

## **StrongHearts Native Helpline Launches as a Critical Resource for Domestic Violence and Dating Violence in Tribal Communities**



For the first time in history, a culturally-relevant, safe and confidential resource is available for Native American survivors of domestic violence and dating violence, who now make up more than 84 percent of the entire U.S. Native population. The National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center (NIWRC) and The Hotline have launched the first, national crisis line dedicated to serving tribal communities affected by violence across the U.S., called the [StrongHearts Native Helpline](#).

Starting today, Native survivors in Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska – the helpline’s initial service areas — will be able to connect at no cost, one-on-one, with knowledgeable StrongHearts advocates who will provide support, assist with safety planning and connect them with resources based on their specific tribal affiliation, community location and culture. Callers outside of these states can still call StrongHearts while the helpline continues to develop its services network. All services available through the helpline are confidential and available by dialing **1-844-7NATIVE (1-844-762-8483)** Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CST. Callers after hours will have the option to connect with the National Domestic Violence Hotline or to call back the next business day.

“The reality is that so many of our American Indian and Alaska Native people experience domestic violence and dating violence every day,” said Lucy Rain Simpson, executive director of NIWRC and a citizen of Navajo Nation. “It has never been more evident that our Native people need a Native helpline to support efforts to restore power and safety in our tribal communities. The StrongHearts Native Helpline is ready to answer that call.”

The StrongHearts Native Helpline was created by and for Native Americans who, compared to all other races in the U.S., are twice as likely to experience rape or sexual assault, two and a half times more likely to experience violent crimes and five times more likely to be victims of homicide in their lifetimes. Even though a staggering four in five experience violence, Native Americans have historically lacked access to services.

“The Hotline has served victims and survivors of domestic violence for 20 years, and we recognize that Native American survivors have uniquely complex needs,” said Katie Ray-Jones, CEO of The Hotline.

“Through StrongHearts, domestic violence advocates will be able to address those complex needs with an unparalleled level of specificity.”

Advocates at the StrongHearts Native Helpline are trained to navigate each caller’s abuse situation with a strong understanding of Native cultures, as well as issues of tribal sovereignty and law, in a safe and accepting environment, free of assumption and judgment. Callers will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect by a well-trained professional.

“To enhance access to services and meet the unique needs of Native survivors, a dedicated Native helpline that provides support and connections to shelter, advocacy, and other services is critical,” states Marylouise Kelley, FVPSA Program Division Director.

Initially, StrongHearts will focus efforts on providing services to survivors who live in Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma, which combined make up more than 12.5 percent of the country’s entire Native American population.

“The team will leverage the large number of Native-centered resources established within these states to begin providing services, with further outreach to tribal communities as StrongHearts continues to grow,” said Simpson.

The StrongHearts Native Helpline plans to purposefully and thoughtfully expand its services to Native American survivors nationwide – based on utilization, demand and resources available.

“Verizon is proud to be the first corporate sponsor of the StrongHearts Native Helpline, a resource that will provide a crucial space for Native people to find support,” said Stuart Conklin, program manager at the Verizon Foundation. “We look forward to its success and continuing to build on a lasting partnership.”

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