NIJ’s projects examine federal, state, local and tribal responses to violence against American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women and related social problems in and around tribal communities.

**Authorizing Legislation**

The Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) 2005, Title IX, Section 904(a) directs NIJ, in consultation with the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), to conduct studies focusing on violence against Indian women in tribal communities. The legislation consists of three major components of research:

- **Prevalence and nature of violence against Indian women**, including dating violence, domestic violence, homicide, sexual assault, stalking and sex trafficking.
- **Evaluation** of the effectiveness of federal, state, tribal and local responses to the issue.
- **Recommendations** to improve the effectiveness of such responses.


**Coordination**

Prior to and during the development of the research program, NIJ sought input and feedback from multiple sources:

**Federal Advisory Task Force**

VAWA Section 904(a)(3) directed the Attorney General to establish a task force to assist NIJ and OVW in the development and implementation of this program of research and to help guide implementation of the recommendations resulting from the studies. Task force members are representatives of tribal governments, national tribal domestic violence and sexual assault organizations, and national tribal organizations.

http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/section904-taskforce.html

**Prominent Researchers and Experts in the Field**

In 2009, NIJ sponsored a two-day workshop with prominent researchers and experts in the following areas: violence against women, AI/AN

**TRIBAL CRIME AND JUSTICE WEB SITES**

NIJ.gov contains information about NIJ’s efforts to support research and evaluation that enhances Indian tribes’ capability to address crime and related concerns in tribal communities.

NIJ.gov, keywords “tribal justice”

Justice.gov contains additional information, including information on how the Department can meet tribal communities informational, training and funding needs.

http://www.justice.gov/tribal
research and evaluation, conducting research in Indian Country, and public health and/or public safety issues in Indian Country. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the scientific feasibility and practical considerations of NIJ’s program plan and to ensure that the research is viable, systematic and comprehensive.

In 2012, NIJ convened federal partners, stakeholders, researchers and experts to discuss the scientific results of the Violence Against Indian Women pilot study conducted in late 2011 and early 2012. The information gathered from the study and input from the field will ensure the National Baseline Study is viable, systematic and comprehensive.

NIJ.gov, keywords: “tribal justice researchers’ workshops”

Phase I: Violence Against Indian Women in Indian Country Pilot Study (2009-2012)

The Violence Against Indian Women (VAIW) pilot study was specifically designed with input from tribal stakeholders to help ensure that a proposed national survey is culturally and community appropriate, respectful of those who participate in the study, and that the information collected is relevant and helpful. With the approval of tribal leadership, several tribal communities were selected to pilot test the VAIW survey and methods for selecting and recruiting survey participants. The VAIW pilot study was conducted by RTI International and NIJ in late 2011 and early 2012. The pilot study along with input from the field will help ensure that NIJ’s National Baseline Study is viable, systematic and comprehensive.

Phase II: VAIW National Baseline Study (NBS) 2014-2017

The NBS is expected to (1) produce a deeper understanding of the issues faced by Native American women living in Indian Country and Alaska Native villages, (2) evaluate the response to violence against AI and AN women by all levels of government, and (3) help formulate public policies and prevention strategies to decrease the incidence of violent crimes against AI and AN women. The NBS is critical to quantifying the magnitude of violence and victimization in tribal communities and understanding service needs. The data collected in this study will, for the very first time, provide reliable and valid estimates of the scope of the problem and aid in identifying possible solutions.

The VAIW National Baseline Research Study and National Data Processing Center Contractors will implement a study of public safety and public health among AI and AN women living in Indian Country and Alaska Native villages consistent with the general approach and methods developed for NIJ’s VAIW pilot study. The NBS will be conducted in geographically dispersed tribal communities across the U.S. (lower 48 and Alaska) using a NIJ-developed sampling strategy. The aim is to provide an accurate national victimization rate of violence against adult AI and AN women specifically living in tribal communities.

Federal and Tribal Response to Violence Against Women in Indian Country Study

NIJ has collected detailed information on federal and tribal responses to sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking of AI and AN women living in tribal communities. The study involves complementary data collection activities, including face-to-face interviews with federal and tribal agencies responsible for investigating and prosecuting these crimes (including tribal law enforcement officers and prosecutors; FBI special agents and victim specialists; members of the U.S. Attorney’s Office; tribal liaisons; victim/witness staff; and Bureau of Indian Affairs agents, criminal investigators, and victim specialists) and documenting district policies, training and outreach efforts.

Study findings are expected to provide a clearer understanding of existing issues in the justice system responses to violence against AI and AN women to improve law enforcement, prosecution, and judicial responses (including interagency coordination and communication); strengthen training and outreach efforts to build cultural competence; build victims’ trust in law enforcement; encourage reporting of victimization; and, ultimately, reduce violence among AI and AN women living in tribal communities.

FEDERAL STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) www.doigov/ria
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.cdc.gov
- Census Bureau www.census.gov
- Executive Office for United States Attorneys (EOUSA) www.usdoj.gov/usao/EOUSA
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) www.fbi.gov
- Indian Health Service (IHS) www.ihs.gov
- Office of Justice Programs (OJP) www.ojp.gov
- Office of Tribal Justice (OTJ) www.justice.gov/otj
- Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) www.ovw.usdoj.gov

RESEARCH PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Based on these coordination efforts, a program plan was developed consisting of four components:

- Primary data collection of information related to violence against Native American women
- Secondary data analysis relating to crime rates and responses to crimes against Native American women
- Evaluations of promising programs addressing violence against Indian women
- Special studies relating to victimization of Native American women

NIJ.gov, keywords “VAW research”