

# Creating a Circle of Safety



*"Healing Sunset"* Christopher Sweet, Artist





## ***“Dedication”***

*This advocacy handbook is dedicated to all who struggle with trauma*

*As a result of experiencing rape, sexual violence, sexual abuse,*

*Sexual harassment, sex slavery, statutory rape, partner rape,*

*Child rape, date rape, gang rape, military rape,*

*Prison rape, war rape, acquaintance rape,*

*Corrective rape, unacknowledged rape, rape by deception, and children of rape.*

*To all who were not heard.*

*To all who were not believed.*

*To all who were afraid to speak.*

*To all who were trapped in silence.*

*We want you to know you are beloved.*

*May the Creator look over you, protect you, and touch your heart.*

*From the Grandma’s of Ogitchidakwe Council*

*And Ogitchidakwe Council Drum Group*



*“Welcome Your Prayers”* Christopher Sweet, Artist

**Little Sister,**

**“You are not alone.**

**We are strong and have the courage to heal.**

**We are here to sit with you, to stand with  
you, to stand behind you, beside you or in  
front of you.....whatever you need.**

**There is unity in our sacredness.”**

## ***“Healing is a Process”***

**It was an innocent question,**

just a random question which in a different place and a different time with a different person would've led into a normal conversation. But there was alcohol involved and anger. When the question was posed to a jealous insecure bully it became something entirely different.

I looked into his eyes and saw the change occur. From normal to glassy eyed and hard. I could see the anger boiling up, which would soon become a full blown, terrorizing rage.

I argued back, I yelled back, trying to make myself heard. Forgetting that there was no reasoning, there was no way to calm the anger I had somehow caused in him.

The blow came fast. Faster than I thought. Quicker than the last time it happened. Or maybe just the same speed and I didn't duck fast enough. The blows to the side of my head that sent me reeling and scrambling but wouldn't show if someone decided to ask what was going on. He knew what he was doing.

Then came the names, “bitch, whore, don't talk back to me...” Always the same. The last blow came so fast and so hard, I could only see blinding light and my eyes were closed.

Waking up, hours and hours later. Without clothes on a mattress on the floor. The few seconds where my mind was blank, where there was a total blankness. No pain, physical or emotional. The split seconds of peace where there was nothing but a void. And then the rush of emotions along with the pain. The violation, the depression, the grief, the unanswered question. Why? The guilt, the fear, the overwhelmingness of everything.

***“Healing is a process. An ongoing, continuing process. I may never be completely healed but I will be okay. I will be/I am the best person I can be today. The trauma was endured, the experiences I lived through have made me, molded me, into who I am today.”***

## *“The Only One that Knows is My Sister”*



**I don't know what to say.**

Maybe because I never got any help with my rape and the only one that knows is my sister. Every time I hear of a rape, I get angry about everything I went through, the memories come back.

I can still remember it like it was yesterday. I wish I can forget it ever happened. Sometimes I blame myself for it and I know I shouldn't blame myself.

The things I find comfort in are coloring, beading, drumming. Things that help me are smudging and praying to get me through the day.

***It's okay to talk about it.***

***Take your time.***

***Be gentle with yourself.***

***You will find peace.***

## ***“I was a Caterpillar of a Caterpillar”***

“You made your bed!” Kind of thinking it’s also a sign of fear, despair, depression and ignorance.

My mom had another child when she was 18 and 1 month, the next year and the next year and the next year.

My mom was a beautiful woman with intelligence, humor and deep insecurities that must have made it difficult for her to show love. How terrifying it must have been to her...to see me as a young girl 14, running away from home, sleeping with different ones and being beaten. To see me in destructive behavior – drinking, drugs, and sex trafficking.

Mom, oh mom! I never realized until now how much I hurt you and how much I hurt me! I’m sorry, I love you and in me you can find the acceptance you craved! Mom, and I can find self-acceptance and healing. This is my path, my journey, and we move toward the light together.

All of our relatives are on this healing journey with me and their spirits are rejoiced!

So yes, I was a caterpillar of a caterpillar but we will both emerge as the beautiful butterflies as the Creator intended us to be!

***“Breaking the silence is breaking the shame.***

***There’s no timeline on trauma.”***



## *“Bear Medicine”*

I had to escape to get away. Escape for me, meant I had to leave everything I’ve ever known and never look back. That’s what I did for the last time in the winter of 2017. I was a completely broken soul. I had been that way for many years. I had endured so much abuse that it became normal. Calling the police was a joke after a while because of the way the officers treated me. They told me it was my fault for always going back. I tried to leave many times. It felt like I was screaming for years but nobody could hear me. The last time I saw him we did the normal routine; he provided the drugs and alcohol and when I got out of my mind, he liked to rape me. Humiliate me. Strangle me, torture me. This was his way and that’s the way we had to do it. He threw me outside with no clothes on. I begged him to open the door and at least give me some clothes. Even though we were together for ten years, he did this to me every time. I accepted this kind of treatment because I didn’t know how to make it stop. I wanted the drugs and I wanted him to love me. He always gave me a little bit of false love, enough to stay attached. For years, I was one of the Missing Indigenous Women we read about, and he almost killed me many times.

When I finally walked away, I believe it was my spirit that helped pave the way. I had to completely trust that I was going to be okay. I had to remind myself of where I had been and what I had been through, and make the decision that enough was enough.

It is hard to sit here and write this down, but I am here to share my journey. As I sit here, I am reminded that there are others who also suffer, and it is my hope that my story may reach other’s so they too can find new life.

In the winter of 2017, I made my first Bear Bundle. Our culture is very beautiful. We have animal spirits that come to help us. It is our responsibility to ask for the help that we need. While preparing this bundle I sat in silence and thought of barriers that I wanted to let go of. One of my prayers was to let go of loneliness. It was loneliness that kept me going back. It was loneliness that gave me heartache. Every time I felt alone, I reached for the drug. Each time loneliness crept back, I called him again. Each time he hurt me I told myself I didn’t care; it was better than being alone. When I thought of being away from my children, the thought of them being alone, hurt me so deep that I drank to numb the pain. I lived in the street for most of my life. I had this tough skin called a shell that was covering my body. Loneliness was the only thing that could break it. Loneliness has a way of breaking you down and making you surrender. I knew that it was time to let it go. So, I sat there crying with the sage burning and I prayed for the spirits to help me. I asked the bears for their medicine of courage to go on. Next, I asked them to make me invisible from relationships with men. I asked to be alone in a good way. I knew that by asking this I would have to learn to love myself in its entirety and I was willing to do that. It has been three years since I have been with a man or have been touched by one. For the past three years I’ve been discovering who I am. I have real women in my life who teach me how it is to be a woman.

***I learned to love myself. I am a proud Ojibwe woman and I know what I want. I am unstoppable! I am stronger today than I ever was before. I have my children back in my life. I am not walking in the street and selling myself for drugs or living in the street anymore. I answer to myself and I don't have to have survival sex anymore. I lay my head down at night and feel complete. I love my life now and I learned it is okay to be alone. Loving yourself is a beautiful gift. Loneliness has a new meaning. It doesn't hurt anymore. After a full day, I cherish alone time. It is a time to recollect yourself and to live with self-care. One of the best gifts that we can give ourselves is time alone. I am not running from it anymore. It is transformation. To let go of what we once knew, recreate it, and live to embrace it.***

### **Bear Bundle**

Each winter for the past three years I renew my bundle, and, in the spring, I let it go! It takes time to heal and there is always work. But I trust wholeheartedly that our spirits do listen to our calls for help and will take care of us, but we must ask. They want to help. When the time is right, I will ask the spirits to help me find love from a companion. But until then, I am happiest LOVING ME!

The bear bundle is a ceremony that we have to help us. I want to share this with you and encourage you to make your bundle. Bear Medicine is very powerful, and the medicine is waiting for you.

Maroon material cut into a prayer size piece (five inch square) and a black tie (thin ribbon). (the colors represent the bear clan colors)

A piece of bear fur

7 tiny black stones

Tobacco and sage

Smudge all materials

Take each stone and pray for something you want to let go of.

Place the stone on to the material.

Put bear hair and tobacco with each of the prayers.

Tie it up.

Place your bundle beside you when you sleep. And carry it with you throughout the day. Hold on to it until the springtime. Make you bundle in the winter when the bears are going into hibernation. When they sleep, they are recharging their powers and spirit. When they start to wake up in the spring be ready to release your bundle in the river.

When you go to the river, remember your tobacco and offer it to the water spirits. Tell the water spirits why you are there and ask the spirits to take it. Open your bundle and let it go! Be thankful, grateful, and blessed.

T.M. Ojibwe Woman

Mother, Grandmother, Survivor





*"Peaceful Reflection"* Christopher Sweet, Artist

## *“Healing from the Heartbeat of My Drum”*

I have been drumming for the past two years. I only know about five songs, however, I have received a lot of healing from participating in drumming, sweats, and healing ceremonies.

I have experienced domestic violence as a young child. I witnessed domestic violence between my parents. During their drinking sessions, they would argue and get into fights. I only remember 2 incidents and only a part of them. One incident they were drunk arguing, and then I remember seeing my dad push my mom’s arm up a stove. The stove was the old kind they used to have in apartments, that you could see the fire, almost like a mini fireplace. The other incident was them arguing and my mom threw a clock at my dad, she missed and it went out our 3rd floor window, smashing, breaking, etc. I had told myself back then I wasn’t going to drink when I grew up.

However, as a young teen I started drinking and smoking pot. I only remember vaguely being molested as a young child. Later as a young teen and adult I was raped. I am the great minimizer, so I really don’t remember a lot of things that happened to me. I was able to push things away and continue to find my way with praying to God and in Jesus name. I was baptized Catholic as a baby. So that’s all I knew most of my life was God etc.

Now I have five adult children that I have raised and eight grandchildren and one great granddaughter. I would say that through prayer I was able to continue to seek a way to provide and get services to help raise my children. During the time of raising my children I was drinking, smoking, and chasing men. Needless to say, I have four different fathers for my children... I was boldly living my life and not caring really much about what others had to say about me.

Now thru my participating in a 40 hours sexual violence training, I have learned that my promiscuity was a way of me taking control of my own body after the rapes etc. It was a big weight off of me, also understanding my need to use, drinking and smoking to ease my troubles.

My drumming has led me to different places I would not have had the opportunity to participate in. I have participated in “Stories of the Drum” at the Guthrie Theater. I have been to Madeline Island, Grand Portage, Canada, Morten and Pipestone in the past 2 years. These opportunities were thru Indigenous Women’s Life Net class. This class is at the Minneapolis American Indian Center and lead by E.H.. I am so grateful to have met her and participate in Ogitchidakwe Council’s drum group and workshops.

I have also been drumming with the Indian Health Boards, Drumming for Success class. I felt like I need to continue to learn all I can about drumming and my culture which I grew up without. At Drumming for Success they teach us songs and a little about where the songs come from and the meanings. It is an ongoing thing for me now to drum.

I remember last year after an intense sweat and praying at the Elder’s Lodge in St. Paul, I received a phone call from my 2nd daughter. She was in jail, she says momma I know what happened to Erica, there are some ladies here, and they say Erica was riding in a car with some people, she overdosed, and they were scared and didn’t want to get in trouble so they pushed her out of the

car and left her. I have been participating in the MMIW March for the past 4 years, because I have been grieving her. She is my niece and she went missing 4 months after we buried my brother. She was found on the side of 394 in 2009, decomposed.

Two of my children were molested by Erica's dad. I didn't find out about it all until 2005. My son, I had been trying to get him into counseling since he was in kindergarten. Well he molested his two younger cousins the way their dad had molested him and his sister. It has been hard and I am still hurt by this all. However, I am going to continue drumming, and healing. The heartbeat of my drum is all I need now, I do not have to be drinking, drugging, or chasing men. I am content. I am seeking peace the rest of my life.

I would like to say that I have been in counseling different times of my life and it has never had as much healing as my drumming and learning my culture.



***“I believe if more young people were given these opportunities to drum, sing, sweat, etc. maybe we would have less violence and could continue to heal the generations after us.”***



*"Dance by the Shore"* Christopher Sweet, Artist

## ***“Good day...Hihanni Waste”***

I am the mother of 5 boys 2 girls... I am greatly honored to be w/ all the other women... that are here for our women-girls...even boys – men...

My life... my story... takes me back.. this morning getn rdy.. up before sunrise.. seen sunrise... in Colorado my niece up taking pics of sun rising!! I believe/truth my mom is here this morning...for all of us women. All of our families..

Where do I begin..

I remember my grandpa..putn his hands on me.. wondered why he pull me on his lap all the time... brings back trauma.. that’s where it begins..

One of my uncles...too. Now I know why I was scared of him....too young to remember everything.. How did I forget... pushed it behind my mind... Never told anyone...

“I’m a mad mom. I’m a strong mamma....

Sometimes I have to protect my girl...by fighting for her.. took a lot out of me.. Who won’t fight for their daughter out in this heroin world where there are predators --- Sometimes I would sit around listen to all the girls on the street. Talking about what predators they don’t like! PREDATORS...I WANT TO HURT THEM PREDATORS! LET’S MAKE A STAND! STOP THEM PREDATORS!

Friends come to tell me of this ugly man or this other ugly man that are hurting our girls women boys...they will take this hurt just to get next \$ for their next fix.. I’ve witnessed, living this life...I want to make a difference! TO LET EVERYONE OUT THERE KNOW THEY ARE LOVED! I LOVE MY BABIES! I’M THEIR MOM!! NEVER GIVE UP!

Make yourself not want to live! Thinking about how many times/what my daughter does for the dope\$!! That’s what we go thru --- Genocide... killing our people...

One day me and my partner home playing w/ our chihuahua... Phone rings... my son screaming. They can’t find Lyle!!! I like WTH! March 13, 2013. My son Lyle jumped into the Falls to save a 6yr old sister.. my son and 6yr old sister never made it out of the water... This shocked, ruined my family’s lives... I didn’t care about nothing no more... My other older children/lost their way meth heroin... METH HEROIN KILLING OUR CHILDREN OUR PEOPLE Now my children lost...no hope...on the streets... 1 just got out of jail 1 in prison only way they survived... I am here today because of my daughter --- heroin use --- prostitution --- 3yrs now longer? I walk around to find my son my daughter - - to feed them - - let them know I care Always ---

Growing up followed wrong people.. married into crazy family. Fighting with guns, bats, bars, knives, etc... getn shot so many times...



First son when I was 15..

No time for enjoying teen yrs because instant mom.. love all my babies 5 boys 2 girls...

Moved to Mpls.. MPLS SOSIDE! PROJECTS! My families home.. Where we all learn good/bad...  
7 babies.... married to a domestic abuser... stayed only because my children loves their dad...  
Should have left after the first time I got hit!

Nephew got killed on soside.. had to take him home...South Dakota..we got stranded... messed up  
our housing... couch hopping w/ my children staying @ grandmas.. one family member calls CPS  
Lost my babies 12 yrs now... lost my mind that day.. Said fuck it!

CPS took my babies because of no housing....!

Lost my first born --- he saved another life! My oldest kids went into drug darkness..

I am here in sobriety...to help our children to help our people...

I've witnessed too much...

I AM to protect all!

Let our children be the reason...

Our next generations!

LOVE MY CHILDREN!!

One day soon we will be together!

***I AM not giving up!***

***Survival means respect your elders...***

***say no...fight for your right to say no***

***BE STRONG!***

***Always tell others...don't keep it in....***

***we will survive....***

***we are all related!***

## ***“I am a Boarding School Survivor”***

I am a boarding school survivor back in the 1950's. I left when I was 16, ran away that is. I went home.

I am a recovering alcoholic, 20 years in July 2020.

Bad things happened to me when I was drinking. Not with a boyfriend, but other guys when I was passed out. I always heard it was the woman's fault of what happens so I believed that, until now some time ago.

I wasn't good enough. I think you have to forgive yourself of the things you do and healing will begin. I feel anger, anxiety, blaming, hating the things that happened. Wishing bad on the people that did these things to me. But I think I shouldn't think that!

It took me a long time to talk about it, probably like 50 years. It was at a conference in California.

***“My healing time is being in our drum group. I sing on my hand drum, makes me feel good. I also do a lot of sewing and beading. I get asked to help sewing ribbon skirts, making hand drums and a lot of other things. I love to help people do stuff. I think that's what I'm here for, to help young and old.”***

I also take care of my husband. He can't walk anymore.

(Dreams I've had in the past.)

I was climbing a mountain. I was trying to get to the top. I was slipping and very scared. I never did make it to the top. I often wonder what that dream means?

Also, about a black bear. He's walking below hills and he's coming toward me and I'm scared. I'm trying to get away and then I woke up.

I haven't had these dreams for a couple of years, now.

There is no closure for all the things that happened. The loss of my only two sons, very tragic. All my loved ones that I have lost. Even though people say they're in a better place, they're here with me forever.

Shaa-way-natig (Love one another)

Miigwetch



*“Good Morning Sisters”* Christopher Sweet, Artist

## ***“I Didn’t Remember”***

**I didn’t remember** my childhood sexual abuse until I was 13 years old. I used to think it was a bad dream until I started to have those “bad dreams” when I was awake.

As I got older, I experienced more traumas from rape and an abusive relationship where I experienced rape from him as well. My father would get mad and blame me. “I told you not to drink!” “I told you not to go!” Even though his words would hurt, I knew it stemmed from his hurt for me.

As I got older, I knew I had to heal from my trauma’s and started therapy. With intensive inner work I ..... , the seed that was planted, that message of self-talk I carried with me my whole life. It was a memory of being abused when I was only 3 or 4. I was being abused and I was crying for my mom and dad and they weren’t there, they didn’t come save me. My adult thoughts know, they weren’t there and didn’t come save me because they didn’t know.

I wasn’t good enough.

3 years ago a friend of the family passed away. I drove with my mom to the services and my dad was going to meet us there.

My mom and I walked in and found our seats. As we were sitting there, the man that hurt me and sexually abused me as a little tiny girl came up to me and said, “I remember you. You were a little brat kid, are you still a brat?” I used to dream about the day I saw him as a grown woman he couldn’t hurt. All the things I wanted to say to him, but there I stood in fear and ran outside. My mom must have recognized him and said, “I know what you did to my daughter. I would have told her family what you did but a funeral isn’t a place for what they would do to you, so you need to leave.” He left. My dad showed up shortly after this and my mom told him what happened. He shook my mom’s hand and thanked her.

My parents came and saved me. I felt believed. I felt safe. I felt loved. My dad passed away less than a year later. He gifted this to his baby girl before he left this world.

***“For healing go to the water. Water is life.”***

***Cedar Tea***

***Cedar Bath***

***Sweat Lodge***

## ***“My Childhood Was Empty”***

**My childhood is empty**, like big blocks of empty spaces, too big and heavy to carry. Too heavy to lift. They tell me it's a trauma response. My brain created a way for me to survive, to shut it out. Some things I still remember. Those things too deep to forget, refusing to let me go, always chasing me.

They won't like me talking about these things! Again, they will be upset! “That's a lie! You're mistaken! You made that up,” they'll say.

But I see his face, can still smell the reeking stench of alcohol and cigarettes as he stumbled into my mom's room. “Why did I have to sleep in there?”

This time my sister was with me. She was so little she was still in diapers. I was scared. So afraid he'd hurt her too! I tried to lay so still I held my breath. He was like a huge bear sniffing through the garbage, snorting and rummaging, throwing and tossing things.

“Don't breathe. Don't blink. Don't move or he'll catch you.”

After he passed out, I bundled by sister up and crawled with her in my arms. We snuck past him, passing through the living room where my mom laid passed out. This scene was reoccurring.

Again, at age 15, I found myself in a cage of monsters. I woke up surrounded in blackness with claws digging and tearing into my flesh. I tried to scream out. I tried to cry out, “Stop! No!” My voice was caught in my throat my words choked down by him. They tore at my body. I was too small and too weak to get away. I left myself. I had to leave my body behind. I watched as they, like a hungry pack of wolves, fighting and devouring a young naïve 15 year-old girl. I came back to my body. I lay there on a bed full of blood, puke, feces, and their remains. What came next was a blur, the hospital, the police, but the judgments, the looks, the blaming, the denial...to this day still there.

Because of these painful experiences, I hurt myself running to things to shut these memories out. This led to further situations that were dangerous and painful experiences.

***“Survival once meant --- don't tell, don't feel, don't remember, it meant don't move, don't speak up, don't get him mad, don't bring attention to myself.***

***I am no longer in a place of survival of that kind. I'm living today through healing, through speaking, through my sobriety, ceremonies, songs, prayer and surrounding myself with strong amazing indigenous women.”***

## ***“My Sister was my Best Friend”***

**My sister was my best friend.** I always took care of her growing up. We were 5 years apart and as we got older the age difference didn't seem to make a difference. My sister was a very rebellious teenager. She would run away quite often. Our mother would worry, sick! So, to ease her worry, I would chase my sister around in the streets to take care of her the best I could while she was on run. I would feed her, give her some money and sometimes buy her clothes. Some days I wouldn't be able to find her and I later learned those were the days she was drinking and huffing spray paint.

My sister lived a rough life while on run. She saw a lot of terrible things being out on the streets. My sister was very tough for such a young girl. She found her way around out there very quickly. She knew where to eat and shower throughout the whole city from day to day. She hung out with a lot of rough and tough people. She learned how rough and tough these people were when she was brutally raped one night at one of their parties. My sister was only 15 years old. Still very innocent for being a wild child. She was still a baby just trying to find her own way, her way.

This awful boy and his sidekicks really hurt my sister. They physically, mentally, and emotionally hurt her. These boys humiliated my sister. They held her down while shoving a gun down her throat. They took away her power to fight. She had no choice but to lay there and take it. Only one boy was sexually forceful with her while the other boys held her down and held the door shut from her friends getting in. These boys drew sexually explicit words all over her breasts, her stomach going all the way down her inner thighs and vagina area. They hurt and humiliated my sister! My baby was sexually assaulted and tortured for hours. She was never ever the same after that night. It changed her life forever. These boys brutally raped my sister and threw her away like garbage once they were done.

I was the first person she called once she was free from these boys. It was a very early summer morning about 6 something AM. I wasn't talking to her then because she made our mother cry by not coming home for a very long time, not even to check in or rest up as she would. Her first words were, “Don't hang up! They hurt me sister. They hurt me really bad!”

I stood straight up out of bed knowing I was going to save her. I said, “Who hurt you? What happened babe?”

She said she had to be quiet because she was still in the presence of the main boy's family. My sister hid in a closet to use the phone to call me. She was scared and physically hurt. She said quivering with a small cry, “Hurry sister! I'm scared they're going to come back!”

I said, “I will be there in a few minutes!”

I drove so reckless running every red light just to get to my sister. My brother and cousin lived right down the street so I picked them up first because I knew I was going to hurt someone. I wanted revenge and I wanted my brother and cousin to want it too.

I got to my sister and she was in the closet still crying. Still so scared. When I opened the door to look for her, she flew into my arms as she saw it was me. She never hugged me so tight. She was shaking with fear. I was relieved to have my sister.

I was scared for my sister not to mention overwhelmingly sad for what she had just been through. By now fear and anger started taking over my body. My first emotion as a young lady was always anger. My anger started getting the best of me because I wanted to kill these boys. As my sister explained very shortly what happened, I couldn't hold my tears back nor could my brother and my cousin.

We took my sister to the emergency room because she was physically in pain. She was bleeding from her vagina area and was bruised up pretty good. I then learned how horrific her rape was. They were horrible to my sister.

The main boy had left for South Dakota in fear of being arrested and charged. My sister being too scared to press charges, he got away. He was brought up in a similar case with another young girl in South Dakota so the prosecutors came for my sister to testify. She was still too scared. This boy put the fear of death in my sister. My sister was a tough girl, but he broke her down. She lived in constant fear of him.

I called our mother at work from the hospital. She was so upset, as she should have been. But she wasn't as worried or distraught as I thought she would be being I told her how my sister was raped. My mother's first emotion was anger as well. I guess that's where I get it from. Our mother was angry. She said she would be to the hospital after work. My sister was crushed. She wanted our mom more than anything. Our mom made her feel alone and unwanted by not leaving work immediately to be by her side. I held my sister as hard as I could. I was furious. My sister could feel it so it made her anxious. I hugged her tight and reassured her it would be okay not knowing it was never ever going to be okay. I had never experienced anything so traumatic before so I didn't know how to comfort her. I low key wanted our mom just as bad. I hugged my sister as often as I could and just held her hand through it all.

The emergency room performed a rape kit on my sister. She had to relive her rape all over again and was yet humiliated even more. She was so ashamed of what her body looked like. She was embarrassed to get undressed for the nurse. My sister wanted to hide. She felt like it was her fault for being on the run and partying with the wrong crowd. I couldn't help but cry for my sister and beg her to believe none of this was her fault. Nobody had the right to have their way with her the way they did. No matter what. No matter if she was on the run. No matter if she was drinking. Especially, no matter if she was hanging out with these boys earlier.

Our mother showed up with her mother (our grandmother). They were both angry. Angry with my sister that this happened. They told my sister if she wasn't out there, running away and hanging with a tough crowd this wouldn't have happened to her. I couldn't believe what came out of my mother's mouth and my grandmother was agreeing with my mother.

Multiple times my sister was reported as a runaway and with that my mom was able to lock her up. After a night of horror and day of yet more humiliation my sister was forced to be alone in a group home. I was so mad that I can't even explain the level of anger I was in. I called my mom and my grandma out of their names. I was yelling, cussing and swearing at them both in disbelief.

I was hugging my sister so hard and so tight as she was me. It took two E.R. security guards and two police officers to tear my sister and I apart. We were both crying so hard. She cried because she knew she was going to be alone. All she wanted was to be with our mother and me. I cried because I knew she was going to be alone and I knew she needed our mother and me more than anything in the world right now. She desperately needed to feel loved and our mother pushed her away.

I want to think maybe my mother didn't know any better or she didn't know how to handle it. Nonetheless, she handled it all wrong. My mother and grandmother unknowingly caused more damage to my sister's mental and emotional wellbeing.

My sister completed treatment and was able to go home to our mother. My sister was resentful, angry, and most of all hurt by the way our mother treated her at the hospital as if it was her fault. That whole experience did something to my sister because she was never the same. She became very clingy at times. Very isolated, very lonely, and very bitterly angry.

My sister eventually turned to drugs and alcohol to numb or run. Maybe both from her pain.

She again became very rebellious but even more so this time. She was violent. She would fight with any and every one with no fear in her body. She felt like she had already been so hurt that no one could hurt her that bad again. So, she feared no one.

My sister lived with this pain for 17 years along with the constant fear of this boy. Her drug use got bad over the years and after 17 years this boy, now a man, decided to come back to Minneapolis. My sister ran into him at a corner store. She was terrified all over again. She dropped everything and ran straight home. She called me again in absolute terror. I had never seen my sister that scared other than the time I found her in the closet at this boy's people's apartment the night of her rape. Again, I couldn't help her. No matter how much I hugged her and reassured her, she was still scared.

My sister completely isolated herself for two weeks and overdosed.

Six years later, I blame this boy, now a man, for my sister's death. I will always wonder if her overdose was on purpose or an accident. I cry for my sister a lot. I miss her so much. She was my best friend.

I cry because my sister never got to live a life that was beautiful because of her rape. She never got a chance to learn how to love herself. She never got to heal from the pain she experienced. She never had any power to fight. So, it was flight for her.



This man raped again, but this time, he video – taped the rape. He was eventually caught, arrested, prosecuted and sentenced to many years in prison. I believe he didn't get enough time.

Now, though our elders, I am learning how to forgive. Something horrible has happened to these men to make them monsters. I am not there yet. I still have a long way to go to forgive him for my sister's hurtful life and for my sister leaving me.



*“Today, I help women. I try to make a difference in their lives, help them to heal and to live a good life. I do this for my sister.”*



*"Blessed Morning"* Christopher Sweet, Artist

## *“Women are Sacred as Life Givers” - Jocelyn Brieschke*

Women are sacred as life givers and connected to the water that flows through our land as well as our wombs. Women are giving birth afraid of what may happen, and the death rate of our Native babies was disproportionate before the 2019 pandemic. There is a war on our water and on our women. Indigenous Women are being murdered and sexually assaulted at alarming rates. Our reproductive justice matters. Our sexuality and ability to have healthy relationships matters. Our choice to be sexual with whom we want and when we want is ours alone. Our children matter. Healing the individual will heal our families and then our communities. We can heal our spirits as a community. I wrote this because I believe in our ability to heal. I want us to not only survive but to thrive as our community returns to traditional ways. To be a Indigenous person and heal is revolutionary.

Ground yourself, and go to your mother.  
Lay on her earth, and know her comfort.  
Held like a child to her chest, like truth,  
She gives her best, to you.  
She is warm and cool, for you.

It was decided a long time ago before each one of us got here that we would be born. Did the universe damage us through our earthly struggles? No, we are enough-- we are perfect. The Ancestors are proud of us for being here: they are proud in our survival of a genocide and all the told and untold struggles our our people. We have a blood memory of that trauma, but it is mirrored in the memory of resistance, the memory of spiritual peace among our people on earth.

Heal.  
Feel the way she loves you.  
You can do this too.  
Feel her love and settle in, lose your ache.  
Learn to collect our medicines in a good way.  
Return to ourselves.

I learned a teaching from an elder: let your strength bring you back to a place of trauma, so you can leave your medicine there. Transform its meaning.

The old woman spoke this to mean that one should return physically, but in understanding healthy sexuality after trauma, I ask you to take your spirit back to this place, to this feeling. Transform its meaning. In trauma, it's your spirit that's going to do the healing. I cannot give answers, but I offer hope and promise that you will heal and, when you are ready, passion and enjoyment will be waiting there for you.

She holds our rhythms in her palms  
A study in breath and spirit, deliver our songs  
The heart has honest words revealing truth  
The spirit holds our teachings

from the spirit world, she sends our enigmatic souls  
Showing up to bloom in places no one thought we could.  
Push through the miniscule cracks.  
We are all dandelions now.

Everyone's healing, everyone's timeline is different. There is no one right way to heal. There is no one right way to transform. Circumstances are different too. Speaking is healing. Regaining your voice is an acknowledgement of your resilience, your wisdom, your truth. Learn our songs.

There is a bird singing for you each morning.  
Find something amazing for your heart.  
Lay in the grass,  
Feel the sun and honor the moon as she honors you.

Be patient with yourself. Know yourself alone, and know yourself with others. Figure out what you like, what feels good to you and your body before you share yourself with somebody else. You are important and sacred. Your journey is your own; be ready spiritually, emotionally, and physically and at your own pace.

Praying, asking, remembering to heal.  
A connection to the spiritual, growing near.  
In water, our voices are found,  
They are our ancestors', their dreams,  
They are our daughters', their songs.  
They are, our people.

## ***“Relationship: Reclaiming Our Status as Native Women After Sexual Violence”***

Statistics about the sexual violence and abuse experienced by Native women is one small fraction of the story. Our narrative is not simply the story of just one rape or one victimization. It is the characterization of our experience as a Native woman. We are victimized at every stage of our lives. And if we are a child of rape, this violence began at conception. Not just one woman, but countless generations of Native women, youth, and babies. Our men experience sexual violence and our LGBTQ youth are targeted for rape and sexual exploitation. So, the story of the rape of our women is the fabric of our colonization and the justification for taking our children and institutionalizing them.

Our narrative of sexual violence begins at the inception of colonization and persists in the refusal of the Catholic Church to rescind the Papal Bulls. That is when and where we were declared non-human. What would happen if these ‘laws’ were rescinded? Would the house of cards fall down? Would Native people, especially our women, become instantly human? The degradation of Native women is built into the institutions of this country as well as the laws and treaties claiming the land. U.S. law still references the Papal Bulls in legal decisions.

When Native women examine the question of relationship after sexual violence, we are being challenged to self-determine our status as Native women. We are not lying in the ground of the past 500 years of colonization. We are stating our experience and our narrative about sexual violence.

We position ourselves in a place of humanity established in our indigenous ways and in our indigenous values. We are untouched. We are whole and complete. The Creator has made us this way. Reclaiming our status is an immense struggle with trauma. Not only of rape and other forms of sexual violence, but day to day racism. The dynamic of racism and the inherent rules within societal racism communicates to us and society that; 1) Native people don’t exist, 2) Native people are invisible, 3) Native people are ‘too savage’ to govern their own possessions, it all belongs to the government, 4) Native people cannot love and raise their own children, therefore, Native people cannot pass on culture, etc. The legal status of Native people in the United States is relegated to an afterthought.

We look to our cultural ways of healing and our language for ways to uplift us individually and within our Tribal Nations. Seeking legal reprieve or protection seems pointless at this time. There is adequate documentation to show that all forms of sexual violence against Native women receives little or no attention by the criminal justice system. We are not viewed as human enough nor valued enough to be protected by law.

We must value ourselves and protect one another. Justice comes in surviving and healing. We were meant to be exterminated and we are still here!

## ***“Challenges Faced by Native Women Surviving Sexual Violence”***

I am a Pueblo woman, a Native woman who has survived sexual violence. I continue to survive, to live, despite the sexual violence that surrounds me and other Native women in our homes, in our communities, in the urban areas, where many of us live, and in the world around us.

It was not always this way. Separating the truth that Native women are to be respected and honored from the colonized societal views that sexual violence of Native women is normal and acceptable is one of the greatest challenges we face today.

Safety. Peace. Innocence. Belonging. I believe that intuitively we seek safety and peace within a sense of belonging because we have memories that we once lived those values. Those values came from the creator or female deities who instilled in us the importance of passing on those values to those we birth and nurture. We know who we are and how important it is as Native women to ensure that we survive as Native people. Our futures depend on our survival.

We also carry the memories of our ancestors who experienced sexual violence at the hands of those who came into our lands to colonize, take, rape, and enslave. The trauma of that sexual violence they experienced is heavy and in many Native communities no one talks about it, perhaps because the trauma cuts into our hearts, minds and spirits so painfully.

I recall that time years ago, when we got together as trainers, technical assistance providers, advocates, Native women and Native men working with the Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance Project, and had that tough conversation about rape and sexual violence and why people in tribal communities were having such a hard time talking about it.

I offered that perhaps we don't talk about it because of the children who were born of the rapes that happened to Native women. I shared that when the colonizers from Spain came to the Pueblos, they took Pueblo women into their homes as slaves, the churches took Native women as servants to cook and clean. The colonizers and those men with the churches raped Pueblo women. Children born of those rapes were then legally disowned. Dr. June L. Lorenzo, Laguna Pueblo, who continues to do research in the Spanish archives, found that under Spanish laws governing the Indians, any children born during the marriage were considered to be the children of the husband. She states “this law appears to provide cover for situations in which Spanish raped Indian women and children were the result.” Those children “legally” became the children of the Pueblo husband.<sup>1</sup>

Intuitively or through ancestral knowing and memory, I feel that any children born of rape were accepted into the families of Pueblo people. Children are considered gifts and are to be cherished, nurtured and loved, no matter who the father is because they come from their mothers and their identities are derived from their primary clans which comes from their mother.

It is known that Pueblo peoples experienced so much violence at the hands of the Spaniards. I have wondered why people don't talk about what happened back then. We are told that that we don't talk about the violence. We don't talk about “those things” because they are over and we have moved on, left it behind us.

I think that's why it's been a challenge to get Pueblo women and perhaps other Native women to talk about sexual violence. One of the other things we also don't openly talk about is how patriarchy, that was brought to us by the Spaniards, has permeated our ways of life. For example, a major patriarchal belief that was brought over was that women were "property" and it was okay to objectify Native women, to use them, to sexualize them, to rape them.

We face the challenges of addressing patriarchal beliefs that have no place in our matriarchal Native communities. We are surrounded by patriarchal lifeways in American society that Native men now believe that it is okay to also objectify, use, sexualize and rape Native women.

All but one of the times that I have been sexually assaulted or raped, have been at the hands of Native men or Native women. The hurt each time has been deep because I put my trust in Native people and then was betrayed and traumatized. I buried those memories of being raped and sexually assaulted for over half my life. I tried to forget, to get through the trauma by drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. I blamed myself for so long because I believed that each time it happened to me, it was my fault. I protected myself by burying the trauma, the sexual violence, by disassociating and distancing myself from the hurt and pain.

Rape, sexual assault, sexual violence

Violation of the spirit, the heart, the mind, and the body Unreal yet real trauma

Deep wounding that twists and turns within one's being That seems to be forever healing

I have learned that there are other buried memories held deep inside each one of us. Our ancestors passed on the ways of healing, the ways to recover from the traumas experienced, and the lights connecting to hope. With clear minds, open hearts and spiritual connections, those memories of healing come forth.

Healing is possible with each breathe we take

With each glorious sunrise, with each spectacular sunset

When the stars are filling the night sky twinkling and sharing their beauty

The moon watches over us, providing comfort and reminders that we can heal

We can survive the trauma of sexual violence

It is not our fault

We are not damaged goods

We will heal, we are healing

We know who we are and we remember

We are the precious beauty of life

## *“Taking Back Your Light”*

By Lisa Brunner

White Earth Ojibwe Nation

Sexual assault is a spiritual wounding. For those who have been fortunate enough to not have had to survive such darkness, obviously, they would not understand what that means.

I was in a training in Key West Florida, surrounded by non-Native men, all in law enforcement as we attended a 40-hour training on Law Enforcement Response to Domestic Violence by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. I was there to understand law enforcement response to domestic violence to further understand what their response was so that I could help support victims and Tribal law enforcement at home.

During this time, I believed I ‘dealt’ with all the child sex abuse and the rapes I survived as a teenager along with the horrific domestic violence I was exposed to as a child, including being a survivor of domestic violence. I was actually just boasting before this training that I never cry.

Well, that changed in heartbeat as I was sitting in this training as the only civilian, woman and Native with all these male law enforcement officers. We were listening to 911 Dispatch recordings. One in particular was named ‘Lisa’. When the 911 dispatcher answered, the shrill scream of absolute terror of this little girl instantly broke the false barrier of ‘dealing with it’. Her screams were my screams and just like that, Pandora’s Box was ripped wide open. We had a break right after that and I beelined it to the bathroom and cried the tears I said I never shed. Thing is, I never stopped crying after that.

I came back from my training and was such an emotional mess. Some would say that I had Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and was triggered. I am not much for label’s as they can have unforeseen impact on someone’s life. Some certainly do have it but it’s important we are supportive and careful with the use of that diagnosis.

Where my healing journey began.... During this time, I had started listening to the spirits who come to me in my dreams and give me guidance and had been shown Earl Hoagland. He was an Elder in our community on White Earth who was married to a respected Elder named Kathy. I had a dream that had taken me to him specifically and I at the time did not know what to do about that as our ways were something very new to me. I had passed tobacco to Earl as his wife Kathy was with us, he named me, and became my Waa’a. Being in such distress, I went to my Waa’a and I could not tell him what was happening with me without crying through the whole story. My Waa’a handed me paper and pen and told me to write down what he was about to tell me.

He said, “We have many healing ceremonies and there are many monidoogs (spirits) who are there to help us with that. He said that we have a healing ceremony with a tree. It is just you and that tree”, he said. Earl said, “Go to a tree and clear everything around the tree away. Then take tobacco and make a circle around the tree, make sure it is big enough to fit comfortably in. Then stand and face the tree, tell the tree everything! Laugh, cry, scream, be angry whatever you feel



is ok, just make sure no one is around when you do this, otherwise, they will think your nuts, as he laughs. He said, “Do this in the morning, then go about your day and before nightfall, go back and face the tree again and tell the tree everything. Then go home and put a cup of water by your bedside. In the morning, pour the water out and go back to the tree and stand with your back to it and tell the tree everything, then again, go back in the evening and do it again, followed by the cup of water. Next day, go back and sit facing the tree, tell the tree everything, then go back in the evening and do the same thing but, this time there will be gift for you, whatever it is, bring it back with you and set it by your bed along with the cup a water. Then on the fourth day in the morning bring the gift back and put it in the circle, then sit with your back against the tree and tell the tree everything but when you come back before sun sets, bring the tree a gift and dish and thank the tree for helping you”. He asked, “When I was telling you all of this, did a tree come to mind”? With a surprised look on my face I said, “Yes”. Earl smiled and said, “That’s your brother, he has been waiting for you”. He then had me pass tobacco to him so that on the fourth night, we would have a sweat lodge.

Healing can occur in so many ways, trust what your instincts tell you. There’s no such thing as one method of healing, whatever works for you is what is right for you. Healing is also a lifelong journey. I do not cry for the little girl inside me anymore, she was healed as was the teenager. Just because that is how I feel, does not mean that one ceremony is a one stop shop. We still have work to do for ourselves in our journey in life. Taking care of our health and wellbeing, taking care of our children and family, for me, going to ceremonies to learn but also to help others in their healing and continue to get healing. We can my beautiful amazing relatives move from survivors to be in a place where we can thrive in our lives. Ceremony with a trusted Elder is what helped me get there.

Just a caution. My Waa’a Earl new at the beginning that I knew absolutely nothing about our ceremonial ways and knew I was a vulnerable. The first thing he said to me was, “There are no have to’s in our way.” “You do not have to take your clothes off to go into a sweat or be doctored, I should not be putting medicine on you, my wife can do that or someone at your home can do that.” He also said, “The monidoogs come to us to guide us. We can choose to listen or we can choose not to, that is your choice.” “But, know this Red Path will not be as hard as walking the other road you may choose, but ultimately, the choice is yours.”

I share these teachings he gave me because predators are everywhere and if you do not know much about cultural ways as I was in the beginning, that made me very vulnerable to these predators and my Waa’a knew that and gave me the guidance to keep me safe from such predators from the start.

Our cultural practices and ceremonies are here simply to help us heal. All of these monidoogs like my brother tree are here waiting to help us with the spiritual wounding we have endured. No matter how this may look or feel to you, always trust your instinct and do what is right for you.

For me, my spiritual wounding required spiritual healing. It was here with my brother tree that I screamed out the darkness and took back my light.

## *“Sacredness – Our Choice”*

At night Mother Earth exhales.  
Dampness seeps into the surface of all that touches the land.  
Grandmother Moon lights the way across camp.  
A midnight trip to the outhouse.  
Night sounds turn up the volume. Soft breathing, an occasional snore.  
The Sundance Tree is up, flags and tobacco ties fluttering ready for first light.  
Sundancer’s sleeping, waiting for the wake-up call.  
Moving slowly toward my destination, I stop to gaze at the night sky.  
Falling stars, Haley’s Comet.  
Returning, I cuddle warmly in my sleeping bag.  
Sleepily, I retrace my steps to the halfway point.  
The campsite of a dozen released prisoners from Nebraska.  
Free for seven days of Sundance. Hilltop – Rosebud with its rolling skies.  
I tremble with a chill of remembrance.  
Four months ago, I was raped.  
Abducted at gunpoint by a stalker, waiting stealthily at my back door.  
Hidden in the bushes and the shadow of darkness.  
At home, in Minneapolis, each night holds my terror,  
revisited by my attempts to close my eyes.  
Constant upheaval! My humanity stolen!  
How can I be at this Sacred place? I need to be at this Sacred place!  
Slumbering, no wakefulness here. Safety by the Sacred Tree.  
The felons from Nebraska chose Sacredness. Each dancer choosing Sacredness.  
I fall asleep in a Circle of Safety.  
I have chosen Sacredness, my Sundance crown touching my cheek.

*Eileen Hudon - 1985*



*"Healing Sunset"* Christopher Sweet, Artist

## ***“Breaking the Silence: Asking for Help and Accepting Help”***



As a victim of rape, you are not responsible for what happened to you. Your responsibility is to heal. That includes seeking out helping people, trusted friends and family members, who will support your decisions about safety, healing, resources, and assistance.

***“It is your body, your spirit, your emotions and your healing that is most important.”***

Each victim of rape is unique and has distinct needs for safety, healing, and assistance. The impact of rape can be both subtle or dramatic. There are numerous ways that human beings cope with being raped. Some victims become enraged, while others are overwhelmed by fear, terror or grief. Others suffer in silence. Physical injuries heal, but the spiritual, mental and emotional repercussions can last much longer. You will heal in your own time and in your own way.

Some rape victims may turn to drugs or alcohol as a means of seeking an escape from the pain and anguish brought on by the rape. To heal you will need courage to ask for help and to accept that help. Sobriety will be a significant part of your healing.

You have a right to expect any professional to be patient, non-judgmental, skilled and knowledgeable. Each professional has responsibilities about how to help you. They have an obligation to refer you to someone in your community who can provide ongoing support and advocacy.

***It takes time to live your life without the turmoil or grief of being a rape victim.  
Be patient and accepting, allowing yourself time to heal.***

***You didn't deserve it.  
You're not to blame.  
It's not your shame to carry.***



*"Sisters Unite"* Christopher Sweet, Artist

## ***“Our Sacred Ways are a Resource for Healing”***



Our Sacred Ways ***are a resource for healing***. A Sacred Fire can take away the feelings of shame and self-blame after rape/sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

***Drink Cedar Tea, or make a Cedar Bath.*** Both will soothe and diminish the harshness and trauma from sexual abuse and sexual violence.

Preparations: Add 2 or 3 Tsp. to a pot of water (2 or 4 cups) bring to a boil then simmer until water is tea colored. Strain before drinking, add honey to flavor.

Wash with this amount of Cedar tea. Wipe down with a wash cloth soaked but not dripping with the tea.

Add three times the above amount to your bathwater for a Cedar bath.

### ***Trauma from rape/sexual violence dehumanizes, diminishes, and makes us feel invisible.***

- For some survivors, the losses are physical such as people we loved (family members, friends, a beloved intimate partner), or a body that once functioned perfectly or without the fear of touch.
- For others, the losses are emotional such as living with fear, knowing who you are within, or being rageful.
- Mental – living with anguish and grief about what was.
- The loss of being a spiritual person or living without hope.
- Healing from trauma is a process without a timeline.

### ***Generational Trauma***

Ada Deer called it ‘eternal rape’. The rape of Native women has been perpetual since first contact. Rape as an act of war has not been diminished. Our continent, the Great Turtle Island has been decimated by colonization and our women have been direct targets throughout this lengthy onslaught of genocide.

1 in 3 Native women will be raped in her lifetime. 70% of Sexual Assaults will never be reported.

- The deep silence about sexual violence is embedded in a complex set of circumstances originating in each tribal Nation’s history of colonization. Generational trauma has also reduced the Native community’s ability to respond positively to victims of sexual crimes.

- *Native victims of sexual assault often do not report the assault because they do not believe that authorities will investigate or charge the crime, and they fear being blamed or criticized by people in their communities.*
- *Native women are at exceptionally high risk for poverty, homelessness, and sexual violence—problems that are also relevant antecedents in the prostitution and trafficking of women.*

A 2010 survey that was recently made public showed 94 percent of Native-American women in Seattle had been raped or coerced into sex at least once. Statistics in a report by the Urban Indian Health Institute highlight the plight of Native women nationwide and the multifaceted challenges they face.

“We are talking about Native people homeless and assaulted on their own land. The injustice of that I can’t even conceptualize – and to change it, we need to have a holistic view of what got us here.” Abigail Echo-Hawk, Urban Indian Health Institute

“We’ve done interviews in communities where not one woman we talked to was not a survivor of sexual assault ... all the way from the 10-year-old great-granddaughter to the great-grandmother at 90 years old, all of whom in their community had experienced sexual assault at some point,” Demant said.

### **Why Native Wo/men Remain Silent about Sexual Violence**

- Doesn’t know who to trust with information about the assault.
- Self blame & self criticism! Shame, guilt or fear!
- Afraid of retaliation from partner, family, friends, community, and/or others.
- Not believed or cared about because s/he is a Native.
- Distrust of systems - police, courts, hospitals, service providers, etc.
- S/he is battered and the rape occurred as part of the battering.
- Doesn’t see it as rape if assaulted by a partner.
- Drinking at time of assault & s/he blames her or himself for what happened.
- Talking or thinking about the rape triggers an emotional crisis and s/he doesn’t want to do that.
- S/he just wants to go on with her/his life and to heal!

## ***“What is Rape/Sexual Violence/Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse?”***

Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse which is initiated by one or more persons against another person without that person’s consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or with a person who is incapable of valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, or below the legal age of consent.

Usually, this act is committed by someone we know.

- There is an element of force, coercion, and/or manipulation
- The motive is power & control

Whether or not it was a violent crime has nothing to do with the experience of life altering trauma.

<b><i>Prostitution/Trafficking</i></b>	<b><i>Statutory Rape</i></b>	<b><i>Partner Rape</i></b>	
<b><i>Rape of Children</i></b>	<b><i>Date Rape</i></b>	<b><i>Gang Rape</i></b>	<b><i>Child Sexual Abuse</i></b>
<b><i>Prison Rape</i></b>	<b><i>War Rape</i></b>	<b><i>Acquaintance Rape</i></b>	<b><i>Children of Rape</i></b>

***“Corrective rape”***, also called *curative* or *homophobic rape*, is a hate crime in which one or more people are raped because of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The common intended consequence of the rape, as seen by the perpetrator, is to turn the person heterosexual or to enforce conformity with gender stereotypes.

***Unacknowledged rape*** is defined as a sexual experience that meets the legal requirements of rape, but is not labeled as rape by the victim. Instead, the victim may label the experience as “bad sex”, a “miscommunication”, or a regrettable “hook up.” This response is more frequently recognized among victims of acquaintance rape, date rape or marital rape.

***Rape by deception*** is a situation in which the perpetrator obtains the victim’s agreement to engage in sexual intercourse or other sex acts, but gains it by deception or false statements or actions. Judicial treatment of such situations varies greatly by country and even by case.

***Why should a rape exam be done one week after the sexual assault or later?***

- So that it is documented
- The rape is reported
- Creates an expectation of ‘follow through’ in caring for the survivors
- Survivor will have an advocate
- Take care of her/his health concerns (STD’s, Pregnancy, HIV, etc.)



***An Advocate's Role*** is to act as the biased supporter of Native women/men/LGBTQ and children experiencing sexual violence, advocating for their expressed interests, including safe space and other resources to regain control over their lives; to provide expertise founded on their distinct experiences within justice, social service and medical systems; and to prioritize their safety and offender accountability in all aspects of advocacy, including maintaining confidentiality.

***What Advocacy is needed by Sexual Assault Survivors***

- ***Safety First***
- No judgment
- Make sure s/he is not injured
- Support her/him through the whole process
- Provide follow-up support
- Create a safety plan
- Assist survivors with getting their basic needs met.
- Protect their right to confidentiality and privacy when seeking safety.
- Honor our tribal legacy by accessing traditional ways of healing.
- Create an image of hope.



## *“Are we a Moment or a Movement?”*

As I write this story, we are surrounded by a global pandemic and massive demonstrations in the streets. While we find ourselves homebound during this pandemic, we know that home is not a safe place for countless women and children. For those of us who work to end domestic and sexual violence, we are seeing a sharp increase in incidents of domestic violence, sexual violence, homicide by an intimate partner and all forms of violence against women all across the country. This pandemic has proven to be very dangerous to women in ways we never imagined.

Over the last forty years, the movement to end violence against women has made a monumental impact on legislation, policy, and how society responds to domestic and sexual violence. It's important to remember the critical role Indigenous women played and continue to play in creating, shaping, strengthening and amplifying this movement. We may never know how many lives have been saved or how many more women are safer today than they were forty-five years ago as a result of this movement. And, while thousands of women are safer today, how much safer are our women? Although Indigenous women played a significant role in creating this movement, how well have we benefitted from policies, funding, services and national attention?

As Indigenous women, we know the answer to this question. All across the country there are fewer than 45 tribal domestic violence shelters and according to a recent study 38% of American Indian/Alaska Native women were unable to receive necessary services. We experience the highest rates of violence. Native women are abused 3 ½ times the national average; one in three Native women will be raped; three in five will be physically assaulted; homicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for Native women with 75% killed by an intimate partner. And perhaps the worst statistic is that Native women are murdered at a rate 10 times the national average. According to the National Crime Information Center database in 2018 5,646 Native women went missing. Sadly, we know these numbers do not accurately reflect the actual numbers of Native women who are physically, emotionally, psychologically, mentally abused, sexually assaulted, raped, missing and murdered.

We cannot talk about reclaiming our status as Native women after sexual violence, without talking about colonization, racism, gender and the socio-economic status of our people; all the circumstances that led us to where we are today. All these issues are connected. Violence against our women is intricately laced throughout gender, race and class and cannot be separated out.

There is a long and well documented history of sexual violence against Indigenous women perpetrated by non-native men that is supported and sustained by institutions, policies and leadership. Sexual violence against Indigenous women is a tool for racism and colonialism. Indigenous women continue to pose a tremendous threat to colonialism for a multitude of reasons. We give birth to our nations to ensure our survival, we raise our children and build our communities/societies. We honor and preserve our culture and traditions.

As advocates we must understand and adopt broader anti-violence strategies that address all forms of violence in our communities, including police brutality, racism and poverty. The

strength of our movement is that we have brought attention and drawn attention to so many of the factors that have contributed to and have perpetuated the violence such employment, workplace, housing, child welfare, mental health and substance use. We know that domestic and sexual violence permeates all facets of society and we must continue to work to end it. Particularly during this time when there is talk about dismantling or de-funding police departments, what impact will that have on our movement?

The sexual exploitation of our women is about this government and federal policies that fail to protect our people and to fulfill its' trust responsibility. Most tribes do not have the resources to protect their people. Perhaps our most formidable enemy is the general public's attitudes, myths and misconceptions about Indigenous women, Indian people and tribal nations for generations. Native women have been surviving physical and sexual violence since contact. We have been described as the perfect population, as Indigenous women are prime targets because of where and how we live, because we have experienced trauma for generations and because we have a legal system that won't protect us.

In this era of ME TOO, Silent NO MORE, End the Violence, STOP the Violence and NO MORE STOLEN SISTERS Indigenous women have been front and central in organizing in their communities and raising awareness both locally and nationally. Yes, we have survived as Indigenous women, our voices will not be silenced, and while our women have experienced the most tremendous forms of violence we have maintained and strengthened our status as Indigenous women.

As an elder I continue to be amazed and astounded by this life we are given and this Earth Mother we walk upon. Especially during these times, when an un-seeable virus could bring the world to its knees, and that a black man could wake up one morning, go to the store to buy a pack of cigarettes and the whole world is challenged to change and end the violence that is mainly subjected to people of color. All individuals, organizations and systems must confront the longstanding history of racism and oppression and take action to change–this begins with us.

I'd like to cite what I call the Advocates Prayer, "God, grant me the Serenity

to accept the things I cannot change... and the courage to change the things I cannot accept."

That is our charge, that is what we committed to, to change the world, and we are changing the world everyday as we continue to practice and model our culture and tradition teachings.

I leave with the question, are we a moment in time, a brief flash of light across the span of human life or are we a movement a steady, growing, glowing, brilliant light that forever changes the way we think, live and treat one another, especially Indigenous people and our women and children.

Chi Megwetch to each of the contributor of this advocacy handbook!

The women who shared their stories and words of encouragement wanted other Native women to speak out and get help.

Peggy Bird	Jocelyn Brieschke
Betsy Brugier	Lisa Brunner
Yvonne Cloud	Star Downwind
Margaret Eagle Tail	Emma Geyer
Denise Guinn	Dawn LaRoque
Tara Lewis	Trina Martinez
Williamette Morrison	Rebecca Nelson
Gwen Packard	Elizabeth Red Bull
Starlite Shakespeare	Sherri Villebrun

Valentina Zaragoza

Thank you Chris Stark for helping us in the development of the advocacy handbook by sharing your talent as a writing teacher and a skillful facilitator!

A special thank you goes to Christopher Sweet for contributing his art for the advocacy handbook.

Chi megwetch for all the love, prayers, hope, and tears that went into the creation of the booklet for women. We wanted to touch your hearts!

With my deepest respect for each of the contributors,

Eileen Hudon

Ogitchidakwe Council

### **Minneapolis/St. Paul Advocacy Resources**

#### **Indigenous Women's Life Net (Minneapolis American Indian Center)**

Rachel LaRose (612) 879-1746 rlarose@maicnet.org  
Rebecca Jackson (612) 879-1736 rjackson@maicnet.org

#### **Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (612) 728-2000**

2300 15th Avenue South Minneapolis, 55404

#### **Mino Oski Ain Dah Yung (Good New Home) (651) 370-2600**

769 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104

#### **American Indian Family Center (651) 793-3803**

579 Wells Street St. Paul MN 55130

#### **Women of Nations Crisis Hotline: 877-209-1266**

Local Crisis Line: 651-251-1609

### **Statewide Resources**

#### **Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC)**

(651) 646-4800 (877) 995-4800  
Education and Information - Sexual Violence  
1619 Dayton Ave, Ste 202, St. Paul, MN, 55104-6276

#### **Sacred Hoop Coalition Office: (218) 623-4667 ext. 155**

Toll Free: 888-305-1650  
202 W 2nd St Ste 200, Duluth, MN 55802  
Education and Information - Domestic Violence

### **National Resource**

#### **StrongHearts Native Helpline 1-844-762-8483**

A safe domestic violence and dating violence **helpline** for American Indians and Alaska **Natives**,  
Daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Central Time Zone. Anonymous and confidential.

***Call 211 First Call for Help for other assistance.***





*“Survival once meant --- don’t tell, don’t feel, don’t remember, it meant don’t move, don’t speak up, don’t get him mad, don’t bring attention to myself.*

*I am no longer in a place of survival of that kind. I’m living today through healing, through speaking, through my sobriety, ceremonies, songs, prayer and surrounding myself with strong amazing indigenous women.”*



**Ogitchidakwe Council**

1500 Magnolia Ave. East

St. Paul, MN 55106

763.244.5815