



A Survivor's View on Missing and Murdered Indigenous People: A Healing Journey of Raising Survivor and Grassroots Warrior Voices

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Abstract

Native American people are at higher rates of violence but have fewer studies done on them to highlight the high statistics.

Many systemic issues contribute to the higher rates of violence:

- historical and multi-generational trauma
- poverty
- colonialism

I am a two-spirit survivor of domestic abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking, and have crucial expertise on these issues

Objectives

Sex trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual assault directly correlate with the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous people. With my research I am:

- adding to the literature from a different perspective than most
- heightening voices and empowering other survivors
- contributing to a rising survivor movement, which we have already begun with Annita Lucchesi creating the survivor leadership council for the Sovereign Bodies Institute

Mixed Method Approach

I surveyed 35 Indigenous people across the United States and Canada. I also interviewed 12 people from various aspects of life and different areas ranging from California to New York to Minnesota, and all the way to British Columbia and Manitoba, Canada.

The purpose of this research is to:

- get a sense of how survivors feel about their experiences and the availability of services that are accessible to them
- focus on cultural healing, trauma-informed care, grassroots organizations, and survivor leadership.

Results

A total of 35 Indigenous people were surveyed across the United States and Canada.

- 87% are enrolled members of tribes, and 13% are descendants
- 86% of the people surveyed were women, 14% identify as two-spirit.

Publicly identifying as a survivor is sometimes an indicator of where someone may be at in their healing journey.

Of the people surveyed 75% publicly identify as a survivor.

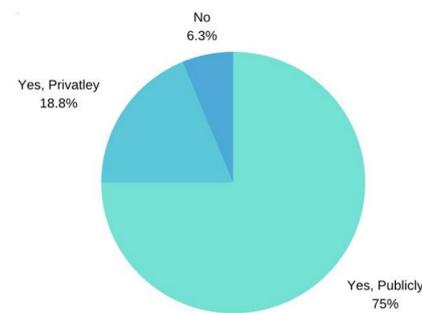


Figure 1: Percentage of people who identify as a survivor

- 45% have been victims of violent crimes that they reported
- 50% have been victims of violent crimes that were not reported

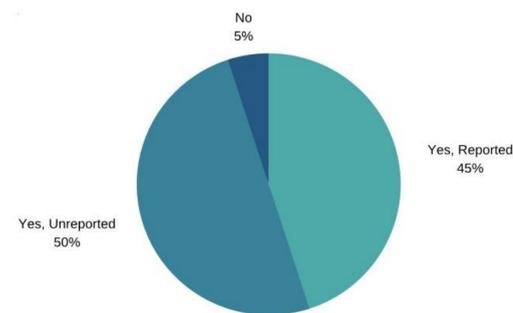


Figure 2: Percentage of people who have been victims of violent crimes

When asked if they knew the person who victimized them

- 19% said yes, this person was a family member
- 44% said this person was an intimate partner
- 22% said the person as a friend
- 15% said the person was a stranger

Results

When asked if they were abused as a child.

- 29% said yes, sexually
- 22% said yes, physically
- 38% said yes, emotionally

These were “select all that apply” answers, and several people were abused in more ways than one as a child.

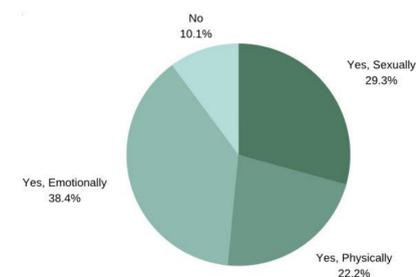


Figure 4: Percentage of people who were abused as a child

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

When asked if they feel confident and trusting of the justice system, if they were to report a violent crime, would they feel safe in the system?

- Only 6% said, definitely yes, they would feel safe

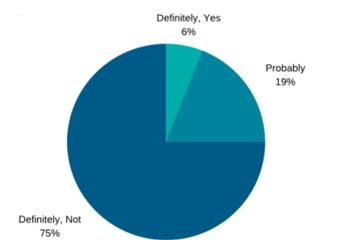


Figure 7 :Percentage of people who feel safe in the justice system

- 97% have been in a relationship with someone who was abusive
- 50% never reported the abuse

Recommendations

Fund survivor research, grassroots organizations, Sovereign Bodies Institute, and Urban Indigenous Collective

Implement cultural healing services within your organizations

Educate government agencies on historical and intergenerational trauma

Reform the foster care system

Policymaking needs to be survivor informed. This study is proof that there is a severe under-reporting of the violence that Indigenous people face. The under-reporting is linked to the fact that our people do not feel safe within the criminal justice system.

Congress needs to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, Savanna's Act, and The Not Invisible Act, now Stop investing in pipelines and corrupt systems that exacerbate the MMIP epidemic and reallocate that funding to fund culturally-based services and initiatives that help stop it.

People Interviewed Providing Services Survivors Need

Annita Lucchesi, the founder of Sovereign Bodies Institute (SBI)

Sutton King is a member of SBI's Survivor leadership council, founder of Urban Indigenous Collective (UIC), and co-founder of the innovative app ShockTalk

Raechel Ibarra, a member of SBI's Survivor Leadership Council, is a case manager for sexually exploited children in California

Alaya McIvor is a powerful advocate from Canada, who is a member of SBI's Survivor Leadership Council

Roxanne White is a member of SBI's Survivor Leadership Council, and she is the founder of the grassroots groups Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and Families and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives No Borders

Lenny Hayes is a two-spirit chemical health therapist, an advocate for violence against men, boys and two-spirit people, the two-spirit project assistant for Sovereign Bodies Institute.

Rachel Fernandez is an organizer, activist, advocate, and artist

Shawn Carr is a Native Veteran and grassroots leader of Idle No More/Northwoods Wolf Alliance

Roger Smith Sr. tribal representative for the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. He has many years of law enforcement experience and serves on the task force in Minnesota for MMIW

Rebecca Balog is the sex trafficking coordinator for the national sex trafficking in Indian Country grant by the office of violence against women, through the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition

Mel Alvar Safe Harbor Northeast Regional Navigator in Minnesota