



## Reclaiming What is Sacred:

Addressing Harm to Indigenous Elders and Developing a Tribal Response to Abuse in Later Life

Presented by

**Red Wind** Consulting, Inc.

Victoria Ybanez, Executive Director

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“ELDER RESPECT IS PART OF  
OUR CULTURE SO THERE IS  
INCREASED SHAME WHEN  
WE FAIL.”

— listening session participant



## 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day.

Acierno, R., Hernandez, M. A., Amstadter, A. B., Resnick, H. S., Steve, K., Muzzy, W., & Kilpatrick, D. J. (2010).

Older women comprise more than half (55.8%) of the adult population age 65 and older.

United States Census Bureau (2012).



Racial and ethnic minority populations have increased from 5.7 million in 2000 (16.3% of the elderly population) to 8.5 million in 2011 (21% of the elderly).

**They are projected to increase to 20.2 million in 2030 (28% of the elderly).**

[http://www.aoa.gov/Aging\\_Statistics/Profile/2012/docs/2012profile.pdf](http://www.aoa.gov/Aging_Statistics/Profile/2012/docs/2012profile.pdf).



A national study discovered  
76% of physical mistreatment of  
individuals 60 years and older is  
perpetrated by a family  
member;

**57% was perpetrated by a  
partner**

10% by children or  
grandchildren

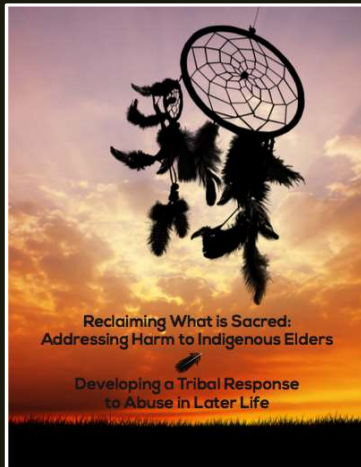
9% by other family members.

Acierno, et al. (2009)



Elders who experienced abuse,  
even modest abuse, had a  
**300% higher risk of death**  
when compared to those who  
had not been abused.

Dong X, Simon M, Mendes de Leon C, Fulmer T,  
Beck T, Hebert L, et al. (2009)



### Authors

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A Project by the  
**National Clearinghouse on  
Abuse in Later Life**

## Elder Stories

### ELDER STORY

- *Abuse started at very early age.*
- *Started at 16, went to 62. Once (receiving services), the emotions all came out.*
- *Cried and cried. Had safety buttons to press for help.*

### ELDER STORY

- *In transitional, have meetings.*
- *Time to think about where you are going and what you want to do.*
- *Time to get it together.*
- *Working on self esteem.*

## Reasons Abuse in Later Life **Might Go Unreported**

- May not see themselves as victims nor understand abuse or neglect.
- Desire to protect the loved ones who are hurting them, may be afraid about starting gossip in the community, or being characterized as a “victim.”
- Terror may keep them from reporting.
- May believe if they tell someone about the abuse they will be institutionalized, abandoned, or killed.
- Worry about the loss of independence or being sent to live outside their tribal community.

Litton, L. I.S.P. Consulting & Ybanez, V. Red Wind Consulting, Inc. 2015. *Reclaiming What is Sacred: Addressing Harm to Indigenous Elders and Developing a Tribal Response to Abuse in Later Life*. A Project by the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life

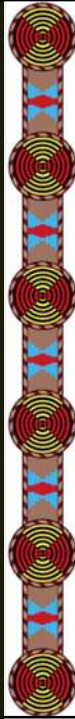
## Preparing to Serve Elder Victims

- Staff need long term training on how to work with the elder population
- Build the community resources for elder services, needs.
- Don't pre-judge Adult Protective Services. Get to know what they can and cannot do.
- Staff need to know how to maneuver social security income.
- American with Disabilities Act (ADA) will make people with chronic health conditions a protected class. Requires providers to provide auxiliary aids and services available.



## Reaching Elder Populations

*Outreach is often targeted to a younger population.*



- Need to conduct extensive outreach to reach the aging populations.
- Identify where Elder's gather.
- Create materials targeted to Elders.
- Conduct community education targeted to Elders.



**“Historical trauma should be used to inform your advocacy.”**

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## Unique Needs of Older Victims

Staff may have to adjust their thinking and ways of responding to accommodate a victim of Abuse in Later Life

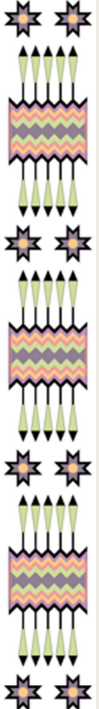
- This generation does not want a handout. Importance to stress this is not charity, they are doing all the work.
- Mobility issues, physical difference from aging
- Medical needs, medications
- Different abilities to respond to requests, requirements, expectations
- Social stigma
- Generational beliefs that different from current norms
- Language based on generational differences
- Self-sufficiency takes longer for older adults. Such as lack of computer knowledge skills. Helping develop marketable job skills. Memory challenges.



## Safety Planning for Elders

How might this look different for elders, in their day to day lives?

- Homes they will live in and before they secure housing to make sure it will accommodate them.
- Fear of the unknown.
- Limited energy.
- Physical, medical needs.
- Location. Work to make sure it's not isolated. Has access to community.



## Strategies to Respond to Elder Abuse

- Emphasis on family and kinship networks and the interest in preserving tribal culture, including restoring peace and harmony in the community and upholding spiritual beliefs.
- Involve elders
- Promote family unity and cooperation
- Incorporate traditional values and traditions
- Utilize informal community networks.

We can make a difference in the lives of our Elders.





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