

SACRED RESPONSIBILITY

PROTECTING OUR *PEOPLE*



A national snapshot of the impact of federal funding challenges on domestic violence, sexual assault, missing and murdered people, and other violence-related services for American Indians and Alaska Natives.



We ask Congress and the Administration to protect and expand funding for Tribal and rural survivor services. We need stable, flexible, and culturally informed support. We need grant programs that recognize the realities of remote life, the legacy of colonization, and the strength of our Tribal Nations... We hope you will stand with us to ensure that future generations inherit not only the weight of our past, but the strength of our survival, and the full support of a nation that honors its trust and treaty responsibilities.

-Tribal Survey Participant



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) wants to acknowledge the partnership with National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), Alaska Native Women's Resource Center (ANWRC), National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (NIWRC), StrongHearts Native Helpline, NCAI Violence Against Women Task Force, and Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence (ATCEV) and their collective efforts and continued advocacy for this essential work.

UIHI and partners want to give tremendous gratitude to the advocates and organizations working to protect and support survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, missing and murdered Indigenous people, and other types of violence across the nation.

Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of survivors and providers.

Language Note

The authors use the terms “Native,” “Indian,” “Indigenous,” and “American Indian and Alaska Native” interchangeably throughout this report. The demographic terminology included in source material is referenced when appropriate.¹

Recommended Citation

Echo-Hawk, A., Vega, E., Gurule, S., Augustine, H., McCarn, B., Seneca, C., Begay, A., Mewada, S., Vaidya, D., Fong, K., Schuit, S., Esiong, D., Lucero, C., McGraw, J. Sacred Responsibility Protecting our People Survey. 2025. Seattle, WA: Urban Indian Health Institute.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose.....	4
Executive Summary	6
Key Findings	6
Recommendations (abbreviated)	8
Background	9
About the Survey.....	11
Findings	13
Funding Landscape.....	13
Violence-Related Services Being Accessed.....	14
Alaska’s Unique Challenges to Address Violence Against Native People.....	15
Widespread Reductions Across Critical Services	16
Law Enforcement.....	18
Discussion.....	19
Recommendations	22
Appendices	27
Appendix A: Funding Types.....	28
Appendix B: Services Offered.....	29
Appendix C: Methodologies	33
References	35



PURPOSE

This report examines the impacts of new and ongoing federal funding cuts to violence-related programs and services for American Indians and Alaska Natives, including those serving survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and missing and murdered Indigenous people (MMIP).

201 Tribes and organizations serving Native survivors of violence responded to the survey, including Tribes, Tribal coalitions, Native nonprofits, and Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs).

The analyses and recommendations presented in this report can be used to inform partners and legislators about the impact of federal funding cuts to violence-related services for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Program Types

Tribe - A sovereign nation with inherent self-government rights.

Tribal Organization - A Tribal governing body or a Native organization that is either established by a Tribal government or elected by community members, with Indians actively involved in all aspects of its work.

Tribal Coalition - A formal alliance or nonprofit organization formed by Indigenous groups, Tribes, and Native domestic violence and sexual assault organizations to pool resources, advocate for shared goals, and provide culturally specific services to American Indians and Alaska Natives, including nonprofit Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions funded by the Violence Against Women Act.

Urban Indian Organization - A nonprofit corporate body situated in an urban center governed by a board of directors of whom at least 51 percent are American Indians/Alaska Natives, for establishing and administering an IHS urban Indian health program and related activities.

Native Nonprofit - A not-for-profit whose leadership and board are made up of a majority of American Indian/Alaska Native, and whose mission is to provide services to the Native population.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Definitions

Survivor Services: Promotes safety, healing, and justice for victims and survivors of crime by meeting their individualized needs, upholding victims' rights, and enhancing community and national responses to harm. ^[17]

Advocacy Services: Support that promotes survivors' rights, safety, access to resources, and self-determination. ^[18]

Key Findings

- 64% of respondents reported being substantially impacted by funding cuts to grants that were not due to expire since January 2025.
- 44% of current survivor services have or will be reduced due to funding cuts.
- Federal funding covered over 50% of the budgets for 84% of survey respondents.
- The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) was the largest funder of survey respondents (46%), followed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (36%).
- 25,074 Native survivors received services from participating organizations in a 12-month period. Of those, 28% of survivors were Native children (under 18) and 8% were pregnant or postpartum.
- Safe housing was the most utilized service accounting for 58% of all services.
- Supportive services, including transportation, court accompaniment, and counseling accounted for 42% of all services.

- 1,582 Native people were referred to StrongHearts Native Helpline over the previous twelve-month timespan.
- 419 training sessions related to violence prevention and intervention were provided to 12,541 members of the public over the previous 12 months.
- Respondents provided an aggregate of 227 types of advocacy services. Of these services, 41% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts.
- Respondents provided an aggregate of 146 types of advocacy services for children/youth. Of these services, 36% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts.
- Respondents provided an aggregate of 198 types of healthcare services. Of these services, 36% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts.
- Respondents provided an aggregate of 83 types of financial services. Of these services, 40% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts.
- Respondents provided an aggregate of 52 types of legal services. Of these services, 40% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts.
- Respondents provided an aggregate of 142 supportive services, including prevention and educational programs. Of these services, 53% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts.
- 20% of services provided to Active Duty or Veteran Victims were reduced due to funding cuts.
- 1,156 requests from victims served by respondents were NOT able to be met due to funding constraints. Of these, 263 requests were for children.
- 60% of unmet need requests were for safe housing support.
- 53% of respondents offered culturally specific services. Of these, 16 organizations said that funding for these services had been reduced or eliminated since January 2025.
- Essential service reductions included translation/interpretation services (53%), housing/landlord support (50%), transitional and other housing support (50%), direct cash assistance (50%), and technology use support (47%).
- 49% reported they struggle with the recruitment of Tribal law enforcement officers.
- 43% reported they struggle with retention of Tribal law enforcement after training.

Recommendations

1. Federal agencies must include consistent and sustainable noncompetitive funding for Tribal Nations for all public safety and victim services needs in their annual budget requests. Congress should direct appropriate funding levels for noncompetitive funding that meets expressed need.
2. Congressionally allocated grant programs established for American Indian and Alaska Natives should be exempt from any federal administration elimination of programs deemed DEI as these programs are the fulfillment of treaty and trust obligations for public safety.
3. Tribal consultation and urban confer should be initiated by the federal administration prior to the elimination of grants that recognizes the web of federal funding that supplements drastically underfunded Tribal set-asides and funding.
4. DOJ should request from Congress and the federal administration the total amount of funding authorized for Tribal programs in VAWA, especially for the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction grant program and reimbursement.
5. DOJ and DOI should request Congress increase funding for Tribal Nations' implementation of Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction for DOJ, DHHS, and the BIA.
6. Congress should pass legislation such as Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety (BADGES) for Native Communities Act (HR 1010/S 390) and the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act (HR 3712/S 2452) that establish grant programs, provide resources and training, and provide support for increasing appropriately trained and compensated Tribal law enforcement.
7. Congress should support the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Modernization Act of 2026.
8. Congress should support a permanent Tribal set-aside fix to the authorizing legislation of the Victims of Crime Act Tribal funding stream that reflects actual Tribal needs and continues to support the flexible use of funding.
9. Congress should pass a FVPSA reauthorization that: 1) adjusts the funding distribution to increase the amount that Tribes receive from 10% to 12.5%; 2) dedicates formula funding for Tribal coalitions to provide culturally appropriate technical assistance to Tribes; 3) provides permanent funding for the national Indian domestic violence hotline; 4) provides permanent funding for the Alaska Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce disparities facing Native victims; and 5) provides permanent funding for the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce disparities facing Native Hawaiian victims.
10. BIA should continue requesting additional federal funding to provide public safety and justice resources to Tribal Nations in P.L. 280 states.

See appendices for more information.



BACKGROUND

American Indians and Alaska Natives suffer from some of the highest rates of violence in the United States.² Finding the appropriate solutions to combat this crisis has plagued policymakers and Indian Country alike as the human and monetary costs decimate urban and rural Native communities. Women are missing, children are suffering, and after Black men, Native men are more likely to be murdered than anyone else in the nation.³

The promise of public safety is intended to be universal, but for Native people it is a promise that has never been met with resources or reality. Tribal Nations have a legal right to public safety resources as a part of the prepaid benefits included in numerous treaties signed with the United States. However, Tribes have never received the adequate resources they are owed.⁴ The violence comes with an astronomical cost as violent crimes accounted for 85% of the \$2.6 trillion in total costs associated with personal and property costs in the United States in 2017.⁵ Stopping this violence reduces monetary cost, but most importantly improves the lives of all Americans. For Indigenous communities, research has shown us what works to build thriving safe communities—sustained investment in culturally based programming⁶ and Tribal law enforcement.

Through the efforts of Tribes, Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs), Tribal organizations, and Indigenous leadership, a web of federal funding has been established over the decades, establishing programming across Indian Country, both rural and urban. However, this funding has never fully met the documented need and falls drastically short of the treaty and trust obligations owed by the U.S. government for public safety. This budget shortfall has created the necessity for programs to expand the web of funding to numerous federal agencies outside of the U.S. Department of Justice, who holds the responsibility for appropriate disbursement of federally mandated Tribal set-asides for public safety. For urban Indian communities, the funding maze holds further complications as they are often not directly eligible for Tribal set-aside dollars (unless eligibility allows for Tribal governmental designation), making them more dependent on local, state, and other federal grant opportunities. Through the ingenuity of Native leadership, the web of funding has built thriving

organizations despite these ongoing obstacles.

The current federal and state funding environment is threatening the ability of Native communities to continue to provide services for the prevention, intervention, and ending of violence in Indian Country.

These threats include funding revoked overnight, the potential elimination of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) within the DOJ, and removal of the Not Invisible Act Commission report from the DOJ website. As a result, Tribes and other service providers are scrambling to serve the most vulnerable within our communities, amplifying the need to ensure that the federal government fulfills treaty and trust obligations via resource allocation for public safety and victim services.

This report provides a snapshot of how federal funding and administrative cuts are affecting direct service providers across Indian Country, including Tribes, Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs), and national organizations, over a 12-month reporting period. Additionally, it provides specific recommendations to ensure fulfillment of treaty and trust obligations for public safety and victim services

“The urgency cannot be ignored, and the voices of victims cannot be silenced. All of Indian Country is watching the actions of policymakers and agencies. We will fight for the safety of our relatives. This report points the path forward—we urge you to take it.” -Abigail Echo-Hawk (Pawnee), Director of Urban Indian Health Institute

ABOUT THE SURVEY

A total of 201 programs and organizations nationwide responded to the survey, including Tribes, Tribal organizations or coalitions, Native nonprofits, and Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs). This report provides a snapshot of services provided by these organizations and cannot be generalized across all programs serving American Indians/Alaska Natives survivors.

Respondents were asked a series of questions focused on funding mechanisms, services provided in the past 12 months, unmet service requests, and Tribal law enforcement.

Figure 1. Participating Programs/Organizations (N=201)

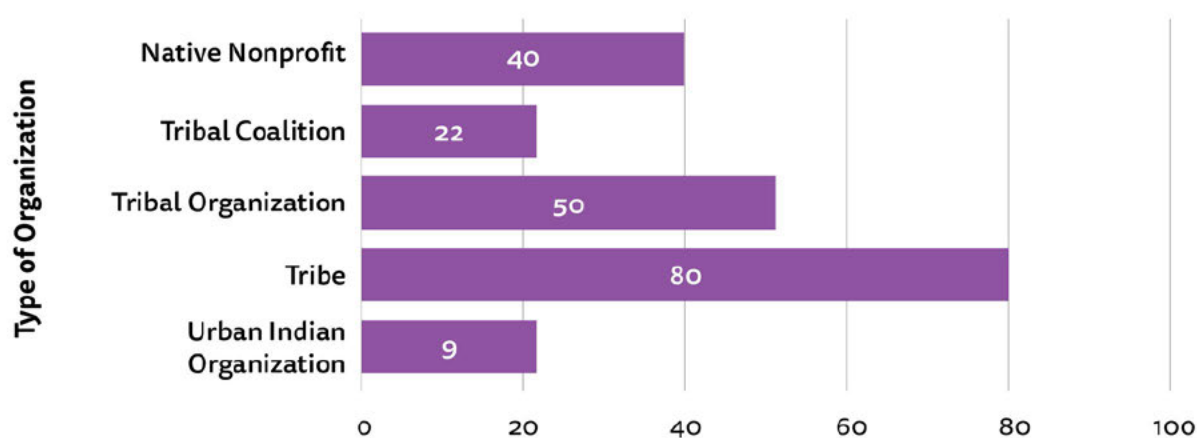
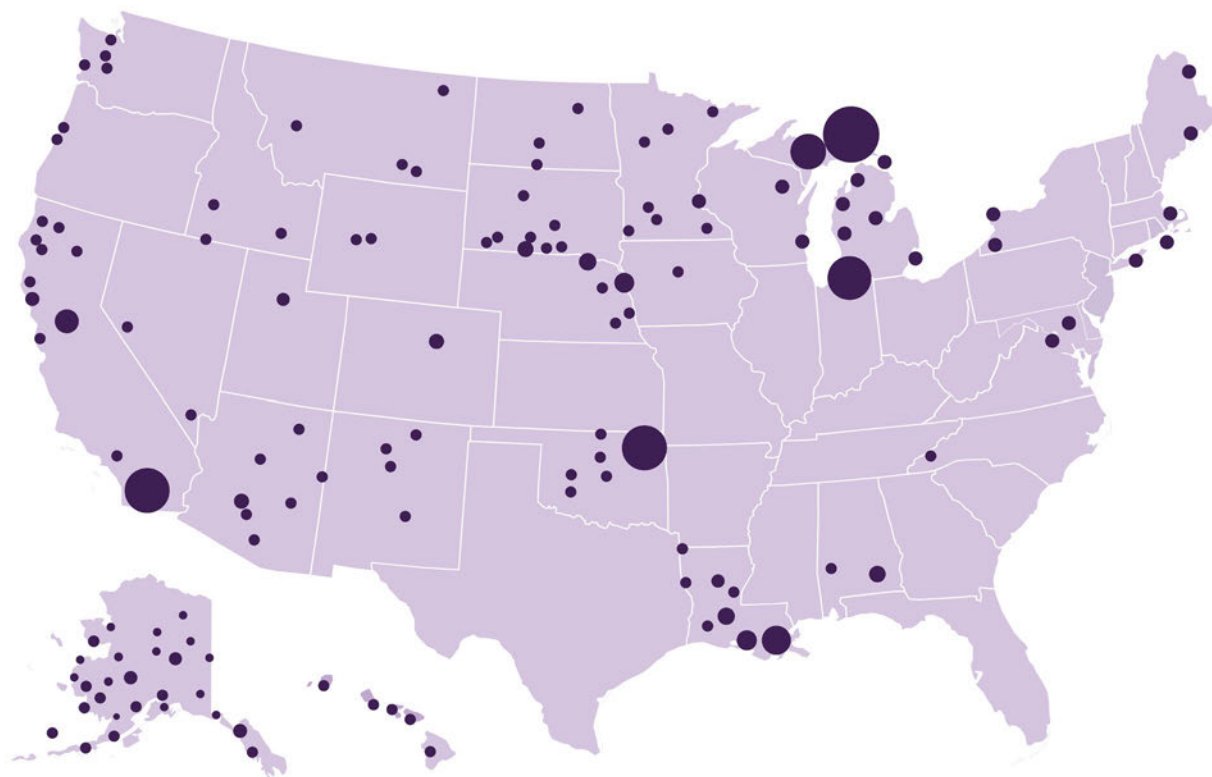


Figure 2. Survey Participants Spanned Indian Country



FINDINGS

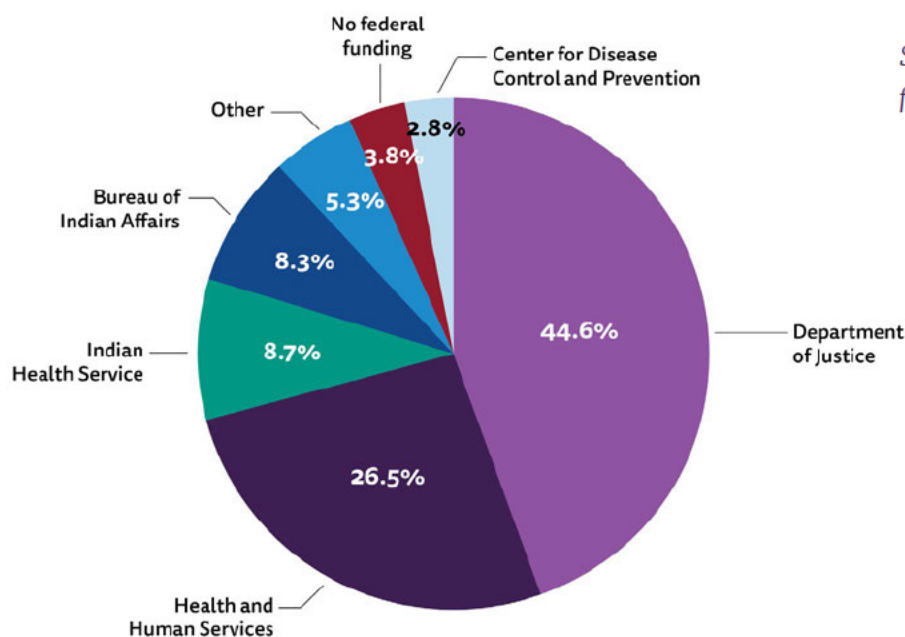
Funding Landscape

Federal funding challenges have significantly impacted American Indian/Alaska Native programs and organizations. 64% of respondents reported being substantially impacted by cuts to federal funding that were not due to expire. Some of these may have been reinstated by the Administration after this survey was completed. However, the impact remains via funding uncertainty, staff layoffs, and hesitancy to reinstate programs that could be cut without notice.

84% of respondents said that federal funding covered over half of the overall budget of their programs, indicating a reliance on federal funds to sustain program services.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) was the largest funder for participating programs and organizations. This is consistent with the legal obligation of the DOJ to administer Tribal set-asides for Tribal public safety.

Figure 3. U.S. Funding Sources for Violence-Related Programs



See Appendix A for further funding disaggregation

Violence-Related Services Being Accessed

In the previous 12 months, respondents served 25,074 American Indian/Alaska Native survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, or MMIP nationwide, providing resources, advocacy, and other forms of assistance (Appendix B). 55% received multiple services.

8%

of survivors were pregnant or postpartum.

28%

of survivors were children.

58%

of all services received by adults and children were housing-related, which included emergency shelters, transitional housing, hotels, motels, or Tribal-specific or culturally based housing provided by local programs.

Unmet Needs

While housing-related services were the most accessed, respondents reported **690 unmet requests related to housing and 466 unmet requests related to supportive services. Of these unmet requests, 23% were for children.**

42%

of all services received by adults and children were for supportive services, including transportation, court accompaniment, and counseling.

47

participating organizations referred 1,582 individuals to the StrongHearts Native Helpline.



StrongHearts Native Helpline is federally funded free, 24/7, confidential and anonymous domestic violence and sexual violence helpline for Native Americans and Alaska Natives.⁷

419

training sessions were provided by programs to 12,541 members of the public, addressing topics like domestic violence prevention and early intervention.

Alaska's Unique Challenges to Address Violence Against Native People

While making up only 19% of Alaska's population, Alaska Native people account for 47% of reported rape survivors.⁸ Of the 15 Alaska organizations that responded to the survey, all had been impacted by funding cuts with 73% reporting being substantially impacted. This was higher compared to the overall average of respondents (~64%). The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization of 2022 responds to this disparity with provisions tailored specifically for Alaska. These changes address longstanding challenges created by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, and other federal laws and policies, which disrupted traditional Tribal governance. Unlike Tribes in the Lower 48, whose sovereignty is upheld by treaties, ANCSA and other federal laws and policies limited Tribal authority in ways that weakened their ability to respond to violence.⁹

How does VAWA 2022 help?

- Establishes a Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction (STCJ) pilot program, allowing up to five Alaska Tribes each year to hold non-Native offenders accountable.¹⁰
- Provides technical assistance through the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to build Tribal justice capacity.¹⁰

Why does this matter?

Alaska is home to 229 federally recognized Tribes, nearly 40% of all U.S. Tribes. Many are located in remote areas, where law enforcement is limited or entirely absent. Over 40% of villages have no full-time officers, and vast distances mean response times are often delayed.

What's still needed?

While VAWA's reforms are critical, they are just a starting point. Continued attention and investment are essential to:

- Expand shelter and housing options.
- Improve access to legal services and advocacy.¹¹
- Support Tribal justice infrastructure.¹¹



Widespread Reductions Across Critical Services

Reductions were noted across every single service area. The largest reductions were observed in third party translation/interpretation services (53%), housing/landlord support (50%), transitional/other housing support (50%), direct cash assistance (50%), and technology use support (47%).

Culturally Specific Services

53 organizations surveyed reported offering some kind of culturally specific service for American Indian/Alaska Native survivors of violence with beading as the most offered service. Other services included regalia-making, drumming, sweats, ceremony, and access to traditional healers or medicine people. Of respondents that offered culturally specific services, 16 said that funding had been reduced or eliminated since January 2025.

“Our healing circles have become an increasingly important space for survivors to connect with one another and reclaim strength through culture... One participant shared that the healing circle has become ‘a place where I can breathe and remember who I am.’” -Tribal Survey Participant

Housing-Related Services

120 housing services were offered across 46 reporting organizations. Of these services, 44% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts. This includes emergency shelter, hotel/motel stay, support/advocacy related to housing/landlord, and transitional or other housing.

Language Services

Many American Indian/Alaska Native survivors are faced with additional difficulties such as language and cultural concerns, which can make it difficult to understand their rights and find services. In a 12-month period, an aggregate of 22 language services were offered across organizations with 41% reducing services.

Advocacy Services

227 advocacy services were offered across 47 reporting organizations. 41% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts. This includes services for victims with disability issues, Two-Spirit/LGBTQ+, elder abuse, teen/young adult dating abuse, trafficking, third-party translation/interpretation, and stalking.

Children/Youth Services

An aggregate 146 services supporting children/youth were offered across 43 reporting organizations. Of these services, respondents indicated 36% have been or will be reduced. This includes childcare, children's support/advocacy, safe exchange/visitation, therapy/counseling, and child welfare/protective services support with the highest impact observed for 43% reduction for children's support/advocacy.

Substance Misuse & Mental Health Services

198 healthcare services were reported as being offered across 44 reporting organizations. Of these services, 36% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts, including support for substance misuse (39% reduction) and support/advocacy for mental health (38% reduction).

Financial Services

83 financial services were offered across organizations. Of these services, 40% have been or will be reduced due to funding cuts, including support to access public benefits (42% reduction).

Legal Services

Respondents indicated 52 legal services were offered, and of these services, 40% have been or will be reduced.

Active Duty & Veterans Services

Notably, 20% of services provided to Active Duty or Veteran Victims in the U.S. Armed Forces were reduced due to funding cuts.



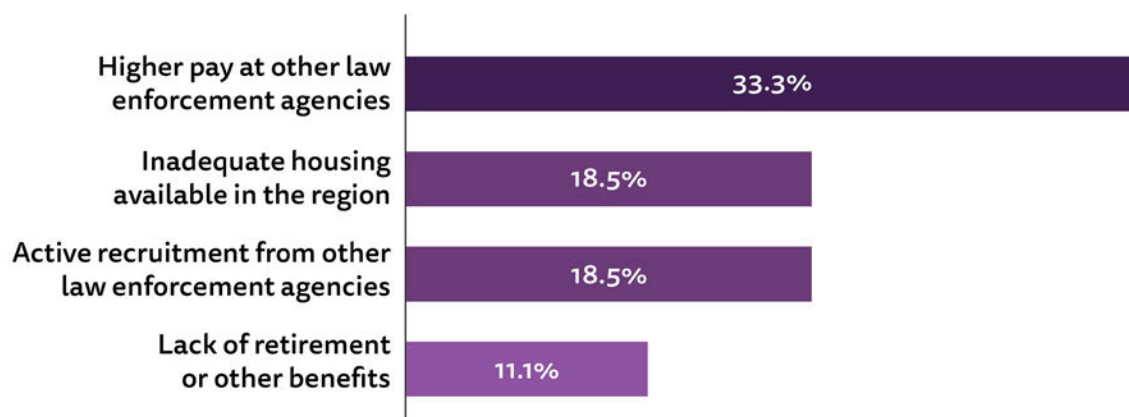
Law Enforcement

Of the 35 organizations who responded to Tribal law enforcement questions, 49% reported they struggle with the recruitment of Tribal law enforcement officers and 43% reported they struggle with retention after their training. Of the 35 respondents, 51% were Tribes and 49% were Tribal organizations.

Stated issues with retention were associated to higher pay at other law enforcement agencies, inadequate housing available in the region, active recruitment from other law enforcement agencies, and lack of retirement or other benefits. Respondants specified that remote living, stressful nature of the role, high turnover, and understaffing also significantly contribute to their struggle with retention.

Despite these struggles, 50% of programs reported that law enforcement in their local service areas are trained to be culturally attuned to the needs of Native victims, survivors, and their families, indicating the positive impact of culturally based training and community engagement.

Figure 4. Issues with Retention of Tribal Law Enforcement Officers





DISCUSSION

“Our program is 95% reliant on federal funding. Decreases would decimate services.” -Tribal Survey Participant

AN OBLIGATION TO INDIAN COUNTRY

This report reveals the urgent consequences of federal funding cuts on Native-run programs that serve American Indian/Alaska Native survivors of violence. Since January 2025, federal funding challenges have impacted organizations who responded to the survey with 64% reporting being substantially impacted by these funding cuts. These programs—already operating with limited resources—face devastating setbacks as proposed reductions threaten the primary funding streams that sustain them. The federal government has a legal obligation for public safety of American Indian and Alaska Natives. Cutting funding to these programs not only undermines essential services, but also represents a failure to uphold the federal government’s responsibility to Tribal communities. Protecting and expanding funding to these programs is a matter of justice, accountability, and upholding treaty and trust obligations owed to Native people.

Supporting survivors in rural and urban Native communities is essential to reduce the human and monetary costs of violence. This survey illustrates the impact of the current policy and funding environment that exasperates the already strained safety net for the most vulnerable in Native communities. Organizations repeatedly cited housing, whether emergency, transitional, or long-term, as their most frequent unmet need with housing assistance being constrained by restrictions outlined in funding awards, annual spending caps, or the complete absence of federal or state funding. Long-term housing is persistently unattainable due to a lack of affordable and accessible housing units.

There is also a lack of vacancies available at shelters and transitional housing projects. Moreover, housing needs are not fully met because shelters and programs have policies that impose maximum stay limits. A respondent emphasized that *“when clients have exhausted their stay at the Tribal Domestic Violence Shelter, there is no housing for them.”*

SYSTEM UNDER STRAIN

One organization described four instances where they could not offer shelter to clients because the clients required specialized services and referred them to a crisis response team. Another organization listed reentry support as a critically needed, yet unavailable specialized service requested by survivors who are trying to establish safe housing.

These findings paint a clear picture of a system under strain. Many programs are forced to triage care, refer survivors elsewhere, or turn people away. Increased investment in culturally responsive, survivor-centered, and geographically appropriate infrastructure is urgently needed.

Individual counseling and therapy are another area organizations currently struggle with when trying to meet client needs. Organizations described extensive waitlists for clients seeking individual services due to a shortage of mental health professionals, especially those providing culturally grounded services. One respondent shared, *“Due to our clinical team being overextended with these requests, many are placed on our waiting list.”*

Organizations indicated that survivor legal services were sorely lacking and reduced funding will increase this disparity. Legal services are key to assisting survivors to obtain restraining orders, determine child custody, and other legal issues. For rural communities, the situation is even more dire. One organization explained legal professionals seldom travel to their service area. Another said, *“legal advocacy and representation remain a challenge. Many survivors are hesitant to engage with attorneys they’ve never met in person... Building the trust necessary for effective legal support is difficult when legal professionals are unable to travel to our community.”*

A WIDENING GAP

As a result of the changes and restructuring of federal agencies, organizations are experiencing significant disruptions to their funding. These include delayed or total loss of grant dollars, pending Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs), grant eliminations, suspended communication with federal agencies, and loss of program officers. Organizations are left with no option but to take drastic cost-saving measures, including freezes on hiring, travel and overtime, staff layoffs and salary cuts, and reductions to facility space and hours of operation. Survey respondents reported an increased sense of uncertainty in planning and budgeting for projects and services. These imposed approaches to decreasing expenses hinder organizations’ ability to maintain their current operations and result in program reductions, affecting victims who depend on their essential services.

“Since January 2025, we have been forced to close our doors on Fridays due to an inability to cover staff salaries on those days, reducing our full-time workforce by 20%. [W]e also drastically reduced our comprehensive mental health services from 23 programs down to just 6. Our physical space has been reduced by 50%.”
-Native Nonprofit Survey Participant

Table 1. Federal Funding Challenges

	Funding Challenges	Impacts
1	Delayed disbursement of grant dollars	Freeze on hiring, travel and overtime
2	Total Loss of grants	Staff layoffs and salary cuts
3	Notice of funding opportunities (NOFOs) are pending rather than released	Reduced facility space and hours of operation
4	Grant elimination after grant closure	Delay of program expansion along with total elimination of programs
5	Freeze in communication with federal funders	Loss of rapport, trust, and institutional knowledge with funders
6	Grant program officer layoffs	Critical information missing

Respondents emphasized that the combination of basic needs support, emotional healing, and personal agency helped rebuild lives, strengthen families, and reinforce cultural identity. Ongoing investment in these programs is critical to sustain this momentum and expand the reach of healing-centered, Native-led support. Safe, stable housing was a cornerstone of nearly every story. However, survivors benefited from comprehensive services beyond shelter, including cultural healing service, legal advocacy, transportation, childcare, food, clothing, and employment support.

This snapshot illustrates the impact of federal funding uncertainty. However, it also brings to light the ingenuity and dedication of those serving Indigenous victims of violence. Despite this uncertainty, survey respondents continue to dedicate themselves to creating a healing environment for Native survivors.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Congress must include consistent and sustainable noncompetitive funding for Tribal Nations for all public safety and victim services needs in their annual budget requests.

Ensuring the safety of Tribal communities and upholding Tribes' sovereign rights requires noncompetitive, sustainable, and ongoing investment. Tribal citizens have a legal right to a well-functioning criminal justice system and responsive public safety services. However, many Tribal Nations struggle with insufficient funding for these essential services, making it difficult to address community needs effectively. Federal agencies serving public safety and victim services in Tribal Nations must provide the necessary funding for programs to uphold treaty and trust obligations and ensure safe thriving Native communities.

2. Congressionally allocated grant programs established for American Indians and Alaska Natives should be exempt from any federal administration elimination of programs deemed DEI as these programs are the fulfillment of treaty and trust obligations for public safety.¹⁹

It is crucial that the Administration ensure Congressionally allocated grant programs for American Indian and Alaska Native communities remain intact despite DEI program cuts. Under federal law, American Indian/Alaska Native communities are not a racial or ethnic group, but a political class. These programs fulfill federal trust and treaty obligations and are vital for public safety. Tribal communities depend on these grants as lifelines, and their removal would significantly harm the livelihoods of Tribal citizens and their justice systems. Without consistent funding, the implementation of restored criminal jurisdiction could be jeopardized, threatening public safety. Preserving these grant programs is essential to uphold Tribal sovereignty and Tribal citizens' rights to public safety. As Congress recognized in Section 901 of the Tribal Title of the Violence Against Women Act of 2000, "the unique legal relationship of the United States to Indian tribes creates a Federal trust responsibility to assist tribal governments in safeguarding the lives of Indian women."

3. Tribal consultation and urban confer should be initiated by the federal administration prior to the elimination of any federal grants that recognize the web of federal funding supplementing drastically underfunded Tribal set-asides and directed funding.²⁰

Due to drastic underfunding, most Native programs are forced to utilize a web of funding across federal agencies in order to maintain basic services and programming for victims. This includes grant programs that are not Tribally specific and instead are open to the general population. However, Tribal Nations and the United States have a distinctive political and legal relationship rooted in inherent sovereignty, which is essential for protecting the rights and interests of Tribal citizens and communities. Engaging in Tribal consultation and urban confer leads to better-informed decisions that benefit all parties involved, especially when funding mechanisms are being considered for elimination. Commitment to ongoing and meaningful dialogue with federal agencies whenever sovereign rights or the fulfillment of the United States' trust and treaty obligations may be at stake is critical to our government-to-government relationships. This applies to any changes to federal programs that impact Tribal Nations, not just Tribally specific programs.

4. DOJ should request from Congress and the federal administration the total amount of funding authorized for Tribal programs in VAWA, especially for the Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction grant program and reimbursement.

Tribal Nations face significant challenges in implementing the provisions of VAWA 2022 due to a lack of flexible, consistent, and sustainable funding for their justice systems. Tribal Nations invest substantial efforts to prepare their justice programs, but funding shortfalls hinder their ability to fully implement VAWA's restored criminal jurisdiction. Without adequate resources, they cannot meaningfully exercise restored jurisdiction or enhance public safety in their Tribal Nations.

5. DOJ and DOI should request Congress to increase funding for Tribal Nations' implementation of Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction for the DOJ, DHHS, and BIA.

Adequate resources are essential for strengthening Tribal justice systems and victim service programs, which are critical for community safety. Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction funding will support law enforcement training and collaboration with federal and local agencies. Tribal communities need culturally relevant services to meet the needs of their citizens. Additionally, funding for data collection and research is necessary to demonstrate the effectiveness of these initiatives and advocate for ongoing support. This investment would increase the capacity of Tribal communities to uphold justice and enhance public safety.

6. Congress should pass legislation such as Bridging Agency Data Gaps and Ensuring Safety (BADGES) for Native Communities Act (HR 1010/S 390) and the Parity for Tribal Law Enforcement Act (HR 3712/S 2452) that establish grant programs, provide resources and training, and provide support for increasing appropriately trained and compensated Tribal law enforcement.

Legislation that supports Tribal law enforcement's ability to keep our communities safe is an essential step. The BADGES Act would improve responses to Missing Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIWP) cases by expanding Tribal access to missing persons data systems, increasing training for Tribal law enforcement, and providing dedicated funding for coordinating investigations. The Tribal Law Enforcement Parity Act would allow qualifying Tribal law enforcement to enforce federal law within Tribal jurisdictions, reducing red tape. It would also improve recruitment and retention by extending to Tribal law enforcement the same benefits that federal officers already receive. While this legislation is a start, if passed, it should be seen as an incremental step to full funding and safety for Native communities. We encourage members of Congress to partner with Tribal Nations and Tribal advocates to introduce additional legislation to fully respect the nation's treaty and trust obligations.

7. Congress should support the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Modernization Act of 2026 (NAHASDA).

This act is a bipartisan effort with strong Tribal support with the goal to strengthen and modernize the foundation of Tribal housing policy. It aims to modernize outdated policies that have not been updated since 1996, strengthen Tribal self-determination in housing development, expand access to rental housing units and pathways to homeownership, improve infrastructure development in rural and Tribal communities, and unlock economic growth through housing investment. As indicated by the findings in this report, housing was the most requested service by survivors of violence. However, it was also the most likely to be unmet. This Act has the opportunity to strengthen Tribal housing to meet the needs of the community, including survivors.

8. Congress should introduce and pass a permanent Tribal set-aside fix to the authorizing legislation of the Victims of Crime Act Tribal funding stream that reflects actual Tribal needs and continues to support the flexible use of funding.

The Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside within DOJ has served as a critical and flexible source of funding that allows Tribes to administer appropriate crime victim services in their communities. However, this crucial funding source remains vulnerable to changing federal priorities. A permanent legislative fix in the Victims of Crime Act would provide long-term stability for funding for Native communities.

- 9. Congress should pass a FVPSA reauthorization that: 1) adjusts the funding distribution to increase the amount that Tribes receive from 10% to 12.5%; 2) dedicates formula funding for Tribal coalitions to provide culturally appropriate technical assistance to Tribes; 3) provides permanent funding for the national Indian domestic violence hotline; 4) provides permanent funding for the Alaska Tribal Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce disparities facing Native victims; and 5) provides permanent funding for the Native Hawaiian Resource Center on Domestic Violence to reduce disparities facing Native Hawaiian victims.**

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) has been a critical resource in combating the lack of shelter and supportive services for victims of domestic violence, serving as the only dedicated federal funding source for domestic violence shelters across the nation. However, the authorization for FVPSA expired in 2015. Tribal leaders have expressed concerns about the limited availability of shelter and supportive services for Tribal Nations. The reauthorization of FVPSA is essential for addressing these issues and enhancing public safety within Tribal communities.

- 10. Congress should direct additional federal funding to the BIA to provide public safety and justice resources to Federally Recognized Tribes in P.L. 280 states.**

In P.L. 280 states, the state government holds jurisdiction over crimes in Indian Country that in other states is under the jurisdiction of the federal government. However, P.L. 280 state governments fail to uphold their responsibilities to Native communities, and have low prosecution rates in cases of violence against Native women. Tribal law enforcement in these states need additional funding from the BIA to fill these gaps left by their state governments to ensure the safety of Native people.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FUNDING TYPES

Other types of funding sources that were listed by respondents are listed below.

Funding Source
National Institutes of Health
NYS
National Children's Alliance
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) through state
Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Tribal Civil and Criminal Legal Assistance (TCCLA) for Tribal court criminal and civil representation, LSC
Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)
Child Care Development Fund
Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)
Department of Children and Families
California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) Grant
Bureau of Indian Affairs District VI
Tribal Governments
Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)
Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)
American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
Corporation for Public Broadcasting
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
Medicaid reimbursements, TOR grant

State funding
Rural, STOP, VAWA DV/SASP
State funds- DPH
United States Department of Agriculture, Environmental Protection Agency
SIP TVSA VAWA OSHF
In-kind

APPENDIX B: SERVICES OFFERED

Services offered by organizations and the impact due to funding cuts.

■ **Survivor**
■ **Advocacy**
■ **Both**
**Color indicates type of service offered*

Service		No. of Programs Offering Service in the Past 12 months	% of programs offering service that have been or will be reduced due to funding
Housing	Emergency Shelter	33	36.4%
	Hotel/Motel Stay	35	42.9%
	Support/Advocacy Related to Housing/Landlord	32	50.0%
	Transitional or Other Housing	20	50.0%
Language Services	Bilingual Advocacy	11	45.5%
	Advocacy in Tribal Language	11	36.4%

Survivors	Disability Issues	35	40.0%
	Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+	32	46.9%
	Elder Victims	36	41.7%
	Teen/YA	42	35.7%
	Victims of Trafficking	30	40.0%
	Third Party Translation/ Interpretation	15	53.3%
	Victims of Stalking	37	37.8%
Children	Childcare/Daycare	9	33.3%
	Children's Support/ Advocacy	28	42.9%
	Safe Exchange/ Visitation	12	33.3%
	Therapy/Counseling	25	36.0%
	Traditional Indian Medicine practitioners	15	26.7%
	Support/ Advocacy Related to Child Welfare/Protective Services	32	31.3%
	Support/ Advocacy Related to Ensuring Access to Indian Child Welfare programs	25	40.0%

Health Care	HIV/AIDS Information and/or Support	19	26.3%
	Onsite Medical Services	14	28.6%
	Support/Advocacy Related to Health Care or Health Care Systems	29	44.8%
	Support/Advocacy for Mental Health	37	37.8%
	Support/Advocacy for Substance Use	33	39.4%
	Therapy/Counseling for Adults	27	33.3%
	Traditional Indian Medicine Practitioners for Adults	17	35.3%
	Referral and/or Accompaniment to Sexual Assault Forensic Examination	22	31.8%
Financial	Direct cash assistance	12	50.0%
	Financial Literacy/ Budgeting	20	35.0%
	Job training/ Employment assistance	18	38.9%
	Matched Savings Programs and/or Microloans	2	0.0%
	Public benefits/ TANF/Welfare	31	41.9%

Legal	Alternatives to the Criminal Legal System (Transformative, Restorative Justice)	13	38.5%
	Court Accompaniment or Legal advocacy	31	41.9%
	Legal Representation by an Attorney	15	40.0%
Other / Non-Residential Supportive Services	Prevention and/or educational programs	37	35.1%
	Support/Advocacy Related to Technology Use	19	47.4%
	Support/Advocacy to Active Duty or Veteran Victims in U.S. Armed Forces	10	20.0%
	Transportation	38	31.6%
	Safety Planning and Peer Support	38	39.5%

APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY

The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) contacted Tribal, urban Indian, and partner organizations to complete the Sacred Responsibility, Supporting the Sacred survey. The snowballing¹² method — where existing participants help recruit future participants from among their acquaintances — was used to broaden respondent base from other organizations, Tribes, and programs. The survey was administered in an online format through REDCap 15.4.5, a secure web platform for building and managing online databases and surveys, from May 5, 2025 to June 28, 2025.

Organizations meeting the following criteria were eligible to participate in the survey: (i) Must identify as one of the following: Tribe/ Tribal Organization/ Tribal Coalition/ Urban Indian Organization/ Native non-profit; (ii) Must provide resources, services, advocacy, or other types of assistance to American Indian/Alaska Native survivors of violence. This included domestic and/or family violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, missing or murdered Indigenous victims, or other victims.

Multiple survey questions were adapted from the existing Domestic Violence (DV) Counts Survey⁸ conducted annually by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), which is a one-day, unduplicated count of DV services requested and received across the nation. Adaptations were reviewed by the NCAI Violence Against Women Task Force, ensuring that the questions were relevant to our population and were culturally appropriate for participants. The survey gave respondents the option to not answer all questions.

All survey data was recorded, cleaned and analyzed using UIHI's Indigenous Evaluation Framework¹⁴. Qualitative data was cleaned in alignment with quantitative data and skip logic was reviewed. For both qualitative and quantitative data, responses were aggregated across the Tribal organizations for multiple funding sources, program types, and all types of services including culturally specific services.

Qualitative data were analyzed using an iterative thematic analysis process.¹⁰ Themes were evaluated through coding using Microsoft Excel for qualitative content analysis. Response rates and descriptive statistics were performed in Microsoft Excel for Microsoft 365 MSO (Version 2506) 64-bit and maps were created in Tableau 2024.3. Surveys that were submitted but did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded from the analysis.

To simplify data analysis and interpretation, responses from five-point Likert scale questions were consolidated into a two-point Likert scale. Specifically, the original response categories of 'Extremely Impacted', 'Very Impacted' and 'Moderately Impacted' were combined into 'Substantially Impacted' category, while 'slightly impacted' and 'not at all impacted' were combined into 'Minimally impacted' category. This recording approach¹⁶ was adopted to reduce response variability and enhance clarity in reporting trends.

Survey Response Rate:

The survey response rate was 89%. This rate was calculated based on the number of surveys that met the inclusion criteria, including both complete and partial responses.

Note: The response rate should be interpreted with caution. Determining the true population size using a snowball sample is difficult due to the unknown number of referrals made by initial respondents.

REFERENCES

1. Urban Indian Health Institute, Seattle Indian Health Board. Strengthening the Health of Future Generations: A Community Health Profile of Urban American Indian and Alaska Native Infants, Children, and Adolescents. Urban Indian Health Institute; 2021.
2. Petrosky E, Mercer Kollar LM, Kearns MC, et al. Homicides of American Indians/Alaska Natives—National Violent Death Reporting System, United States, 2003-2018. *MMWR Surveill Summ.* 2021;70(SS-8):1-19. doi:10.15585/mmwr.ss7008a1
3. Compton K, Bertolacci G, Kendrick P, et al. Homicide rates across county, race, ethnicity, age, and sex in the US: a Global Burden of Disease Study. *JAMA Netw Open.* 2025;8(2). doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.62069
4. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Report to the Congress on Spending, Staffing, and Estimated Funding Costs for Public Safety and Justice Programs in Indian Country, 2021. US Department of the Interior; 2023. Accessed June 5, 2026. https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/2021_tloa_report_final_508_compliant.pdf
5. Miller TR, Cohen MA, Swedler DI, Ali B, Hendrie DV. Incidence and costs of personal and property crimes in the USA, 2017. *J Benefit Cost Anal.* 2021;12(1):24-54. doi:10.1017/bca.2020.36
6. Polansky L, Ferronato H, Echo-Hawk A. Service as Ceremony: A Journey Toward Healing. Urban Indian Health Institute, Seattle Indian Health Board; 2021.
7. StrongHearts Native Helpline. StrongHearts Native Helpline. Accessed June 5, 2026. <https://strongheartshelpline.org/>
8. Attorney General's Advisory Committee on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence. Ending Violence So Children Can Thrive. US Department of Justice; 2014. https://www.justice.gov/d9/defendingchildhood/pages/attachments/2015/03/23/ending_violence_so_children_can_thrive.pdf

9. Murray MJ. Alaska Native Lands and the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA): Overview and Selected Issues for Congress. Congressional Research Service; December 22, 2021. Accessed July 6, 2026. https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R46997/R46997.4.pdf
10. Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022, HR 1620, 117th Cong. 2022. Accessed May 10, 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1620/text>
11. Demmert M. VAWA 2022 and Alaska Indian Tribes. Restoration Magazine. National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. Published June 2022. Accessed July 6, 2026. <https://www.niwrc.org/restoration-magazine/june-2022/vawa-2022-and-alaska-indian-tribes>
12. Ting H, Memon MA, Thurasamy R, Cheah J. Snowball sampling: a review and guidelines for survey research. Asian J Bus Res. 2025;15(1):1-15. doi:10.14707/ajbr.250186
13. National Network to End Domestic Violence. 19th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report. National Network to End Domestic Violence; 2025. Accessed July 24, 2025. <https://nnedv.org/resources-library/19th-annual-domestic-violence-counts-report-full-report/>
14. Locklear S, Hesketh M, Begay N, Brixey J, Echo-Hawk A, James R. Reclaiming our narratives: an Indigenous evaluation framework for urban American Indian/Alaska Native communities. Can J Program Eval. 2023;38(1):8-26. doi:10.3138/cjpe.75518
15. Braun V, Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qual Res Psychol. 2006;3(2):77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp0630a
16. Jeong H, Lee W. The level of collapse we are allowed: comparison of different response scales in safety attitudes questionnaire. Biom Biostat Int J. 2016;4(4):128-134. doi:10.15406/bbij.2016.04.00100
17. Victim & Survivor Services – National Center for Victims of Crime. Victimsofcrime.org. Accessed June 11, 2026. <https://victimsofcrime.org/direct-services/>
18. Office for Victims of Crime. Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services Final Report. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs; 2013. Accessed June 10, 2026. https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/Vision21_Report.pdf
19. National Indigenous Women's Resource Center. Editor's note: Vol. 15, Issue 3. Restoration Magazine. October 2018. Accessed July 1, 2026. <https://www.niwrc.org/restoration-magazine/october-2018/editors-note-vol-15-issue-3>
20. Executive Order 13175. Consultation and coordination with Indian Tribal governments. Federal Register. 2000;65(218):67249-67252.



**Urban Indian
Health Institute**
A Division of the Seattle Indian Health Board

Our mission is to decolonize data, for Indigenous people,
by Indigenous people.

611 12th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98144
info@uihi.org | www.uihi.org