

**Testimony of Lori Jump, CEO
StrongHearts Native Helpline
For the U. S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
Legislative Hearing on
“Justice and Safety for Native Children: Examining Title II of the Draft
Native Children’s Commission Implementation Act.”**

My name is Lorrie Jump, and I am a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. I am a survivor of both domestic and sexual violence and have been an advocate for victim survivors for almost 40 years. I also serve as the Chief Executive Officer for StrongHearts Native Helpline.

Miigwech - thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Title II Justice and Safety for Native Children. Title II offers a number of provisions that will have a positive impact on access to justice and healing for AI/AN and Native Hawaiian peoples. While all are important, I will focus my remarks on Section 204, which will have the most impact on the work we do at StrongHearts.

The need for specialized services in AI/AN and Native Hawaiian communities is well documented. Our relatives experience the highest levels of violence and yet access to services is extremely limited. The provisions in Title II, Section 204 will codify several programs including the Alaska Native Resource Center, the Native Hawaiian Resource Center and StrongHearts Native Helpline. Further, this section will also include access to funding for Tribal Domestic and Sexual Violence Coalitions, which are not currently eligible for funding.

Background

Data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) affirms what many in our Native communities understand to be true. As Native people, we are statistically more likely than individuals of other races and ethnicities to be victims of violent victimizations. In 2024 alone, rates of violent victimization among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people were substantially higher—between 3.8 and 7.8 times higher—than those of other groups.

In 2016, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) released the results from a 2010 study on violence against AI/AN women and men. It is important to note that while this data is 15 years old, it remains the most referenced data on intimate partner victimization of AI/AN peoples.

A summary of the NIJ findings was published in a series, titled ‘Five Things About Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men’ revealing that most AI/AN adults are victims of violence. Reported highlights include:

1. More than four in five (83%) have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime, and more than one in three experienced violence in the past year.

2. Native men and women are victimized at similar rates, but in different ways. While both report high victimization rates for physical violence and psychological aggression by an intimate partner, Native women experience far higher rates of sexual violence and stalking.
3. AI/AN women are 1.2 times as likely as non-Hispanic white-only women to have experienced violence in their lifetime, while Native men are 1.3 times as likely as non-Hispanic white-only men to have experienced violence in their lifetime.
4. Native women are more likely to need services yet are less likely to have access to those services. More than one third of Native female victims (38%) were unable to access the services they needed.
5. For AI/AN victims, interracial violence is more prevalent than intraracial violence. An astounding 97% of women reported at least one act of violence at the hands of an interracial (non-Native) partner. At similar rates, 90% of men reported at least one act of interracial (non-Native) partner violence.

Beyond the high rates of violence perpetrated by members of another race, AI/AN victims living in tribal communities face a range of challenges and barriers directly impacting their ability to access services and find justice. The majority of Tribal Nations face additional barriers including:

- a shortage of well-trained law enforcement (or law enforcement in general)
 - Tribal LE funded at 49% of need, [per Bureau of Indian Affairs \(BIA\)](#)
- a medical desert - especially for sexual assault nurse examiners. Survivors of sexual assault often must travel hundreds of miles to receive a sexual assault nurse examination by a certified examiner.
- geographical remoteness of many of our tribal communities creating a disparity in available supportive resources
- limited capacity or financial capability to offer the many services needed by those who have been victimized.
 - Tribal Courts funded at 10% of need, per BIA
- limited funding for tribal public safety and justice
 - BIA's 2021 Tribal Law and Order Act report estimated that Congress funded BIA's public safety and justice program (within the OIP account) 87% below the estimated total tribal need of \$3.5 billion. Congress increased funding for this program from \$434 million in FY2020 to \$556 million in FY2024 (+22%). The FY2026 budget request proposes reducing funding for this program.

In 2021, the Bureau of Indian Affairs released their Report to the Congress on Spending, Staffing, and Estimated Funding Costs for Public Safety and Justice Programs in Indian Country.

The report estimated that Indian country BIA public safety and justice is funded at just under 13% of total need to adequately serve Indian Country.

In Indian Country, victims often face a complicated legal maze of jurisdiction, and may not understand that they may be subject to not one, but three different jurisdictions, depending on what happened to them and where it took place. AI/AN victims often become frustrated as to why tribal police or tribal prosecutors are “doing nothing” to help them, not understanding that their Tribe may not even have the authority to investigate or prosecute specific crimes on their lands.

Our response to victimization is impacted by who we are, what we experienced, where we live and so many more things. Access to justice and the availability of services intended to minimize the impact of victimization are critical to our ability to find healing.

StrongHearts Creation Story

In 2012, data from the National Domestic Violence Hotline (The Hotline) showed that despite the high rates of violence in tribal communities, tribal citizens only rarely accessed The Hotline for services. Seeking to understand why this might be, The Hotline sponsored a series of round tables with grassroots advocates and staff from the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC) to discuss the issue. As a result of those meetings, The Hotline supported the development of a helpline built by and for AI/AN survivors of domestic violence. They sought funding from both federal and non-federal sources, and in 2016 began the groundwork to establish the helpline.

On March 6, 2017, StrongHearts Native Helpline officially launched with a staff of five. With only two Advocates answering the phones, StrongHearts observed limited hours of Monday - Friday, 9:00 AM - 5:20 PM CST. To ensure that no call went unanswered, StrongHearts utilized a recorded message advising that no StrongHearts advocates were available, but callers could either call back during business hours or simply press one to transfer to The Hotline. It should be noted that less than 10% of callers chose to transfer to The Hotline. This reflects the reality that AI/AN survivors were seeking the services of StrongHearts advocates specifically.

Over the past almost nine years, StrongHearts has grown exponentially. From a staff of five, we now have 45 staff in 16 States. We offer advocacy service by telephone, chat and text, 24 hours a day, every day. Every advocate employed by StrongHearts is a citizen of a Tribal Nation, ensuring that our relatives have access to an advocate that understands their lived experience, their unique circumstances and barriers. We have received more than 83,000 contacts and provided more than 32,000 referrals to ongoing supportive services.

Due to the hesitancy to reach outside of their communities for help, the first task of new helpline staff was to develop a resource database of service providers with a mission to serve AI/AN peoples. After a full year of outreach to Tribal Nations, the StrongHearts database contained just over 200 Native-centered services. There were less than 60 tribal shelters. This is in contrast to 574 (now 575) Tribal Nations.

The development of the database confirmed what grassroots advocates had long suspected. There is a serious disparity in the availability of services, particularly of tribal shelters to serve all Tribal Nations.

While there has been an increase in the number of Tribal Nations receiving funding, there are still too many that are unable to provide the services needed by survivors. StrongHearts advocates provide the 24/7 critical services needed to help fill that gap. Services include one on one peer support, safety planning, information and education, and referrals to community services where available.

Previously funded as a project of The Hotline, in FY26, StrongHearts received the first ever award of a grant for the National Indian Domestic Violence Hotline. We are incredibly grateful for the ongoing funding and support received from OFVPS, ACF and HHS.

Title II Justice for Children, Youth and Families

Statistics documenting the need for this Act are well known and undeniable. Specifically, Section 204 would make funding mandatory for two resource centers providing population specific training and technical assistance and services (Alaska and Hawaii). It would also make funding mandatory for a National Indian Domestic Violence Hotline to serve citizens of Tribal Nations across the country. These three provisions are responsible for serving populations with unique needs and barriers not easily met by traditional programs.

Moving funding from discretionary to mandatory would be a clear statement of support for American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and their families experiencing domestic violence. It would prioritize the safety and wellbeing of their families and communities, ensuring equal access to training and technical assistance. It would recognize that every person, every community deserves safety, to live a life free of violence by prioritizing ongoing support for life saving services.

It is important to note the introduction in January 2025, of H. R. 143, Short Title Unauthorized Spending Accountability Act in the House. The bill would have reduced budgetary levels for certain federal programs that were funded through the annual appropriations process but did not have an authorization of appropriations. The introduction of this Bill struck fear in the hearts of advocates from every community across the country.

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) was last reauthorized in 2010, with authorization lapsing in 2016. FVPSA is the primary funder of emergency domestic violence shelters, state domestic violence coalitions and national technical assistance resource centers. Through FVPSA, service providers can access critical training to ensure that services are victim centered and trauma informed. Shelters for survivors of domestic violence provide emergency shelter, providing safety when danger is the highest.

While H.R. 143 was not passed, it made clear the need to work tirelessly to ensure funding for these critical services was protected. Title II of the Native Children's Commission Implementation Act will ensure that the critical programming made possible through FVPSA are not subject to reductions or eventual termination.

Conclusion:

I'd like to express my genuine gratitude to the Committee for considering my testimony. I'd like to conclude by reminding our federal partners of the significance of codifying the critical support to Tribes *and* Tribal organizations. It shows an investment in our communities, promoting solutions that come from our strengths, culture and collective knowledge. That investment advances safer, healthier communities where access to justice and healing is achievable, and where Native individuals, families and communities can thrive.

Attachments

2026 01 01 SH-Summary

2026 01 01 SH-Resources