

Wopila tanka, Mitakiyapi.
Cantewaste iyuha nape ciyuzape ksto.
Ciscila Tatewin emachiyapi.
Wakpa Waste oyanke ematanhan.

Hello my friends and relatives!
I greet you all with a good heart.
My name is Taté (Wind).
I am an enrolled citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota.

Before we get started I want to recognize the original and ongoing caretakers of so-called Colorado: The Ute, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Apache, and other tribes who have been calling this space home since always.

My pronouns are they/them/mother and I am Mniconjou Lakota, a Two Spirit communications professional and Indigenous rights activist. I have quite a bit of living experience in Colorado, first as an elementary student, then as a college student, and most recently as a freelance journalist and Head Start worker. I've currently live in Phoenix and I'm here speaking through my work with the online magazine [Everyday Feminism](#).

Today I'll be talking about an issue that has stalked Indigenous womxn of the Americas since explorers and settlers began colonizing this land: Violence against Indigenous womxn. We'll be discussing the many and varied ways Native womxn experience violence, how that violence is directly tied to sexism, racism, and settler colonialism specifically, and how we might go about preventing this violence now to ensure health equity for future generations.

I'd like to remind the audience that this presentation – like most discussions about violence – may evoke strong emotional, mental or physical reactions and that I encourage anyone triggered to seek the space you need.

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Violence against Indigenous womxn.

That's a phrase that encompasses so much and we could spend years discussing its origins, causes, current manifestations and other issues surrounding it. It does indeed deserve that time.

So, I've set forth some topic parameters to guide us today:

- We know, of course, that nation borders are arbitrary and that our Indigenous brothers and sisters north and south of the so-called United States experience similar violence. However, today, I'll be centering Indigenous womxn, primarily from the so-called United States. If you're interested in seeing data that includes men, I have a report linked to

this presentation from the National Institute of Justice that shows, among other things that violence impacts Native men at nearly the same rate as Native womxn; however, that violence looks different for men than for womxn.

- We know, of course that relational violence also transcends arbitrary gender-based borders – that male-identifying folks, gender nonconforming folks and others experience specific violence issues. However, my talk today is specific to feminine and womxn-identifying/passing people, including Two Spirits who identify/pass within that framework.

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We'll be discussing a few terms that will set the foundation for this presentation:

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Indigenous/Native/American Indian/Tribal: Western umbrella terms for and vague references to thousands of unique nations/individuals with Turtle Island histories dating back to always and currently experiencing oppression stemming from settler colonialism. [See also: Indian, Native American, First Nations, Aboriginal, skins, NDN](#)

Native (capital N) refers specifically to the original people of the so-called United States and is short for Native American (this is why I and others cringe when we see that green bumper sticker so widely used in Colorado *gag*).

I generally only use Indian or American Indian within a direct quote; however, [terms like American Indian and Indian Country](#) are still the legal language used in federal law to refer to the Indigenous people of the United States.

Within our own familial or communal circles, many Natives use "Indian," but, in general, that is a word belonging to Native people only – it is not for widespread use, as today it more likely refers to those who can trace their lineage to India.

The absolute best way to reference any Native is to identify them by their nation, i.e. I am Taté Walker, Mniconjou Lakota. Not Taté, the Native American.

Indigenous people are not monolithic.

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Womxn: alternative spelling that rejects patriarchy in language by removing "men" as the root of "womxn" and that proactively includes transgender womxn, female-assigned genderqueer/gender non-conforming people, as well as cisgender womxn.
Nicole Hurt, Transformative Alliances

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Sexism: (1) Prejudice or discrimination based on sex, *especially* discrimination against womxn; (2) behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex

Merriam-Webster

[NOTE: Misogyny is sexism with *contempt/violence* for womxn; you can be sexist, but not a misogynist, but all misogynists are sexists]

SLIDE

Racism: a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race

Merriam-Webster

SLIDE

Patriarchy: a sociopolitical and cultural system that values masculinity over femininity and perpetuates oppressive (cruel and unjust control) and limiting gender roles, the gender binary, trans phobia and sexism, sexual assault, the political and economic subordination of womxn, and more.

Everyday Feminism

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Settler Colonialism is an ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures. Settler colonialism normalizes the continuous settler occupation, exploiting lands and resources to which indigenous peoples have genealogical relationships.

Settler colonialism includes interlocking forms of oppression, including racism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. This is because settler colonizers are Eurocentric and assume that European values with respect to ethnic, and therefore moral, superiority are inevitable and natural.

However, these intersecting dimensions of settler colonialism coalesce around the dispossession of indigenous peoples' lands, resources, and cultures. ... [S]ettler colonizers do not merely exploit indigenous peoples and lands for labor and economic interests; they *displace* them through settlements.

[Alicia Cox](#)

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What the definitions I just showed you for sexism and racism lack is a critical framework for Power Dynamics. Don't have a ton of time to get too into this, but highly suggest reviewing the website [DismantlingRacism.org](#).

Racism, for instance, is **Privilege** (advantages one has like, say, access a trust fund or reliable transportation or running water) + **Prejudice** (cultural norms that have been established and deemed preferable over non-dominant cultures) + **Power** (institutional/systemic)

Racism = race **prejudice** + social & institutional **power**

Racism = a system of **advantage** based on race

Racism = a system of **oppression** based on race

Racism = a **white supremacy** system

For white and white passing people like myself, it's easy to get defensive when discussing racism, "Well I didn't kill the Indians – my best friend in college was Indian! I love Indians! I'm pretty sure my great great grandmother was Indian."

And then white people shut down when Black, brown and Indigenous people make requests for white people to shoulder their fair share of the burden (meaning most, if not all the burden) to dismantle the racist system we live in. That's when we start hearing things like, "Taté is always so *angry*. I don't know why she's demanding I call my legislators to reject the Bayou Bridge Pipeline – I don't even live in Louisiana! AND she drives a car, too! I wish she'd stop yelling at me. Let's block her on Facebook."

But I'd love to get us to a place where white people can start looking at our defensive reactions and recognize those as agents of "Oh, I have work to do. I'm not familiar with this issue, and my ignorance has me all up in my feelings, so it's up to me as a quality individual to do better and ensure my squad does as well."

One of the best ways to begin dismantling racism, sexism, and settler colonialism is to LISTEN TO THE POWERLESS and TAKE ACTION TO END THEIR OPPRESSIONS. We'll talk about what that action can look like at the end of this presentation.

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Finally, keep in mind that ALL THESE ISSUES ARE INTERSECTIONAL.

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We're oppressed at multiple crossroads, therefore, we can be concerned with something like the state police violence being experienced right now by our First Nations relatives protecting life in [Wet'suwet'en territory](#) from extractive industries AND care passionately about [language revitalization](#) efforts in tribal schools AND fight against the use of [racist mascots](#) in sports like Washington's professional football team.

Never tell someone there are more important things to worry about. If you don't understand why something is important, ask yourself what privileges or advantages you may have that allows you to avoid that conflict in your life and then take the extra step to learn how you can use your privilege to help others.

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Violence in Native communities begins with historical trauma.

What is historical trauma? Michelle Sotero, an instructor in Health Care Administration and Policy at the University of Nevada, offers a [three-fold definition](#).

In the initial phase, **the dominant culture perpetrates mass trauma on a population** in the form of colonialism, slavery, war or genocide.

In the second phase **the affected population shows physical and psychological symptoms** (disease, addictions) in response to the trauma.

In the final phase, the initial population **passes these responses to trauma to subsequent generations**, who in turn display similar symptoms.

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This is where we see health inequity most clearly: According to researchers, high rates of addiction, suicide, mental illness, sexual violence and other ills among Native peoples might be, at least in part, influenced by historical trauma.

Pull your attention to the quote “Many present-day health disparities can be traced back through epigenetics to a ‘colonial health deficit,’ the result of colonization and its aftermath.”

What does this mean? To be born into a tribal community means experiencing first-hand the multiple ways your people have been oppressed by state-sanctioned violence. Take the current [government shutdown](#): We Indigenous people already suffer from under-funded health care clinics and programs—services and funding for those services that were PROMISED to us in what the Constitution refers to as the “supreme law of the land”—legal treaty agreements the US government made with tribes in exchange for the land you and I occupy today. The shutdown means a lot of those critical services aren't being offered or staff (many of them Native) aren't being paid.

So as a for instance, I recently had a mental health appointment at the Phoenix Indian Medical Center (operated by Indian Health Service). I needed to reschedule and my call kept getting bumped to a messaging service on the day of my appointment. I happened to be driving by the clinic and stopped in person only to find a huge waiting line and frazzled front desk workers. Thankfully I wasn't experiencing a crisis, but what if I had been?

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Historical trauma is often passed along through [anniversaries or celebrations](#): we *remember* the horrors of the Wounded Knee or Sand Creek massacres; we *remember* how religious and government boarding schools were established to kill the tribal identities of Native children; we're *forced* every year to re-experience ignorant celebrations of historically suspect people like Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, and Christopher Columbus, who are responsible for some of the worst genocidal policies and state sanctioned acts of violence Native people ever experienced.

We grow up with these stories about how America has always hated us, and those stories are legitimized through our own daily experiences with violence.

Today, I'm speaking specifically about the kinds of violence experienced by Indigenous womxn.

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Some basics a lot of folx talk about when it comes to violence against Native womxn:

- In the US, Native womxn are murdered at **10 times** the national average.
- **1-in-3** Native womxn will be raped in her lifetime.
- Colorado mirrors national average: **1-in-4** womxn will experience sexual assault (Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center, Colorado)
- Physical assaults, stalking, and harassment are more than **2x** as likely if you're a Native womxn.
- **39%** of Native womxn experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime, higher than any other race or ethnicity.
- **80%** of perpetrators are non-Native. ← remember this

From the Indian Law Resource Center, CDC, Bureau of Justice Statistics (US Department of Justice)

According to the [Indian Law Resource Center](#):

- Statistics for Native womxn are woefully **underreported** (by an estimated 30%), if tracked at all.
- Hard to get a full picture when **agencies don't coordinate** well (tribal vs federal vs state/local jurisdictions – none of them talk to each other)
- **No one agency coordinates or tracks this data**, though many organizations have created or are creating databases of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. #MMIW grew out of a movement created in 1992 by Indigenous womxn and families in Coast Salish territory in Vancouver to heal, mourn, and create awareness for the hundreds of missing and murdered Indigenous womxn in that area. Every year on Feb. 14 they hold the [Women's Memorial March](#).
- Keep in mind we're talking about [573 unique federally recognized tribes](#) (and hundreds of other non-federally recognized tribes), each with their own legal jurisdictions.
- **Savanna's Act** – passed Senate, failed in the House in December; would have created standardized procedures to bolster cooperation among federal, state, and local agencies that may share jurisdiction in or near tribal communities; the Act also would have expanded tribal

access to key law enforcement databases and improve data collection by compiling statistics on these crimes in an annual report to Congress. There were [5,712 cases of missing Indian women](#) reported in 2016.

- Savanna LaFontaine Greywind, 22, was a member of the Spirit Lake tribe of North Dakota. In August of 2017, she was 8 months pregnant.
- SEXISM, RACISM: The white woman who cut the baby out of Savanna, Brooke Crews, was sentenced to life in prison. Her white boyfriend, William Hoehn, accused of tightening a rope around Savanna's neck to make sure she was dead and disposing of her body, was acquitted of conspiracy to commit murder, because he said he had no knowledge of his girlfriend's intentions.
- Another recent example of #MMIW and a case for demanding your legislators vote to approve Savanna's Act - [Henny Scott](#), 14yo Northern Cheyenne (Montana) went missing in early December, body found Dec. 24. Mother went to BIA Dec. 13, but no public alert was issued until Dec. 26. She would have turned 15 this month.

All Native womxn and girls are impacted by this violence in some way. When I lived in South Dakota I volunteered at a rape crisis center. I was talking to a mom and her teenage daughter about sexual health, including safe, consensual sex.

The mom laughed bitterly. "We've already talked about this together, me and her."

"Oh yeah?" I said. "Can you tell me some of what you discussed?"

"I told her it's better if you just lay there and don't move and it's over with quicker."

"What?" I asked, dismayed, thinking that this womxn clearly never had an enjoyable sexual experience.

"Well, I don't lie to my kids," she said matter-of-factly. "I tell it like it is. When she gets raped she'll know to just be still so it'll be quick."

Did you catch that? "When" she gets raped. Not "if." Native girls and womxn expect violence. Tell me how productive and healthy we're supposed to be if the assumption is violence?

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In her debut book, [The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America](#), Sarah Deer (Mvskoke Creek) says our approach to such a task is all wrong. Researchers (often non-Native) and media (also non-Native) will refer to violence against Native womxn as an "epidemic," that the levels at which we experience violence are of epidemic proportions.

Deer argues language like this is part of the problem. Epidemic, the word, refers to something biological and blameless, two things violence like rape or child abuse or domestic abuse IS NOT!

Violence against Native womxn is historical, political and PURPOSEFUL.

Federal law, for instance, accommodates rape and domestic violence by destroying tribal legal systems.

There was a statistic we saw in a previous slide about how roughly 80% of the people who abuse Native womxn are themselves not Native. There are reasons for that: Sexism, racism, and—you guessed it—settler colonialism.

Prior to 2014, tribal governments were [effectively banned](#) from prosecuting non-Natives on tribal lands. It's a well-known fact in Indian Country that predators flock to reservations because they know they can get away with murder – literally. **←I'll circle back to that in a bit.**

In [2013, Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act](#), which affirmed tribes' ability to exercise special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction over non-Natives who commit domestic assault, or engage in dating violence, on tribal lands. For this, womxn and tribal rights activists in Indian Country celebrated VAWA as an excellent first step to a much larger problem.

But.

It's six years later and just 20-some tribes have implemented the VAWA statute to prosecute non-Natives. Keep in mind: Each of those 573 sovereign Indian nations has its own Constitution, its own criminal and civil codes, its own body of law—so meeting the criteria under the statute typically requires changes to tribal law to exercise special jurisdiction as just the first step.

Why do tribal courts need to jump through all these hoops to protect their people? Because white legislators feared non-Natives (read: white people) wouldn't get a fair shake in tribal court. Essentially, white people were scared they would be treated the way they see Natives and people of color treated in US courtrooms with disproportionate number of convictions and stricter sentencing.

Among the [criteria](#) that the Department of Justice requires tribal governments to meet are protections for non-Native defendants under the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, and additional protections under the 2010 Tribal Law and Order Act, including “[f]ree, appointed, licensed attorneys for indigent defendants” and “[l]aw-trained tribal judges who are licensed to practice law.”

[SIDENOTE](#), because VAWA expired in December and we're all kind of pissed off about that, there is one bright spot: As of March 7, 2015, tribes no longer need federal approval to exercise criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians, however, tribal governments must comply with VAWA's statutory requirements when prosecuting non-Indian offenders.

Though VAWA grant programs, like the one my maske/friend works for in Colorado Springs, are facing a funding crisis due to Congress' inability to reauthorize VAWA in 2018, it's important to

note that tribal jurisdiction does not need to be re-authorized by Congress, and will continue to be the law of the land without any further Congressional action.

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SKIP The [National Congress of American Indians](#) released an amazing, comprehensive report last March. It's linked in the resources I provided to the Colorado Trust and I encourage you all to look through it, if not for the jaw-dropping data, then for the powerful stories, some sad and some uplifting, like this one:

For 35 years, the law failed to protect women like Taryn Minthorn.

Like many Indian women, Minthorn dated a non-Indian man. Eventually the relationship ended and her former boyfriend became dangerous. He spent months verbally abusing her before things became physically violent in September 2016. Her former boyfriend assaulted her in front of her children. When tribal police arrived, they promptly arrested him.

Her case was referred to the federal government for prosecution; however, they declined to prosecute her abuser. As Ms. Minthorn describes it, "I felt like I was seriously let down....I felt like he could do all the crime in the world, and it was just a slap on the hand. I just wanted to give up."

Until recently, Minthorn's case would have ended there, with her abuser walking free because only federal courts had jurisdiction to prosecute her non-Indian abuser.

However, because Minthorn's tribal Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, was one of the first tribes to exercise Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction over non-Indians under the Violence Against Women Act of 2013, Minthorn was able to receive justice.

Umatilla prosecutors were ready and willing to do something about her abuse. In March 2017, her former boyfriend pled guilty in Umatilla Tribal Court. His sentence included two years of incarceration, three years of probation, abstaining from drugs and alcohol, anger management and batterer intervention treatment, and obeying a no contact order. In Minthorn's words, "[t]o hear him saying that he was pleading to these charges, I literally felt the load come off of me, off my shoulders, off my mind, off my heart."

Without her tribe being able to step in and prosecute, Minthorn and her children would not have seen justice. Tribal court jurisdiction over non-Indian abusers makes all the difference for women like Minthorn who previously had nowhere else to turn. As she says, "It's important for future generations to know that eventually there is justice."

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Though there is good news, there is also still a ton of work to be done. According to the [National Congress of American Indians](#), VAWA itself is so narrowly tailored that tribal police and prosecutors can only respond to the charge of a non-Indian perpetrator for domestic violence—they cannot, for instance, charge a non-Indian with child abuse, abuse of elders or senior citizens, or destruction of property.

They are also unable to charge a perpetrator or abuser who is violent towards responding officers. Domestic violence cases are very complicated and often involve more than just an abuser and his victim—they can involve the parents of the victims, neighbors, cousins, pets—anyone who happens to be in the home at the time of the assault. So while the granting of special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction on tribal lands is historic, many feel it ran short of offering comprehensive protections to Native womxn.

Fewer than 25 (of 573 federally recognized) tribes are exercising special jurisdictions over non-Natives under VAWA 2013. One of the three implementing tribes—the Pascua Yaqui Tribe located in Arizona, the state where I live—says that since it began exercising special jurisdiction as part of a 2014 pilot program, cases involving non-Natives have accounted for 25 percent of its domestic violence caseload.

And prosecuting non-Natives is an expensive exercise. The Pascua Yaqui Tribe's domestic violence caseload increased by 12 percent since implementation began in 2014, resulting in a 10-20 percent spike in operational costs for the tribal court system.

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Wow – all that is a LOT to take in! But that sets a nice foundation into the next sections. To overcome and prevent violence, we need to be AWARE of the whole issue. For that to happen, we need broader definitions of the kinds of violence Native womxn experience, because we often leave it at the stats I showed you earlier.

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Violence is a many-headed beast that intersects and many points in Native womxn's lives.

1. HISTORICAL TRAUMA (we talked about this)

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2. EDUCATIONAL VIOLENCE

This is a topic that deserves it's own presentation.

- Boarding schools were set up by the US government and later religious institutions to “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.” It was also a great way to keep Natives in check during the Indian Wars – “don't start nothing – we have your kids.” For folks who aren't sure, that's systemic genocide. If you're thinking, well, why didn't the Indians just keep their

kids home? then consider that the government withheld treaty-obligated resources, like food, clothing and land, if families refused to send their kids. There wasn't a choice, I promise you.

- While you'll hear a few Natives talk about their time at boarding school as positive, they were by and large places of spiritual and cultural torture, that have left many scars and gaping wounds on Native people today.
- We still have teachers, like the one in Albuquerque, who last Halloween cut off a Native student's hair and called another Native student a "bloody Indian."
- [From an article I wrote:](#)
 - In 1893, mandatory education for Native children became federal policy. If parents refused to send their children away, Bureau of Indian Affairs authorities could withhold treaty-obligated annuities or rations (food, clothing, land) and jail offenders.
 - Col. Richard Pratt, founder of Carlisle Indian School (one of the few on the East Coast, though many boarding schools were purposefully established away from reservations as a means to cut off all ties with family, land and culture.
 - Boarding schools set the stage for why Natives statistically do so poorly today, academically (and in other areas). I wrote a piece for EF about this specifically. Educational achievement for Native kids in K-12 schools continues to be **the worst** of any demographic. Natives have the **highest dropout rates**, the **lowest graduation rates**, and **terrible test scores**. Our histories with the education system mean many Native adults don't see the point in making their kids do well in school. Distrust is one thing, but an even bigger problem is that teachers and staff have no concept of boarding school horrors and thus, wrongly assume lazy students and disinterested parents. Moreover, the idea that Native culture doesn't belong at school – or it does, but only within a **stereotypical framework** – continues to this day. We see majority white high schools with **mockery-laden homecoming traditions** and **kids being sent home** for having **"distracting" hairstyles**. Make no mistake: Actions and viewpoints like these have similar consequences on today's Native students as boarding schools had on their ancestors.
- Furthermore, education today – whether we're talking K-12 or collegiate – is fundamentally flawed when you consider the overwhelming absence of Natives in the faculty, curriculum and student body.
- Additionally, we see erasure within academic studies: Too little research published is helmed or assisted by Native researchers or includes Native participation within its demographics.
- Just last year (2018) Colorado State University campus police removed two Native teen brothers from a college tour after a white mother called them in for being creepy (which is white code for "other").
- Not having a good education means your less likely to do well in other areas, including health outcomes.

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3. STATE/POLICE VIOLENCE

Arrests/Incarceration, as reported by [QUARTZ](#)

- In the past five years alone, the number of Native Americans incarcerated in federal prisons has increased by 27%. In South Dakota, the state with the fourth highest percentage of Native American residents, Native Americans compose 60% of the federal caseload, but only 8.5% of the total population.
- Native Americans are incarcerated at a rate [38% higher](#) than the national average, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Native Americans are [more likely to be killed by police](#) than any other racial group, according to the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice and the [CDC](#).

Social Services which falls under State violence

- The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978: "ICWA" stands for the [Indian Child Welfare Act](#), which is a federal law passed in 1978. ICWA was passed in response to the alarmingly high number of Indian children being removed from their homes by both public and private agencies. The intent of Congress under ICWA was to "protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families" (25 U.S.C. § 1902). ICWA sets federal requirements that apply to state child custody proceedings involving an Indian child who is a member of or eligible for membership in a [federally recognized tribe](#).
- ICWA is constantly under attack and each case chips away at tribal sovereignty and the cultural integrity/indigeneity/identity of the next generations – undermining ICWA is a great way to ensure we revert back to the days when “kill the Indian, Save the man” ruled over tribal futures.
- Each year, South Dakota removes an average of 700 Native American children from their homes. Indian children are less than 15 percent of state's the child population but make up more than half the children in foster care.
- Despite the Indian Child Welfare Act, which says Native American children must be placed with their family members, relatives, their tribes or other Native Americans, Indigenous children are more than twice as likely to be sent to foster care as children of other races, even in similar circumstances.

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4. POLITICAL VIOLENCE

- Of 12,000 people elected to Congress since 1789, only 300 were Native; two identified Natives currently serve in the US House (Tom Cole, Chickasaw; Markwayne Mullin, Cherokee - both from Oklahoma and both Republican)
- 0 women until now: Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo, NM) and Sharice Davids (Ho-Chunk, KS)
- Keep in mind we were only granted citizenship in 1924, which many states didn't fully implement until the 1960s and still refuse to provide full Indigenous participation in.

- This lack of representation at the highest government levels leads to more and more barriers to resources, as well as an extreme lack of knowledge regarding Indigenous identity and issues.
- [Elizabeth Warren](#): Massachusetts legislator has made headlines the last few years for her claims of Cherokee ancestry. Despite what liberal media would claim, actual Native people are very concerned with how Warren's obvious political stunt in taking a DNA test and publicly announcing her results—regardless of her intentions—is damaging to Native people and our communities. Indigenous scholars, researchers, and scientists, including [Dr. Kim TallBear](#) (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate), [Rebecca Nagle](#) (Cherokee), and [Dr. Adrienne Keene](#) (Cherokee), have written and spoken about Warren's false tribal claims and the very real harm Native people have experienced as the debate has revived the worst stereotypes and offensive racist remarks, i.e. Trump referring to Warren as Pocahontas (widely considered by the people of her own tribe as a child sexual assault victim), and Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz referring to as Sacagawea. And while the conversation centers her heritage (or lack thereof), actual Native people are being silenced and our very real issues ignored.
- Heidi Heitkamp & Savanna's Act (passed the Senate but blocked in the House in December)
- [Department of the Interior](#), led until recently by Ryan Zinke, single-handedly ensuring science-based land/resource management is a thing of the past (land grabs for extractors, such as the selling off of Bears Ears in Utah); as secretary, he quickly became one of the chief proponents of Mr. Trump's energy-first agenda, promoting policies that seek to open the East Coast to offshore drilling, weaken the standards of the Endangered Species Act and shrink two national monuments, constituting the [largest rollback of federal land protection](#) in the nation's history.
- North Dakota legislators [narrowly defeated a bill](#) in 2017 that would have allowed drivers to run over and kill protesters without being jailed; meanwhile an increasing number of states want to make [it a crime](#) to plan a pipeline protest.
- The mess was a direct result of the Supreme Court's 2013 gutting of key provisions of the Voting Rights Act specific to racially-driven barriers to voting (in North Dakota, for instance, a lawsuit was recently filed by Turtle Mountain tribal members after their tribal IDs were legislatively invalidated due to PO Box addresses --- yet most Natives living on reservations have PO boxes due to lack of roads, signs and multiple families living on a piece of property).
- During the 2018 midterm elections, [North Dakota disenfranchises tribal voters](#), demanding a residential address be listed on their license, rather than the more common P.O. Box most tribal/rural residents (including non-Natives) use. In Sioux County, ND, where the Standing Rock Indian Reservation is, [turnout](#) was up 105 percent from the last midterm elections in 2014 and 17 percent from the 2016 presidential election, according to data from the North Dakota secretary of state's office. In Rolette County, home to the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, it was up 62 percent from 2014 and 33 percent from 2016. In Benson County, home to the Spirit Lake Nation, it was up 52 percent from 2014 and 10 percent from 2016.

- VAWA and all the barriers preventing full tribal authority over non-Natives who commit crimes on tribal land is political violence
- Government shutdown is political violence. When tribes negotiated treaties with the U.S. government decades ago, they often secured government funding for things like health care and education in exchange for land they were giving up. Now, with the government partially shut down, tribes are scrambling for funds to keep services such as food pantries and health clinics open. But the tribes may soon run out of money if the shutdown continues, and they don't know whether they will be reimbursed once the government is funded again. In the meantime, fewer federal workers being paid can mean that rural communities are trapped by snow in unplowed areas or that tribal citizens who work for the government don't have salaries to support their families.
- The deaths of migrant womxn and children: A seven-year-old Guatemalan girl named [Jakelin Amei Rosmery Caal Maquin](#) died in December in large part due to the deplorable conditions while in the custody of the US Customs and Border Protection; from Alta Verapaz and their first language was Q'eqchi (Mayan dialect); 20-year-old Guatemalan womxn [Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzalez](#) was shot and killed in May by Border Patrol agents in Texas

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5. HEALTHCARE

- [We can't even heal in peace](#): San Carlos Apache tribal member is in a vegetative state for 10-plus years and is said to have been "[apparently assaulted](#)" after she gives birth STILL IN A COMA.
- As mentioned before, healthcare is one of those areas the federal government agreed to pay for in exchange for the land y'all occupy. [Currently budgeted](#) at about \$5 billion federal funds to IHS. Considering increasing healthcare costs and the disproportionately high rates to which Natives suffer diseases (physical and mental), this number is a drop in the bucket.
- Native youth suicide is anywhere from 3-10 times the national average depending on the reservation.
- Inadequate womxn's healthcare, specifically. On my reservation, womxn haven't been able to plan the birth of their children on their own reservation for decades because the [lack of adequate facilities](#). Aside from emergency births, most womxn on my reservation have scheduled births (induction) or C-sections at hospitals off their reservation.
- [No abortion services](#) (2006 SD abortion ban). Few family planning services. Native womxn have higher rates of teenaged pregnancy, late or no prenatal care, and alcohol and tobacco use in pregnancy. Their infants have higher rates of preterm birth, mortality, and sudden infant death syndrome than infants in the general population. See also <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4167108/>.

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6. ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE (food, land, water)

- [Violence against the land is violence against Indigenous womxn.](#)
- Womxn are leading the frontlines to protect the Earth:
 - Winona LaDuke (Ojibwe, co-founder and executive director of [Honor the Earth](#) and fighting against Enbridge pipelines in Minnesota)
 - [LaDonna Tamakawastewin Allard](#) (Standing Rock NoDAPL camp founder/landowner)
 - [Cherri Foytlin](#) (Diné/Cherokee), an advocate for climate justice who is fighting the Bayou Bridge pipeline in Louisiana (from the same company that gave us the Dakota Access Pipeline – Energy Transfer Partners)
- [Government shutdown](#) – National Parks, which encompass the sacred sites of many tribal nations, are being torn apart by tourists without rangers on duty to keep folks in line.
- [White vegans harassing Indigenous people for traditional hunting practices and meat consumption.](#)
- The US government purposefully destroyed Indigenous food sources, such as buffalo (and the land) and made it illegal to hunt/fish in certain areas. At the same time, the government introduced the commodity food system to annihilate [Indigenous relationships with food](#) - why we ate (spirituality, sacrifice, communal-sufficiency), where we ate (reservations with little agricultural value), when we ate (government distribution of food was often limited during harsh seasons or withheld during the Indian Wars), what we ate (foods that could travel the long distances to rural reservations were highly processed, salty, sugary, and fatty), how we ate (no more movement associated with food; poorly researched nutrition advice included lots of pasteurized dairy, three square meals, and lots of protein and starch—very little human connection with sun and soil—all things Natives and our guts weren't ready for = [DIABETES](#)). Today, food relationships are still severed, because many reservations are [food deserts](#) lacking access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Growing veggies or raising livestock often isn't an option for impoverished people just looking to survive day to day. Historical links provided here: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/food-boxes-have-already-failed-for-native-communities-why-would-they-work-for-snap>
- Today, many Indigenous people live in rural areas, and many of those Indigenous families subsist off the land and waters through farming, herding, hunting, fishing and gathering for their main food supplies. <http://law.irank.org/pages/8750/Native-American-Rights-Hunting-Fishing-Rights.html>
- Indigenous womxn play a key role in farming, food gathering and preparation. They are also cultural practitioners, healers, teachers and knowledge holders who have a central role in the transmission of language and culture to younger generations. Indigenous womxn have a central role in food gathering and preparation and in a range of traditional cultural practices inextricably linked to the natural environment. These everyday practices increase their exposure and makes them particularly vulnerable to

absorbing environmental contaminants, which are increasingly affecting their health, livelihoods and reproductive capacities.

- The particular health effects of toxic contaminants on Indigenous womxn are well documented. Multiple studies confirm that alarmingly high levels of toxics are found in Indigenous womxn's breast milk, placental cord blood, blood serum and body fat. Devastating impacts on maternal health include sterility, reproductive system cancers, decreased lactation and the inability to produce healthy children. Research also demonstrates the link between chemical exposures and intellectual and neurological development of children, impacting their ability to retain and pass on culture, ceremonies, stories, language, songs -- a primary concern of Indigenous womxn.
- "We have listened to each other's stories and have seen the tragic effects within our own families, communities, and nations of the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of toxic contamination. These imposed, deplorable conditions violate the right to health and reproductive justice of Indigenous Peoples, and affect the lives, health and development of our unborn and young children. They seriously threaten our survival as Peoples, Cultures, and Nations." --- [Declaration for Health, Life and Defense of Our Land, Rights and Future Generations", 1st International Indigenous Womxn's Environmental and Reproductive Health Symposium, June 30 – July 1, 2010, UN Permanent Forum's 10th session](#)

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7. Media

- When I say media, I'm talking every product we mass consume. Examples of violence against Natives in the media include:
 - [News](#)
 - [Movies](#)
 - [TV](#)
 - Books (JK Rowling's [History of Magic in North America](#), [pretendians](#), [children's literature](#))
 - [Comics](#)
 - [Video Games](#)
 - [Sports](#)
 - [Halloween](#) and [other holidays](#) / [celebrations](#)
 - [Advertising](#) and [Marketing](#)
 - [Social Media](#)
 - [Etc.](#)
- With this we're talking about representation, dehumanization, and erasure, which play into the health inequities we've discussed already, including violence against Indigenous womxn. How? When the majority of non-Natives only have inaccurate media representations to work with, it allows the "real" issues, like Savanna's Act and VAWA, to get steamrolled. I discuss this in more detail in my [Fierce](#) essay.
- Why are stereotypes so important to address:

Stereotypes hold everyone back, because they don't allow outsiders to see the human beings underneath all that black and white makeup and stupid bird hats. Stereotypes allow non-Natives to appropriate indigenous images and traditional aspects of our heritage with offensive whooping and tomahawk chopping, dancing in fringed costumes and war bonnets, Navajo panties at Urban Outfitters...

It is so normalized and accepted in America that we see this (mis)appropriation of ourselves in music videos, fashion shows, Halloween parties, frat shindigs, and sporting events. We become obsolete pieces of art used solely for entertainment purposes. And just as Depp's Tonto ended up as a carnival sideshow, so too do important tribal issues. How does this all come back to harm Native people and communities? In one of my favorite books, *The Lucifer Effect*, Philip G. [Zimbardo](#) talks about how stereotypes and misrepresentations are classic tactics of those in power to marginalize, dehumanize and ultimately do away with specific populations:

Dehumanization is the central construct in our understanding of 'man's inhumanity to man.' Dehumanization occurs whenever some human beings consider other human beings to be excluded from the moral order of being a human person. The objects of this psychological process lose their human status in the eyes of their dehumanizers. By identifying certain individuals or groups as being outside the sphere of humanity, dehumanizing agents suspend the morality that might typically govern reasoned actions toward their fellows. (Zimbardo p. 307)

Zimbardo explains how dehumanizing can trigger 'good' people to commit atrocious acts, i.e. the Jewish Holocaust, Rwandan genocide, and abuse by guards at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq. Dehumanization allows people to redefine harmful behavior as honorable, minimizes personal responsibility, maximizes apathy, and "reconstruct(s) our perception of victims as deserving their punishment" (p. 311). <--- Sound familiar? Read through some of the comments on [my blog](#)... Or better yet, through the troll-infested comment sections of news stories about Indian mascots or Hollywood depictions of ethnic people. In case you were operating under some delusion to the contrary, let me be the first to point out how alive and thriving racism is today. Let's stop that whole "post-racial" fantasy, mmmkay?

In the case of Hollywood whitewashing, the context behind the offensive Native imagery is at issue. In relegating Native Americans to Western or mythological roles, Hollywood perpetuates and popularizes racist trends proponents say "honor" Natives; mascots, in particular, which are the little racist brothers to Hollywood's stereotypes.

Perhaps one of the biggest concerns regarding AI [American Indian] mascots is that, because AIs may be largely defined by (and socially represented in terms of) mascot stereotypes, AI people have ceased to be perceived as real. From the time of first contact with European explorers, AIs have been portrayed fictionally as

barbaric, wild, and savage—terms that imply AI people are less than human. Thus, it could be argued that AIs have existed as mascots for the 500+ year history of this country, and one consequence of AI sports mascots is that they keep AI people allegorically fixed as a kind of ‘cultural souvenir’ preserved in the American identity. ([Chaney, Burke & Burkely, 2012, p. 43](#))

Mascots and Hollywood stereotypes exacerbate the issues plaguing Indian Country today by making the American public complacent and indifferent to those “Indian-only” problems, in addition to totally leaving out the fact that many of these issues are because of past and current U.S. POLICIES (I’m thinking in terms of assimilation, allotment, boarding schools, ICWA, VAWA, and – most recently – the shutdown)! These images further divide Us and Them, because we Natives are nothing more than ticket sales and sports jerseys. Who cares about the Indians when there are REAL issues to deal with? Dehumanizing Natives through racist imagery has been the most effective modern means of annihilating the few of us remaining.

- Study after legit, peer-reviewed ([UC Denver](#), [American Psychological Association](#), [American University Washington College of Law](#), [University of Montana](#), and also [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), [among many other examples](#)) study show self-esteem lowers drastically in Native youth with poor & problematic media representation

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8. Relational violence (sex and love): We can’t forget that all the violence discussed heretofore also inherently incorporates spiritual/cultural violence; said another way, violence disrupts how Native people relate to ourselves and to each other. Because Native womxn are often in caregiver and household/tribal leadership roles, violence against them is also violence against Native culture. Contrasting with Western perspectives of a nuclear family and individualism, Native families are extended, communal and land-based. Violence separates us from each other, from our notions of love and sex (Two Spirit identities, for instance, were lost during assimilation eras) and we are only just beginning to reclaim those sacred identities.

All violence Indigenous womxn face is connected and part of the larger picture of sexism, racism, and settler colonialism. Understanding what causes violence against Indigenous womxn and what that violence takes shape as are the first steps to dismantling this oppression and lead to better outcomes for Native communities.

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- Where do we go from here? Awareness is key to prevention. You KNOWING means you can DO something. Vote, follow, uplift, PAY!
- Do better with cultural competency and programming led by qualified Native people and allies. This includes supporting Indigenous-led movements, such as Indigenous Peoples Day, and ending holidays that glorify genocidal and geographically illiterate colonizers like Columbus. Assist with planning and execution of events, but step back from leadership roles and media coverage. Step forward and use your privilege to

intercept violence. More ally steps here: <https://www.amnesty.org.au/10-ways-to-be-an-ally-to-indigenous-communities/>.

- Call your legislators and demand tribal court systems receive proper support/funding to fully implement laws like VAWA and demand even stronger legislation allowing for the full prosecution of non-Natives who commit ANY crime on Indian land.
- Reconnect Native clients with traditional food sources and knowledge: <https://www.americanindiancancer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RIFR-9.7.18-PRINT-1.pdf>.
- Always consider how trauma might affect outcomes for your Native clients. Train yourself and employees in [trauma-informed care](#).
- Implement culturally appropriate systems of care. A good foundation is outlined [here](#).
- Demand more representation at educational institutions, from the faculty, to the students who are accepted, to the curriculum. ALWAYS ask who isn't at the table and you'll discover it's often a Native perspective.
- Demand Indigenous representation in media. Demand that representation be accurate and from a Native perspective—always. Start by following Indigenous thinkers and scholars on social media: <https://news.psu.edu/story/490970/2017/10/30/research/research-suggests-american-indians-are-finding-image-power-social>
- Support Indigenous creatives! Yes – you can buy those beaded earrings, t-shirts, and beautiful pottery, so long as the creator is an artist who can provide a certificate of authenticity and/or prove tribal affiliation. Can buy the art because it's too expensive? Don't settle and buy the cheaper knock-offs – this is actively harming Native people and their communities. Instead, save up and/or encourage your network to [#BuyNative](#).
- Support Native-led organizations. Some fabulous initiatives to get you started:
 - [Native Women's Society of the Great Plains](#): The Native Women's Society of the Great Plains, Reclaiming Our Sacredness, is a coalition of domestic violence and/or sexual assault programs committed to the reclamation of the sacred status of women. The Society offers a vision that ends domestic and sexual violence against Native women, in all aspects – a vision of change. The Society works to support and strengthen sisterhood and local advocacy and program development efforts through culturally specific education, technical assistance training and resource implementation. Member organizations of the Native Women's Society are committed to ending all forms of violence and will actively support the mission of this organization.
 - [Red Wind Consulting](#): Red Wind is a 501c3 nonprofit organization created in response to the increasing needs of Tribal and Native specific programs to develop indigenous responses to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Unfortunately, resources have been slow to reach Indian Country. Native women have been organizing for years, however, the levels of technical support available to tribes and native-specific organizations continue to be limited. Red Wind was developed to bring additional resources to ending violence against

women work while enhancing the capacity of Tribal and Native specific programs.

- [StrongHearts Native Helpline](#): Offering peer-to-peer support and culturally appropriate resources for Native Americans affected by domestic violence and dating violence. Speak with a StrongHearts advocate by calling 1-844-7NATIVE (1-844-762-8483), Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CST when you are ready to reach out. Safe, anonymous and confidential. We're here to listen. Domestic violence is not our traditional way.
- Divest from organizations that support violence against Indigenous lands.
Step 1: Head to the Facebook page or Google reviews entry for one of these global banks. Use the links below to contact the banks' corporate headquarters. If you're a customer, you can search for your local bank branch to leave a comment or review.

- **Barclays:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **JP Morgan Chase:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **BBVA:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Citibank:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Deutsche Bank:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Credit Suisse:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Royal Bank of Canada:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Toronto Dominion:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Wells Fargo:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Credit Agricole:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)
- **Mizuho:** [Facebook](#), [Google](#)

Step 2: Leave a public comment or review telling them what you think about their financial support for climate-wrecking pipelines. Not sure what to say? Here are some suggestions for what you can write. Don't be afraid to make the message your own!

- The company behind the Dakota Access Pipeline, Energy Transfer Partners, is trying to silence speech with a \$900 million baseless lawsuit. Don't fund Energy Transfer Partners and their pipelines!
- Oil pipeline companies are constructing pipelines and risking oil spills on Indigenous territories and violating Indigenous rights. Don't fund these devastating projects!
- Oil pipeline companies are constructing dirty pipelines that threaten our water, could harm wildlife, and contribute to climate change. Don't fund these dangerous pipelines!
- Oil pipeline companies are constructing new pipelines which will carry some of the dirtiest oil on the planet, reducing our chances of avoiding

the worst impacts of climate change and affecting millions of people worldwide. Don't fund these pipelines!

- Connect with Indigenous activists on social media to keep up with current issues. I am on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#). [#NativeTwitter](#) is a good place to start.
 - **Believe survivors.**
-

More resources regarding violence against Indigenous womxn (in no particular order)!

- [Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege](#)
- [A Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma: Implications for Public Health Practice and Research by Michelle M. Sotero, University of Nevada, Las Vegas](#)
- [Suicide and Trauma May Be Woven in DNA for Native Americans](#)
- [The Facts on Violence Against American Indian/Alaska Native Women](#), from Futures Without Violence
- [Tribal Leaders Call for Expanded Jurisdiction Over Non-Native Domestic Violence Offenders](#)
- [This report from the National Institute of Justice shows, among other things, that violence impacts Native men at nearly the same rate as Native womxn; however, that violence looks different for men than for womxn.](#)
- Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men, 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey - [National Institute of Justice](#)
- [National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2015 Data Brief](#) (and this [infograph](#))
- [Surviving an Invasion & Understanding Your Neighbors](#), by Heather Dawn Thompson (TEDxRapidCity)
- [White people are still raised to be racially illiterate](#)
- [Native Americans are recasting views of indigenous life](#), by Tristan Ahtone
- [Settler Fragility: Why Settler Privilege Is So Hard to Talk About](#), by Dina Gilio-Whitaker

- [BREAKING A SACRED TRUST: ON THE EXPLOITATION OF TRADITIONAL NATIVE KNOWLEDGE](#)
- ['Kill Every Buffalo You Can! Every Buffalo Dead Is an Indian Gone'](#)
- [Report: Americans Know Little about Native Americans](#)
- [How Native American Children Benefit From Trauma-Informed Schools](#)
- [Are 'man camps' that house pipeline construction workers a menace to Indigenous women?](#)

Need more resources? Happy to help! Email me at jtatewalker@gmail.com.