

Stop Trafficking!

Awareness Advocacy Action

Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter • October 2020 • Vol. 18 • No. 10

FOCUS: This issue highlights the vulnerability of indigenous peoples to human trafficking.

Human Trafficking in Native American Communities

Columbus wrote in his journals, a hundred castellanos are as easily obtained for a woman as for a farm, and it is very general and there are plenty of dealers who go about looking for girls; those from nine to ten are now in demand.

(Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince John, American Journey's Collection)

Before the colonization of North America, Native Americans held women in high regard, as political, spiritual and ceremonial leaders, and as life bearers, the future of their people. Sex was considered sacred in native culture: a gift from the creator and a way to communicate. Violence against women was prohibited and most indigenous languages have no word for rape or prostitution. Ideas related to human trafficking, such as property, commodity, or ownership did not exist in the language nor the culture.

As Europeans colonized North America, they brought values that were much different from the native people. They viewed the value placed on women by the native peoples as a threat to “civilized” society. In their writings, colonial men noted that the women lacked “appropriate” male control. They described indigenous women as exotic, oversexed, and without morality. Native women became targets for men’s sexual “entertainment”, objects to be sold or traded for alcohol or other goods. There were no legal consequences for sexual harassment, rape, or sexual exploitation.

According to the website truthdig.com, George “Washington’s troops put to death all the (native) women and children, excepting some of the young women, whom they carried away for the use of their soldiers and were afterwards put to death in a more shameful manner.”

Native Americans were soon forced onto reservations where they became a “nation within a nation.” They retained their own government and were supposed to keep



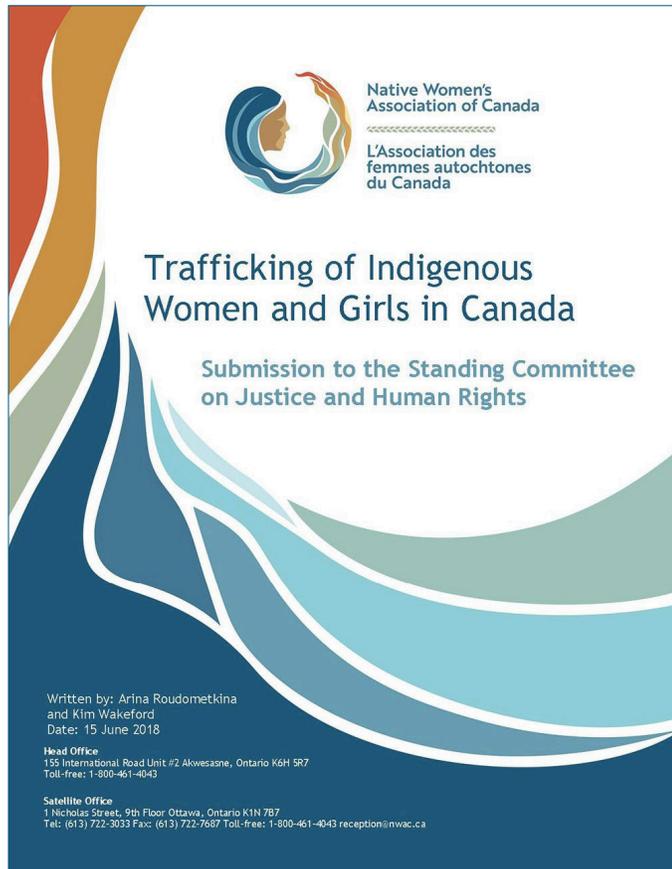
their land through a system of land “allotment.” However, the federal government did not keep all the promises made to them. Removal from homelands resulted in parents and tribes being unable to adequately house, feed, and clothe their children. This was then used as a reason for authorities to remove Indian children from their families and move them to boarding school or residential schools. Parents saw these schools as an option to prevent children from dying of starvation. However, many children were abused during their times at these schools. The children would be punished for practicing their religion or speaking their own language.

From the 1940s through the 1960s, about one-third of Native American children were placed in foster homes: the majority of which were non-Indian. These children often were victims of physical and sexual abuse. Culturally inappropriate welfare practices and lack of adequate support systems further made these children vulnerable to human trafficking.

Today, Native American survivors of human trafficking refer to the history of colonization as the underlying factor behind the sexual exploitation of girls and women. Loss of cultural identity coupled with social and economic marginalization fuels violence in the community. Native Americans suffer from systemic racism from all sections of society. Stereotypical representation of Native Americans in the media serve to marginalize them, especially youth. This coupled with poverty, limited job opportunities, and homelessness place Native Americans at risk for both sex and labor trafficking. (Lake, Nancy. “Human Trafficking in Native American Communities.” ACAMS Today, January 19, 2018) Click [here](#) to learn more.

Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada

In June 2018, the Native Women's Association of Canada published a Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada.



Introduction

Canada's legacy of colonialization has pushed Indigenous women and girls into dangerous and precarious social and economic conditions, making them vulnerable to human trafficking. Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by racialized violence in Canada. While Indigenous women make up 4% of the Canadian population, over 50% of trafficking victims in the country are from the indigenous population. Despite this, campaigns in Canada to educate people about human trafficking fail to specifically reference Indigenous peoples as victims of human trafficking.

As a result of colonialism and resulting discrimination, Indigenous women and girls have less access to social supports and services, putting them at a greater risk of being recruited into human trafficking. While urban centers are considered hubs for human trafficking in

Canada, Indigenous women are recruited into human trafficking while residing in their Northern and rural communities. Further, British Columbia's urban areas are especially problematic for the sexual exploitation of Indigenous youth, many of whom are First Nations. Inuit women in Northern communities are also extremely vulnerable to becoming trafficked.

Identifying and assisting Indigenous victims and survivors of human trafficking and exploitation has been greatly hindered by a lack of working together across jurisdictions. This has created significant difficulties for Indigenous organizations, advocates, and community members in conducting research that is cognizant of the varying experiences among and between First Nations, Inuit, and Metis women impacted by human trafficking, and developing policies and strategies that are responsive to those experiences.

Some of the recurring themes that contribute to the recruitment of Indigenous women into human trafficking include:

- Precarious housing and poor living conditions
- High rates of unemployment, unstable employment, and low working wages
- Lack of access to social and economic resources and programs
- Prior exposure to human trafficking and the sex trade from a young age (through family or friends)
- Family violence and the impacts of colonization (such as the residential school experience and intergenerational trauma)

Social media has also contributed to the increase in the human trafficking of Indigenous women and girls. Recruitment of young girls and women using the internet is a growing concern for many Northern communities, in which young women are often promised a better life in urban settings by online "friends".

Conclusion and Recommendations

The trafficking of Indigenous women and girls persists in Canada and needs to be addressed in a deliberate and cross-jurisdictional manner. The issue cannot be properly addressed without examining the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and the colonial legacy. Indigenous women and girls in Canada need proper access to relevant and culturally appropriate

supports and resources. Communities need education on healthy relationships and awareness of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Poor living conditions, including precarious housing, high food costs, low employment wages, and limited job opportunities, need to be addressed to avoid the risk of women and girls searching for alternative and more dangerous conditions.

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) recommends that:

- more funding be allocated to culturally-safe, community-based programs addressing poverty, precarious housing, healthy relationships, and internet safety;
- more funding be allocated to accessible, stable, and culturally appropriate safe homes for victims of human trafficking;
- there be increased multi-sectoral collaboration between national, provincial, territorial and local jurisdictions, and service providers
- there be an increase in cross-jurisdictional and distinction-based data sharing and gathering on First Nations, Inuit, and Metis populations and human trafficking;
- laws and education materials be translated to a wide range of Indigenous languages to enhance accessibility and address any gaps in communication and knowledge transfer;

- in collaboration with Indigenous organizations, communities, and leadership, resources be developed and provided to communities on safe travel, and legitimate work opportunities;
- more funding be allocated to community-based and led initiatives centered around the social and economic empowerment of Indigenous women; and
- all policy and counter-human trafficking initiatives be implemented and reviewed in consultation with Indigenous organizations, individual communities, and leadership;
- there be a concerted cultural competency training, Indigenous history education, and training on the trafficking of Indigenous women and girls for service providers and front-line workers, including Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Canada Border Services Agency officials.

According to the 2020 Trafficking In Persons (TIP) Report, the Canadian government developed a new law enforcement tool kit in 2019 to assist law enforcement identification of human trafficking victims, particularly youth and indigenous communities.

(Roudometkina, Arina and Wakeford, Kim. 2018. *Trafficking of Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada: Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights*)

Click [here](#) to learn more.



INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, INDIGENOUS VOICES

Who are Indigenous Peoples?

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues estimates there are more than 370 million indigenous people worldwide. At times, they are described as aboriginal: members of a tribe or members of a specific group. While there is no internationally accepted definition of "indigenous," the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues identifies several key factors to facilitate international understanding of the term:

- Self-identification of indigenous peoples at an individual and community level;
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies;
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources;



Awareness

- Distinct social, economic, or political systems;
- Distinct language, culture, and beliefs;
- Membership in non-dominant groups of society;
- and/or resolve to maintain and reproduce ancestral environments and system as distinctive peoples and communities.

The term “indigenous” has prevailed as a generic term for many years. In some countries, there may be a preference for other terms including tribes, first peoples/nations, aboriginals, ethnic groups, adivasi, janajati. Occupational and geographical terms like hunter-gatherers, nomads, peasants, hill people, etc., also exist and for all practical purposes can be used interchangeably with “indigenous peoples”. In many cases, the notion of being termed “indigenous” has negative connotations and some people may choose not to reveal or define their origin.

Indigenous peoples are the holders of unique languages, knowledge systems and beliefs and possess invaluable knowledge of practices for the sustainable management of natural resources. They have a special relation to and use of their traditional land. Their ancestral land has a fundamental importance for their collective physical and cultural survival as peoples. Indigenous peoples hold their own diverse concepts of development, based on their traditional values, visions, needs, and priorities.

Worldwide, indigenous persons are often economically and politically marginalized and are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and armed conflict. They may lack citizenship and access to basic services, sometimes including education. These factors make indigenous peoples particularly vulnerable to both sex trafficking and forced labor. (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Factsheet. *Who are indigenous peoples?*) Click [here](#) to learn more.



Impact of Trafficking on Native Americans

Native Americans experience higher levels of poverty, rape, and entry into the foster system – all risk factors for trafficking. The proliferation of the fracking industry also contributed to a rise in the sex trafficking of Native girls and women as “man camps” were established in remote areas of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. This created a high demand for sex in an environment rampant with drugs, alcohol, and limited supervision.

There are many challenges to addressing human trafficking in tribal communities in the United States that are unique to the Native American experience. Only one of the federal agencies that handle human trafficking cases records the race or ethnicity of the victim. Lack of data limits agencies from identifying the magnitude of human trafficking in the Native American population. There are also overlapping jurisdictional issues between tribal, state, and federal governments that allow perpetrators to slip through the cracks and that create gaps in communication between agencies. Native American tribes cannot arrest or prosecute non-Native Americans which allows non-Native traffickers to operate with little risk. A 2012 UN Report estimates that almost 80 percent of rapes of Native women occur at the hands of non-Native men. Culturally appropriate support services for at-risk individuals and survivors are also limited for Native American girls and women due to a lack of resources.

Combatting Trafficking of Native Americans

Human trafficking of Native Americans has received increased attention by both federal and tribal governments in recent years. Tribal Nations – such as the Navajo Nation – have begun implementing anti-trafficking laws, raising awareness in their communities, and training initiatives.

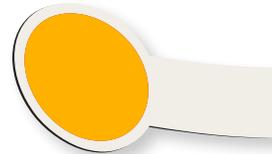
The United States’ 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report highlights actions undertaken by the government to combat the sex trafficking of Native Americans. Health and Human Services developed resources and engaged tribal and Native youth on the impact of human trafficking on indigenous communities and how cultural practices such as storytelling can raise awareness of trafficking. The Department of Justice provided technical assistance funding to increase the

capacity to respond to sex trafficking, including safety planning for victims, developing interagency cooperation in responding to sex trafficking, and expanding service providers' understanding of trafficking involving Native women and children. The Department of Justice also trained American Indian and Alaska Native law enforcement to better understand and investigate child sex trafficking cases. (Kane-Hartnett, Liza. 2018. *Trafficking in Tribal Nations: the impact of sex trafficking on Native Americans*) Click [here](#) to learn more.

*“A buyer of commercial sex said to me,
‘I thought we killed all of you.’”*

(Anonymous, from the report: “Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota”)

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Trafficking of Indigenous People Globally

The United Nations estimate that 370 million people — 5 percent of the global population — are indigenous. They are members of distinct cultures and social and political systems who lived on their lands long before the first colonizers and settlers arrived. Today, indigenous people endure poverty, illness, and human rights abuses at far higher rates than the rest of the world. They are also disproportionately victims of both labor and sex trafficking.

Indigenous people have been ousted from their home territories around the globe, from Indonesia to Colombia and Hawaii. Poverty, homelessness, poor education, and few job opportunities make indigenous men and boys globally vulnerable to labor traffickers. They are behind many of the commodities we consume. Indigenous women and girls are at severe risk of sex trafficking. Accurate numbers are hard to come by, in part because of underreporting and a lack of consensus about when commercial sex workers cross into being victims of human trafficking. But data from the United States, Canada, and other nations with indigenous populations show risk factors for sexual exploitation and human trafficking. However, most people are unaware of the plight of indigenous people. An unfortunate example is a shocking indifference to indigenous women seen in the national inquiry in Canada into the unsolved disappearances and deaths of as many as 4,000 indigenous females dating back decades. Canada's indigenous population is very small — just 4% of the population — yet more than 50% of all sex trafficking victims in Canada are indigenous.

In the United States, crimes on Indian lands are much less likely to be reported or investigated than cases elsewhere. Click [here](#) to learn more.

The following are some highlights from the 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report regarding the trafficking of indigenous people globally.

Bolivia

Rural and poor Bolivians, most of whom are indigenous, are particularly at risk for sex and labor trafficking. Bolivian women and girls are exploited in sex trafficking within Bolivia and neighboring countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Panama, and Peru. Within the country, traffickers exploit Bolivian men, women, and children in forced labor in domestic work, mining, ranching, and agriculture.

Forced criminality continues to be a problem. Children are forced to commit crimes, such as robbery and drug production, and others are exploited in forced begging. In 2019, traffickers forced a Bolivian victim into criminality by compelling her to smuggle drugs into Malaysia. Traffickers exploit a significant number of Bolivians in forced labor in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile in sweatshops, agriculture, brick-making, domestic work, textile factories, and the informal sector.

Colombia

Indigenous communities, individuals with disabilities, and those living in areas where illegal armed groups and criminal organizations are active are forced into human trafficking. Sex trafficking of Colombian women and children occurs within the country and around the world. Colombian women and children are victims of sex trafficking within Colombia in areas with tourism and large extractive industries. Illegal armed groups, particularly in the departments of Choco, Norte de Santander, Cordoba, Nariño, and Cauca forcibly recruit children to serve as combatants and informants, harvest illicit crops, and to exploit them in sex trafficking.

Republic of Congo

In the Republic of the Congo, internal trafficking primarily involves recruitment from remote rural areas for exploitation in cities. Traffickers exploit the indigenous



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An 18-year-old indigenous woman from the Carapana community in Colombia was promised domestic work and a salary of \$77 US dollars. When she arrived in Bogota she was warned that she would not receive a salary for 2 months because she had to pay for the tickets from her home town to the capital city. She was later told that she would have to work an additional 20 months without a salary because she had to pay for a decorative piece that she had accidentally broken. The 18-year-old indigenous woman was pregnant and worked more than 12 hours a day with restrictions to her freedom.

The Colombian prosecutor who won the first conviction for Trafficking in Persons for domestic servitude in Colombia was able to demonstrate that the indigenous woman was vulnerable due to her ethnic origin, low level of education, economic difficulties in her place of origin and because she was pregnant when she arrived in Bogota, and that this position of vulnerability was abused. This situation of vulnerability coupled with evidence of recruitment and transfer for exploitation were fundamental to the judge's ruling on the existence of Trafficking in Persons for domestic servitude under Colombian criminal rules and procedure. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "First Conviction in Colombia for Trafficking in Persons for Domestic Servitude." 2019) Click [here](#) to learn more.

populations for forced labor in the agricultural sector; some reports suggest that some servitude might be hereditary. NGOs report that internal trafficking involves forced labor or exploitation of indigenous people by members of the majority Bantu community in remote areas. North Koreans working in the Republic of Congo may have been forced to work by the North Korean government.

Ecuador

Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers exploit Ecuadorian indigenous men, women, and children in sex trafficking and forced labor within the country, including in domestic service, begging, banana and palm plantations, floriculture, shrimp farming, fishing, sweatshops, street vending, mining, and other areas of the informal economy. Traffickers recruit children from impoverished indigenous families under false promises of employment and subject them to forced labor in begging, domestic service, sweatshops, or as street and commercial vendors in Ecuador or other South American countries. Ecuadorian children are subjected to forced labor in criminal activity, such as drug trafficking and robbery. Traffickers exploit Ecuadorian men, women, and children in sex trafficking and forced labor abroad, including in the United States and other South American countries, particularly Chile.

Guatemala

Traffickers particularly target indigenous Guatemalans, including children, for forced labor, including in tortilla-making shops in Guatemala and in foreign countries. Traffickers exploit Guatemalan children in forced begging, street vending, and as street performers, particularly within Guatemala City and along the border with Mexico. Child victims' families are often complicit in their exploitation.

Honduras

In Honduras, children from indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, particularly Miskito boys, are at risk for forced labor in the fishing, mining, construction, and hospitality industries.

Indonesia

Indonesian Government failure to prevent companies from encroaching on indigenous communities' land, sometimes in collusion with the military and local police, contributed to displacement that also left these ethnic minority groups vulnerable to trafficking.

Mexico

Women, children and unaccompanied minors, indigenous persons, persons with mental and physical disabilities are most at risk for trafficking in Mexico. Observers in Mexico noted that indigenous victims experienced discrimination within the judicial system. The national antitrafficking law provided for restitution from a victims' fund that was unfunded, no victims received restitution; this compared with two victims receiving restitution in 2018.

Traffickers recruit and exploit Mexican women and children, and to a lesser extent men and transgender individuals, in sex trafficking in Mexico and the United States through false promises of employment, romantic relationships, or extortion. Traffickers exploit Mexican men, women, and children in forced labor in agriculture, domestic service, childcare, manufacturing, mining, food processing, construction, tourism, begging, and street vending in Mexico and the United States.

Traffickers exploit day laborers and their children in forced labor in Mexico's agricultural sector; these individuals migrate from the poorest states to the

agricultural regions to harvest vegetables, coffee, sugar, and tobacco; receive little or no pay, health care, or time off, may live in substandard housing, and in the case of children, are denied an education.

Organized criminal groups profit from sex trafficking and force Mexican and foreign men, women, and children to engage in illicit activities, including as assassins, lookouts, and in the production, transportation, and sale of drugs. Observers, including Mexican legislators, noted links between violence against women and girls and between women's disappearances, murders, and trafficking by organized criminal groups. Experts expressed concern over the recruitment and use of torture and murder by organized criminal groups of indigenous children and youth to exploit them in forced criminality.

Panama

In Panama, traffickers exploit indigenous females in forced labor in rural, impoverished border areas of the country.

Paraguay

Indigenous persons are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Boys are often victims of forced labor in the agriculture industry, domestic service, criminality, and in some cases as horse jockeys. Traffickers exploit Paraguayan women and girls in sex trafficking within the country.

In the Chaco region, traffickers exploit adults and children in debt bondage. Children engaged in street vending and begging and working in agriculture, mining, brick making, and ranching are vulnerable to trafficking.

Paraguayan victims of sex trafficking and forced labor have been identified in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Mexico, Spain, and other countries. Traffickers recruit Paraguayan women as couriers of illicit narcotics to Europe and Africa, where they subject them to sex

trafficking. Traffickers move female trafficking victims regionally and to Europe via transit countries including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Spain. Paraguayan women and girls are vulnerable to trafficking on ships and barges navigating the country's major waterways.

Philippines

In the Philippines, traffickers subject indigenous and displaced persons in Mindanao to trafficking through the promise of employment. Officials, including those in diplomatic missions, law enforcement, and immigration agencies allegedly have been complicit in trafficking or allowed traffickers to operate with impunity.

Some corrupt officials allegedly accept bribes to facilitate illegal departures for overseas workers, operate sex trafficking establishments, facilitate the production of fraudulent identity documents, or overlook illegal labor recruiters.

Venezuela

Traffickers exploit women and girls, especially those from indigenous communities. Illegal mining operations exist in some of Venezuela's most remote areas, including Bolívar state, where traffickers exploit girls into sex trafficking, forcibly recruit youth to join armed criminal groups, and forced children to work in the mines under dangerous conditions.

In 2019, there was an increase in sex and labor trafficking in the informal mining sector. It was estimated roughly that 45 percent of miners in Bolívar state were underage and extremely vulnerable to trafficking. Armed groups exploit civilians and kidnapping victims into sex trafficking and forced labor, including farming, domestic service, and construction. Workers recruited from other areas of the country were victims of forced labor and manipulated through debt, threats of violence, and even death.

Mexican authorities freed 107 indigenous men and women whom officials say were being held as slave laborers in a Mexico City factory disguised as a drug rehabilitation center. The victims ranged from 14 to 70 years old, some were tortured, and some victims also suffered sexual abuse. All the victims were suffering from severe dehydration and malnutrition. The captives, some of whom speak only indigenous languages and no Spanish, were locked in the building, which had bars on the windows and a fence outside.

They made handbags and clothespins and were not paid. Their only daily meal consisted of chicken legs and rotten vegetables and most of the food that was found was spoiled. The men and women worked 8 a.m. to midnight and were given only a half-hour food break. They were not allowed to go to the bathroom, and many soiled themselves. Most of the victims were nabbed off the street under the guise of giving them treatment for alcoholism or drug addiction. (Brice, Arthur. "107 slave laborers freed in Mexico City." CNN, December 4, 2019) Click [here](#) to learn more.

Advocacy



Diane Redsky runs Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre in Canada, which advocates for indigenous women and children, specifically sex trafficking victims. Her organization runs safe houses, rehabilitation and prevention programs throughout Manitoba. Redsky says the history of racism against indigenous Canadians feeds into the cycle of violence and exploitation against them. “It’s really difficult to be able to fight those stereotypes as indigenous women when a whole society is targeting indigenous women and girls, particularly for violence and abuse—and that spills over into sex trafficking,” says Redsky. (Newton, Paula. “Canada’s stolen daughters: Sex traffickers target indigenous Canadians.” CNN, February 23, 2017) Click [here](#) to learn more.

Human Trafficking Affects Tribes in Montana

Human trafficking has been tied closely with the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls crisis. A report from Indian Country Today, “The Invisible Victims of Human Trafficking,” stated that Native females are trafficked at disproportionate levels due to risk factors correlated to exploitation, especially homelessness; limited resources on reservations; and jurisdictional complexities creating a favorable environment for traffickers.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that domestic violence and sex trafficking are two underlying issues linked to the disappearances of girls and women in Indian Country adding that Montana indigenous girls and women make up 3.3 percent of the population while 30 to 40 percent of those are deemed missing in Montana.

Billings, the largest town in Montana, has the highest commercial ads for sex trafficking. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation Billings area office, from October 2016 – 2017 Billings produced 19,226 in commercial ads; Bozeman with 1,533; Missoula with 4,615; Great Falls with 2,931; Butte with 2,548; Helena with 2,274; and Kalispell with 2,223.

“Human trafficking is about vulnerability,” said Katathrina Werner, Missoula Chair and founder of Human Trafficking Task Force. “We all play a role in affecting this issue. Knowing when to step in is important,” said Werner, a clinical professor at the University of Montana School of Social Work who has been educating, raising awareness, and helping communities across Montana understand red flags and indicators of human trafficking exploitation.

Werner said when people are not used to looking for something, they can miss what is happening right in front of them and the power of awareness plays a vital role in combating sex trafficking in rural communities. A Department of Justice community survey of 845 people from across Montana indicated that one in four did not know if human trafficking happened in their communities and 40.5 percent said they would not know how to identify it. (Upham, Lailani. “Human trafficking affects tribes in Montana.” Char-Koosta News, February 21, 2019) Click [here](#) to learn more.



Trafficking in Hawaii

The results of a study published in early 2020 by the Arizona State University’s Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research and the Hawaii Commission on the Status of Women found that more than a quarter of Hawaiians receiving social services reported that they had been sex trafficked.

Nearly 100 of the study’s 363 participants from five Hawaiian Islands, who receive social services through the Hawaii nonprofit organization Child and Family Service, said they were a victim of sex trafficking at some point in their life. Of the victims, 75% were female and one in five victims had been sex trafficked as a child. The victims’ average age of their first sex trafficking experience was 21.4 years. Nearly a quarter of them were trafficked by a family member. Sixty-four percent of victims identified as being all or some Native Hawaiian.

Nearly a third of sex trafficking victims said technology, such as smartphones, websites, and social media was used as part of their sex trafficking experience. Victims were also more likely to report a gang affiliation, drug use, and homelessness. Click [here](#) to learn more.

New Mexico Struggles With Trafficking of Native Americans

Thousands of human trafficking victims are targeted and exploited in the US every year, of whom only 10% are ever identified. In New Mexico, only 160 cases have been opened since 2016. While Native Americans make up about 11% of the state's population, they account for nearly a quarter of trafficking victims.



An investigation by Searchlight New Mexico found that indigenous women and girls are the least recognized and the least protected population in the state. Investigators noted a lack of protocols, mandated training, and coordination among law enforcement systems and medical institutions. Moreover, in 2017, federal prosecutors declined nearly half of all reported cases of human trafficking in Indian Country. The District of New Mexico US attorney's office, the third busiest district in the country for Indian Country cases, has declined 69% of cases that fall under the "offenses committed within Indian Country" statute and 80% of cases falling under child abuse in Indian Country, according to data from the Trac research center at Syracuse University. (Pachelli, Nick. "Nobody saw me": why are so many Native American women and girls trafficked?" The Guardian, December 18, 2019) Click [here](#) to learn more.

What Makes Native American Women Vulnerable to Trafficking?

Phoenix, Arizona, which has a large Native community, has been identified as a major jurisdiction for trafficking for sexual exploitation by the US Department of Justice. Several years ago, the National Congress of American Indians reported that an estimated 40 percent of women who are victims of sex trafficking identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, or First Nations.

Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya, a Hopi expert on human trafficking in Indian country, has proposed several reasons Native women are targeted. The high rates of poverty and hardship in tribal communities; historical trauma and culture loss; homelessness and runaway youth; high rates of involvement with child welfare systems, including entry into the foster care system; exposure to



violence in the home or community; drug and alcohol abuse; and low levels of law enforcement all add up to a very vulnerable community rich in targets for traffickers.

For Valaura Imus-Nahsonhoya, tribal leadership is key to preventing human trafficking. To prevent sex trafficking in the Native community, tribal leaders need to pass new laws which include prosecution of traffickers. She also notes that tribal law is not prepared to deal with trafficking in tribal casinos. Some tribal nations, like the Navajo, have codes that address trafficking, such as the Violence Against Women Act. Imus-Nahsonhoya hopes other tribes will follow their lead. ("Why Traffickers Go After Native American Women." Navajo-Hopi Observer, March 19, 2019)

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Advocacy



Federal Office to Investigate Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

The Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs is opening seven offices nationwide to investigate cold cases of missing and murdered indigenous women under the Operation Lady Justice Task Force.

The first office opened July 27 in Bloomington, Minn., while other offices are expected to open nationwide in these cities: Bloomington, Billings, Rapid City, S.D., Albuquerque, N.M.; Phoenix, Ariz.; Anchorage, Alaska; and Nashville, Tenn.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



Resource Guide

The Senior Policy Operating Group under the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons established an Ad Hoc Working Group on

What Is Being Done?

American Indians and Alaska Natives in September 2017 to increase coordination among agencies responding to human trafficking in indigenous communities. The Working Group released a "Resource Guide on U.S. Government Entities Combating Human Trafficking in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities" for policymakers and tribes in October 2018.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



Training

The Office of Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) provided seven in-person trainings and two webinars for Native communities through the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC). Topics included how human trafficking impacts Native communities, culturally-responsive resources, and promising practices for services and partnerships. NHTTAC provides support to inform and enhance the public health response to human trafficking. NHTTAC builds the capacity of communities to identify and respond to the complex needs of all survivors of human trafficking and address the root causes that make individuals, families, and communities vulnerable to human trafficking.

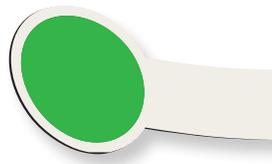
OTIP and the Agency for Native Americans (ANA) co-presented at the Bring Her Home: Creating Tribal Responses to Commercial Sexual Exploitation conference hosted

by the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, on a panel titled "Empowering Native Youth to Combat Human Trafficking." Topics included the development of the Native Youth Toolkit, awareness-raising and direct outreach as a form of primary prevention, and models for tailoring materials to local needs. OTIP and ANA also disseminated a Native Youth Toolkit on Human Trafficking, informed by focus groups of tribal youth and Native survivors of human trafficking.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

"When my daughter was 14 years old, she ended up involved in prostitution. As a child, she was molested. She was so upset about her life and told me to go away. She was suicidal and couldn't live with herself. No one was there to help her. When she went missing, I went to the police and had to wait. They told me that if my daughter is missing then it was probably a runaway and not kidnapping. There were no resources for us. She later ended up in prison. I understand how these things happen in our communities. Now that I have learned about human trafficking, I am going to go home and yell from my experience. It hurt so bad to have to live with this. A lot of women, men, daughters, and sons are going away. I am going to yell and scream for those who are going through this until I am heard and something is done."

(B.L., Quechuan Tribal Member)



Actions You Can Take



Image Attribution: Seeding Sovereignty collective member Jackie Fawn, www.actionnetwork.org

Not Invisible Act

Not Invisible Act of 2019 (H.R.2438) would establish an advisory committee on violent crime comprised of law enforcement, tribal leaders, federal partners, service providers, and survivors to make recommendations to the Department of Interior and Department of Justice. The bill currently has 60 co-sponsors in the House. Call and ask your Representative to co-sponsor and support this bill.

Savannah's Act

Savannah's Act, which has passed in the Senate in March and the House in September, bolsters the data tracking of missing and murdered Native Americans, standardizes law enforcement and justice protocols, and requires the Department of Justice to provide training and technical assistance to tribes and law enforcement to implement new protocols. The bill now is on the President's desk to sign.

Red Ribbon Alert

Support the Red Ribbon Alert project. Since there's no database tracking missing and murdered indigenous women, this project offers an alert system for when a Native American woman goes missing. Like their Facebook page and share missing women alerts from your area.

Save our Sisters Walk

This annual 80 mile walk in Montana is to raise awareness about violence against native women. The larger movement, which began in Canada, is known on social media by the hashtag #MMIW. Both walks are meant to draw attention to the thousands of indigenous women missing or murdered in the North America.

Navajo Nation Law Against Human Trafficking

The 23rd Navajo Nation Council unanimously approved the 2017 Law Against Human Trafficking. According to the bill, the law intends to deter human traffickers by criminalizing certain offenses, prescribing appropriate punishment, giving priority to the investigation and prosecution of trafficking offenses, and protecting and providing justice to victims.

A person commits human trafficking if they:

- Recruit, solicit, entice, transport or obtain by any means another person with the intent or knowledge that force, fraud or coercion will be used to subject that person to provide labor, services, or to engage in commercial sexual activity.
- Benefit financially or by receiving anything of value, from the labor, services or commercial sexual activity of another person with the knowledge that force, fraud or coercion was used to obtain the labor, services or commercial sexual activity.

** Minors induced to perform services, labor or commercial sex are human trafficking victims without requiring the elements of force, fraud or coercion.

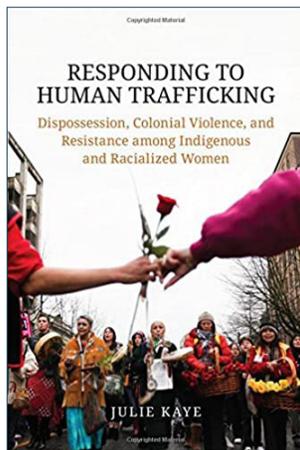
The Navajo Nation's Law Against Human Trafficking is stronger than the federal laws because it reflects the dynamics of trafficking and is more expansive: The definitions for "commercial sex act" include a broader range of activities for which traffickers can be penalized, e.g. inducing someone to participate in "sexually explicit exhibitions" such as exotic dancing. The definition for "commercial sex act" also penalizes an act for which anything of value is promised, given or received. This addition allows for earlier intervention since the transaction must only be known but does not need to be complete for successful criminalization. To access the law, please click [here](#).



Action

Responding to Human Trafficking

Responding to Human Trafficking is the first book to critically examine responses to the growing issue of human trafficking in Canada. Julie Kaye challenges the separation of trafficking debates into international versus domestic emphases and explores the tangled ways in which anti-trafficking policies reflect and reinforce the settler-colonial nation-building project of Canada. In doing so, Kaye reveals how some anti-trafficking measures create additional harms for the individuals they are trying to protect, particularly migrant and Indigenous women. The author's critical examination draws upon theories of post- and settler-colonialism, Indigenous feminist thought, and fifty-six interviews with people in counter-trafficking employment across Western Canada. *Responding to Human Trafficking* provides a new framework for critical analyses of anti-trafficking and other rights-based and anti-violence interventions. Kaye disrupts measures that contribute to the insecurity experienced by trafficked women and individuals affected by anti-trafficking responses by pointing to anti-colonial organizing and the possibilities of reciprocity in relationships of care.



Trafficking of Indigenous People in Canada

Indigenous people have inhabited Canada for thousands of years and today, Indigenous people make up only four percent of the Canadian population – yet represent over fifty percent of all sex trafficking victims in Canada. What makes Indigenous women and girls so vulnerable to exploitation? CNN's Paula Newton introduces us to the activists, the advocates, and the survivors who are working hard to change the narrative. Ma Mawi has worked closely with CNN sharing real-life experiences of Indigenous women who were sex-trafficking victims in Manitoba. To view the videos, please click [here](#).



Reach to End Sex Trafficking in Native American Communities

Reach to End Sex Trafficking in Native American Communities is a powerful and informative 17 minute YouTube video which may be accessed by clicking [here](#).

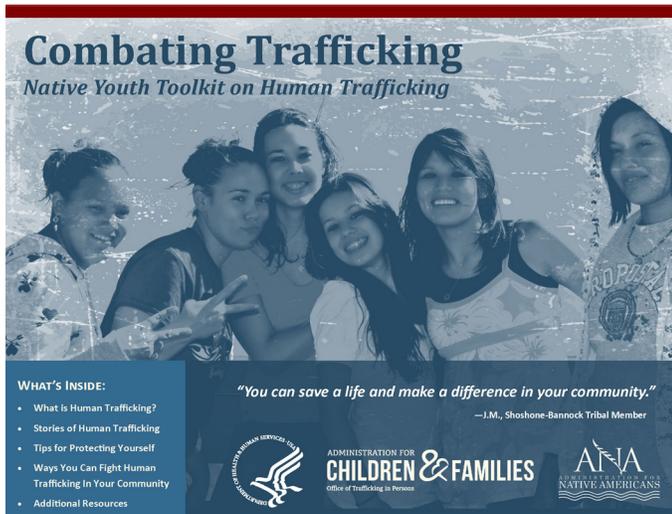


Trafficking of Indigenous People an 'Epidemic'

Rates of human trafficking in Toronto are very concerning, says a local human rights group. A national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women helps highlight the issue. Click [here](#) to view a 3-minute YouTube.

"I was embarrassed to tell anyone, I didn't want to shame my family. I wanted to die. I eventually escaped and now work fighting trafficking. I never want anyone to go through what I went through. It's important to know the signs and have the tools to protect yourself. Hold events, movie screenings, and talk to your friends and family about human trafficking. If you see something suspicious report it. You can save a life and make a difference in your community."

(J.M., Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Member)



Toolkit to Prevent Human Trafficking of Native Youth

The purpose of this toolkit is to raise awareness and prevent trafficking of Native youth by educating them on what human trafficking is, available resources, safety tips, and ways to get involved in their communities. The toolkit is available as a PDF document.

This resource considers the unique cultural aspects of human trafficking for Native youth, tying in the fact that trafficking is outside of Native traditions, and encourages youth to speak with tribal Elders in their community.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Resources for Native Youth

Native Youth Toolkit on Human Trafficking Toolkit

Click [here](#) for more information.

Social Media Resources for Native Youth

Follow:

- @StrongHeartsdv
- @niwrc
- @GEMSGirls
- @Polaris_Project
- @SafeHorizon
- @ACFHHS

Websites

Information about Human Trafficking among the Native American Population may be accessed at any of these websites.

Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, and Human Trafficking in Native Hawaiian Communities

Click [here](#).

First Nation's Woman's Alliance

Click [here](#).

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre

Click [here](#).

Native Alliance Against Violence

Click [here](#).

Native Hope

Click [here](#).

Navajo Nation Law Against Human Trafficking 2017

Click [here](#).

Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition

Click [here](#).



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