

Breaking Barriers:

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence



Resource & Reflection Packet

The Michigan Victim Advocacy Network (MIVAN) is a collaborative training and technical assistance effort between the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Division of Victim Services and Michigan State University and is supported by OVC FY 21 Building State Technology Capacity 15POVC-21-GK-01103-NONF awarded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services nor the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime.

Breaking Barriers:

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

COURSE DESCRIPTION

With support from Indigenous advocates, wisdom keepers, and cultural leaders from across Tribal communities throughout Michigan, Uniting Three Fires Against Violence (UTFAV) created a video series intended for individuals and communities across Michigan that may work with our Indigenous/Tribal/Native survivors who have experienced gender based violence. The videos spotlight how historical trauma continues to impact responses to violence against women living in and outside of their Tribal communities. The videos collectively share how culture and history intersects with providing culturally honoring services, which is often different from Western/historically funded approaches to safety, healing and justice.

MiVAN is privileged to feature four of the videos from the UTFAV cultural video series along with supplemental resources to support Michigan advocates. Additional videos and information can be found on the UTFAV website:

unitingthreefiresagainstviolence.org

Any questions about this course can be directed to admin@mivan.org



Breaking Barriers:

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Learn about the federally-recognized tribes in Michigan and how tribal service providers support survivors.
2. Learn how historical trauma continues to impact responses to violence against women living in and outside of their Tribal communities.
3. Identify ways that culture and history intersect with providing culturally honoring services, and how this can be different from Western/historically-funded approaches to safety, healing, and justice.

We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg - Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan's twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.



Breaking Barriers:

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

Presented by **Uniting Three Fires Against Violence**

Produced by **Michigan Victim Advocacy Network** at Michigan State University

Funded by **Michigan Division of Victim Services**

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Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence (UTFAV) is a statewide tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalition serving the tribes located in Michigan. UTFAV's mission is to support Michigan tribes in promoting the social change necessary to address the disproportionate rates of violence impacting tribal communities.

Uniting Three Fires refers to Michigan's Three Fires Confederacy of Tribal Nations. The Three Fires Confederacy is an Anishinaabe alliance of the Chippewa (Ojibwe/Ojibwa), Ottawa (Odawa), and Potawatomi/Pottawatomi (Bodéwadami/Bodowadomi) Tribes that formed in 796 A.D. Indigenous peoples of the Great Lakes region are known as the Anishinaabe. The Three Fires Confederacy's original central meeting place was Michilimackinac (meaning "Big Turtle"), or present-day Mackinac Island and the area around the Straits of Mackinac.

Tribes in Michigan

Today, Michigan shares geography with twelve sovereign tribal nations that are federally recognized by the United States government. These tribes have governmental operations within Michigan and work with the State of Michigan in a government-to-government relationship.

Federally-recognized tribes are not merely organizations of citizens who happen to be of Native American descent. Rather, they are sovereign governments that exercise direct jurisdiction over their members and territory and, under some circumstances, over other citizens as well. Tribal governments provide a wide array of governmental services to their members including lawmaking, tribal police and court systems, health, education services, and many more. The 12 federally-recognized tribes in Michigan are:

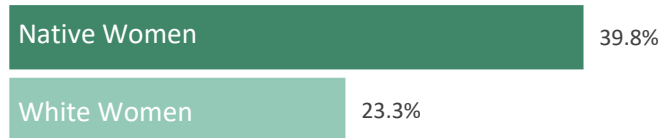
- Bay Mills Indian Community
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
- Hannahville Potawatomi Indian Community
- Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
- Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians
- Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians of Michigan
- Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe
- Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

A map showing the location of each of these tribes is in the Appendix, on page 22.

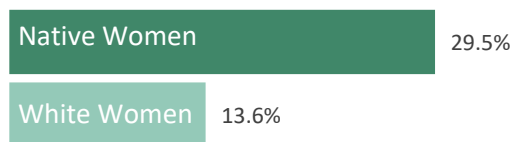
Violence Against Native Women and Girls

In the United States, Native women and girls are more than twice as likely to experience violence than any other demographic. According to a 2016 report from the National Institute of Justice¹, more than 84% of Native women have experienced violence in their lifetimes, with more than half experiencing sexual violence (56%), physical violence by an intimate partner (56%), psychological aggression (64%), and nearly half have been stalked (49%).

Compared to white women, Native women are 1.7 times more likely to have experienced violence in the last year,



more than twice as likely to have been raped in their lifetime,



and the murder rate of Native women is almost 3 times that of white women. These disproportionate rates of violence are rooted in historical trauma.

Colonialism, Historical Trauma, and Violence

It is important to understand these disproportionate rates of violence as an effect of colonization, genocide, inadequate resources, and marginalization. Before colonization, abuse and domestic violence were rare in tribal communities. Colonialism is the act of domination involving subjugating a region's Indigenous peoples, occupying it with settlers, and imposing full or partial control over a peoples' culture, economy, religion, and more. Domestic violence mirrors this pattern of power and control, and many Indigenous scholars view the connection between colonialism and domestic violence as an effect of historical trauma where this violence was ingrained into Indigenous ancestors' lives and perpetuates today.

Addressing Violence from Non-Native Perpetrators

However, while domestic and sexual violence does occur within tribal communities, Native women and girls experience violence more commonly by non-Native perpetrators, which tribal communities have struggled to address due to restrictions on Tribal Courts' ability to prosecute non-Natives. In 2013, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) reauthorization included a historic provision that re-affirmed tribes' sovereignty by giving tribes the ability to prosecute non-Native perpetrators who commit acts of domestic violence, dating violence, or PPO violations in Indian Country. While this was a step in the right direction, it does not cover all forms of domestic violence. In 2022, VAWA further expanded tribal jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators of additional crimes, including child violence, sexual violence, sex trafficking, stalking, obstruction of justice, and

¹ Rosay, André B., Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 2016: <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249736.pdf>

assault of Tribal justice personnel. However, Native victims of violence are still less likely to receive needed services and continue to experience a lack of reporting and prosecution at the federal, state, and local levels, leading to thousands of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women being ignored. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) or Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) movement was formed to raise awareness by organizing marches, building databases of the missing, and more. In 2021, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo tribe) created the Missing and Murdered Unit within the Bureau of Indian Affairs to provide resources and leadership in prioritizing cases of missing and murdered Indigenous people.

Learn More:

[Anishinaabe Historical Timeline](#)

Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi

[Michigan Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services Information](#)

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

Violence against Native Americans:

[Understanding the High Rates of Violence Against Native Americans](#)

Stronghearts Native Helpline

[State of the Data on Violence Against AI/AN Women and Girls](#)

National Congress of American Indians

[Violence Against AI/AN Women and Men](#)

National Institute of Justice (video)

[Violence Against AI/AN Women and Men](#)

National Institute of Justice (PDF)

[Colonization and Domestic Violence](#)

Stronghearts Native Helpline

Missing and Murdered Indigenous People:

[Understanding How the Laws Encourage Violence: History of MMIW](#)

Nonviolence International New York

[Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women](#)

Native Hope

[Michigan MMIP Efforts and Task Force](#)

Miigwech, Inc.

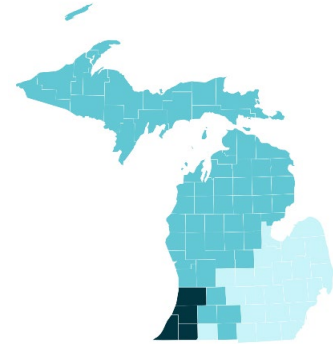
[Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Toolkit](#)

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

Segment 1: Culturally-Honoring Services: Discussion with Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Victim Services Team

This talking circle was recorded on October 5th, 2022 with members of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Social Services Staff in Dowagiac, MI.

This segment features the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Victim Services team sharing the difference and impact of culturally honoring versus standardized historically funded services in supporting victims in Tribal communities. The Tribal victim services program takes a seven-generation approach acknowledging past, present, and future generations. The role and impact of historical trauma, blood memories and cultural/traditional responses are key components to culturally honoring approaches. This video is key in clarifying the differences between western systems social services approaches and Tribal culturally-honoring practices where families and survivors move from the role of systems to community.



Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians tribal service area in Michigan (dark shading)

Talking Circle

A talking circle is a method of communication that focuses on deep listening and respectful dialogue by allowing everyone in the circle to speak uninterrupted, or remain silent if they wish. Some practices use an object called a talking piece that is passed around the circle to signify whose turn it is to speak, but talking circles can be practiced without this object. This practice originated from Indigenous peoples of North America, particularly tribes in the Midwest region of the United States and First Nations leaders in the Great Lakes region of Canada.

Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Victim Services

The Pokagon Band Social Services Department assists families in maintaining strength in a healthy community structure by helping to solve issues experienced by children, parents, and Elders in the community.

The domestic violence and victim services program was initially formed as a grassroots group of women who came together to talk about how critically they needed services related to domestic violence, which has now been formally adopted by the Pokagon Band Social Services Department.

The Victim Services staff offers services to people in the community who are feeling unsafe at home and need help, including:

- Referrals to local domestic violence shelters
- Case management
- Safety planning
- Assistance filing Personal Protection Orders
- Court accompaniment
- Limited financial assistance
- Educational programming and outreach
- Cultural programming and assistance

Bringing Culture into Advocacy Work

Culturally-honoring services acknowledge, respect, celebrate, and honor the cultural identity, beliefs, experiences, and needs of individuals and communities. Some examples of culturally-honoring services include providing information in a survivor's native language, offering culturally appropriate food choices, understanding and accommodating religious and spiritual practices, and more. The information in this resource and reflection packet is intended to help all advocates gain a deeper understanding of some of the experiences and needs of Native and Indigenous communities in Michigan.

It is important to bring culture into Tribal victim services for many reasons, including that it can:

- Help **bring people into the light**. Coming into the light can symbolize a person emerging from a period of hardship or darkness and moving toward healing, reclaiming their identity and traditions, and possibly sharing their stories and experiences with others.
- Keep survivors and helpers **grounded in who they are**. Being in alignment with one's culture and identity is important for healing.
- **Build trust**, especially when service providers and survivors are from the same community.

There are many ways culture can be incorporated into Tribal victim services, including:

- Cooking and **eating together**
- **Singing** together
- **Sewing** groups
- Offering traditional **medicine**

For non-Tribal advocates, the intention is not for you to learn these practices, but to understand the ways these are important to many Native and Indigenous survivors and to be open to talking about these cultural pieces in the context of your service provision. For example, you could ask a survivor, "What kinds of cultural things are important to you? How can I help you connect with those?"

The Role of Historical Trauma

"Every single Pokagon family is impacted in some way by historical trauma."

-Casey Kasper-Wells, Victim Services Supervisor

Historical trauma is a term first described by Native American (Hunkpapa/Oglala Lakota) scholar Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. Historical trauma is a type of intergenerational trauma that refers to the cumulative psychological effects of massive trauma experienced by past generations of a group of people (such as slavery, genocide, and impacts of colonialism) that continues across multiple generations.

In addition to combatting the effects of historical trauma, culturally-honoring services can help harness "**historical resilience**" and "**historical power.**"

The Seven-Generation Approach

“Our future generations are the children we’re working with now.”

-Andy Jackson, Cultural Specialist for Victim Services

The seven-generation approach is rooted in traditional practices and teachings of many Indigenous communities. This approach acknowledges past, present, and future generations, encouraging people to “think seven generations ahead” about how decisions and actions will impact future generations.

Honoring past generations is also important in the seven-generation approach. **Blood memory** is the idea that people inherit their ancestors’ knowledge, culture, and experiences. Just as people may carry the effects of historical trauma, they may also carry historical wisdom and strength, which can be honored by preserving traditional practices.

Practices for Current and Future Tribal Advocates

Practices that Tribal advocates may engage in with survivors include:

- Making smudge sticks
- Making tea
- Cooking traditional foods
- Sewing ribbon skirts
- Beading earrings

These practices can help survivors connect with their culture and pass down healing traditions. Many times, when survivors come together to do something with their hands and engage in these cultural practices, they will naturally start talking about abuse they’ve experienced, how that affects them, and how they try to break those cycles of trauma.

Terminology heard in this segment:

- Boozhoo: hello. This is a common, slightly formal Ojibwe greeting.
- Historically-funded organization: a mainstream, non-Tribal or non-culturally specific program that has been historically funded with state funds

Reflection Questions:

- What are some challenges that are faced by Tribal community members who need help with domestic violence or other safety issues?

- What are some cultural aspects of healing described in this video?

- What examples of a community thinking “seven generations ahead” were mentioned in the video?

Learn More:

[Michigan Resource Handbook for On-Reservation Victims of Crime](#)

Michigan Indian Legal Services

[Understanding Historical Trauma & Resilience when Responding to Events in Indian Country](#)

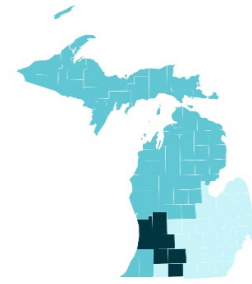
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

[Pokagon Band Domestic Violence Services](#)

Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

Segment 2: NHBP Food Sovereignty – Food Supporting Culturally Honoring Community Responses

Food sovereignty at Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi (NHBP) is demonstrated at Pine Creek Farms as a tool for returning to sustainable, culturally-honoring tribal community practices that promote individual and community health and wellness. Pine Creek Farms is a 22-acre parcel of land near Athens, MI that was acquired by NHBP in 2022 and is managed by NHBP Food Sovereignty staff.



Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi (NHBP) service area (dark shading)

Food Sovereignty

Food Sovereignty is the ability of communities to determine the quantity and quality of the food that they consume by controlling how their food is produced and distributed.

In many instances, the United States Government removed Tribal Nations from their ancestral lands to areas where they couldn't grow traditional foods, hunt, or fish. This removal threatened the continuation of knowledge about growing, gathering, and hunting that tribal communities had sustained for thousands of years. This action was an assault on the physical and spiritual health of Indigenous people/nations. This action extended beyond food to spiritual practices, ceremonies, and communities coming together, which are all interconnected to traditional food gathering and sharing.

Food and Culture

Food sovereignty intersects with all areas of culture. Food in tribal communities brings everyone together. Food is an important aspect of tribal cultures, as it is central to:

- Keeping people together
- Maintaining physical and mental health
- Helping people find a path and vision for their lives
- Traditional ceremonies
- Spiritual practices

Restoring Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty directly affects the quality of life for all members of the community. Some ways tribal communities are working to restore their food sovereignty include:

- Growing and eating foods that were part of a traditional diet
- Supporting sustainability
- Operating food pantries
- Teaching about traditional diets and food practices

Reflection Questions:

- What impact did the removal from ancestral lands have on tribal communities and food sovereignty?

- What are some ways growing, acquiring, preparing, or sharing food is important to you and your culture?

- What are some ways NHBP is making food sustainable and accessible for people in their community?

Learn More:

[Agriculture and Food Sovereignty](#)

Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians

[Pine Creek Farms](#)

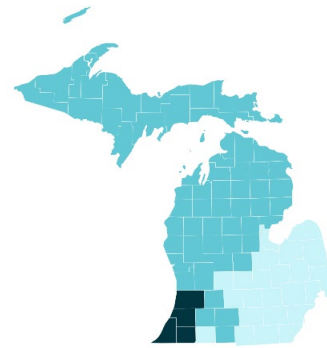
Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi

[NHBP website](#)

Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi

Segment 3: Sacred Medicines Supplemental Teaching Resource

This segment is dedicated to identifying the four sacred medicines and how, when, and why they are used in ceremonies specific to the Michigan Three Fires Confederacy Tribal Nations, as well as to water as a sacred element/medicine. This talking circle was recorded in the fall of 2023 with members of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Social Services Staff at Gage Street Lake near Dowagiac, MI. Gage Lake is an important spiritual lake to the Pokagon Band, which they care for and honor deeply. Water is considered a sacred element in many Native and Indigenous cultures and is often seen as more than just a resource, but a way of life and fundamental aspect of cultural identity.



Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians tribal service area in Michigan (dark shading)

The Sacredness of Water

Water is considered to be the essential component of all life, and women in particular are tasked with protecting the waters as they are the life-givers who carry water in their wombs to protect their babies.

Some important ways to care for water include:

- **Teaching** families and children about the sacredness of water
- **Not wasting water** (for example, turn water off when you're brushing your teeth)
- Using **reusable water jugs** instead of disposable bottles
- Practicing **water ceremonies**
- **Children's events** that may include reading the "We are Water Protectors" book and having kids make cups for water ceremony
- **Water Walks** (also known as Mother Earth Water Walk), an Anishinaabe-led initiative dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of water and the need for the protection of water from pollution.
- Teaching about **Water Protectors** such as Josephine Mandamin (Wikwemokong First Nation) who was an Anishinaabe grandmother, Elder, and founding member of the Water Protectors movement and Mother Earth Water Walk. During her 77 years, she walked about 25,000 miles around the shorelines of all of the Great Lakes to bring awareness to the need to protect the waters from pollution.

The Four Sacred Medicines

There are four sacred medicines that are used in everyday life and in traditional ceremonies. The four sacred medicines are:

- **Tobacco.** Dried tobacco leaves can be used for prayer offerings where a prayer is said into loose tobacco and then tied into a cloth and placed in a special location. Tobacco can be offered to an Elder when requesting help or guidance, or when asking a favor of another person. Tobacco is the sacred medicine that is used in every ceremony as it is the activator of the other medicines.

- **Cedar.** Cedar use varies according to the tribe but is often used for its purification and protection properties in a smudge, placed in the shoes of dancers in a pow wow or ceremony, or in sweat lodge ceremonies. When a person has been in great stress or trauma, a cedar bath is sometimes made for comfort and healing.
- **Sage.** The smoke of burning sage is used to release things that trouble the mind and for removing negative energy from a person or space to prepare them for ceremonies and teachings. There are many types of sage that can be burned or made into a tea.
- **Sweetgrass.** It is said that the burning of sweetgrass allows the ancestors to see their descendants and hear their prayers. Sweetgrass can be burned or braided to bring calmness.

Some ways to practice using the sacred medicines include:

- **Using tobacco to say a prayer** for all living beings in and around the water before swimming
- **Honoring moontime teachings** by not handling sacred medicines during moontime (menstruation) and reducing stigma around menstruation
- **Using smudge kits** when visiting client's homes. UTFAV offers cultural care kits with each of the four medicines and a pamphlet describing each medicine. Bringing these to clients can be comforting. For Native children living in non-tribal foster care homes, these kits can help them feel connected to their homes and culture.

Smudging

Smudging is a purifying ceremony commonly used throughout Native American communities in which the four sacred medicines (together or individually) are placed into an abalone shell and burned, using the smoke to purify the mind, body, spirit, or a place. Tribal advocates may smudge buildings before they start a program or service to cleanse the buildings and begin with a fresh feeling. When working with Indigenous survivors who don't know about smudging, they may smell the burning smudge and have a blood memory awakened where they may have smelled this before at a grandparent's house or pow wow earlier in life. This can help them relax and bring good thoughts. For someone who has been harmed or experienced abuse, they may ask for someone to come smudge their home to purify the space. It can also be important for survivors to learn how to practice this themselves.

There may be times where smudging is not appropriate, such as if in a building where burning is not allowed or if with a person who has respiratory conditions and is sensitive to smoke. In these cases, the sacred medicines can be used in other ways:

- **Cedar oil** and **sweetgrass oil** can be placed on the fingers and rubbed under the nose, forehead, and hair. Advocates can bring these oils with them during a home visit to use to keep themselves calm and grounded.
- **Sweetgrass can be braided** as a sacred medicine practice or bundled and offered as a gift
- **Making tea** using sacred medicines
- **Holding a stick of sage or tobacco tie** in hand for comfort and strength

Practices for Non-Tribal Advocates

While non-Tribal advocates will not engage in these sacred ceremonies, it is important to know about them for any Indigenous survivors who may access your services.

- **Offering smudge kits.** Some tribes may provide smudge kits to mainstream organizations in their area to offer any Tribal citizens who advocates encounter. Non-Tribal advocates can reach out to UTFAV or their local Tribal authority to learn more about how they can be prepared to serve any Tribal survivors who access their services. If planning to offer smudge kits, is also important for non-Tribal advocates and organizations to be aware of how to handle and keep these medicines.
- **Encourage Indigenous survivors to reach out to their local tribe.** Learn about which tribes are in your service area, but also know that you may meet survivors from a tribe that is not local to your area.
- **Find out what is most important to each individual** and what is going to bring them the most peace and comfort. It is important to note that there are many variations in how any individual or community uses the sacred medicines and practices ceremonies, and you should not make assumptions about any survivor's cultural needs.

Many Indigenous families and individuals grew up away from their tribe and culture and may not have received the traditional teachings and cultural knowledge described in these videos. It is important to not make assumptions about any individual's knowledge of or relationship to their cultural teachings and practices but to be open to learning what they do know and helping them connect with what they would like to know more about.

Terminology heard in this segment:

- **Nen sema:** tobacco. Also known as *asema*.
- **Moontime:** the female time of menstruation. A woman's moontime is a time to cleanse herself mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually and she does not partake in ceremonies, use sacred medicines, or prepare food during this time.

Reflection Questions:

- What are some examples of tribal community members honoring and caring for water?

- What are some ways that using the sacred medicines can help a survivor?

- What resources are available in your community to support your work with Native and Indigenous survivors?

Learn More:

[The Four Sacred Medicines](#)

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

[Products offered by UTFAV](#)

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

[The Power of Traditional Ways: Native Teachings are About a Way of Life](#)

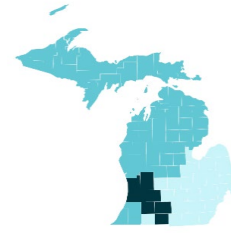
Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Health System

[We Are Water Protectors \(book\)](#)

Read aloud by author Carole Lindstrom (Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe Indians)

Segment 4: Restorative Justice: Judicial Practices Looking Through a Culturally-Honoring Lens

The Honorable Melissa L. Pope is Chief Judge of the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi (NHBP) Tribal Court. She describes how the NHBP Tribal Court is committed to trauma-informed, survivor-centered, culturally-honoring approaches to justice that may differ from Western approaches to justice.



Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi (NHBP) service area (dark shading)

Tribal Law Courts

There are approximately 400 tribal justice systems throughout the United States. In Michigan, each of the 12 federally-recognized tribes has their own Tribal Court that interprets and applies laws in its jurisdiction to resolve civil, criminal, and other legal matters. While there is some common ground between federal, state, and tribal courts in the United States, the Western judicial system that state and federal courts practice differs in important ways from many Tribal court approaches. Some Tribal courts do resemble federal and state courts, but others use more traditional practices of justice such as peacemaking, Elder councils, and restorative justice.

Restorative Justice

“With the concept of restorative justice, there needs to be an opportunity for access to healing in a culturally honoring way.”

-Hon. Melissa L. Pope, Chief Judge of the NHBP Tribal Court

Restorative justice can be considered a trauma-informed approach to justice. A trauma-informed approach considers how trauma may be impacting all people involved in a case and uses practices that reduce the risk of re-traumatization. The Western criminal justice system was established to focus on punishing criminal behavior and has not been primarily concerned with treating or responding to the harms suffered by a victim. For this reason, Western systems have struggled to adopt trauma-informed approaches. Additionally, Western approaches to trauma differ from Indigenous approaches in that Western approaches tend to focus on individual experiences that prioritize diagnosis and treatment, while Indigenous approaches view trauma as holistically encompassing the individual, community, spirit, and land. Rather than seeing justice as a form of punishment, restorative approaches see justice as a way to repair or restore the harm caused by crime and conflict. While Western court systems focus on determining a winner and a loser, restorative justice practices strive to preserve the tribal community and the relationships within.

Restorative justice considers the healing of the whole community by offering:

- **Trauma-informed approaches** that Western systems struggle to acknowledge
- **Victim-centered approaches** such as allowing the survivor to determine what will support their healing
- **Traditional sacred medicines**, foods, and teachings from Elders and other spiritual leaders

- **Healing to survivors as well as defendants/perpetrators** in some cases. It is important to note that even when healing practices are offered to defendants, there is still an aspect of accountability and restitution to the victim that is honored.

This practice of addressing the needs of both survivors and those who caused harm responds to the reality that both parties, as well as their children and other family members, are going to remain part of the larger community and restorative justice can help prevent the anger, trauma, and pain to continue to be passed down to future generations.

Changing the System

While some tribal courts have adopted state and federal laws and approaches to justice, the NHBP Tribal Court strives to not simply replicate the Western system but to honor the traditional concepts of justice and to work to make both Tribal and Western courts more trauma-informed and survivor-centered. Judge Pope works to change systems by:

- Educating state and federal court systems about Tribal courts
- Teaching about restorative justice and the need to heal trauma for everyone (not just the victim/survivors) in the community
- Educating law students, legislators, and judges
- Visiting with Elders and praying when facing particularly difficult situations
- Explaining the “why” behind decisions in written opinions of the court

U.S. federal and state criminal legal systems have been going through much reform to address shortcomings of the system, and some of the reforms such as “alternative dispute resolution” mirror traditional Indigenous practices like Peacemaking.

Restorative justice is dedicated to community wholeness and healing, returning to a place of traditional teachings, respect, love, kindness, honor and embracing and enacting the Seven Grandfather teachings.

Important Tribal Law Cases

Johnson v. McIntosh (1823): the first Federal American Indian law case where it was ruled by the U.S. Supreme Court that Indigenous peoples had possession of their land but no rights to buy or sell it, they could only occupy it. This is an example of the Western system that many times conflicts with Indigenous and Native American values and sovereignty.

Ex Parte Crow Dog (1883): a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court deciding who has jurisdiction over Indian crimes in Indian Country following the death of one member of a Native American tribe at the hands of another tribal member. The case involved a Brulé Sioux man named Crow Dog who shot and killed another man named Spotted Tail from the same tribe on reservation land. The tribal council dealt with the killing

according to Sioux tradition and Crow Dog paid restitution to Spotted Tail's family; however, U.S. authorities then arrested and prosecuted Crow Dog for murder in federal U.S. court. He was found guilty and sentenced to hanging. The case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing that the federal court had no jurisdiction to try cases where the offense had already been tried by a tribal council. The Supreme Court found that unless Congress authorized it, the U.S. government did not have jurisdiction over a crime committed by one Native American against another on reservation land, and Crow Dog was set free. This illustrated the inherent sovereignty tribes possess. However, there were people wishing to assimilate Native Americans into Western society who wanted to do away with tribal laws that they saw as inferior, so the U.S. Congress reacted to the ruling by passing the Major Crimes Act of 1885, which placed 15 major crimes under federal jurisdiction even if committed by Native Americans on tribal land. This illustrates the power Congress can take over tribes.

Terminology heard in this segment:

Peacemaking: Peacemaking or Peace Circles are a way to resolve disputes between community members that does not involve the Tribal Court. It utilizes ceremonial traditions, talking circles, and circle keepers to bring people involved in disputes to common ground.

Western: The term "Western" refers to a broad concept that encompasses social norms, values beliefs, political systems, and other aspects of culture that are rooted in European and Mediterranean history that later circulated the world through colonization.

Reflection Questions:

- What are some ways restorative justice practiced in tribal court proceedings differs from Western concepts of justice?

- What are some ways the NHBP court works to honor traditional tribal values?

Learn More:

[What is Native Justice?](#)

Pokagon Band of Potawatomi

[Tribal Courts in Michigan](#)

Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center

[Breaking the Cycle: The Role of Tribal Courts and Communities in Healing Justice](#)

Michigan Indian Legal Services

[Protecting Lives Across Jurisdictions: Enforcing Tribal PPOs](#)

Michigan Indian Legal Services

[Trauma-Informed Interventions through an Indigenous Worldview](#)

Western Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children

[Trauma and Resilience in Native Communities](#)

ACES Aware

APPENDIX

Federally Recognized Tribes in Michigan

A more detailed Michigan [Tribal Service Map](http://michigan.gov) can be found at michigan.gov



Bay Mills Indian Community



Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians



Hannahville Potawatomi Indian Community



Keweenaw Bay Indian Community



Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians



Little River Band of Ottawa Indians



Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians



Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians



Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi



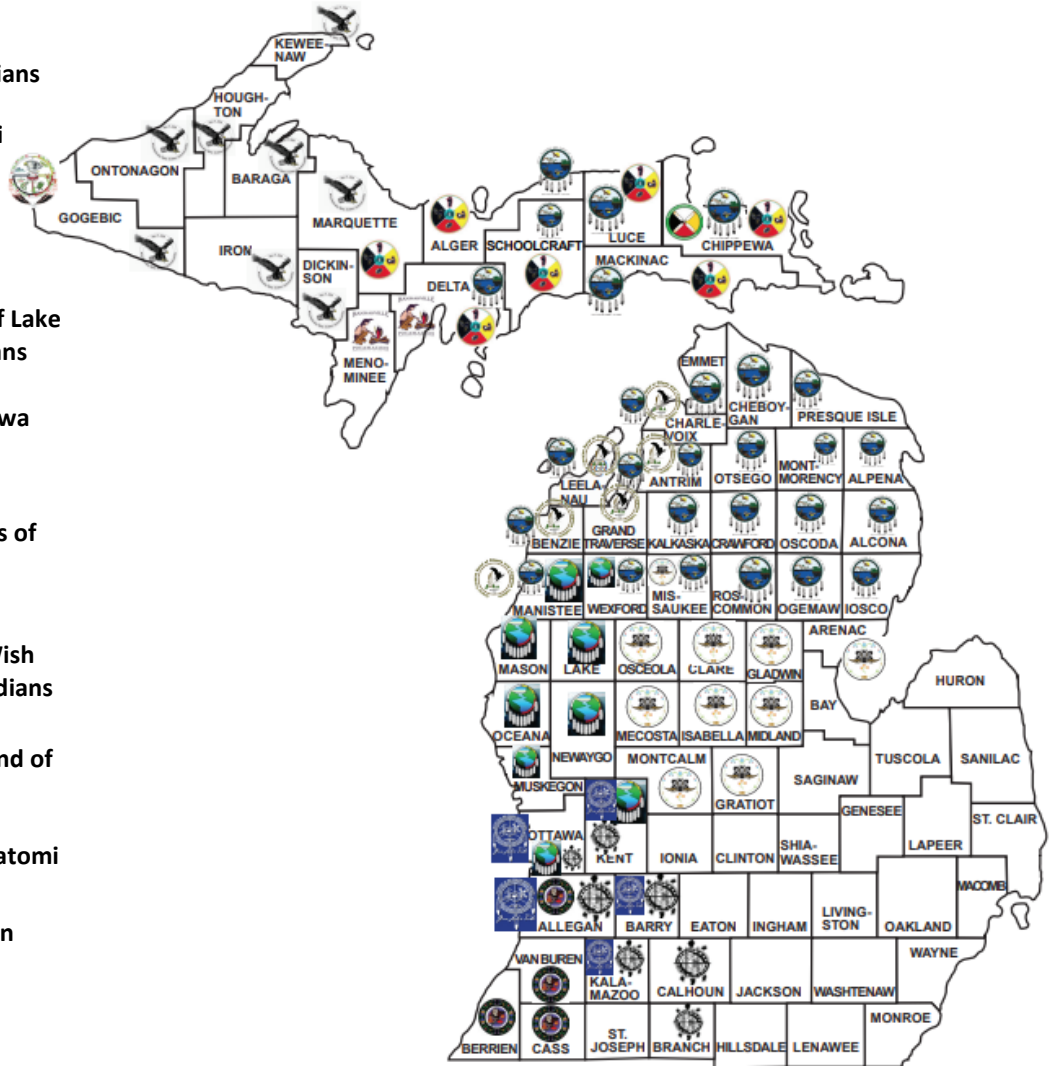
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi



Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe



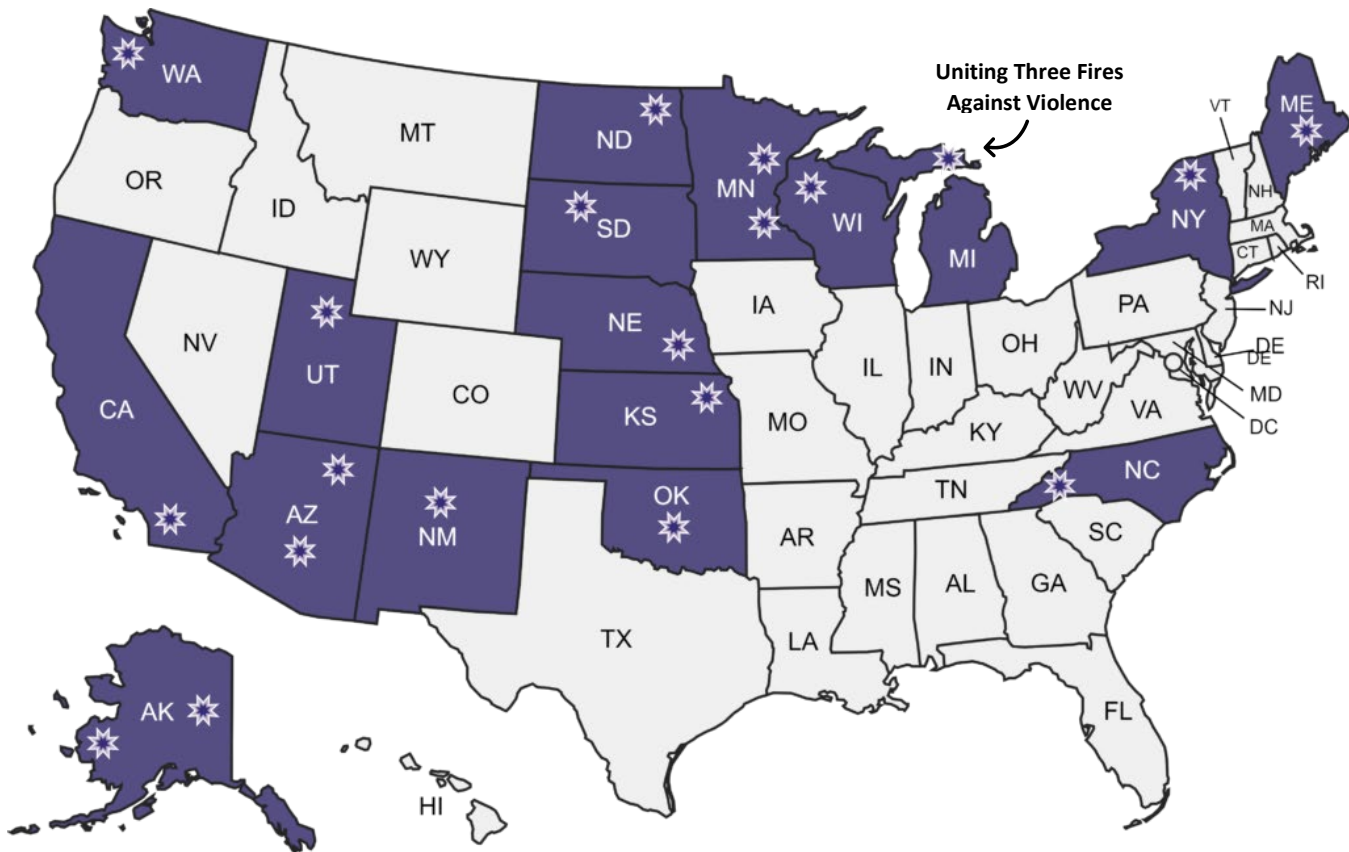
Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians



Tribal Coalitions

The Violence Against Women Act of 2000 (VAWA) created the Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions (Tribal Coalitions) Grant Program administered by the federal Office on Violence Against Women. This grant program funded the formation of nonprofit Tribal Coalitions that are the local and regional Tribal experts providing technical assistance and training for tribal communities in establishing and maintaining culturally appropriate services for Native and Indigenous survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Coalitions advocate for the social changes needed at the Tribal, state, regional, and national levels to end violence against American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian women. A few Tribal Coalitions were established before 2000 and have been working at the grassroots level for over 30 years.

As of 2024, there are now 20 Tribal Coalitions across Indian Country (see map below):



<https://www.atcev.org/tribal-coalitions/>

Glossary

Indigenous refers to any people with pre-existing sovereignty who were living together as a community prior to settler populations. Indigenous is an inclusive term in that there are Indigenous peoples on every continent throughout the world. **Indigenous peoples** can refer to the descendants of the peoples who inhabited the Americas, the Pacific, and parts of Asia and Africa prior to European colonization.

Native American and **American Indian** are terms used to refer to people living within what is now the United States prior to European contact. American Indian has a specific legal context because the field of Federal Indian Law, which regulates the legal relationships between tribes and state and federal governments, uses this terminology. In the U.S., the term Native American has been widely used but is falling out of favor with some groups, and the terms American Indian or **Indigenous or Native** are preferred by many Native people. However, it is always best to ask for and use the terminology that individuals and members of a community use to describe themselves.

American Indian and Alaska Native (sometimes seen as **AI/AN**) refers collectively to indigenous peoples of North America.

Native may be used as a synonym for “American Indian and Alaska Native” and it should be capitalized when referring to indigenous peoples.

Alaska Native refers to indigenous people of the area that is now Alaska. “Alaskan Native” is an incorrect use of the term Alaska Native.

Tribe may refer to any current or historical tribe, band, or nation of Native Americans.

Indian is a term that should not be used alone and can be considered derogatory if used alone to refer to Native and Indigenous peoples of North America, and it creates confusion between Native Americans and people from India. Indian may be used as an adjective to describe a specific person, place, or program (e.g., American Indian, Indian Country, Indian Health Service).

Indian Country is a term used by many Native Americans to refer to their homeland and community, anywhere that Native communities exist can be Indian Country. Indian Country may also have specific legal meanings under federal law.

The Seven Grandfather Teachings

Of all the North American Indigenous teachings, the Seven Grandfather Teachings are the most commonly shared. Many communities have adopted these seven guiding principles as a moral stepping stone and cultural foundation, and each community has adapted the teaching to suit their community values.

1. Humility (Anishinaabe: Dbaadendiziwin)

Humility is to know that you are a sacred part of creation, to live selflessly, and respect your place and carry your pride with your people and praise the accomplishments of all.

2. Bravery (Anishinaabe: Aakwa'ode'ewin)

Bravery is to face life with courage, find your inner strength to face difficulties and have courage to be yourself. Defend what you believe in and what is right for your community, family, and self.

3. Honesty (Anishinaabe: Gwekwaadziwin)

Honesty is walking through life with integrity, recognizing and accepting who you are, accepting and using the gifts you have been given, and not deceiving yourself or others.

4. Wisdom (Anishinaabe: Nbwaakaawin)

Wisdom is cherishing knowledge, using your inherent gifts and recognizing your differences and others' in a kind and respectful way. Continuously observe the life of all things around you, listen with clarity and a sound mind, and respect your own limitations and those of others.

5. Truth (Anishinaabe: Debwewin)

Truth is showing honor and sincerity in all you say and do, understanding your place in this life, and applying faith and trust in your teachings.

6. Respect (Anishinaabe: Mnaadendimowin)

Respect is honoring all creating, living honorably in teachings and in your actions towards all things, not wasting and being mindful of the balance of all living things, sharing and giving away what you don't need, and treating others the way you would like to be treated.

7. Love (Anishinaabe: Zaagidwin)

Love is carrying all the teachings and viewing your inner-self from the perspective of all teachings. To know love is to know peace, and being at peace with yourself, the balance of life and all things, and balance with the creator.

Adapted from [The 7 Grandfather Teachings](http://utfav.org) at utfav.org

Additional resources:

[UTFAV Cultural Videos](#)

Uniting Three Fires Against Violence

[Cultural Competency/Humility and Ally-Building in Indian Country](#)

National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

[Understanding the Role of Indigenous Elders](#)

Native Indigenous Elder Abuse Initiative

[Story of the Ribbon Skirt](#)

Seven Generations Education Institute

[Sliver of a Full Moon](#)

A powerful reenactment of the historic congressional reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 2013, a movement that restored the authority of tribal governments to prosecute non-Native abusers who assault and abuse Native women on tribal lands.

[National Indigenous Women's Resource Center](#)

[Indigenous Sexual Assault and Abuse Clearinghouse](#)