9 Percentage of people that very much support the need for survivor leadership, trauma informed care, and culturally based services



Annita Lucchesi before
testifying
against Keystone XL
pipeline
as a survivor



INTERVIEWS WITH PEOPLE PROVIDING SERVICES SURVIVORS NEED

Annita Lucchesi, the founder of Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI), is truly the woman that our ancestors prayed for. Sovereign Bodies Institute is doing the work that Indigenous people need, and the work that the U.S government has refused to do. Lucchesi created the database for MMIP because no government entity has ever made the effort to do so. She built SBI and the database, and although SBI is now a non-profit research institute, it is important to recognize this and others within this report as grassroots organizations. When Lucchesi met her trafficker, she had just finished all her coursework for her master's degree but had not yet started her thesis. During the time she was with him she was not able to work on her thesis at all. When she left, she left with no belongings, moved to a state she had never lived before, and she decided that after everything that he took from her, she was not going to let him take her education. So with a broken hand, Lucchesi began writing her thesis. Her work on her thesis was originally on how we can use maps to tell stories about genocide and Indigenous communities. Having just been through violence, she used her thesis as a way to start making sense of life. Not just the violence that she went through, but the violence that her trafficker went through because he was Native and he was a survivor of trafficking and other violence as well.



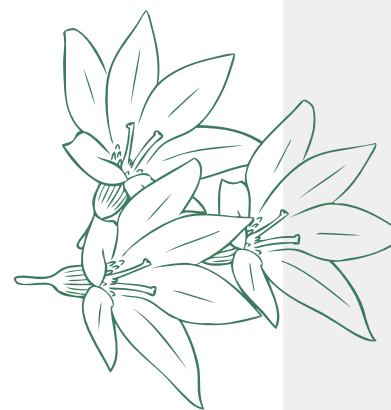
For one of the sections of her thesis, she needed a working number of how many MMIP cases existed. Lucchesi wasn't originally writing about MMIP and she was thinking that she could easily compile a list. Five years later, she's still doing it, and building the database for MMIP has become her life's work. Her work was rooted in the experience of violence and then using school and research as a way to make sense of what happened to her.

SBI is funded through private funding and donations. They don't take any federal or state funding, only accepting grants from philanthropy. Sometimes SBI does contract work with tribes, but the majority of their funding comes from private funding and public donations. This is the same with other grassroots organizations: their work is funded by donations, and most of the time out of their own pockets. Lucchesi did this work unpaid for 4 years, sacrificed so much to fund her work herself, and worked thousands of hours building the database, unpaid. She typed the first 200 cases into the database when her hand was still broken from the abuse she faced.

When Lucchesi decided to create the SBI Survivor Leadership Council, she had a lot of support but did not feel like there were enough people that were like her. It came from her feeling that even though she is a survivor, there are so many different ways to experience sexual exploitation, trafficking, or sex work. Her experience does not speak for everybody. She wanted to have a platform where people from all sorts of experiences could share their voices. Once Lucchesi came out publicly as a survivor and became a public figure, journalists asked for her story all the time. She felt she also had to appeal to the audience when she gave presentations. She really felt expected to put her story on display. It was exhausting and re-traumatizing. She felt like SBI, herself, and the movement needed this network. A network where we aren't alone, where we are setting the agenda, where we are deciding what's shared and not shared, and where we took some of our power back as survivors. But also stepping up and taking on leadership roles and deciding that "This is the limit and you're not going to traumatize me in this way anymore." The leadership council is a sisterhood, all our stories are different but within this council and sistership, we stand together as one.



Dreamcatcher I made for Annita Lucchesi

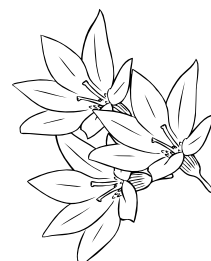
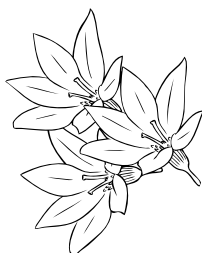


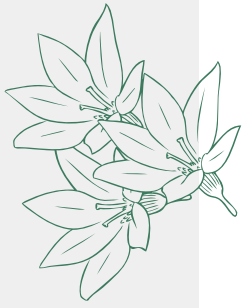


Sutton King is a member of SBI's Survivor leadership council, founder of Urban Indigenous Collective (UIC), and co-founder of the innovative app ShockTalk. She started working on tribal projects about six months after she graduated with her degree in psychology and sociology. She said she has always been an activist and advocate, and that really became more strategic when she was 16. She was accepted into a youth organization called Urban Underground. They taught her how to use her voice in a strategically. They helped to build different campaigns around social injustices and helped her to learn how to organize. King says being from the Menominee Nation in Wisconsin, she has always felt an obligation or responsibility to support her people, whether that was locally, nationally, or internationally.

Six months out of undergrad King was offered a job as a tribal program specialist and research assistant, developing the first-ever culturally tailored simulation that trains law enforcement on how to engage with tribal youth without retraumatizing them. The simulation trained law enforcement about historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, and how they both have adverse effects on the undeveloped brain of an adolescent. In tandem, she was also implementing suicide prevention programming nationally throughout Indian country. This programming was implemented within 80 tribes in the duration of three years. King said it was almost surreal that six months after graduating, she happened to find a job in the middle of Manhattan supporting tribal nations. She said, "When you are walking in your purpose, the Creator will align everything for you, and you have to trust in that. And so I really felt very humbled and lucky to be able to do that work."

Almost one month after that grant ended Sutton was offered a position to become the director of the Urban Indian Health program in New York City. The urban programs have struggled with mismanagement due to funds fraud. A lot of nefarious and criminal activity has happened in New York City.





It has really been an injustice to the Native people living in NYC. Almost a year into the work with the organization King was employed with, she became painfully aware that they were not defending urban natives in the way that urban Natives deserved. There was a misappropriation of funds and she later found out that the CFO had 44 counts of tax fraud against him; he was a non-Native working in this organization.

When King saw the same behavior happen again, she was outraged. She was belittled on so many occasions for being a young Native woman in this position. She left the organization and took their case manager with her and decided that she was going to start something herself. It was always a dream for King to start her own nonprofit. At that time she was at New York University (NYU) working on her Master's in Public Health, specifically a concentration in Global Health. She knew that she had the tools to be able to start her own non-profit. At 22 years old, she was developing and implementing national programming throughout Indian Country successfully. Sutton said, "I know what needs to be done, being native, being from this community almost for 10 years now. I know what our community needs and that's really how UIC came to be. Other urban native professionals, young native professionals felt the same way. That our community was not getting what they deserved and that we have the tools and the education to meet those gaps."

UIC is bringing an innovation and technology aspect to their non-profit to help create sustainability. They are looking into designing applications to really look at solving different public health issues. Right now they are designing an app called ShockTalk, which is a tele behavioral health app. The revenue from the app will support some of the programs of the UIC mission. Grant proposals have been going out that they feel very confident that they will be receiving. They are excited to be able to lean more on that and not just on donations.

ShockTalk is something that came to King and her cofounder Austin on Indigenous People's Day. It was the first day that UIC had come out into the community to really create community trust and rapport. They started talking about how he's native from NYU, and he's had his experience on Wall Street and in Silicon Valley. They were talking about the values that are deeply rooted in colonialism and how Indigenous people are underrepresented when it comes to new technology. So they decided they should create an app. They knew that suicide is a problem and Sutton had implemented suicide prevention programming that was technology-based previously. They decided they should create something themselves.



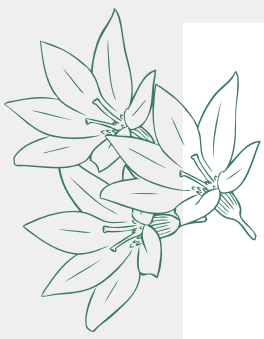


ShockTalk seeks to decrease adverse mental health effects in Natives, by connecting users to Native therapists. It's focused on healing unresolved historical and intergenerational trauma. King said:

We haven't seen anything like this before now. We've seen apps like Talkspace or the calm app, but it's not culturally tailored. I think that's a really important piece when we're talking about improving mental health. Especially for native youth, we really have to decrease the risk factors for suicide, for PTSD, for anxiety, which the best way to do that is to use culture. We know that research has demonstrated that culture is prevention. Culture is medicine. Culture is treatment. And so that's really what we're seeking to do with the app. So we're really excited. We've been accepted into the NYU ignite fellowship, the Blackstone and tech starters launch pad. We actually received \$6,000 in fellowship money and about \$16,000 in AWS credits, which will support our apps platform. This is work being done by someone who is Indigenous, someone who does come from the community, and someone who does honor the protocols in which our communities have put in place to protect each other. I think that a lot of times we see individuals leading initiatives and programming for our communities who are not from our communities, who do not look like us, and I think it's really important that people know that, a strong Afro-Indigenous woman from the Menominee United Nations who is equipped with her masters is leading this work. And so when I say I understand the trials and tribulations our communities face, that's real (S. King, personal communication, June,2020).

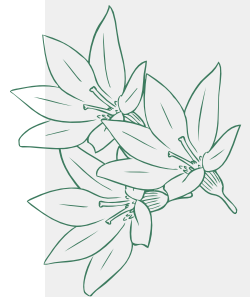


Dreamcatcher made for Sutton King




Raechel Ibarra, a member of SBI's Survivor Leadership Council is a case manager for sexually exploited children in California. Her agency supports about 98% of the kids in foster care. The youngest of the children she represents is 11, but they also do transitional agents, so some children have aged out of foster care, but they still support them at age 22. Because Ibarra is a survivor, she knows what these children need and how to support them. These are children coming out of trafficking and abusive situations. There is a lot of trauma to carry. There is a lack of culturally-based services for these children. I asked Ibarra if the kids she works with have access to culturally-based services. She said:

So for Spanish speaking and I'll say Mexican Spanish dialect, those youth there are services it's called LaFamilia counseling. And if they're lucky they will get a Spanish speaking therapist or counselor. I have yet to see Latin offered wrap services. So it's different. There's another one for African Americans. But what happens for youth in foster care is that they end up getting these wrap services: a counselor, a behavioral specialist, there's a substance use counselor that typically will offer services if needed, there's a peer advocate and also a family advocate. So these wrap services are for youth in foster care who still live in the home with their parents. Now if I picked up a case for domestic violence in my kids, and I'm required or mandated to go to therapy. I could seek culturally based services myself. But if I am in the system with an open CPS case, they do not offer that for Native Americans. There is next to nothing. At the system level, there is nothing, when you start looking on your own, you can find them (R.Ibarra, personal communication, June, 2020).



When someone starts looking on their own, they can find services, whether that is from grassroots organizations, non-profits, or health centers funded by Indian Health Services. This is a common theme when looking at the lack of culturally-based services.





I asked Ibarra if she works with grassroots organizations as well. There are some great grassroots organizations in California. Ibarra said:

There's a health clinic. That's a nonprofit. I would not say it's grassroots just because there are Native health clinics across the nation through IHS. So, they offer culturally based services. Then there are grassroots organizations that are Native specific. We've got the Native Dads Network, the Fifth Direction, it's for boys. Which is incredible, they do incredible work. We have a Native Sister Circle that recently just came out a couple of years ago. At the Native American health center here, they offer a CIP. Its culture is prevention and that is a class based on cultural teachings, you get your life skills and coping skills through all of that (R.Ibarra, personal communication, June, 2020).

The children Ibarra works with are lucky to have her because she is so passionate. In my interview with Ibarra, I told her they are lucky to have her. Ibarra said, "They're amazing, I am lucky to know them."



Dreamcatcher I made for Raechel Ibarra




Alaya Mcivor is a powerful advocate from Canada, who is a member of SBI's Survivor Leadership Council. In 2004, the night after marching for Take Back the Night in Canada, Mcivor's best friend was murdered. They both had been sexually exploited in the sex industry and after her friend was murdered Mcivor dedicated her work, advocacy, and voice to bringing awareness to her case. At that time there wasn't a lot of light that was shunned on cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people especially two-spirit people. Wanting to honor her friend and bring awareness to her case, Mcivor started speaking out. When I asked her about grassroots organizations in Canada, she said:

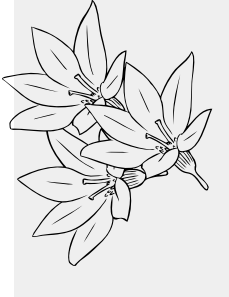
Everything done in Canada collectively is grassroots people. The grassroots people are the shakers, the movers, and the amplifiers of the voices of those missing and murdered. I was honored to participate in a walk across Canada to draw awareness and attention at the time in 2013 for a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, girls and two-spirits in Canada, we walked through Nova Scotia to be seen. So it was the East coast to the West coast. That was with the grassroots movement called Period for Justice. I think for the broader community, You know, pay attention and walk alongside family members, survivors, walk alongside them, walk in front of them, walk behind them, walk alongside them. I think it is the most important piece and being willing and open to educating yourself on the reality that Indigenous people face across, across the nation (A. Mcivor, personal communication, June, 2020).





Dreamcatcher I made for Alaya Mcivor



If someone was to look up “Grassroots warrior” in the dictionary, it should have a picture of Roxanne White holding a drum singing, marching, and praying. White is a member of SBI’s Survivor Leadership Council and she is the founder of the grassroots groups Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and Families, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives No Borders. She fights on many frontlines and fought at Standing Rock as a water protector. White’s ability to overcome her traumas and fight for the voices of those who have been silenced is extraordinary. White doesn’t only fight for Indigenous peoples; she fights for all of our people. She is active in the Black Lives Matter revolution and brings good medicine, cultural healing, and traditional medicine to those who need it. In 2014, newly into her sobriety and healing journey, White had a vision, a call from our ancestors: she said:

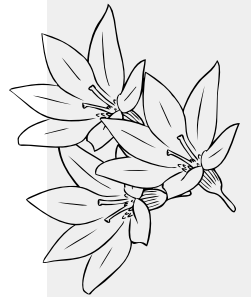


Spiritually I'd have to say that I got a vision one day that I didn't quite understand at the time, but it was in 2014. I was at a powwow and women were called out to the floor. When they went out, I was looking around and I didn't see a lot of people standing up and I don't know why that stood out to me that day, but the golden age men went up before them and everybody stood. And so when the women went out, I just noticed that nobody stood. So I stood up and I was standing there on the side of the arena, and I was saying, we should be standing up. Everybody should be standing up. And when the grandmas were out there, I just had all these emotions hit me. I saw the faces of the grandmas. Some of the grandmas were crying. Some of them, you could see the abuse that had happened to them in their faces, and I could feel the pain and I could hear the crying. I started sobbing. I was crying so hard and I couldn't understand it. I went up to one of my friends. She's an older sister and I just walked up to her and I said, I have to tell somebody that I see the pain, I see the pain. And, I hear the cries of our ancestors, of our grandmas. At that time I had 14 days clean and sober. This was the beginning of the journey that I'm on right now. Like, I believe that was the first time that I could hear, see, and know that the ancestors they were reaching out to me. My purpose was coming into play and into action spiritually (R. White, personal communication, June, 2020).





White's dad was a paralegal, but even before he was a paralegal, he did a lot of work for people. He worked with boarding school survivors. She always looked up to her dad because he was always a person that stood up against injustice. White said, "I just admired him and I looked up to him. I always wanted to be like him. But what I realized is that my strength was always there, through him, through our ancestors." In 2016 White's dad loaned her his van because she was called to go to Standing Rock to fight against the Dakota Access pipeline. The van barely made it from Seattle, but she made it to Standing Rock where she spent the next two months of her life camping, taking care of others, and fighting against the pipeline. It was at Standing Rock that she learned how to sing the women's warrior song. White said, "In those two months my spirit, my Indian spirit came more alive. You know, just hearing all the stories, seeing all the tribes come in, seeing all the work being done. I've been through a lot, I've survived a lot of violence. I've witnessed that all my life, violence being inflicted on my mother, my aunties, or just women in general." When White met some First Nations sisters from Canada, they started talking about MMIW. At that time it wasn't something she had heard of, but as she listened to their stories, something started resonating with her. She thought about her aunty and about the things that happened to her. White said:



I believe that there's a lot of reasons why I was there, but that was a huge reason why I was there. I had no idea at that time that I would be doing all the things that I'm doing today, but it was all of that was my confirmation of what I was about to do in my life. So I think that's how I would say I got into it. Throughout my life, I was an MMIW because of the things that happened to me. I survived it, I wasn't murdered, but I lost a part of me, I lost time, I lost memory, I lost trust, I lost security and the feeling of being safe for the rest of my life (R.White, personal communication, June, 2020).



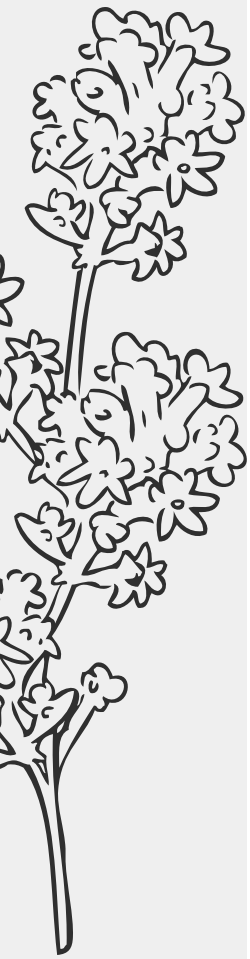
When White was listening to the stories of the First Nations sisters from Canada, and they were talking about MMIW, something resonated with her. She started thinking about her aunt. In 1996, her aunt was shot and killed right in front of her by her cousin. There was a lot of injustice, White never even got to testify even though she was a witness. Her aunt's murderer, who was her cousin, only faced a manslaughter charge. White said:

I told them, I'll testify, I'll be a state's witness. Nothing ever happened, I never got to be a witness. They just decided to go with manslaughter. And my cousin basically got legally like a slap on the hand. I never understood that. I never understood how you could take somebody's life and just get a slap on the hand, that never felt right. I was angry and just kinda just lived with that for all my life (R. White, personal communication, June, 2020).

This is something we see all too often within the justice system and our MMIP. This is why our people are fighting so hard against these injustices. Standing Rock was the beginning of a healing journey for White. When she left, she took the sacred fire of Standing Rock in her heart. She takes it wherever she goes, whatever she does, that fire lives within her.



Dreamcatcher I made for Roxanne White



Lenny Hayes is a two-spirit chemical health therapist, an advocate for violence against men, boys and two-spirit people, a survivor of sexual violence, and the two-spirit project assistant for Sovereign Bodies Institute. Hayes started his private practice because of the violence he went through. Nobody ever created a space for him to heal. So it became important for Hayes to create a space for men, boys, and two-spirit people to heal. Hayes said:

When I worked within the Native community before I went into private practice, I worked mainly for Native organizations and my frustration was that I felt like they weren't properly serving two-spirit people. They were not getting the specific training that's needed to work with the community. And a lot of times there was just that frustration that they would misgender individuals. They didn't understand the hate that occurs within the community. So because I identify, that also played a huge part in it too. I knew that I could be helpful in supporting youth who are coming out, doing family therapy. Because of my background, my specialty is marriage and family therapy. So I've had many opportunities to work with families of our youth that were coming out. I've also worked with gay couples through couples therapies. I've always worked in the Native community, but I felt like the two-spirit population was an underserved and often forgotten population. So that's what led me to a lot of my national work, which began here in Minnesota. This is important work and our two-spirit community is not based on being sexual beings. But also bringing back that cultural aspect that we were looked upon as being spiritual beings before colonization. So I believe the mainstream community often forgets about us. They are not being inclusive. It's like, they're just adding the label and saying we're being inclusive and not really, truly, truly understanding what it means to be two-spirit. So I'm pretty loud and boisterous about that nationally (L. Hayes, personal communication, June, 2020).



Two- Spirit Pride



Lenny Hayes before presenting on violence against men and boys



Rachel Fernandez is an organizer, activist, advocate, and artist. She is a survivor of child sexual abuse, suicide attempt, domestic and sexual violence. When she started her healing journey and began to love herself, she realized there was no support for survivors of abuse. She decided to start a women's support group. They have evolved, and she has been a cultural advocate organizing Woodland Women's Group for the past seven years. They are a group led by our elders who teach lifeways and how to reclaim traditional knowledge through art and circle. Fernandez said, "We awaken our blood memory as our ancestors speak through our work and teachings. Connection to Culture is essential for healing and recovery. It's given us ways to decolonize from the genocide, assimilation, and colonization that was forced upon us." Fernandez is an active voice and grassroots warrior in the MMIP movement. She organizes and attends marches for visibility of our missing and murdered, bringing awareness and fighting for justice. Fernandez is a true matriarch. She is a mother and has 17 grandchildren. Her children and grandchildren are blessed to have such a powerful warrior to follow. Our ancestors prayed for Fernandez. She is true resilience and beauty.



Dreamcatcher I made for Rachel Fernandez





Shawn Carr is a Native Veteran and grassroots leader of Idle No More/Northwoods Wolf Alliance. Carr didn't grow up with cultural knowledge or being connected to his Culture, but since 2008, he has been on an amazing cultural journey. I met Shawn when I was getting this research study going at a rally for Black Lives Matter that we both were speaking at. I saw a button of John Redcorn on his hat, and I knew this guy was someone I wanted to have as a friend. Carr is a powerful leader within our community. He carries his Eagle staff to all the events he attends; he brings blessings wherever he goes.

When Carr was just getting out of the military, he was homeless, and that's what brought him to Duluth. He was able to get some help, but only if he came to Duluth. He got a job working at a homeless center, and that's where his advocacy began. He got involved with the synthetic drug problem that was ravaging the city and had detrimental effects on the homeless population. There were days that the Duluth Police had to escort Carr to work because of his loud voice against the drug problem. Carr got involved with Idle No More because he knew that if he wanted something done, he had to do it himself. So in honor of his friend who was murdered and his friend who is still missing, he started organizing rallies for MMIW. It became clear to him what he needed to do when he was walking in a park, and a lady came up to him, poked him in the chest, and said, "She's missing! What are YOU going to do about it?"



Every year Carr holds a vigil and press conference for his friend, Sheila. We don't want her case to get cold. We want to bring her home. Carr also works with other area grassroots organizations, Native Lives Matter and Gitchigumi Scouts.



Dreamcatcher I made for Shawn Carr

Gitchigumi Scouts and Sahnish Scouts of North Dakota are grassroots organizations that specifically are set out to find our missing people. They are the boots to the ground warriors who look for people who are missing and support their families and protect our women and children in ways that the police or the government fail to do. They are both run by Native mothers who are dedicated and focused on putting a stop to the genocide of our people. These organizations are entirely self-run, community, and survivor-led, and truly give back to their communities in any way that they can.



Lissa Yellow Bird-Chase at Standing Rock. Lissa is the founder of Sahnish Scouts of North Dakota and a member of Sovereign Bodies Institute's Survivor Leadership Council.



Roger Smith Sr. is a tribal representative for the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. He has many years of law enforcement experience and serves on the task force in Minnesota for MMIW. Smith was hired as one of the first officers for the Fond du Lac Tribal Police Department and helped build the police department. He made it a priority to have good working relationships with the community. He was involved in two of our area's most high-profile cases: Katie Poirier and FDL's own Trina Langenbrunner. Trina's case went unsolved for 12 years. It wasn't until 2013 that her family received any closure. Her murderer was only sentenced to 40 years, and his girlfriend received 9.5 years for witness tampering and intimidation. She set fire to the witness's house and got a slap on the wrist.

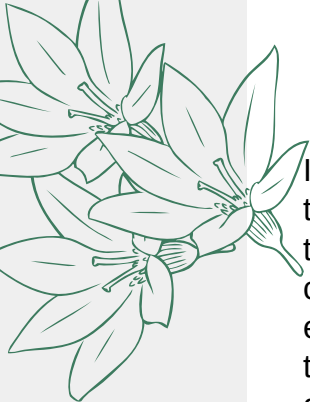


Smith serves on the taskforce for MMIW in Minnesota. He works collaboratively with Kelly Hatfield with the TRUST taskforce that focuses on the trafficking of juveniles in Indian Country. Smith said:

I understand how task forces work; there was the old drug task force; everything goes to the Metro area. And this was the issue that I felt that yes, there was a lot of the sex trafficking that occurs in the Metro areas. But if we're going to go into this type of collaborative relationship on this type of subject, we need to realize how tribes and things work from reservation to reservation and how it's all interconnected. So from there, we decided we're going to go in a different direction. The direction that we went in was to establish our own task force, which became the TRUST task force. Kelly Hatfield has done a tremendous job at it. Meeting with her and giving her my insights. What I would like to see and what we need to do, she's a fantastic officer who got this task force up and running (R. Smith Sr, personal communication, June, 2020).



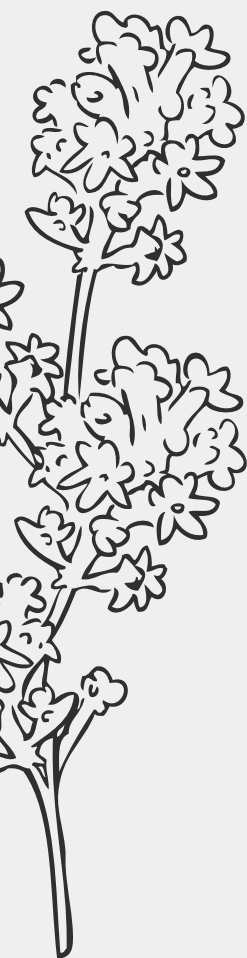
Dreamcatcher I made for Roger Smith Sr.



I have attended community gatherings for the TRUST taskforce, and they really are doing fantastic, exceptional work with juvenile sex trafficking in Indian Country. We are all interconnected in this community. When I was young, Trina Langenbrunner's case was the first exposure I had to missing and murdered Indigenous women. At that time, I did not know how bad this genocide was. I was friends with her daughters and her son. I did not even think of it as research. It was just me trying to help my friend find her mom's murderer. I remember sitting at the computers in the community center with one of her daughters looking up her mother's case. Only to realize 20 years later, I would still be researching our missing and murdered but just on a bigger scale. This case is a huge reason why I am passionate about seeking justice for our missing and murdered. I know and love her family very much. I've felt their pain and as a researcher and as a friend, if there's one thing I can do: it is to raise the voices of the warriors fighting against these injustices and fighting for the lives of our Indigenous people. To be a voice of those who have been silenced.



FDL community TRUST Taskforce meeting



Rebecca Balog is the sex trafficking coordinator for the national sex trafficking in Indian Country grant by the office of violence against women, through the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition. They work with all ages and all genders even though their title says women, they are inclusive of all genders and have great partners. Balog said:



I've been doing this work as a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. I've been doing this work for 20 years and grassroots, I started at a local grassroots level. I did that direct service for ten years. Then the last ten years that I'm in now have been at the National level, but much like the merged identity of a survivor advocate. I don't think National work can be done without the grassroots presence. Otherwise, we're just academics and public policy people that are disconnected from the ground, and that just doesn't work. It takes a village. I mean that in our collaborations and networking, we must work together to provide wholeness. While we're trying to do the intervention, prevention, or healing in sex trafficking. And all the other layers that impact it: the legal policy, medical, traditional healers, tribal leadership, all the way to the administration, and the American government. There must be wholeness, and I think that's the biggest need for us to end violence in any capacity, working together (R. Balog, personal communication, June, 2020).



Dreamcatcher I made for Rebecca Balog

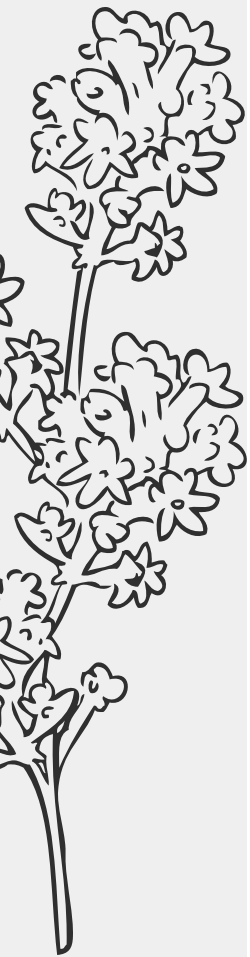




Balog is a perfect example of strong survivor leadership and the Indigenous resilience that government-funded programs need more of. She is personally connected to her work on different levels, and that makes it even more powerful.



Rebecca Balog



Mel Alvar is the Safe Harbor Northeast Regional Navigator in Minnesota. As Regional Navigator, she serves as a connection to the statewide Safe Harbor Network, a point of contact, and resource on sexual exploitation and trafficking for youth, families, communities, and professionals in 7 counties and four tribal reservations in the Northeast Region: Cook, Lake, St. Louis, Carlton, Pine, Kanabec, Mille Lacs Counties. The tribal reservations are Grand Portage, Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Mille Lacs, and Leech Lake. Her agency serves individuals over the age of 12 that have been affected by sexual violence. However, as Regional Navigator, she can work with all ages. She has experience working with children as young as nine years old and people as old as 89. Alvar provides a wide array of services and serves as the facilitator of the January Trafficking Awareness Month Planning Committee, St. Louis County Safe Harbor Multidisciplinary Team, and serves as a regional expert on several other local task forces and multidisciplinary teams. Their services are not culturally based, but people within the service area do have some access to culturally based services. In Duluth, St. Louis, and Carlton County, she works very closely with American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Mending the Sacred Hoop, Bois Forte, and Fond du Lac Victim Advocates. Alvar stated:

Unfortunately, there is a huge service gap in the Northeast Region for culturally specific programming and services. I do my best to connect to local grassroots organizations as I become aware of them, attend and promote their events and goals/initiatives with local stakeholders that I am also engaged with, relevant to their work. I have been more engaged recently with grassroots efforts related to MMIW and Safe Harbor For All (a Task Force that came out of the Safe Harbor For All Report by Wilder on decriminalizing those 'selling sex' and putting systems and services in place to support those who have engaged in commercial sex work). It is a goal of mine in this next grant cycle of 2020-2023 to be more engaged with grassroots organizations (M. Alvar, personal communication, June, 2020).



Dreamcatcher I made for Mel Alvar



It was at the January Trafficking Awareness Month Kickoff that I came out to the general public as a survivor of trafficking, I stood in front of a room of roughly 100 people and the press. I told my story and why I am doing the research that I am doing. Mel Alvar also helped facilitate a public presentation of my work, which she got sponsored by Essentia Health. Although her services are not culturally based, her work is still very much needed in Indian Country, and her dedication to serving people of all genders and races must be recognized. Alvar said:

A lot of folx don't know what Safe Harbor is or what Regional Navigators in Minnesota are or that we are even here! I want people to know that Safe Harbor Regional Navigators are here as a resource for victims/survivors, families, communities, and professionals. There is still a lot of work to be done, and it is essential that survivor voices be centered in the work we are doing and the work there is left to do. Regional Navigators within Safe Harbor understand the barriers survivors are up against to be heard and to be seen. Regional Navigators are here to amplify Your voice. Let us know what's working and what isn't. We Believe you, We Honor You and We Support You (M. Alvar, personal communication, June, 2020).



Jessica Smith presenting on MMIP during trafficking awareness month facilitated by Mel Alvar in Duluth, MN



Cultural healing looks different for everyone. There is no right way, and there is no wrong way when it comes to healing. I interviewed a traditional healer from British Columbia who's breaking the cycle of intergenerational trauma and then asked all the people within the interviews, "What is one thing you want people to know about culture or cultural healing?"

The traditional healer said:

Using our traditional ways to heal people. It's what all of us need. I think that our ancestors had started it within the old ways, and we followed them, and it heals us. Like it just completely heals us. When I was little, like when I was like four, my great grandfather saw in me what I was going to do. He was like, you're going to be a healer for the people, for all people, not just starvation, but all people. And because of that, that's what I knew I had to do on every paper. I wrote everything I've done in my life. I've always just done work with our people. I've dealt with my trauma so that my babies can go on, and they don't have to walk through this. When we heal ourselves, we heal all our children, our grandchildren. And it's so important. I know that there are ceremonies all the time, there's powwows, or some dances, whatever you need, everybody just has to pray for it.



Jessica Smith and daughter dancing for healing



Annita Lucchesi said:

I think having access to a ceremony, I think having a really strong sense of who you are and that comes from having an Indian name, or if you come from a tribe that has clans knowing who your clans are, having that sense of rootedness really makes a difference. And I've seen that, not just with myself. Still, like even my friend who helped me get my Indian name, she also taught at the tribal college with me, and she was working with remedial students. They really struggled with a lot of outside stuff that wasn't necessarily school-related, problems, and it impacted their grades. And so they created a program where at the end of the semester all of those students had a ceremony, and they all got their names. Success, even in their class grew a lot just by having that sense of identity. That sense of cultural pride that's unique to you. So I think that's really important, but I think also having a really strong like ceremonial support circle, even if it's not necessarily attending ceremony on a regular basis, but having people who are willing to put medicine in the mail for you or who are willing to teach you prayers or teach you little bits of your language or little ceremonies you can do at home. That's the stuff that I really fell back on in dark times (A. Lucchesi, personal communication, June, 2020).



Beading kit from SBI, they provide supplies and hold beading therapy for survivors and MMIP families



Sutton King said:

Something that is important to me also to just say is that in this work I think it's important to know that I am a survivor of sexual violence and that, you know, my testimony and being able to survive. The trauma that I've been through has made me the strong Afro indigenous woman that you see today. And it's very important for me to speak about that and walk in my truth because like I always say, my truth is good medicine. I think that when we are unapologetic about our testimonies and who we are as women, we create so much we created so many bridges and so many relationships with other women who may not feel like they are worthy of having a seat at the table. I just want to say you are worthy of having a seat at the table and of leading whatever initiative or programming that the creator has put in your heart (S. King, personal communication, June, 2020).



Sutton King during Black Lives Matter March in NYC





Raechel Ibarra said:

When I was about 18 or 19, my brother, who's seven years younger than I am. He got in a lot of trouble fighting and with drug use. He was only 10 or 11, so he ended up going to juvenile hall, and while he was in juvenile hall, he met the spiritual leader who would come in and pray with him, taught him how to pray. That man was Osage and Cherokee. And he would take my brother out in the rain and pray with him while he was in juvenile hall. I thought that that was amazing. Something about that. I loved right when my brother was released; he started going to a sweat lodge in Sacramento. He invited my sister and me, so my sister and I went, and the first time that I went, I was afraid. I think that I was afraid of course, because I didn't know, but also because what happened to me in there the songs and just the prayers really got to me and I sobbed. It was great because nobody could hear me over the songs, and it was very dark, but at that moment, I felt like I was home (R. Ibarra, personal communication, June, 2020).



Ibarra's family wearing shawls of the names of MMIW in California

SHE IS LOVED
SAVE OUR SISTERS



Roxanne White said:

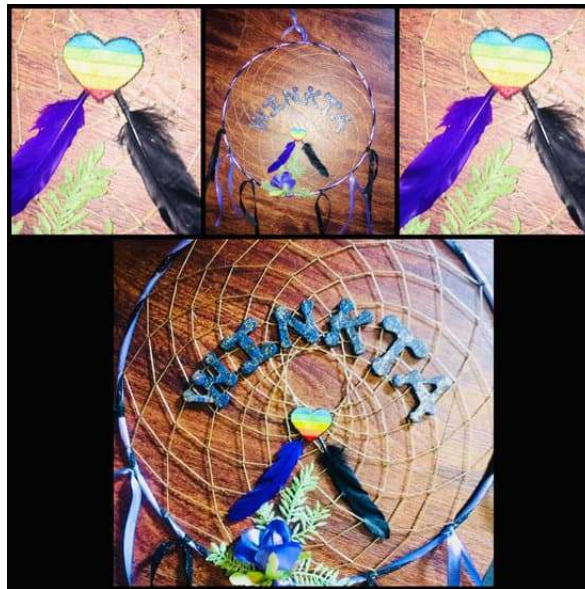
I really wasn't taught to make work about me because I was taught to be very humble, but being humble, it's not silencing myself, or not taking care of myself. So when Annita invited us to the Survivor Leadership Council, it was part of that prayer. It was part of this journey that I'm supposed to be on. Because it's also about me, as a survivor, it's always been. This is where I'm supposed to be now, and I'm still doing a lot of work in the community. I'm still doing many different things with Black Lives Matter and the intersectionality of police brutality on Indigenous people, because many of the families that I work with, they have family members that were murdered by police. So they very much are a part of MMIP. So that is where my heart is, where the ancestors that have called me. The work that I'm doing will continue to be what it's supposed to be. Just doing the best I can to give visibility, organize, and support Native families. For justice, for healing, for visibility, because that's not just something that happens for us, we have to really fight for that (R. White, personal communication, June, 2020).



Standing Rock NO DAPL
Water is Life

Lenny Hayes said:

What it means to be two-spirit, I wasn't introduced to that word until I moved here 23 years ago. The reason why I connected with that word because my understanding back then was that Native people who identified as LGBTQ, connected to that word. So that's what brought me out into the community to talk with people who call themselves two-spirit, also talking with elders who identify as two-spirits. So I was fascinated about learning what that meant. As I grew even more into it, I started to connect to the word that was given to me by my people. I know and understand the word two-spirit didn't come about until 1990. So it's a new word. That's why I say I connect to the word Winkta first. Even though when I grew up, it was a derogatory term. But it's also the word that's given to me by many people. And again, colonization has changed our way of thinking about how we view this population. My connection to Culture and spirituality is because I know and understand that I have a community role to play. So my community role would be that I'm a healer because I do therapy. People come to talk with me, and then I help heal them. That's one of the roles that two-spirit people played before colonization. (L. Hayes, personal communication, June, 2020)



Dreamcatcher I made for Lenny Hayes

Rebecca Balog said:

Learn your history, your family, your virtues, and your ceremony or faith. Whatever that looks like, because no one can ever take it away from you. People can take many things from us, but that's something they can never take away. (R.Balog, personal communication, June, 2020)



Rebecca Balog marching for MMIP

Roger Smith Sr. said:

One thing that gram always said is to be seen, not heard. Be proud of who you are, never being embarrassed about who you are, and what she meant is Native American. I've done that all my life. I always refer back to that saying and remember that because I think it's very important when I see this young generation coming up and getting more and more involved with some of our Culture, ceremonies, hearing these young people speak Ojibwe almost fluently. That tells me that, Hey, we're going to be alright. Seeing some of these young kids on the drum and singing some of these very old songs that are hundreds of years old, understanding the meaning of them. That tells me, Hey, we're going to be alright. We are going to survive as a people. (R. Smith Sr., personal communication, June, 2020)



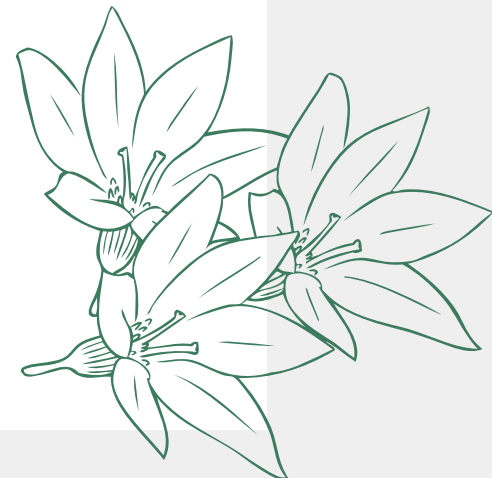
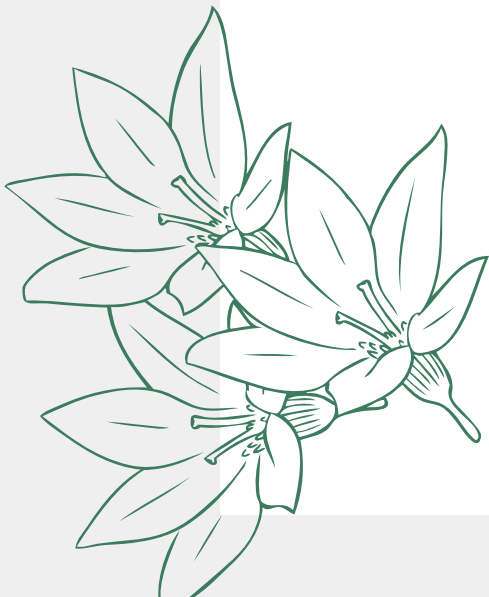


Shawn Carr said:

Culture is life-changing. It's a good path to walk by. If everyone practiced our ways, the world would be a lot better place. (S. Carr, personal communication, June, 2020)



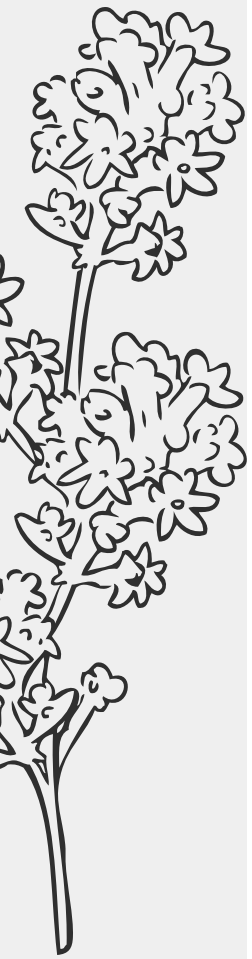
Shawn Carr and his Eagle Staff



Rachel Fernandez said:

Posoh eneq newihswan Namaewkukiw. Rachel Fernandez eneq aekaeyan. Netotaem awew awaehsaeh. Nohnaeq kaehnap Luke Beauprey. Nekiah awew Karen Beauprey. Hello, my name is Namaewkukiw, Surgeon Woman. Rachel Fernandez is what I am called. My clan is bear. My father was Luke Beauprey. My mother is Karen Beauprey. I am a survivor of myself. It wasn't until I started to heal that I realized I could forgive myself and my destructive coping behaviors. That's when I dug deep and started to love myself. As we decolonize based on land and the connection to relationship, knowledge, and language, we know that we are breaking cycles and asserting our inherent right to what we have known all along, who we are and where we come from. Our elders help us in this way. As we gather in circle, we learn from our elders how they were taught from their mothers, aunties, grandmas. They share through stories our history and continue the oral tradition. With every bead put on the loom, every strand woven on the belt, every quill wrapped, and every thread sewn, we are creating our own stories. This is our healing and power. This is how I heal and connect to who I am. I learn where I have been, where I am now, and where I want to be. Decolonized.

Circle has been a great healing tool for me. I have always felt the love, acceptance, and power that our circle holds for us. We help each other in creating this safe space for sharing while we work on projects. Beading has been my greatest therapy because when I am beading, I am putting all my good thoughts and feelings into what I create. It helps me reclaim what was taken from me and to hold that true to my heart, my power, and my control. Learning through my elders has saved me. My mind, body, and spirit. Through them, I was able to move forward in a good way. I continue to move forward with them by my side as we decolonize. (R. Fernandez, personal communication, June, 2020)



Alaya McIvor said:

Culture is one of the most important pieces because we can't just heal from the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirits and our own human trafficking. It's a lifetime healing process, and we need to acknowledge that and work collectively and wholeheartedly on those issues. (A. McIvor, personal communication, June, 2020)



Alaya McIvor



IF WE TRULY KNEW
HOW COMPLEX EVERYONES LIFE IS,
THERE WOULD BE NO JUDGEMENT BUT RATHER,
COMPASSION

TOGETHER WE CREATE HARMONY
HARMONY CANNOT CREATE ITSELF WITHOUT US.

Red Star Woman



RECOMMENDATIONS

My recommendations from this study are clear and are laid out throughout this entire report within the literature review, qualitative data, and backed by quantitative data. Throughout all my interviews within this report: I have compiled these recommendations. Recommendations are to support survivor leadership, fund survivor-led initiatives, fund survivor research, fund grassroots organizations, fund Sovereign Bodies Institute, fund Urban Indigenous Collective. Implement cultural healing services within your organizations so survivors have access to things that can genuinely heal them and support their inner healing. Not just put a Band-Aid on their wounds. Educate government agencies on historical and intergenerational trauma.





The foster care system needs to be reformed. They remove black and brown children at higher rates than people know, but it happens every single day. The system needs to be completely broken down and needs to work in prevention, education, and maintenance services. Because right now, everything is crisis intervention, and it's not working. The system criminalizes boys quicker than anything. They often do the same for females of color, but the females of color are often looked at as victims before they're looked at like criminals.

Native children are very much invisible. They still don't have cultural services offered to them. Disenrollment is a major problem for youth in foster care because for youth that are not enrolled or the books are not open for them, those kids often will not get cultural services because it's hard to fight for that. Whether or not they are from a federally recognized or disenrolled, they need access to culturally based services. When you get the opportunity to get cultural healing or that connection, you gain a sense of belonging and identification that registers and resonates within your spirit. That could potentially change everything for someone's life. Natives that are disenrolled, those children are left with zero chances. They have no option for mentorship or any sort of direction. They all act out because they have worse inner issues. They become wards of the state. That is when the probation side and the law enforcement side take the lead. So they end up in institutions, and that's where the foster care to prison pipeline comes in. That happens more often for disenrolled native boys than anybody in the foster care system. We need to end the cycle of historical and multi-generational trauma, and it starts with these kids.



Rebecca Balog and family in regalia



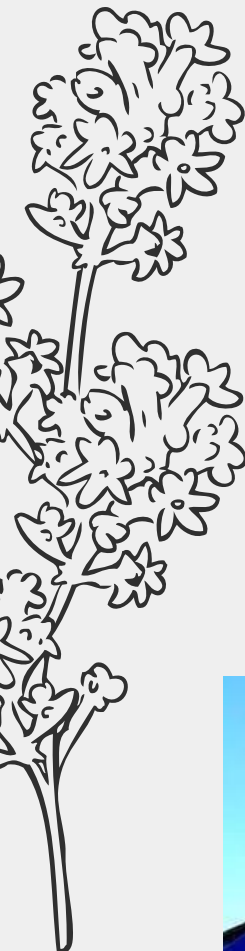
Policymaking needs to be survivor informed. This study is proof that there is a severe under-reporting of the violence that Indigenous people face. The under-reporting is linked to the fact that our people do not feel safe within the criminal justice system. Only 6% of the people surveyed said they would feel safe reporting a violent crime against them. Policies need to be created to protect victims, or this epidemic will never end.

Congress needs to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, now. Congress needs to pass Savanna's Act, now. Congress needs to pass the Not Invisible Act, now. The United States Government has been failing Indigenous people and contributing to our genocide since the government was founded. This needs to stop, now. Stop investing in pipelines and corrupt systems that exacerbate the MMIP epidemic and reallocate that funding to fund culturally-based services and initiatives that help stop it.

This country needs to decolonize education. American Indian history needs to be accurately taught within school systems. It should not be an elective at universities. It needs to be part of the core curriculum everywhere. Especially education on historical and multi-generational trauma. This report is a big step forward in an effort to decolonize research.



Oceti Sakowin Camp at Standing Rock



Be inclusive in your services to all genders and two-spirit people. Listen to survivors, listen to two-spirit people. Listen to the children. We are sacred, and we must be treated that way.

Dear Survivors, Dear two-spirit relatives, Dear Children
You are strong. You are beautiful. You are sacred. You are resilient.
You are loved.



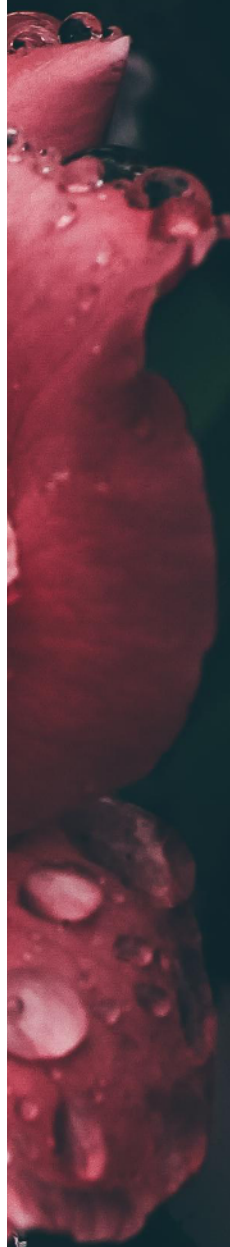
Tony Enos at Oceti Sakowin in front of the Two-Spirit Nation camp.



AUTHOR BIO

Jessica Smith (Gidagaakoons) is a proud two-spirit band member of the Bois Forte Band of The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. She is a McNair Scholar and a Dean's List Student at The University of Wisconsin-Superior, where she is pursuing her Bachelors in Legal Studies and First Nations Studies. Jessica is an intern for Sovereign Bodies Institute and a proud member of their Survivor Leadership Council. Jessica is a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Cultural healing is a journey for Jessica, and doing this research, making these connections with all of the strong warriors featured in this report has been an amazing part of her journey. Jessica is an avid dreamcatcher maker, and uses dreamcatcher making as a way of therapy. The dreamcatchers pictured in this report were made for the interview participants as a way to keep culture in the research and to remain culturally grounded throughout the process. Research is a form of cultural healing, all too often our stories are told by others, so by taking back our voices and using them to educate others is a form of decolonization. Living and walking in your truth is medicine, Indigenous knowledge is power, turning pain into power is a beautiful thing.

"Being a two-spirit Indigenous woman, we are often an invisible population within an invisible population. Especially in the data, so taking back that space that we have been historically pushed out of is one of my life goals. To decolonize research and to do it in a healing and non-retraumatizing way."



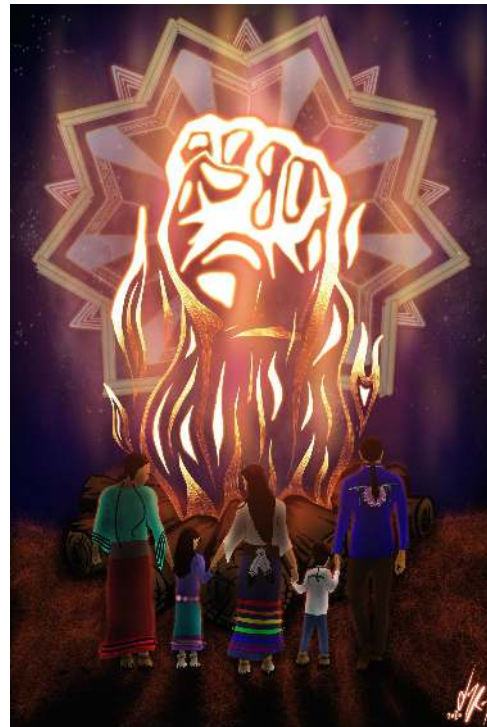
COVER ARTIST BIO

Donny Roy indizhinikaaz. He is an unapologetically two-spirit avant-garde artist currently residing in Duluth, MN. He grew up in Cloquet, MN and is of the Makwa Clan. He is proud of his Anishinaabe and Nordic roots and it often inspires his artwork. He has a deep connection to this earth, to the stars, and to the spirit. He has a profound love of music, enjoys exploring the world, hiking to new heights, working graves while the rest of us sleep, and creating artwork.

He is a self-taught freestyle graphic illustrator. He uses an iPad Pro 12.9 to create most of his current works today but also enjoys using graphite, paint, and ink. His subject matter is primarily figurative, environmental, and ethereal. His work evokes the spirit and it calls us home. He enjoys doing commissions for others but he is usually juggling several compositions for his own pleasure but never finishing anything. Self-expression is very important to Donny Roy in all aspects of his life, including his art being a reflection unique to him. Donny Roy has lived a life standing out of the crowd effortlessly and it's no surprise that his artwork has followed suit.



"The Spirit of Hope"



"Resilience:
Warrior Within"

When I started my research with MMIP, I knew that I needed images of my own that truly represented my work in a beautiful, and meaningful way. Donny Roy is a great friend of mine and each piece he has created for me, has been more than anything I ever dreamed of. Both images are available for purchase through the artist. Contact Gidagaakoons Research for more information.

SERVICES
If You Need Help:

Sovereign Bodies Institute Support Line: 707-335-6263

Strong Hearts Native Helpline: 1-844-744-762-8483

National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or 1-800-787-3224

National Runaway Safeline: 773-880-9860

National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

For more information on warriors in this report:

www.sovereign-bodies.org

www.tatetopa.com

www.urbanindigenouscollective.org

www.pavsa.org





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