



*Listen to the Grandmothers*

Bonnie Clairmont & Jim Clairmont  
Tribal Law & Policy Institute

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**Listen to the Grandmothers  
Video**

THE GOAL OF THIS VIDEO: *To use lessons from elders to help tribal governments and communities improve their support systems and ground their methods and techniques of supporting and protecting women in their cultural traditions.*




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'The Creator of our kind has indeed endowed the person of our mother (the woman), with high honor and also with the full measures of mind and reason. Give heed, therefore, to her works of admonition and advice.'

Iroquois




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 We interviewed 5 women and 2 men who are considered elders in their communities. We asked them to share their wisdom about ending violence.



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 As you listen to their stories, think about:

- How the information might help your community
- Who might benefit from watching this video?
- What cultural traditions are currently being utilized to address violence against Indian women in your community?

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Discussion of Video

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## Stories of Survivors

- Why you believe that the elders have decided to share their stories?
- What are the lessons in the stories?
- How do these relate to contemporary problems of violence against Native women?

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## Grandmother Teachings

- Have respect
- Listen to your elders
- Share
- Listen
- Be clean
- Have humor; don't be too serious
- Behave or people will talk
- Know your relatives
- Acknowledge relationship



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 **Grandmother Teachings**

- Refrain from alcohol and drugs. Not good for you.
- Watch out for "men". Some have evil thoughts/intentions
- Come in at dark. Don't wander too far away from home
- Be humble.
- Take courage
- Stand up for your beliefs
- Help one another; don't wait to be asked
- Get along/don't fight




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 **Grandmother Teachings**

- Know your language
- Women are Sacred; women extend our generations
- Watch your children closely; don't hit your children
- Feed people
- Bring people together for comfort
- Know your roles & practice them
- Work hard
- Pray & know the Creator




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How can we incorporate cultural traditions and belief systems into our contemporary responses to ending violence against Native women?

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### Incorporating Traditional Practices Into Contemporary Response

- Talk to elders
- Research
- Listen
- Review & Compare
- Develop materials, brochures, posters & other publications
- Infuse cultural traditions in actual practice

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### Examples

- HoChunk Nation
- Grand Traverse
- Perryville
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe
- Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (work with young Indian women)

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### Ho Chunk Clan Mothers & Traditional Court

- The Ho-Chunk Nation Tribal Youth Program is focused on reducing, controlling and preventing crime through the use of *Clan Mothers and the Traditional Court*.
- The Clan Mothers teach the guidelines followed by traditional Ho-Chunk women, emphasizing the old-fashioned social behavior and encouraging young women to learn more about these values.
- Elder HoChunk men working in the *Traditional Court* apply traditional knowledge and custom. They use tradition as their law library.

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### Perryville: Alaskan Alutiq Village

- Tribal Council passed resolution banishing most dangerous domestic violence perpetrators
- On appeal, Governor of Alaska upheld tribe's right to banish

*"It means separation from family and the land, a despair of the soul reluctantly imposed on only the most incorrigible."* - Ginger Baim, DV Coordinator, Dillingham AK

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### Grand Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa Indians and Chippewa Indians

- Star Quilt Project: To raise public awareness in the community about domestic violence
- Star quilt to be used as a teaching tool as public awareness that Native women are sacred & that violence against women is not traditional
- Star symbolizes honor and respect

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### White Buffalo Calf Women's Shelter – South Dakota

- Developing public policies through creation of strong victim-centered tribal ordinances.
- Educating the community about the impact of violence on individuals. Help the tribal leaders become knowledgeable about the issues facing victims of violence.
- Incorporate traditional beliefs and cultural practices into the victim services arena. Traditional stories often contain strong statements about the rights of crime victims.
- Facilitate ongoing work with tribal elders. Include elders on the Board of Directors, and have them assist with cultural activities.
- Encourage model leadership based on consensus decision-making. Develop leadership roles for women by training and sharing information on issues affecting tribal women.

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**Minnesota Indian Women's  
Sexual Assault Coalition**



*"Through the Teachings of Our  
Grandmothers:" Primary Prevention with  
Native Youth*

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**Minnesota Indian Women's  
Sexual Assault Coalition**

- Native Girls Retreats
- Radio Public Service Announcements
- Quilt
- Public Awareness Posters
- Talking Circles and Video
- Cultural Activities

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**Elders Panel Held At  
Girl's Retreat**



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 Cultural Activities

- Blueberry Picking
- Making Birch Bark Dishes
- Wild Rice Camp
- Picking Sage After MIWSAC Meeting
- Sugar Bush Camp

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 Blueberry Picking



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 Making Birch bark Dishes



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 Wild Rice Camp



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 Picking Sage



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 Sugar Bush Camp



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### Grandmother's Blanket

Grandmother's Blanket holds the sweet smell of sage  
 Woven by enchantment, as the Spirits feel no rage.  
 Trimmed in eyelet shadows, cast into the snow  
 Tumbleweeds and deserts She traveled long ago.  
 The threads are Her wisdom She passes on to you,  
 Reflections wrap around us, as if we always knew.  
 The patchwork shows directions North, East, South, West  
 The needle points the way so we know when to rest.  
 Grandmother's Blanket holds the soft warmth of down  
 From fine-feathered friends and foliage all around.  
 Covered by a breeze and a soft summer rain  
 Lightning dances wildly, as the Thunder heals Her pain.  
 The colors are Her passions beneath the cotton lining  
 For She knows the Spirit world, is free and never binding.  
 Footsteps walk below the soil, Mother Earth is listening  
 Frost paints the blanket edges, above the stars are glistening.  
 Grandmother's Blanket has many stories to tell  
 The colors have faded, for the years have turned it pale.  
 Comforted by the Oneness, Her head bows down in grace,  
 Thanking Great Spirit for Her Honor in this place.

By Ann Murray Smith

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Bonnie Clairmont  
 Victim Advocacy Program Specialist  
 Tribal Law & Policy Institute  
 1619 Dayton Avenue Suite 305  
 St Paul MN 55104

Office telephone: 651-644-1125

Email: [bonnie@tlpi.org](mailto:bonnie@tlpi.org)

Website [www.tlpi.org](http://www.tlpi.org)




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