

# Native Herstory

The Growth of the  
Movement to End  
Violence Against  
Native Women

Domestic  
Violence  
Awareness  
Month



National Indigenous Women's Resource Center  
National Resource Center to Enhance Safety of Native Women and their Children

## Herstory of the Native Women's Movement

Our *Herstory* begins 1000s of years ago, with the strength of Native women and acknowledgment that women form the backbone of Native societies. With strong and safe women, Native communities can thrive. Today, our movement is focused on decolonizing Indian nations to restore tribal sovereignty and revive traditional values to ensure safety for Native women and their families.

## 1492 on

1492

- **Columbus arrives** and brings the first non-Indian settlement to the Americas. **Colonization begins:** cultural and physical genocide by explorers and colonists, epidemic diseases, displacement from homelands, enslavement, and targeted attacks on the honored status of women in Native communities.

1879

- **Carlisle Indian Industrial School Opens.** Kill the Indian; Save the Man. Carlisle became the model for Indian boarding schools across the US.
- Native students forced to leave their families at young ages; forced to give up their cultures, languages, religion and even their names. Most experience psychological damage as physical and sexual abuse are rampant. The damage can still be felt today.

Before Carlisle Enrollment



After Carlisle Enrollment

## Federal Policies and Safety for Native Women

1800s

- **General Crimes Act (1834)**- For the first time, Congress asserted concurrent federal jurisdiction in Indian country- over crimes between Indians and non-Indians.
- **Major Crimes Act (1885)**- Congress asserted concurrent federal jurisdiction over major crimes, such as rape and murder, by an Indian against an Indian.
- **Dawes Act (1887)**- Congress sought to break up Indian societies by promoting individual land ownership and disintegrating Indian nations' landholdings.

1900s

- **PL-280 (1953)**- Congress transfers criminal jurisdiction from the federal government to state governments, in certain states, without adequate resources to the states to take over jurisdiction.
- **Indian Civil Rights Act (1968)**- Sentencing limitations of one year are imposed on Tribal courts.
- **Oliphant Decision (1978)** – Indian nations are divested of their inherent sovereignty to assert criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians for crimes that occur against Indian citizens within tribal boundaries.

## IMPACT ON NATIVE WOMEN'S SAFETY

- An inadequate state (in PL 280 and similar jurisdictions) and federal response to crime and an inability for Indian nations to either prosecute altogether (Oliphant) or to adequately hold offenders accountable (sentencing limitations) results in increased violence in Indian country and Alaska Native villages.
- A disintegration of respect for the sacred status of Native women due to ongoing trauma from colonization results in increased violence against Native women.
- But due to Native women's strength and their central role in our Native nations, Native women came together to help each other—first by opening their homes to their sisters in need, and then through more organized grassroots advocacy.

## NATIVE WOMEN'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER OPENS DOORS & MAKES AN IMPACT

1978

- **The White Buffalo Calf Woman Society, Inc.** was founded by Tillie Black Bear in 1977 as a non-profit. In 1980, WBCWS became the first Native shelter on an Indian reservation.



1978

- **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence** U.S. Commission on Civil Rights hearings legitimize the needs of battered women as a national concern. Grassroots women, with Native women at the front, organized to create the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV).

1980s to 90s: We begin to see more national action to support the grassroots work of the past decades.

1984

- **The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act** was first passed and provided the first federal funds to states to support family violence prevention.

1994

- **Passage of the Violence Against Women Act** was a result of extensive grassroots efforts of advocates and professionals from the battered women's movement urging Congress to adopt significant legislation to address domestic and sexual violence. For the first time, DOJ funds 14 tribal domestic violence programs.

1997

- **Sacred Circle Opens** to address violence against Native women in the context of the unique historical, jurisdictional, and cultural issues that American Indian/Alaska Native Nations face. Sacred Circle becomes the first National Indian Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women, funded through FVPSA.

2000s

2000

- **Tribal Coalitions** are funded through reauthorization of VAWA and the US Department of Justice to harness local efforts and help build capacity for tribal programs working to end violence in Native communities.

2000

- **Clan Star, Inc. Opens** as the first OVW TA provider to Tribal Coalitions.

2003

- **National Congress of American Indians Task Force on Violence Against Native Women** is established and begins national work to bring attention to the issues facing Indian nations that impact Native women's safety.



## 2000s

2005

- **OVW Tribal Unit is created under VAWA.**
- **Lorraine Edmo (Shoshone-Bannock)** is hired as the first Deputy Director of Tribal Affairs in the Office on Violence Against Women Tribal Department.



2007

- **Do No Harm** commitment by the Domestic Violence Resource Network when it comes to Native efforts in advocacy, sovereignty and policy development for Native women's safety.

## 2010



2010

- **The Tribal Law and Order** was signed into law by President Obama. The Act increased the one year sentencing limitation on tribal courts, requires the USAO to maintain data on criminal jurisdictions; and provides better support for tribal law enforcement. This was a major step toward improving enforcement and justice in Indian country.

2011



- **National Indigenous Women's Resource Center** opens and receives funding by the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act to serve as the new National Indian Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women.

2013



- 2013 • **Diane Humetewa Becomes First Native American Woman Federal Judge** appointed for the US District Court for Arizona. A Hopi citizen Humetewa is the first Native American woman and the third Native American to serve in the federal judiciary.
- 2013 • **Violence Against Women Act Reauthorized** restoring jurisdiction to Indian nations for crimes of domestic violence against Native women by non-Indian perpetrators and other important tribal amendments to federal law.
- 2013 • **Evidence Based Practice and Trauma Informed Care (TIC)** becomes a focus for advocacy services by increasing the understanding of effects of trauma on individuals, groups, and communities. TIC recognizes what Native advocates have known for decades- a holistic approach to healing best serves survivors of violence.

## Sliver of a Full Moon

2013

- **Sliver of a Full Moon** is a play first produced in 2013 by NIWRC. It quickly gains momentum as an important public awareness tool, telling the story of the 2013 VAWA reauthorization fight through the stories of pain, injustice, courage and strength of Native women survivors of violence.



## LEADING THE MOVEMENT FOR ALL NATIVE WOMEN TILLIE BLACK BEAR

1946-2014

Unci



Grandmother





### We will continue her work

Tillie's understanding of social change, organizing and movement building to make connections beyond the shelter doors to end violence against women is her living legacy. We will honor Tillie by continuing to take on our responsibilities to continue her organizing and movement building. Tillie was a true strong heart, and we will carry her lessons and courage and heart with us in future our work to ensure safety for Native women, their children, and our Indian nations.



## Feel Free To Contact Us!

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us know if you have any  
questions!**

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