

Public release of the ground-breaking report

Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota

Based on personal interviews and stories of 105 Native women in the Twin Cities, Duluth, and Bemidji, this first-ever study of prostitution and trafficking of Native women in Minnesota will be released by the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) and Prostitution Research & Education. The report was produced with support from the Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Women's Foundation of Minnesota, and Tides Foundation.

WHEN: Thursday, October 27, 2011, 2:30-4:00 pm

Public event with report authors and community leaders; honoring ceremony and reception

RSVP: Lynette.fraction@wmitchell.edu

QUESTIONS: Lonna Hunter, lhunter@gmail.com or 651-646-4800

WHERE: William Mitchell College of Law Auditorium (Room 245)
875 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota

SPEAKERS: Video message from US Senator Al Franken

Report authors:

- **Melissa Farley**, Director, Prostitution Research and Education, San Francisco Women's Centers
- **Nicole Matthews**, Executive Director, Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC)
- **Sarah Deer**, Assistant Professor, William Mitchell College of Law
- **Guadalupe Lopez**, Membership and Outreach Coordinator, MIWSAC
- **Christine Stark**, co-editor of *Not for Sale*
- **Eileen Hudon**, research, writer, policy advocate, and MIWSAC member
- **Suzanne Koeplinger**, Executive Director, Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center
- **Patty Wetterling**, Program Director, MN Department of Health Sexual Violence Prevention Program
- **Eric Janus**, President and Dean, William Mitchell College of Law

BACKGROUND: *Garden of Truth* is the first study focusing on the personal experiences of Native women who have been prostituted and trafficked in Minnesota. Following on the 2009 report *Shattered Hearts: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota* by the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center (MIWRC), and the 2008 *Sex Trafficking Needs Assessment for the State of Minnesota* by Advocates for Human Rights, *Garden of Truth* provides powerful personal accounts of violence, poverty, survival, and strength from the voices of Native women themselves. The 105 women interviewed for the report in the Twin Cities, Duluth, and Bemidji describe extreme and frequent violence throughout their lifetimes — including child sexual abuse, rape, physical assault, and traumatic brain injuries — with a majority experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. 98% of the women have been homeless, and 92% say they want to escape prostitution but believe they have no other options. The authors of the study stress that these women's strengths as well as their vulnerabilities must be seen in the context of a history of systematic harm to Native people, racism, poverty, and a lack of housing, equitable healthcare, and job and educational opportunities.

About the Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC)

MIWSAC is a statewide tribal coalition that was created through funding from the US Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women. MIWSAC focuses specifically on ending and preventing sexual violence, and is one of 22 tribal coalitions around the country working to address sexual assault and domestic violence in Native communities. www.miwsac.org