

StrongHearts Native Helpline scales up to address ‘a crisis within a crisis’

EAGAN, Minn. – StrongHearts Native Helpline – a free, anonymous and culturally appropriate helpline for American Indians affected by domestic, dating and sexual violence – has expanded its services to address the needs of a population disproportionately affected by both the COVID-19 pandemic and domestic violence.

The organization has added online chat and sexual violence advocacy and is currently recruiting advocates to provide 24-hour services to meet demand from American Indians along with referrals to resources such as legal advocacy, shelters and Native-centered domestic violence programs in each community as available.

“We’re alarmed by trends in domestic violence across the country during the pandemic. It’s a crisis within a crisis,” said Lori Jump, director of StrongHearts Native Helpline. “Tribal communities are acutely impacted by this issue. Our organization is working to reach out to our relatives in Indian Country with advocates who understand their experience in a personal and authentic way.”

New studies confirm layered suffering

As reported by the Radiological Society of North America earlier this month,

lockdowns during the pandemic have contributed to increased rates of domestic violence across the country and many victims are trapped for longer hours with their abusers.

Indian Country includes an estimated 6.79 million people from 573 federally recognized Tribes and these individuals experience domestic violence at much higher rates.

The effects of the pandemic on American Indians are stark. Another recent study cited by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) found that in the 23 states studied, **American Indians were diagnosed with COVID-19 at a rate 3.5 times higher than the non-Hispanic white population.**

According to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), **more than 1 in 2 Native women (55.5%) and 1 in 3 Native men (43.2%) have experienced physical violence by intimate partners in their lifetime.**

Scaling services to answer a surge in demand

“The impact of COVID-19, layered on top of a lack of sufficient health care, is compounding the marginalization and victimization of Indigenous peoples.”

Jump said. “With an expanded staff and 24-hour services, we can be a lifeline to a highly vulnerable population during an exceedingly challenging time.”

StrongHearts Native Helpline offers nationwide support to a historically underserved population disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence. While the helpline currently operates daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. (CST), there remains a need for 24-7 assistance. The new online chat advocacy gives those in need of help the option to reach out in a more discreet manner without needing to speak on the phone.

Additionally, the helpline’s launch of sexual violence advocacy addresses specific trauma experienced by victim-survivors of sexual violence. These new initiatives, paired with plans to hire additional advocates, will support the growing need for services.

Those interested in applying to be a StrongHearts Native Helpline advocate should visit strongheartshelpline.org/careers for more information.

Any Indigenous person in North America experiencing relationship violence or anyone who believes an American

Indian friend, family member or coworker may be in an abusive relationship is encouraged to contact the StrongHearts Native Helpline by calling 844-7NATIVE (844-762-8483) and visiting StrongHeartsHelpline.org to connect with an advocate.

About StrongHearts Native Helpline

StrongHearts Native Helpline was created by and built to serve Tribal communities across the United States. It is a culturally appropriate, anonymous, confidential and free service dedicated to serving Native survivors, concerned family members and friends affected by domestic, dating and sexual violence.

Dial 844-7NATIVE (844-762-8483) or click on the chat now icon at strongheartshelpline.org daily from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CST. Connect with knowledgeable advocates who can provide lifesaving tools and immediate support to enable survivors to find safety and live lives free of abuse.

StrongHearts Native Helpline is a project of the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center and the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Learn more at strongheartshelpline.org.

NMAI to open National Native American Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day

WASHINGTON – The National Museum of the American Indian will open the new National Native American Veterans Memorial on Veterans Day, Nov. 11.

The moment will be marked with a short virtual message to honor the service and sacrifice of Native veterans and their families. The message will be on both the museum’s website and its YouTube channel.

“The National Native American Veterans Memorial will serve as a reminder to the nation and the world of the service and sacrifice of Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian veterans,” said Kevin Gover, director of the museum. “Native Americans have always answered the call to serve and this memorial is a fitting tribute to their patriotism and deep commitment to this country.”

The memorial, which sits on the grounds of the museum, was commissioned by Congress to give “all Americans the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous tradition of service of Native Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States.”

American Indians have served in every major military conflict in the U.S. since the Revolutionary War. This will be the first national landmark in Washington, D.C., to focus on the contributions of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians who have served in the military.

The memorial design is by Harvey Pratt (Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma), a multimedia artist, retired forensic artist and Marine Corps Vietnam veteran. The design features an elevated stainless steel circle resting on a carved stone drum. It also incorporates water for sacred ceremonies, benches for gatherings and four lances where veterans, family members, Tribal leaders and others can tie cloths for prayers and healing.

The museum planned to host a dedication ceremony and veterans’ procession to mark the memorial’s completion but postponed those events due to current health and safety guidelines. The museum will reschedule both events when it is safe to do so.

Major support for the memorial has been provided by the Cheyenne and Arap-

aho Tribes, Chickasaw Nation, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

The memorial has also been widely supported by Tribal governments and Tribal veterans organizations. More than 85 Tribes, individuals, corporations and other organizations have contributed to the memorial.

Why We Serve book and exhibition

To coincide with the completion of the National Native American Veterans Memorial, the museum has published *Why We Serve: Native Americans in the United States Armed Forces*, a 240-page book that commemorates the history of American Indian military service.

American Indians serve in the military at one of the highest rates of any ethnic group and the book explores the many reasons why – from love of home to the expression of warrior traditions.

The book is co-authored by Alexandra

Harris and Mark Hirsch, senior editor and historian, respectively, at NMAI. Other contributors include Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne), Rep. Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna), Rep. Markwayne Mullin (Cherokee Nation), Gover (Pawnee), Jefferson Keel (Chickasaw) and Herman Viola.

The museum will host a virtual discussion with Harris about identity and the warrior stereotype of Native people serving in the military as well as actual – and remarkable – traditions of peace and war within American Indian communities. The event takes place Nov. 12 at noon EST. Details for registering for this Zoom event are available at AmericanIndian.si.edu.

The exhibition *Why We Serve* tells poignant, personal stories of American Indian veterans from colonial times to the present day. The exhibition will be on online and on view in the museum’s Potomac Atrium beginning Nov. 11.

Native Words, Native Warriors Educational Module

This module, part of the museum’s Native Knowledge 360° educational initiative, honors the legacy of Native Code Talkers who created secret military communications based on their languages. Their efforts significantly aided Allied victories during World Wars I and II.

Veterans History Project

The Library of Congress’ American Folklife Center collects, preserves and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so future generations can hear their stories and better understand the realities of war. In partnership with the museum, the project preserves the stories of Native men and women who have served in the military through interviews, correspondence and photographs.

The National Native American Veterans Memorial

