



June FOCIS Newsletter

Native Women Turn Up The Volume in Violence, Sexual Assault Conversations

by [Emily Schwing](#) on November 1, 2018

According to the National Institute of Justice, four in five Native American and Alaska Native women will experience some kind of domestic violence in their lifetime. It's a subject that's long been whispered about. But now, recent headlines about victimized Native women have sparked larger conversations and calls to action in Indian Country.

Since last January's Women's March in Seattle, hundreds of Indigenous women have gathered in the Northwest to raise awareness of those who go missing, are abused or murdered.

Now, demonstrations like this are also happening in Alaska's largest city.

“This is really hopeful, you know, that we are doing this and we’ve come together under a lot of hurt, you know?” said organizer Charlene Apok. Apok is among the many Alaska Native women publicly sharing stories of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

And women in leadership are publicly supporting their efforts. Including US Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney. “What I can say is having those discussions are painful, folks are vulnerable and they need to happen if we’re going to break this cycle,” she said. Sweeney, who’s Alaska Native, wouldn’t comment on specific federal-level policy changes that might better protect Native women from violence and assault. “What I can tell you, is I am open to working with members of congress on this issue and as policy proposals come forward on this issue, we are open to weighing on those,” said Sweeney.

“I think it is fair to say it is a huge issue on people’s minds, but it is not new,” Julie Kitka has worked for the Alaska Federation of Natives for nearly 40 years. It’s the state’s largest native organization. Kitka is now AFN’s President. “But, it is not new,” she said. For Kitka, what is new is that conversations about sexual assault and violence against women and children are happening out in the open. “It’s the evolving issue,” she said, “when I first started, this never would have been talked about.”

For now, ending violence against women is mostly a grassroots effort. And notably even Native men, who normally stay quiet about intimate and

controversial matters, are now stepping up. At this year's annual Alaska Federation of Natives convention, Samuel Johns walked around with a petition.

Men who sign the so-called 'Protector Pledge' agree only to engage in consensual verbal and physical contact with women and to "disrupt situations where men are harming, harassing or sexualizing women and children." "Why would I sign something like this?" said Johns, "... because I have three daughters. I have three daughters and I hope that the world is a better place for them..." he said. By the end of the day, Johns had gathered more than 50 signatures.



<https://www.kuow.org/stories/they-need-to-happen-native-women-turn-up-the-volume-in-violence-sexual-assault-conversations>

MAINE BANNED NATIVE AMERICAN MASCOTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



By [Massoud Hayoun](#) on May 25

Maine has become the first state in the union to ban the use of Native American caricatures as mascots in public schools, which many say amount to a racist mockery of America's first peoples, in what indigenous rights advocates hail as a sign of a growing national movement. Although legal experts believe that the ban is constitutionally sound, citing recent precedent, some disagree over whether bans are in the spirit of the First Amendment and the best means of blocking offensive depictions of Native Americans.

The Law was framed as a way to avoid the unintentional denigration of Native American peoples. "While Indian mascots were often originally chosen to recognize and honor a school's unique connection to Native American communities in Maine, we have heard clearly and unequivocally from Maine tribes that they are a source of pain and anguish,"- Community Member. "Our people, communities, and understanding and respect for one another are Maine's source of pride and it is time our symbols reflect that."

Maine's ban follows years of public outrage over Native American mascots and team names that has frequently targeted more visible, privately owned teams. The Washington Redskins and Cleveland Indians have

fought calls in recent years from Native American and social justice advocates to stop using Native American words and caricatures to brand their teams. The Washington Redskins' legal representation has stood by the name, citing First Amendment protections. Following pressure from the public, the Cleveland Indians recently stopped the use of so-called Chief Wahoo on player uniforms but continue to sell merchandise bearing the character's likeness.

Whether other states will follow Maine's lead remains to be seen, but Native American rights advocates heralded the development as a sign of things to come.

<https://psmag.com/social-justice/maine-banned-native-american-mascots-in-public-schools>

THIS WEEK'S
TOP STORY



Life, Loss and Death

by [Jennette Andrews](#) on May 7, 2019

One of the hardest parts of life is dealing with death. Recently, our little community has experienced a big loss.

Unfortunately, death is inevitable, and unavoidable. Most of us have experienced the loss of someone we love by the time we reach adulthood.

But sadly it doesn't seem to get any easier to deal with. Each loss is painful, and scary, leaving us feeling sad and uncertain and too aware of our own mortality.

For me, that is one of the hardest parts of loss to deal with. I have sadly, experienced more than my fair share of loss in the past. But I was never so frightened of my own death until I had my son. I had my only child late in life, I was 41 when he was born. I will be nearly 60 when he graduates from high school. If I am lucky. See, there is that doubt and fear for my mortality. I have never been too frightened or worried about my own demise. I was brought up to believe that life and death are just two different parts of our journey. That eventually we become the person we are meant to be and will go to join our loved ones in heaven. So, death itself was not that scary for me. I know the pain of losing someone you love, and it is so very hard to be left behind.

My first experience with death was my Grandma Scanland, My mom's mom. We went to live with her after my parents divorce and we lost not only Grandma, but our home, as she didn't own it. My poor Mama was devastated losing her mom so soon after a painful divorce, which is itself another loss. I was 6 and I remember very little, but the feeling of pain and confusion. Then, when I was 8, we were in a terrible accident that took the life of Mama's second husband Hal, who we all loved. It was only a year or so later, that my mom's brother, Uncle John took his own life. And we were all devastated. Suicide is one of the hardest losses to bear, because your loved one deliberately left. They chose to leave this world and that is very personal. Of the three deaths I had experienced in my young life, Uncle John's hit me the hardest.

I couldn't sleep, or eat or even read, which has always been my greatest escape. Not only did it hurt, but it hurt my feelings. How could he

leave me, us, this way? I eventually came to understand that he was so unhappy, so lost and scared that he must have thought it was his only way out of the pain. I didn't and still don't believe that is the answer, but it helped to, sort of, understand. But each loss is different in its pain and intensity, because each loved one, is a different part of our life, of who we are. It feels like we lose a piece of ourselves when we lose someone we love.

So, to deal with this loss I have come to believe that the part of me that lives within the heart of my lost loved one, is carried with them on their journey home. That I, and all of the people who love them can help to strengthen them and provide a link to their earthly family. This is just my theory and it provides me a measure of comfort. We each must deal with the pain of loss in our own way.

One of the tools to help us find our way through the pain is to work our way through the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Some of us prefer to experience these stages on our own, to work through our grief by ourselves, while others of us choose to seek help through counseling, and therapy. There is no right or wrong way to grieve and everyone must advance at their own pace. I, personally find comfort in the presence of my loved ones.

When my Uncle Bob lost his beloved wife to MS, It was so hard to know how to help him. I struggled to find the right words, or even if I should offer any words at all. Everything I could think to say sounded so inadequate in my mind. Somehow, I found an article on grief and loss which suggested that the best thing to do for a grieving loved one is to say nothing, and just be there. Sit beside them and simply be there. Be prepared to listen if they should want to talk, but don't press. Don't offer your own stories of loss unless asked, and understand if they need space

and alone time. Don't offer to cook or help out, but quietly make available food and other necessities so they can process their grief without interruption.

Human beings need each other. We need comfort, and understanding. We need to be needed and loved. We need to feel we have a purpose in this life. Death challenges and threatens all of these. So the best we can do is to provide our loved ones with as much or as little support as they need. And remember, one day, we too will make the journey.

Iroquois Corn Bread



The Iroquois Indians made a wonderful boiled corn bread. They made flour by pounding corn into corn flour. To make bread, they mixed water with corn flour. Sometimes cooked beans were added, or berries or nuts. The bread was kneaded and formed into small loaves. The loaves were dropped into boiling water and cooked until the bread floated. Boiled corn bread was serving both hot and cold. They also used the same bread mix to bake bread by putting it on clay tablets in the fire. They used sunflower oil to fry bread.

Boiled Corn Bread

Recipe:

If you want to try making Iroquois corn bread, mix corn flour with water and a little salt.

Knead it.

Turn it out on a floured board.

Keep kneading until you can handle the bread without it sticking to you fingers.

Then either boil it or fry it.

If you want it to puff up, add a little baking soda.

Fun Summer Activities''

- Go Bird Watching
- Family Movie Night
- Do a Puzzle
- Go Hiking
- Craft Day
- Build a Fort
- Have a Family Talent Show
- Set up a Lemonade Stand
- Write a Story
- Do Yard Work
- Build a Family Garden
- Family Bike Ride
- Family Picnic





Happenings

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Feather River Tribal Health Inc.

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