



HARBOR LIGHTS

SPRING 2007

MISSION

To lead a community-wide partnership in the awareness and prevention of domestic violence and abuse and to offer safety and support to diverse families in crisis.

Native American Women Targets of Violent Crimes at Alarming Rates

The Reality

Sexual assault and domestic abuse happen every day to people of all ages, income levels, and race. However, Native women are the targets of violent crime--battering, rape, assault and homicide--at much higher rates than any other group of women or men, by both native and non-native men. The rate of violent crime experienced by Native American women is nearly 50% higher than that reported by African American males. Native American women are at a higher risk of homicide, including domestic violence homicide (*College of Emergency Physicians*). For a 3-year period studied, homicide was the third leading cause of death for Native women. Seventy-five percent were killed by a family member or acquaintance. Native American women are raped at a rate more than double that of rapes reported by all races on an annual average.

There are two organizations in our area that offer culturally specific programs focused on ending violence against Native American women.

At **Reach Counseling Services**, primarily serving Winnebago County, these alarming statistics give cause for them to offer culturally specific programs to their clientele. This focus on assisting underserved populations exists through a number of precise programs, such as their Indigenous Connections program.

Efforts existing through Indigenous Connections include medical, legal and personal advocacy for Native American



survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. One main component of the program is The Women's Talking Circle, a support system for native, female survivors. Linda Hurst is the Native American counselor at Reach who facilitates this Talking Circle. Meetings take place every Tuesday from 5 to 7 p.m. at The American Indian Center of the Fox Valley, 128 North Oneida Street, Appleton. The circle offers a safe place where the participants can share their histories and connect with women who have similar backgrounds.

The healing that takes place within the circle includes a blend of conventional and traditional native methods. Conventionally, information and referrals are made to outside agencies, along with prevention education efforts. Traditionally, teachings from elders are sought and ceremonies are enlisted, or participants are directed to outside spiritual advisors.

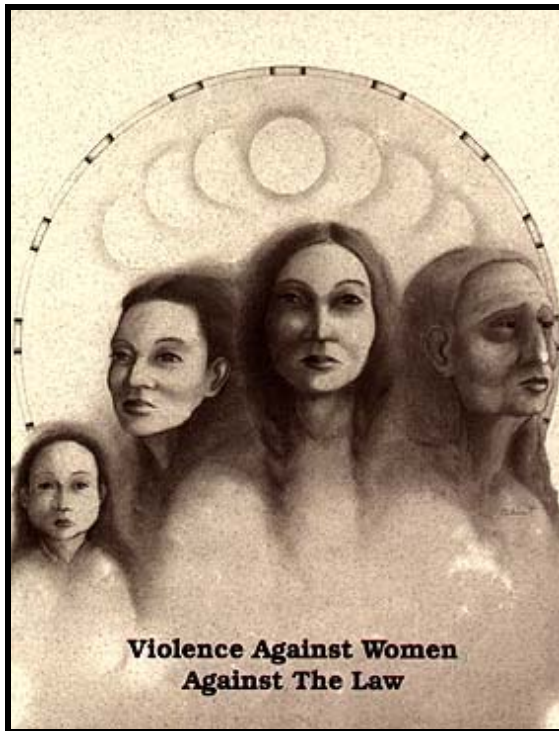
Continued Page 2

CONTENTS

- 1- Native American Violence
Kathy Flores, Linda Hurst & Belinda Brennan
- 2- Native American Violence continued...
- 3- Native American Violence continued...
- 3- W.I.S.E. Women
Linda Tracey

Back Page
A Time To Laugh
Sponsors

"Scream the bloody truth of how we've been raped in every possible way, and then rise up and dig the beauty of our people. Rejoice in our survival and our ways."
Buffy Sainte-Marie
(Cree)



Native American Women *continued from Page 1*

Social aspects also play an integral role in the women's healing process. Periodically, the "Circle" participates in craft workshops (beading, quilting, medicine bags, dream-catchers, etc.), potluck dinners, and volunteer experiences. It is during these social events that the women develop their support and their sense of community, along with sharing a few laughs.

Overall, the universal messages that are given to the women are that: "Violence is not part of native tradition. Healing, in whatever form, is possible. There is no excuse for abuse."

Twenty-nine years ago Reach Counseling Services began as the rape crisis center for Winnebago County. Over the years, this agency has grown and evolved to meet the changing needs of the Fox Cities community. As a state licensed mental health clinic and sexual assault service provider, Reach works to provide comprehensive and compassionate services to all victims of sexual violence and their family members. Income level and economic status are not barriers to receiving help from this agency. Reach offers crisis, short-term counseling and long-term therapy to anyone who has experienced the

devastating trauma of sexual violence in the Fox Valley area. For residents of Winnebago County, they also provide prevention education and advocacy services that include personal, medical and legal advocacy. As part of their mission to end sexual violence, Reach works to establish strong outreach ties to diverse populations within our community. Along with the Indigenous Connections they have a Hispanic outreach program. By working in partnership with other service agencies, Reach strives to create a safe and accepting environment for anyone whose life has been touched by the trauma of sexual violence. Reach is located at 1244C Midway Road in Menasha and 36 Broad Street in Oshkosh. You can reach them via phone at (920) 722-8150 in Menasha or (920) 426-1460 in Oshkosh.

Sexual Assault services are also provided by **The Sexual Assault Crisis Center**, primarily serving Outagamie County. The Sexual Assault Crisis Center, a nonprofit organization, is dedicated to providing crisis intervention and advocacy services to survivors of sexual abuse, their families and others affected. They work toward ending sexual abuse and violence in our communities through prevention and education. They are located at 35 Park Place Suite 100 in Appleton. You can reach them on their 24-hour hotline: (920) 733-8119 or via E-mail at sacc@vbe.com. Visit their website: www.vbe.com/~sacc.

Belinda Brennan works as an advocate for the **Oneida Domestic Abuse Program**. Their program helps Native American families that have been affected by domestic abuse; they work with men, women and children. When Belinda first started working as an advocate, her intention was to help support women whose lives had been affected by violence. She thought it would be great if they could just "break free" from the abuse. After five years, her intention has since changed. She not only wants women/children/men living lives free of violence, she wants each and every person to live the lives they all so richly deserve—lives filled with love, joy, peace and happiness.

After watching the movie, *The Secret*, Belinda felt compelled to create a new curriculum for women who are ready to take their lives to the next level. She wanted to help them recognize the unlimited beauty, power and potential within each of them. As a group, they decided that they no longer wanted to give any more energy to suffering. As a demonstration of love and peace, the women actually pray for the men at the end of every group. The women in this group are committed to change and are working toward creating lives we all dream of. *Continued on Page 3*



Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs
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