

Shattered Hearts

The Commercial
Sexual Exploitation
Of American Indian
Women And Girls
In Minnesota



Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to Bill ‘Big Wolf’ Blake, who devoted his life to ensuring that Native children would have an environment where they could thrive in safety. Bill, a member of the Red Lake Nation and a Sergeant with the Minneapolis Police Department, was a passionate supporter of this project and an active participant in a meeting with American Indian elders, community leaders, and service providers to discuss this report and next steps just days before his unexpected death. Though we grieve his passing, we are immensely grateful for the time that we had with him, and for his tireless work to prevent violence against our children. Thank you, Bill, and we wish you a good journey.



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Board Chair: Joy Persall
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In 2007, a long time resident of the Supportive Housing Program at the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center (MIWRC) came into a staff member’s office, saying she was looking for a job but no one would give her a break. The resident was having trouble completing her GED due to dyslexia, and had very little useful work experience. She told the staff member that the only way she knew how to make money was to prostitute herself, and she did not want to go back to that.

Her story, which she was disclosing for the first time, was alarming. She had been pimped out by her mother at the age of 12 to support the mother’s crack habit. By the time she was 14 she had begun to pimp out other young girls to feed her own drug addiction. At the point in time when she walked into the staff member’s office, she had done hard time in prison, given birth to six children, and lost custody of them all. The MIWRC staff member realized that under current Minnesota law, this resident was a victim of a federal crime, the prostitution of a juvenile under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA).

Rather than being recognized or protected as a trafficking victim, she had been criminalized. Today, even though she has been repeatedly beaten and sexually assaulted by pimps and johns, she is ineligible for most federally-funded services and supports for victims of physical and sexual violence because of her prostitution arrests. And all she wants to know is, who will ever give her a chance?

Background

The topic of this report is the commercial sexual exploitation of American Indian women and girls in Minnesota, including but not limited to sex trafficking. In 2006, the Legislature passed Minnesota Statute section 299A.79 requiring the Commissioner of Public Safety to develop a plan to address current human trafficking and prevent future human trafficking in Minnesota. To develop a comprehensive plan for addressing the complicated issue of trafficking and the needs of trafficking victims, the commissioner created, per Minnesota Statute section 99A.7955, the statewide Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force. The Task Force’s charge is to advise the Commissioner on the statewide trafficking assessment and on the commissioner’s plan to address human trafficking and prevent future trafficking in Minnesota, assisting in two statutory actions:

- Collect, share, and compile trafficking data among government agencies to assess the nature and extent of trafficking in Minnesota
- Analyze the collected data to develop a plan to address and prevent human trafficking¹

Each year, the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs and the Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force, with input from organizations providing services to trafficked individuals, produces an annual report to the Minnesota Legislature and provides training on identifying trafficking victims, methods for prosecuting traffickers, methods for protecting the rights of trafficking victims, and methods for promoting the safety of trafficking victims.²

As part of its activities to produce the 2007 Human Trafficking Report, the Office of Justice Programs

¹ Office of Justice Programs, (no date). *Human trafficking task force*. Minnesota Department of Public Safety. Retrieved May 1, 2009 from <http://www.dps.state.mn.us/OJP/cj/http/about.htm>

² *Ibid.*



interviewed law enforcement personnel, nurses, and social service providers, asking questions about the characteristics and experiences of sex trafficking victims they had worked with. Based on their responses, the OJP estimated that at least 345 American Indian women and girls in Minnesota had been sexually trafficked in a three-year period.

After a client disclosed her own experience, MIWRC recognized that other Native women coming to the agency for housing, domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crisis-related services might have similar stories. Staff contacted other Native-specific housing and social service agencies in Minnesota to ask what their caseworkers were seeing in terms of commercial sexual exploitation of Native women and girls. Several reported an increasing number coming in for domestic violence and sexual assault services, later acknowledging that their assailant had trafficked them for prostitution. Tribal advocates in South Dakota and Minnesota had also begun raising red flags, reporting that Native girls were being trafficked into prostitution, pornography, and strip shows over state lines and internationally to Mexico.

Reports began coming in from Duluth, of police rescuing Native girls who had been lured off reservations, taken onto ships in port, beaten, and gang-raped by the ships' crews. In Canada, where the history and current circumstances of Native (Aboriginal) people closely parallel those of American Indians in the U.S., research studies were consistently finding Aboriginal women and girls to be hugely over-represented in the sex trade. An international report on the commercial sexual exploitation of children described Canadian Aboriginal and American Indian youth as being at greater risk than any other youth in Canada and the U.S. for sexual exploitation and trafficking.³

By 2008, Minneapolis had been identified by the FBI as one of thirteen U.S. cities having a high concentration of criminal activity involving the commercial sexual exploitation of juveniles.⁴ In September of that year, The Advocates for Human Rights released a sex trafficking needs assessment report, commissioned by the Office of Justice Programs and the Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force pursuant to a mandate from the Commissioner of Public Safety. The needs assessment involved evaluation of government response to sex trafficking in Minnesota, identification of facilities and services currently available to sex trafficking victims, assessment of the effectiveness of those services, and recommendations for improvement.⁵ In the report, The Advocates for Human Rights noted the significant lack of information about American Indian trafficking victims and the relative absence of services to not only help them find safety, but to also heal from the trauma of life in prostitution.

³ Beyond Borders , ECPAT-USA and Shared Hope International, (2008). *Report of the Canada-United States consultation in preparation for World Congress III against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents*. Beyond Borders , ECPAT-USA and Shared Hope International.

⁴ Cited in The Advocates for Human Rights, (September 2008). *Sex trafficking needs assessment for the State of Minnesota*. Minneapolis: The Advocates for Human Rights.

⁵ The Advocates for Human Rights, (September 2008). *Sex trafficking needs assessment for the State of Minnesota*. Minneapolis: The Advocates for Human Rights.



Despite Minnesota's significant efforts to identify sex trafficking victims and meet their needs, to our knowledge there had never been any sort of summary report produced in either Minnesota or the U.S. regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of this nation's indigenous girls and women. The abundance of anecdotal evidence suggested that a disproportionate number of Midwest Native women and girls were being targeted by sex traffickers, yet no reliable data existed to support or contradict this theory.

As a first step to addressing this gap, MIWRC approached the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to request support for developing a report that aggregated what is known to date about the commercial sexual exploitation of American Indian women and girls in Minnesota, and to develop a set of recommendations for addressing gaps in knowledge and addressing the needs of victims. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation agreed to support the project, which began in November 2008 and resulted in this report.

Organization of the report

This report is organized to tell a story. For any story, there is always a setting, a context within which the story unfolds. Therefore, Section I briefly describes the historical experiences of American Indian women in the U.S. that have made them uniquely vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, and unique in the ways that such exploitation impacts their well-being.

Section II describes the methods and sources used to produce this report, and our definitions for the terms we use to describe the experiences of commercially sexually exploited Native women and girls.

Section III provides information about the prevalence of Native women's and girls' involvement in the sex trade in Minnesota, across the U.S. and in Canada.

Section IV describes Native women's and girls' patterns of entry into commercial sexual exploitation.

Section V is a summary of the risk factors that have been found to facilitate Native women's and girls' entry into commercial sexual exploitation, and of current data describing the representation of Native women and girls in those facilitating factors in Minnesota.

Section VI provides information about barriers and challenges to helping Native women and girls to escape commercial sexual exploitation.

Section VII contains our conclusions, including a theoretical model for understanding and addressing the problem.

Section VIII describes our recommendations.



I. The context

An understanding of Native women's and girls' experiences in the history of this nation is critical for understanding their unique vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation. Four fundamental beliefs have been found to be essential for a coherent and resilient sense of self, which protects a person against sexual exploitation and/or helps a victim of such exploitation to heal:

- The world is a good and rewarding place
- The world is predictable, meaningful, and fair
- I am a worthy person
- People are trustworthy.⁶

The traumatic experiences of American Indian people during the colonial era and their exposure to new losses and new trauma each consecutive generation have had a devastating effect on Native people, families, and communities, and on their ability to sustain those four beliefs.

American Indians have been stereotyped as a stoic and savage people, incapable of what society deems “normal” feelings,⁷ but historic events contributed significantly to the development of this stereotype. U.S. government actions such as extermination policies, religious persecution, forced migration to Indian reservations, and systematic removal of Native children to boarding schools caused repeated exposure to trauma, which impeded a natural grieving process. Each time, past and current trauma were transferred to the next generation along with the unresolved grief in what has been termed generational trauma or historical trauma.⁸ The long-term impacts have been well-documented: widespread poverty, low educational attainment, high rates of community and interpersonal violence, high rates of alcohol-related deaths and suicide, poor physical health, and corroded family and community relationships.

When a dominant society refuses to recognize a people's grief and losses as legitimate, the result is sadness, anger, and shame, feeling helpless and powerless, struggles with feelings of inferiority, and difficulty with self-identity. This negatively impacts interpersonal relationships and Native peoples' sense of themselves as sacred beings.⁹ Disenfranchised grief is in itself a significant barrier to the healing of trauma, either generational or recent, and it, too, prevents development of the four beliefs needed to develop a strong and resilient sense of self.


In addition to these significant influences on American Indian women's well-being, ongoing experiences with racism lead to what has been termed “colonial trauma response,” which results

⁶ Roth S and Newman E, (1995). The process of coping with sexual trauma, in Everly G and Lating J (Eds.), *Psychotraumatology: Key papers and core concepts in post-traumatic stress*. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 321-339.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Yellow Horse Brave Heart M and DeBruyn L, (1998). American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief, *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 8(2): 60-82.

⁹ Kaufman G, (1996). *The psychology of shame: Theory and treatment of shame-based syndromes*. New York: Springer.



when a Native woman experiences a current event that connects her to a collective, historical sense of injustice and trauma. Just as people with post-traumatic stress disorder are “triggered” to relive traumatic events they have experienced, American Indian women, who have endured massive trauma and injustice historically, are “triggered” to connect current experiences with racism, abuse, and/or injustice with those experienced by their female ancestors, in a very immediate and emotional way. A Native woman’s response to the situation is not only based on her own experience, but on the experiences of generations of her female ancestors.¹⁰

For this reason, Native women experience sexual assault, prostitution, and sex trafficking as a continuation of the colonization process, in which Native women’s sacred selves were routinely exploited for the gratification of a person who claimed the right to do so while ignoring or invalidating the impact on the woman herself. When the assailant, pimp, or john is a white male, the psychological impact on a Native woman is even greater.

While the historical experiences of all Native people have intensified Native women’s vulnerability to sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, generational trauma has also reduced Native communities’ ability to respond positively to victims of sexual crimes. Native victims of sexual assault often do not report the assault because they do not believe that authorities will investigate or charge the crime, and they fear being blamed or criticized by people in their communities. Any admission of involvement in prostitution carries an even greater stigma, so Native women and girls trafficked into prostitution rarely seek help. If unable to escape prostitution prior to reaching the age of 18, Native child trafficking victims find themselves categorized as criminals rather than victims, which only adds to the trauma they have already experienced in prostitution. Most literally have nowhere to turn, as there are very few culturally-based services to help them heal from their experiences in safety. There are also very few culturally-based “upstream” interventions in place that explicitly focus on preventing the trafficking of American Indian girls into the sex trade.

Native women’s experiences during colonization

From the times of earliest exploration and colonization, Native women have been viewed as legitimate and deserving targets for sexual violence and sexual exploitation. In the mid-1500s, the secretary of Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto wrote in his journal that De Soto and his men had captured Appalachee women in Florida “for their foul use and lewdness.”¹¹ Historian Kirsten Fischer reported that during the earliest years of the Carolina Colony, indigenous cultures in the area all viewed women as sacred beings. Women held and managed the community’s resources, including fields and the produce from them. They also had significant autonomy in their choices regarding sexual relationships, including short-term sexual alliances, marriage, divorce, and cohabitation. Native women often played an active and high-status role in

¹⁰ Evans-Campbell T, (2008). Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities: A multilevel framework for exploring impacts on individuals, families, and communities, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 23: 316-338.

¹¹ Gallay A, (2002). *The Indian slave trade: The rise of the English empire in the American South, 1670-1717*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 34.



trade, sometimes using sexual liaisons to smooth trade relations while also acting as mediators providing outsiders with language skills and lessons in local customs.¹²

Fischer noted that Native cultures in what came to be the Carolina Colony did not have the concept of private property or inheritance of property, so European cultures' emphasis on women's virginity and chastity to ensure that property would be inherited father-to-son was not present in the Native worldview. Fischer quoted the writings of John Lawson, a surveyor for the Carolina Colony, who published his impressions of the Native people he had seen. Lawson's writings reflected British male colonists' interpretations of Native women's high status and freedom, viewed through their own patriarchal lens:

[They are] of that tender Composition, as if they were design'd rather for the Bed than Bondage¹³...[the] multiplicity of Gallants [was] never a Stain to a Female's Reputation...[the] more Whorish, the more Honorable.¹⁴

Indian men did not escape being stereotyped in this process. King's Botanist John Bartram wrote that the Indian men of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida:

...are courteous and polite to the women, gentle, tender, and fondling even to an appearance of effeminacy, tender and affectionate to their offspring.¹⁵

Rather than understanding Native men's behaviors as respect, self-possession and restraint, colonial writers viewed them as undersexed and passive, and either unwilling or unable to control their women or to take proper advantage of the wilderness around them. The colonists were "amazed at what seemed an unnatural breach of patriarchal authority," marveling that Indian husbands submitted to a "petticoat government" and let themselves be "cuckolded by" promiscuous wives.¹⁶ These attitudes permitted colonists to justify their use of Native women and Native lands however they pleased, without obligation or limits.

Male colonists also recognized Indian women's ability to control their own fertility, which allowed them to believe that their sexual encounters with Native women, forced or consensual, had no consequences. It was a short cognitive leap to view Native women as shamelessly promiscuous and depraved, which freed male colonists from their own social rules about extramarital sexual relations.

The fact that Native women's sexual relations with colonists were often connected to trade allowed colonists to view those relations as tainted and even mercenary.¹⁷ As a result of these

¹² Fischer K, (2002). *Suspect relations: Sex, race, and resistance in colonial North Carolina*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.


¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁵ Waselkov, Gregory A. and Braund, Kathryn E. Holland (1995). *William Bartrand on the Southeastern Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, p. 114.

¹⁶ Fischer K, (2002). *Suspect relations: Sex, race, and resistance in colonial North Carolina*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.



beliefs, English surveying teams routinely harassed and raped Native women, considering sexual restraint in such circumstance to be foolish.¹⁸

The conceptual framework to justify the sexual exploitation of American Indian women was now in place, supported by two critical stereotypes that emerged from this period in history: the sexually loose, mercenary, and innately immoral American Indian woman and the ineffective, profoundly lazy American Indian man, both of which exhibited a savage disregard for the norms of decent society.

Native women's experiences during national expansion

In 1769, an officer at York Factory on Hudson Bay described the frequent trafficking of Native women in and around the fur trade posts in his journal:

| ...the worst Brothel House in London is not common a [stew] as the men's House in this Factory was before I put a stop to it.¹⁹

Similar sexual exploitation of Native women occurred in Oregon Territory as the British sought to extend their fur trade south. At Fort Langley, a Hudson's Bay Company outpost on the Fraser River in Oregon, Fort Commander James Yale (1776-1871) married three Indian women within his first three years at the fort to smooth trade relations with local tribes.²⁰ Native women such as these were considered "secondary wives" with no legal rights, and as European women began to arrive, these wives and their children were frequently abandoned.²¹

As immigrants moved westward, anti-Indian attitudes and stereotypes born in the colonial era grew and expanded. Entire villages were decimated by smallpox and measles epidemics, some deliberately launched by military distribution of blankets carrying the infection. The U.S. Army not only killed American Indian men in battle, it also slaughtered entire encampments of women, elders, and children. Troops sent to protect settlers referred to American Indian women as "breeders," justifying their rape, murder, and sexual mutilation.


U.S. Army Lieutenant James Connor wrote the following account of the attack launched by U.S. Army Colonel Chivington against Black Kettle's band of Cheyenne in 1864, despite their flag of truce:

¹⁸ Fischer K, (2002). *Suspect relations: Sex, race, and resistance in colonial North Carolina*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 68.

¹⁹ Bourgeault R, (1989). Race, class, and gender: Colonial domination of Indian women, in Forts J et al., (Eds.), *Race, class and gender: Bonds and barriers (2nd edition)*. Toronto: Jargoned Press.

²⁰ Garneau D, (January 30, 2007). *Early years of the Canadian Northwest 1830-1849*. Retrieved February 2, 2009 from <http://www.telusplanet.net/public/dgarneau/B.C.6.htm>

²¹ Lynn J, (August 17, 1998). *Colonialism and the sexual exploitation of Canada's Aboriginal women*, paper presented at the American Psychological Association 106th Annual Convention, San Francisco CA.



I heard one man say that he had cut out a woman's private parts and had them for exhibition on a stick...I also heard of numerous instances in which men had cut out the private parts of females and stretched them over the saddle-bows and wore them over their hats while riding in the ranks.²²

In 1871, an armed “citizens’ group” from Tucson attacked a group of Apache camped at Camp Grant. In a sworn affidavit presented to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Cavalry Lieutenant Royal E. Whitman, commanding officer at the camp, reported on the aftermath:

The camp had been fired and the dead bodies of some twenty-two women and children were lying scattered over the ground; those who had been wounded in the first instance, had their brains beaten out with stones. Two of the best-looking of the squaws were lying in such a position, and from the appearance of the genital organs and of their wounds, there can be no doubt that they were first ravished and then shot dead. Nearly all the dead were mutilated.²³

The genocide of American Indian people during this period has been likened to the Jewish Holocaust, because it was fueled by the government’s formal policies calling for extermination and religious persecution of Native people. Following the Wounded Knee massacre, similar to treatment of Jewish victims at Auschwitz, victims were stripped and thrown into a mass grave “like sardines in a pit.”²⁴ Oral traditions for spiritual healing often died with the elders carrying that knowledge, further impacting Native peoples’ ability to grieve losses together in healing ceremonies.

Native girls’ boarding school experiences

Mission schools were established as early as the late 1700s for the “education of the Indian.” In 1879, the Bureau of Indian Affairs opened Carlisle Industrial School in Pennsylvania, which became the model for government-funded, Christian-oriented Indian boarding schools. Approximately 12,000 American Indian children attended Carlisle in its 39 years of operation.²⁵ At times, there were as many as 100 government-operated Indian boarding schools nationwide.²⁶ The purpose of these schools was to destroy American Indian children’s ties to their families, culture, religion, and language, and to replace those with the values and behaviors of the dominant Christian society.²⁷ This segment of a serialized story in Carlisle’s weekly student newsletter written by a white school matron and titled “How an Indian girl might tell her own story if she had the chance” illustrates the school’s goal for Native girls. In the story, an Indian

²² Brown D, (1970). *Bury my heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian history of the American West*. New York: Holt, p. 90.


²³ Board of Indian Commissioners, (1872). *Third annual report of the Board of Indian Commissioners to the President of the United States, 1871*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office. Retrieved March 2, 2009 from http://www.archive.org/stream/annualreportofbo03unitrich/annualreportofbo03unitrich_djvu.txt

²⁴ Mattes M, (1960). The enigma of Wounded Knee, *Plains Anthropologist* 5(9):1-11, p. 4.

²⁵ Anderson S, (2000). On sacred ground: commemorating survival and loss at the Carlisle Indian School, *Central Pennsylvania Magazine* (May edition).

²⁶ National Public Radio, (May 12, 2008). *American Indian boarding schools haunt many*. Retrieved December 22, 2008 from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17645287>

²⁷ Hoxie F, (1989). *A final promise: The campaign to assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



girl has graduated from Carlisle and returned home to her Native community. When a white storekeeper asks if she will return to wearing “Indian clothes,” she responds:

No! Do you think I can not appreciate what the great and good Government of the United States has done for me? Do you think I would be so ungrateful after the Government has spent so much time and money to educate me as not to use the knowledge I have obtained? I see I cannot do much here, but I believe I can keep myself right if I try. I can keep from going back to Indian ways if I am determined. I don't believe the [tribal leader] could force me back into the Indian dress. If he tried to I should run away. I believe the white people would protect me if I should run to them.²⁸

Native researchers Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra DeBruyn, who have written extensively on historical trauma among American Indians, summarized the impact of “Indian education” on American Indian communities:

The destructive and shaming messages inherent in the boarding school system...were that American Indian families are not capable of raising their own children, and that American Indians are culturally and racially inferior...abusive behaviors—physical, sexual, emotional—were experienced and learned by American Indian children raised in these settings. Spiritually and emotionally, the children were bereft of culturally integrated behaviors that led to positive self-esteem, a sense of belonging to family and community, and a solid American Indian identity.²⁹

In the Midwest, reservation day schools and boarding schools were funded by the U.S. government and most frequently operated by the Catholic Church. Tim Giago, a well-known Lakota author and boarding school survivor, described what he witnessed as a child in a Catholic mission school in South Dakota:


These children were being indoctrinated into the rituals and beliefs of the Catholic Church. It was not out of the question for the abusers to warn the children that if they spoke about what happened to them that they would be committing a mortal sin and they would burn in hell...the children were required to go to confession at least once per week. Can you imagine their fear when they looked through the confessional screen and saw the face of the priest that had been abusing them? What were they to think? Don't you know that they were already suffering from the guilt pushed upon them by their abusers? When they saw the priest behind the confessional screen they knew that they had no one and nowhere they could turn for help. They buried what happened to them deep inside.³⁰

The Canadian Prime Minister issued a public policy in 2008 for the harm done to Native children in Canadian residential schools, but it was not until October 2009 that the U.S. Senate approved a resolution apologizing to American Indians for years of "ill-conceived policies" and acts of

²⁸ Burgess M, (October 18, 1889). Segment of a serialized story in *The Indian Helper* transcribed and posted online by Barbara Landis. In 1891, the story was published as a book by Embe titled *Stiya, a Carlisle Indian Girl at Home*. Transcribed serial segment retrieved June 2, 2009 from <http://home.epix.net/~landis/stiya.html>

²⁹ Yellow Horse Brave Heart M and DeBruyn L, (1998). The American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief, *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 8(2):63.

³⁰ Giago T, (October 25, 2007). *Children left behind: The dark legacy of Indian mission boarding schools*. Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishing. Retrieved May 4, 2009 from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tim-giago/the-catholic-indian-missi_b_69887.html



violence by U.S. citizens. The resolution, described by the Associated Press as “controversial,” was not a stand-alone action by the Senate. Rather, it was tacked onto a defense spending bill.³¹

Impact of assimilation policies on Native women

In the 1850s, the U.S. began establishing and relocating American Indians to reservations. The ultimate goal was their eventual assimilation. Francis Walker, Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the 1870s, imposed a system in which Native people could not leave the reservation without permission, and were required to participate in industrial labor. Walker proposed that “a severe course of industrial instruction and exercise under restraint” would teach American Indians industriousness and frugality, and prepare them for civilized society. In a further effort to force assimilation, Congress passed the Dawes Allotment Act in 1887, which broke up reservations into 160-acre parcels allotted to individual heads of families. It also allowed the U.S. to sell any unallotted land, resulting in the sale of over 17 million acres of Indian land in 1891 alone.³²

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the U.S. government launched a series of aggressive efforts to assimilate American Indians. Three intersecting initiatives from that era had a significant impact on American Indian women’s traditional roles in their communities, their safety, and their perceptions of themselves as sacred beings: tribal termination and urban relocation efforts, involuntary sterilization of Native women, and large-scale efforts to adopt Native children into white families.

Termination and relocation


At the time of the post-World War II economic boom, the average American Indian on a reservation earned \$950 a year, compared to the \$4,000 earnings of the average white person. The federal government initiated the Urban Indian Relocation Program in 1952, which encouraged reservation Indians to relocate to major cities where jobs were supposedly plentiful. Relocation offices were initially set up in Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Dallas, later expanding to include 28 urban areas. Minneapolis was one. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) employees were charged with orienting new arrivals and managing financial and job training programs for them.³³

Native people were told they would receive temporary housing and assistance obtaining permanent housing, counseling and guidance in finding a job, and community and social services, including start-up money. A couple with four children was to receive \$80 a month. About 30 percent of all American Indians were rapidly relocated to cities, where they just as

³¹ Associated Press, (October 7, 2009). *Senate approves apology to American Indians*. Retrieved October 8, 2009 from http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-10-07-senate-apology-american-indians_N.htm

³² Takaki R, (1993). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America*. Boston: Back Bay Books. Pp. 233-236.

³³ Public Broadcasting Service, (September 2006). *Indian Country Diaries: The urban relocation program*. Retrieved February 2, 2009 from <http://www.pbs.org/indiancountry/history/relocate.html#>



quickly joined the urban poor when the promised assistance failed to materialize. By 1980, up to 750,000 had moved to the cities.³⁴ The National Council on Urban Indian Health reports:

*The haunting memories of forced relocation and broken promises on the part of the federal government have affected the overall well being of the American Indian community. This has resulted in high rates of severe mental and physical health disparities. Contemporary health and social issues include poverty, alcoholism, heart disease, diabetes, and unemployment.*³⁵

In 1953, Congress passed two measures: Public Law 280 (PL-280), which authorized some states to unilaterally assume jurisdiction over criminal and civil matters on reservations, and a resolution to end federal relations with tribes as quickly as possible. Nine of Minnesota's eleven tribes are currently subject to PL-280; only Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and the Red Lake Nation have retained federal jurisdiction for criminal matters. By the early 1960s, the U.S. had terminated 109 tribes across the nation, withdrawing from all relations with them, including trust and treaty obligations.³⁶ Increasingly isolated from the social supports and cultural strengths of their tribal communities, American Indian women relocated to urban areas experienced increased exposure to physical and sexual violence along with poverty and its added stressors.

Involuntary sterilization

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Indian Health Service (IHS), the primary source of medical care for most American Indians at the time, routinely performed tubal ligations on Native women and girls without their consent and sometimes during other surgeries without their knowledge. The U.S. government had targeted American Indians for family planning due to their high birth rate, and sterilization was considered an acceptable intervention. Between 1970 and 1976, the IHS sterilized between 25 and 50 percent of Native women in various areas of the U.S. One Choctaw-Cherokee physician examined IHS records and estimated that by 1975, 25,000 American Indian women had been sterilized by this unit of the federal government. In general, Native women agreed to tubal ligation after being threatened with losing their children and/or their welfare benefits. Most of them consented while still sedated during a Caesarean section or during labor to deliver a child, and most did not understand the 12th-grade reading level consent forms or the permanency of the procedure.³⁷


Sterilization abuse destroyed these Native women's sacred roles as life-bringers. Mary Ann Bears Come Out, who conducted interviews with women who were sterilized during this era, described the impact:

³⁴ Public Broadcasting Service, (September 2006). *Indian Country Diaries: The urban relocation program*. Retrieved February 2, 2009 from <http://www.pbs.org/indiancountry/history/relocate.html#>

³⁵ National Council on Urban Indian Health, (undated). *Relocation has been endemic to modern American Indian history*. [http://www.ncuih.org/Relocation%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ncuih.org/Relocation%20(2).pdf)

³⁶ Josephy A Jr., (1988). Modern America and the Indian, in Hoxie E (Ed.), *Indians in American History*, pp.251-272. Arlington Heights IL: Harlan Davidson.

³⁷ Cited in Lawrence J, (Summer 2000). The sterilization of Native American women, *American Indian Quarterly* 24(3): 400-419.



The sterilization of Indian women affected their families and friends; many marriages ended in divorce, and numerous friendships became estranged or dissolved completely. The women had to deal with higher rates of marital problems, alcoholism, drug abuse, psychological difficulties, shame, and guilt. Sterilization abuse affected the entire Indian community in the United States.³⁸

The Indian Adoption Project

Before 1978, the wholesale removal of Native children from their families and tribes by state social services agencies and courts was commonplace. In Minnesota, one of every four Native children under the age of one was removed and adopted, usually by a non-Native family.³⁹ Most often, the justification for removal was “neglect,” claiming the parent had “inappropriately” left the child with an extended family member for a prolonged period of time—ignoring the fact that in many Native cultures, extended family members play important parenting roles.⁴⁰

Building on that practice, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Children’s Bureau entered into a contracted collaboration with the Child Welfare League of America in 1958, to administer the Indian Adoption Project. The project was a response to the number of Native children in foster care or informal kinship care in poverty-stricken reservation settings, based on the idea that Native children would have better health and brighter futures if they escaped the conditions of reservation life. In 1962, the Director of the Indian Adoption Project described the benefits that white families could also realize by adopting an American Indian child:

As tribal members they have the right to share in all the assets of the tribe which are distributed on a per capita basis. The actual as well as anticipated benefits of an Indian child adopted through our Project are furnished by the Secretary of the Interior.⁴¹

From 1958 to 1967, the Indian Adoption Project removed 395 Native children from 16 western states for adoption by white families in Illinois, Indiana, New York, Massachusetts, Missouri, and other states in the East and Midwest. The Adoption Resource Exchange of North America (ARENA), a national organization, took over the work of the Indian Adoption Project in 1966 and continued placing Native American children in white adoptive homes into the early 1970s.⁴² A 1969 study by the Association on American Indian Affairs found that roughly 25-35 percent of Native children had been separated from their families, and the First Nations Orphan Association estimates that between 1941 and 1978, 68 percent of all Indian children were removed from their

³⁸ Cited in Lawrence J, (Summer 2000). The sterilization of Native American women, *American Indian Quarterly* 24(3): 410.

³⁹ U.S. Congress, (1978). *The House Report, H.R. Rep. No. 1386, 95th Congress, 2nd Session*, reprinted in 1978 U.S. Code Congressional and Administrative News 7530.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Lyslo A, (December 1962). *Suggested criteria to evaluate families to adopt American Indian children through the Indian Adoption Project*, Child Welfare League of America Papers, Box 17, Folder 3, Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota, pp. 3-5.

⁴² Herman E, (July 11, 2007). *The Adoption History Project*. Department of History, University of Oregon. Retrieved May 2, 2009 from <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~adoption/topics/IAP.html>



homes and placed in orphanages or white foster homes, or adopted into white families.⁴³ This wholesale separation of Native children from their families and communities had devastating repercussions:

- It shamed Native mothers, reinforcing the stereotype fostered by the “Indian education” era that American Indian women are not competent to raise their own children.
- It left families and communities with disenfranchised grief that could not be resolved.
- It prevented the transmission of cultural values and practices through social learning and oral story-telling traditions.

Removing Native girls from their families and tribes and adopting them into white households severely curtailed these children’s ability to foster any understanding of their roles in traditional Native community life, and their ability to build relationships with other Native people.⁴⁴ Their appearance marked them as American Indian, exposing them to racial targeting for sexual violence, but they had not been permitted to develop a culture-based identity as sacred givers of life.

These historic experiences over generations and the trauma induced by them have had a cumulative effect on today’s American Indian girls and women. Coupled with regular exposure to racism and the poverty of most Native families and communities, they have significantly impacted Native girls’ attainment of the four basic beliefs described at the beginning of this review, which are essential for a coherent and resilient sense of self:

- The world is a good and rewarding place
- The world is predictable, meaningful, and fair
- I am a worthy person
- People are trustworthy.⁴⁵

The damage caused by life in prostitution

Later in this report, we describe the factors that make Native women and girls vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. Some may ask “Why does vulnerability matter?” It matters because women and girls in prostitution suffer extremely high rates of violence and trauma, and these experiences make it very difficult for them to ever return to a healthy lifestyle.

In over 20 years of research, the rates of rape and sexual assault of women in prostitution have consistently been found to range between 70 and 90 percent.^{46,47} A U.S. study found that women

⁴³ Kreisher K, (March 2002). Coming home: The lingering effects of the Indian Adoption Project, *Children’s Voices*. Child Welfare League of America. Retrieved May 2, 2009 from <http://www.cwla.org/articles/cv0203indianadopt.htm>

⁴⁴ Jones B, (1995). *The Indian Child Welfare Act handbook: A legal guide to the custody and adoption of Native American children*. Section of Family Law, American Bar Association.

⁴⁵ Roth S and Newman E, (1995). The process of coping with sexual trauma, in Everly G and Lating J (Eds.) *Psychotraumatology: Key papers and core concepts in post-traumatic stress*. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 321-339.

⁴⁶ Silbert M and Pines A, (1982). Victimization of street prostitutes, *Victimology* 7(1-4): 122-133.



in prostitution had been raped an average of twice weekly. At least 84 percent of the women interviewed were victims of aggravated assault, 49 percent had been kidnapped, and 53 percent were victims of sexual torture. Those that were tortured reported having been burned, gagged, hung, and bound, and having body parts mutilated by pinching, clamping, and stapling.⁴⁸

Though no U.S. data are available on the experiences of American Indian women in prostitution, one study in Vancouver, a city with a large proportion of Native women and girls in the sex trade, found that 68 percent of prostituted women had been recently raped and 72 percent had been kidnapped.⁴⁹ A second Vancouver study found that 90 percent of women in prostitution (about half of whom were Aboriginal) had been physically assaulted in prostitution. Of this group, 82 percent named johns as their assailants. In addition to cuts, black eyes, and “fat lips,” 75 percent had sustained severe physical injuries from pimps and johns that included stabbings, beatings, broken bones (jaws, ribs, collar bones, fingers), and spinal injuries. Half had suffered concussions and fractured skulls when pimps and/or johns assaulted them with baseball bats and crowbars, or slammed their heads against walls or car dashboards. Prostituted women have reported frequent experiences with extreme violence whenever they refuse to perform a specific sex act.⁵⁰

A study with commercially sexually exploited youth and adults in British Columbia, an area in which many are Native, found that significant changes occur when sailors are in port in Victoria. Youth reported the need to protect their safety at these times by traveling in groups and not provoking sailors, and prostituting women viewed these times as a combination of increased business opportunities and greater risk of violence.⁵¹

In addition to violence perpetrated by johns, research in regions with large Aboriginal populations has found that the vast majority of prostituted women experience extreme physical and sexual violence at the hands of pimps, boyfriends, and husbands.^{52,53}

⁴⁷ Parriott R, (1994). Health experiences of Twin Cities women used in prostitution. Unpublished survey initiated by WHISPER, Minneapolis MN, cited in Farley et al., 2003, Prostitution and trafficking in nine countries: An update on violence and posttraumatic stress disorder, in *Prostitution, trafficking and traumatic stress*. Binghamton NY: Haworth Maltreatment & Treatment Press.

⁴⁸ Hunter S, (1994). Prostitution is cruelty and abuse to women and children, *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law* 1: 1-14.

⁴⁹ Cler-Cunningham and Christenson C, (2001). Studying violence to stop it: Canadian research on violence against women in Vancouver's street level sex trade, *Research for Sex Work* 4, June: 25-26.

⁵⁰ Farley M and Lynne J, (2005). Prostitution of indigenous women: Sex inequality and the colonization of Canada's Aboriginal women, *Fourth World Journal* 6(1): 21-29.

⁵¹ Hunt S, (2006). *Violence in the lives of sexually exploited youth and adult sex workers in BC: Provincial research*. Justice Institute of British Columbia, Centre for Leadership and Community Learning. Retrieved April 20, 2009 from <http://peers.bc.ca/images/orchidupdat0407.pdf>

⁵² Currie S, Laliberte N, Bird S, Rosa N, and Sprung S, (1995), *Assessing the Violence Against Street Involved Women in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Community*, Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society and Watari Research Society, Ministry of Women's Equality, Vancouver BC.

⁵³ Lowman J and Fraser L, (1995). *Violence against persons who prostitute: The experience in British Columbia*. Unedited technical report. Department of Justice Canada. Cited in Federal/Provincial Territorial Working Group on Prostitution (1998) *Report and recommendations in respect of legislation, policy, and practices concerning prostitution-related activities*. Canadian Federal/Provincial Working Group on Prostitution.



Verbal abuse by johns adds another layer of trauma for women in prostitution. Canadian studies have found that 83 to 88 percent of prostituted women describe verbal assaults as an intrinsic part of prostitution.^{54,55} Research participants have reported that johns called them names during sex intended to humiliate, eroticize, or justify the john's treatment of the woman, often racial slurs.⁵⁶ Other research has found that racially-motivated verbal and physical violence are particularly intense forms of racial discrimination that have a profound impact on mental health, even when it is not accompanied by violence or abuse.^{57,58} Some prostituted women have described verbal abuse by johns as the aspect of life in the sex trade that is most damaging.⁵⁹ A Native woman in Vancouver described the effect of johns' verbal abuse on her self-esteem:

*It is internally damaging. You become in your own mind what these people do and say to you. You wonder, how could you let yourself do this, and why do these people want to do this to you?*⁶⁰

Involvement in prostitution is also often deadly. In 1985, the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in Canada reported the death rate of prostituted women as 40 times that of women in the general population.⁶¹ Since Aboriginal women's overall death rate for homicide is 40 times that of the general Canadian population, prostituted Native women are by far those at greatest risk of lethal violence.⁶² One Vancouver study found a 36 percent incidence of attempted murder among prostituted women,⁶³ and in 2004 Amnesty International reported that at least 500 Aboriginal women and girls had gone missing over the previous 30 years.⁶⁴

⁵⁴ Cler-Cunningham and Christenson C, (2001). Studying violence to stop it: Canadian research on violence against women in Vancouver's street level sex trade, *Research for sex work 4*, June: 25-26.

⁵⁵ Farley M, Lynne J, and Cotton A, (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the colonization of Aboriginal women, *Transcultural Psychology 42*: 242-271

⁵⁶ Baldwin M, (1992). Split at the root: Prostitution and feminist discourses of law reform, *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism 5*: 47-120.

⁵⁷ Williams D, Lavizzo-Jourey R, and Warren R, (2002). The concept of race and health status in America, *Public Health Reports 109*(1): 26-41.

⁵⁸ Turner C and Kramer B, (1995). Connections between racism and mental health, in Willie C, Rieker B, Kramer B, and Brown B (Eds.), *Mental health, racism, and sexism*. Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 3-25.

⁵⁹ Cited in Farley M, Lynne J, and Cotton A, (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the colonization of Aboriginal women, *Transcultural Psychology 42*: 242-271.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (The Fraser Committee), (1985). *Pornography and prostitution in Canada*, p. 350. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

⁶² Health Canada Medical Services Branch, (1996). Unpublished tables from 1995, cited in The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, p. 153. Ottawa ON: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

⁶³ Cler-Cunningham and Christenson C, (2001). Studying violence to stop it: Canadian research on violence against women in Vancouver's street level sex trade, *Research for Sex Work 4*, June: 25-26.

⁶⁴ Amnesty International Canada, (2004). *Canada: Stolen sisters—a human rights response to discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada*. Ottawa: Amnesty International. Retrieved December 4, 2008 from <http://www.amnesty.ca/campaigns/resources/amr2000304.pdf>



II. Methods and definitions

The information summarized in this report came from four primary sources: two regional round table discussions with advocates, data from screening forms used by MIWRC staff during client intake over a 6-month period, published materials (statistics, reports, and scholarly articles), and data or data output provided to MIWRC by the entities that collected those data.

Regional round table discussions with advocates

Two round table discussions were held with a total of 30 advocates working with American Indian women and girls. The first round table, attended by 12 advocates, was held in Duluth on January 30, 2009. The second, attended by 18, was held in Minneapolis on March 27, 2009.

Each round table discussion was about five hours in length. Almost all of the participating advocates are themselves American Indian, and were working in a variety of programs that brought them into contact with Native women and girls in prostitution as well as those seeking to escape prostitution. Both discussions included advocates from housing programs, domestic violence and sexual assault programs, tribal women's programs, programs serving homeless women and youth, and collaborative programs involving social services and law enforcement. Lunch was provided, and the majority of the participants stayed for the entire discussion. At each round table, advocates responded to the same set of semi-structured questions on the following topics:

- How frequently their work involved Native women and/or girls engaged in survival sex, who had been prostituted or trafficked, or who had worked in strip clubs or pornography.
- The types of commercial sexual exploitation affecting Native women and girls.
- The prevalence of various types of commercial sexual exploitation among Native women and girls in their region of the state.
- How Native girls and women enter the sex trade, age of entry, and who recruits them
- The facilitating factors that make Native women and girls vulnerable to recruitment into the sex trade
- Native women's and girls' experiences in the sex trade and barriers to exiting
- Advocates' recommendations for prevention, policies, interventions, and services for Native girls and women wanting to escape commercial sexual exploitation

The round table discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Open coding was used to identify major and minor themes in the two round table conversations, and quotes were organized within those themes. A copy of the facilitator's guide for the round tables is included in the Appendix.



Screening at intake for social services

To establish a basic source of data to estimate how many of its clients have been involved in commercial sexual exploitation, the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center asked an additional set of questions at intake for three of the agency's programs over a six month period. To prevent client concern about having disclosures documented, MIWRC program counselors waited until after the intake interview to fill out the screening form. To ensure anonymity, no names were recorded on the forms. The data from the forms were entered and analyzed by the research consultant charged with producing this report, who had no contact with the clients whose information was recorded. As of June 15, 2009, MIWRC had screened 95 Native and women and girls. A copy of the screening form is included in the Appendix.

Published materials

We recognize that the two round tables and the intake data alone are not adequate for drawing generalizable conclusions. To place our findings in a larger frame of reference, we triangulated our data with following types of published materials and data sources in preparing this report:

- Statistics reported by government entities, public institutions, researchers, nonprofit organizations, and foundations
- Published research reports and journal articles describing the prevalence and characteristics of commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution, and sex trafficking
- Published reports and journal articles focusing on public policy and law regarding sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation
- Published research and articles produced by American Indian and Aboriginal survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and/or organizations serving Native victims
- Reports and other publications regarding recommended programming and support services for victims of sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation

American Indian tribes in the upper Midwest and Canadian Aboriginal communities share a common history of colonization and government oppression. Many also share a common ancestry and language, with active relationships back and forth across the U.S./Canada border. Therefore, the statistics and publications cited in this report include those from both the United States and Canada.

When citing demographic statistics from other studies or reports that were based on the U.S. Census, the authors of those publications did not always clarify whether they were reporting percentages for people identifying as American Indian only, or if those percentages included people identifying as American Indian as well as those that identified as American Indian in combination with one or more other races. In those cases, we simply reported the percentages as they appeared in the publication.



Data and output provided to MIWRC

Additional sources included a subset of data provided to MIWRC by Wilder Research, which contained the responses of all non-reservation American Indian women and girls participating in Wilder's 2006 statewide study of homelessness in Minnesota. We analyzed those data by age group, and the results of our analyses are described in this report.

Though raw data from the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey could not be released to MIWRC because cell sizes were too small to ensure the confidentiality of research participants in specific counties, the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Health generated data output tables for MIWRC for American Indian girls in the 9th and 12th grades statewide, and when cell sizes were large enough, for American Indian 9th and 12th grade girls in Beltrami, Hennepin, Ramsey, and St. Louis Counties. Because 12th-grade girls' data could not be released for one of the four counties due to small numbers, we elected to report only statewide comparisons, and to include data on 6th grade girls' responses already released to the public. The charts developed for this report show percentages of girls by grade in school, in three categories:

- Girls identifying solely as American Indian (American Indian only)
- Girls identifying as American Indian only combined with those of girls identifying as American Indian plus another race (American Indian + in combination)
- All girls in the general population (referred to as "all girls")

We feel that the distinction between girls identifying as "American Indian only" and those identifying as "American Indian + in combination" is an important one, especially in the urban area. Hennepin County has noted that of the American Indian people included in the county's population during the 2000 U.S. Census, 69 percent also identified as one or more other races, and 40 percent of the county's American Indian children are of mixed-race ancestry.⁶⁵

Limitations of this report

The time frame for this project was quite short, which limited the information that could be identified and accessed. We did not apply a rigorous standard to evaluate the generalizeability of the information to be included. Because this is the first report of its kind, we gathered every bit of information we felt to be reasonably reliable in describing the issue. As noted earlier, our samples for the round table discussions and clients screened at intake were quite small, and limited both demographically and geographically. Therefore, what we report here should be considered an exploratory study, a first glance at a complex problem, and only the tip of a very large iceberg.

⁶⁵ Source: Census 2000, cited in American Indian Families Project (September 2003), *A look at American Indian families in Hennepin County*, pp 1-2. Minneapolis: Hennepin County Office of Planning and Development.



Definitions

We recognize that men and boys are also victims of sexual exploitation, commercial and otherwise. Our focus on women and girls is not intended to deny the experiences of male victims, but rather to examine the impacts that are specific to females. For this reason, our definitions all refer to women and girls.

American Indian, Aboriginal, Native

Other than references to Alaska Natives, the indigenous people of the United States are most frequently referred to as American Indian or Native American. In Canada, indigenous people are legally categorized as First Nations, Métis or Inuit, and collectively described as Aboriginal. For simplicity's sake when discussing the Canadian and U.S. research literature, we use the terms American Indian or Native when referring to indigenous people in the U.S., and Aboriginal or Native when referring to indigenous people in Canada.

Adolescents, girls, young adults, and youth


For the purposes of this report, the terms “girls” and “adolescents” are used to describe females ages 12 to 18. “Young adults” are ages of 18 to 24. The term “youth” encompasses young women and young men ages 12 to 24. Though over the age of 18 and legally considered adults in the United States, American Indian females ages 18 to 24 are still very vulnerable and many are in need of youth-oriented services.

Commercial sexual exploitation

In the U.S., the term “commercial sexual exploitation” is almost exclusively applied to children. The National Institute of Justice defines commercial sexual exploitation of a child (CSEC) as sexual abuse of a *minor* for *monetary* gain (emphasis ours), including any accompanying physical abuse, pornography, prostitution, and the smuggling of children for unlawful purposes.⁶⁶ There is no parallel federal definition for commercially sexually exploited adults, who are instead defined as “prostitutes” unless they can prove force, fraud, or coercion and thus be considered victims of sex trafficking.

In a study of 150 Aboriginal prostituted youth in 22 communities across Canada, research participants differentiated between commercial sexual exploitation and sexual abuse even though they often overlap, arguing that exploitation is taking advantage of someone else for personal profit, pleasure, and/or control. In response, the researchers proposed this definition:

⁶⁶ National Institute of Justice, (December 2007). *Commercial sexual exploitation of children: What do we know and what do we do about it?* (NCJ 215733), p. 1. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.



*Commercial sexual exploitation is the exchange of sex for food, shelter, drugs/alcohol, money, and/or approval.*⁶⁷

Adult women are also sexually exploited by others taking advantage of their vulnerabilities for profit, pleasure, and/or power. Therefore, the definition used in this report is:

*The exploitation of a woman's or girl's sexuality for financial or other non-monetary gains, in manner that involves significant benefits to the exploiter and violates the exploited person's human right to dignity, equality, autonomy, and physical and mental well-being.*⁶⁸

Prostitution

We define prostitution as the act of engaging in sexual intercourse or performing other sexual acts in exchange for money or other considerations, including food, shelter, transportation and other basic needs. We use the terms “in prostitution,” “involved in prostitution,” and “prostituted” rather than “prostitute” because we find it unreasonable to assign a label to an exploited person that implies that she is responsible for her own exploitation. We concur with Melissa Farley, who pointed out:

*We do not refer to battered women as ‘battering workers.’ And just as we would not turn a woman into the harm done to her (we don’t refer to a woman who has been battered as a ‘batteree’) we should not call a woman who has been prostituted a ‘prostitute.’*⁶⁹

Though the term “sex worker” is used by some as an alternative to the term “prostitute,” we choose not to, because it frames prostitution as an acceptable form of work rather than a form of sexual violence.

Sex trade

We use the term “sex trade” to describe the “business” of commercial sexual exploitation, all transactions in which sexual activity is exchanged for food, shelter, drugs, transportation, approval, money, or safety. We do not suggest that women and girls who are sold, traded, or purchased for sexual purposes are trading fairly in a free market system. Similar to the slave trade, women and girls in the sex trade are being exploited in exchange for their survival and/or the benefit of a more powerful person.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada, p. 41.

⁶⁸ Adapted from the definition used on page 11 of Walker N, (April 2002). *Prostituted teens: More than a runaway problem—Michigan Family Impact Seminars, Briefing Report No. 2002-2*. East Lansing MI: Institute for Children, Youth and Families, Michigan State University.

⁶⁹ Farley M, (2003). Prostitution and the invisibility of harm, *Women and Therapy* 26(3/4): 247-280. Retrieved February 6, 2009 from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/6732117/Prostitution-the-Invisibility-of-Harm-HAWTH>

⁷⁰ Based on the definition used in Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada.



The sex trade includes:

- Street prostitution
- Escort agencies
- Massage parlors
- Brothels, “trick pads” and “sex party houses”
- Bars and clubs that sell “lap dances” and “private dances”
- Businesses that organize and sell “private parties” with strippers and nude dancers
- Strip clubs
- Pornography and live “sex shows”
- Phone and Internet sex

Sex trafficking

International, federal, and Minnesota laws all reflect the idea that trafficking involves the recruiting, harboring, receipt or transportation of persons in order to exploit them. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (federal law) defines sex trafficking as:

The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act is under 18 years of age.⁷¹

In Minnesota law, sex trafficking is defined as a type of promotion of prostitution:

...a person subjected to the practices in subdivision 7a [which are: receiving, recruiting, enticing, harboring, providing, or obtaining by any means an individual to aid in the prostitution of the individual].⁷²

In their 2008 sex trafficking needs assessment report to the State of Minnesota, The Advocates for Human Rights described the difference in the sex trafficking definition used in Minnesota law, compared to that used in federal law:

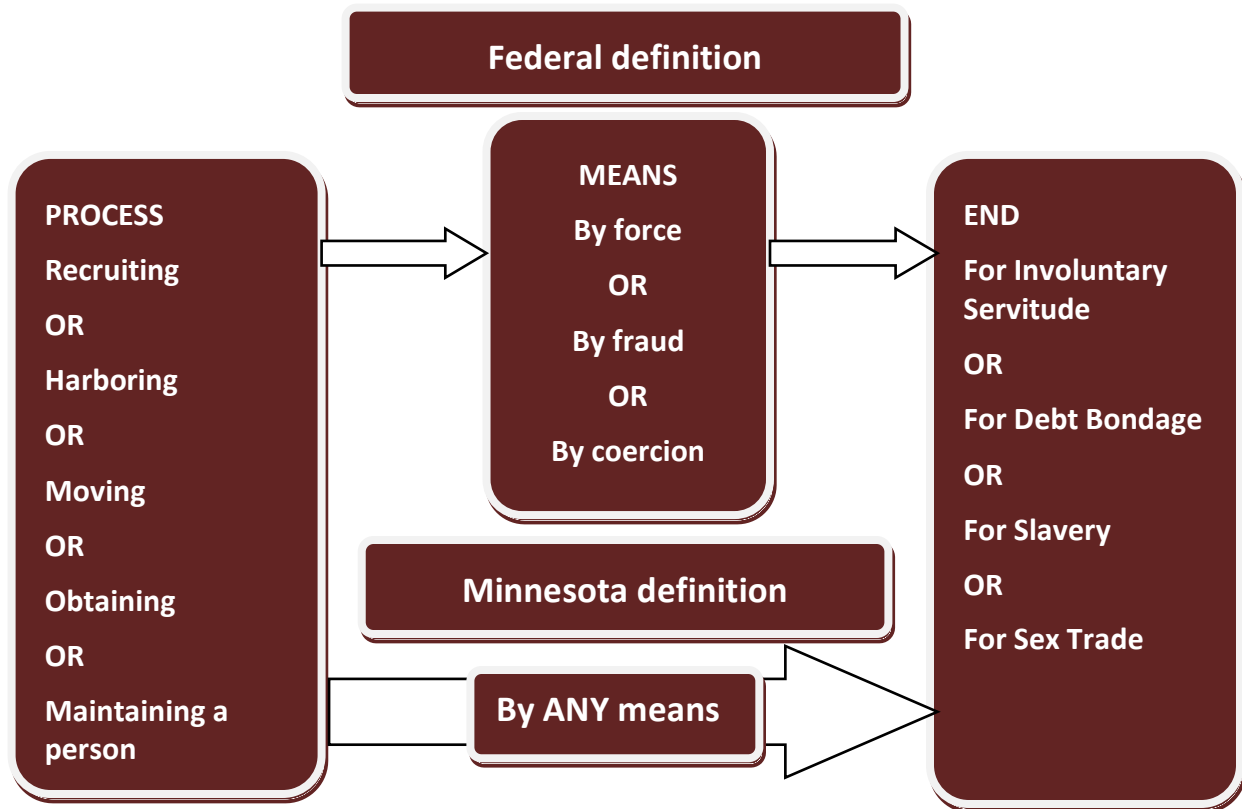
... federal law requires that traffickers use the means of ‘force, fraud or coercion’ to recruit or maintain an adult in sex trafficking while Minnesota does not. Minnesota law recognizes that a person can never consent to being sexually exploited and considers individuals who have been prostituted by others as trafficking victims. Federal law requires an assessment of the level of ‘consent’ of the prostituted person in determining whether the crime of trafficking has occurred.⁷³

⁷¹ See 18 U.S.C. § 1591 (a).

⁷² Minnesota Statute § 609.321, subd. 7a

⁷³ The Advocates for Human Rights, (September 2008). *Sex trafficking needs assessment for the State of Minnesota*. Minneapolis: The Advocates for Human Rights.

Basically, the federal trafficking law requires that three elements be present for a crime to be considered trafficking. In Minnesota law, the victim is not required to establish “means” to prove that she did not consent. Rather, courts determine responsibility based on the conduct of the trafficker.⁷⁴



* Adapted from the Freedom Network Institute on Human Trafficking.


On its website, the U.S. Department of State describes the signs that a person may be a trafficking victim, which include:

- Evidence of being controlled, evidence of inability to move or leave a job;
- Bruises or other signs of physical abuse;
- Fear or depression;
- Not speaking on own behalf

The same website recommends asking possible trafficking victims a set of questions, including:

- Can you come and go as you please?
- Have you or your family been threatened?
- What are your working and living conditions like?

⁷⁴ The Advocates for Human Rights, (September 2008). *Sex trafficking needs assessment for the State of Minnesota*. Minneapolis: The Advocates for Human Rights.

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- Where do you sleep and eat?
 - Do you have to ask permission to eat/sleep/go to the bathroom?
 - Are there locks on your doors/windows so you cannot get out?

Many prostituted women under the control of a pimp in the U.S. would probably evidence the same signs and respond to the U.S. Department of State's proposed questions in exactly the same way as a woman meeting the federal definition of a victim of international sex trafficking. Donna Hughes, professor and Carlson Endowed Chair at the University of Rhode Island, has pointed out the overlap in definitions of sex trafficking and pimping, emphasizing that women's experiences in prostitution and sex trafficking are quite similar in regard to violence, control, exploitation, and level of victimization. Hughes notes that in multiple studies of women in prostitution, the average reported age of entry suggests that 70 percent were, by definition, victims of sex trafficking at the time they entered the sex trade. Hughes also reports that though the Trafficking Victims Protection Act provides for a grant program for local and state authorities to provide services to mostly U.S. citizen victims, those funds were never requested by the Department of Justice, and subsequently no programs were ever funded.⁷⁵

The United Nations definition of trafficking echoes Hughes' point, including means beyond those described in U.S. federal law:

*...deception, abuse of power of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving and receiving and benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over other persons, for the purpose of exploitation.*⁷⁶

In this report, we use the State of Minnesota's definition for sex trafficking, with the understanding that women and girls involved in "survival sex" experience deliberate exploitation of their vulnerability, with a clear sexual benefit to the exploiter:

*...receiving, recruiting, enticing, harboring, providing, or obtaining by any means an individual to aid in the prostitution of an individual.*⁷⁷


Victim

The definition of "victim" is perhaps the most contested and least resolved issue related to sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. There is considerable controversy as to whether an adult involved in prostitution should ever be considered a trafficking victim. The controversy is directly tied to the argument over whether or not a woman or child can ever

⁷⁵ Hughes D, (November 2, 2006). *Prostitution and trafficking: Is there a difference?* Presentation at Breaking Free, Saint Paul MN. Retrieved May 19, 2009 from http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/prost_v_traff.ppt

⁷⁶ United Nations General Assembly, (January 2000). *Revised draft protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children*, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, A/AC.254/4/Add.3/Rev.5, Article 3a. Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Seventh session, Vienna, 17-28.

⁷⁷ Minnesota Statute § 609.321, subd. 2; Minnesota Statute § 609.321, subd. 7a. For a full description of Minnesota trafficking law, see The Advocates for Human Rights, (September 2008). *Sex trafficking needs assessment for the State of Minnesota*. Minneapolis: The Advocates for Human Rights.



give informed consent to be purchased and used for another person's benefit or gratification, without regard to her safety or well-being.

The assumption that a woman in prostitution is a consenting adult regardless of her circumstances is codified in law. Anupriya Sethi, who conducted interviews with program coordinators and others working with sexually trafficked Aboriginal women and girls in Canada, described the difficulty inherent in this assumption when defining a victim of sex trafficking:

It is often argued that a person who consents to engage in prostitution cannot be considered trafficked thereby suggesting that only coercion or force should form an integral part of the trafficking definition. However, it is essential to recognize that consent does not necessarily suggest an informed choice.⁷⁸

In a 2007 report, the National Institute of Justice emphasized the importance of minor status in recognizing sex trafficking victims:

...when a minor, with few visible choices, sells sex at the hands of an exploitative adult, it is generally a means of survival. The term 'teenage prostitute' also overlooks the legal status of minors who have greater legal protection regarding sexual conduct because of their emotional and physical immaturity and the need to protect them from exploitative adults. Therefore, it is important that victims of child sexual exploitation are not mistaken for offenders... Clearly, these youth are being harmed emotionally and are in considerable physical danger.⁷⁹

Another factor is that some states do not allow juveniles to be automatically considered victims of statutory sex crimes if they are older than 15.⁸⁰ In Minnesota, the age of consent is 16, but if a victim is younger, criminal charges still may not result in a conviction if the perpetrator is only a few years older. For instance, if the victim is 13, 14, or 15 and the perpetrator is less than 48 months older, coercion must be proved to convict him/her of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.⁸¹ The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention described the dilemma confronting police officers at the point of contact with juveniles involved in prostitution:

On the one hand, they are offenders involved in illegal and delinquent behavior. On the other, they are children who are being victimized by unscrupulous adults.⁸²


⁷⁸ Sethi A, (2007). Domestic sex trafficking of Aboriginal girls in Canada: Issues and implications, *First Peoples Child and Family Review* 3: 57-71, p.59.

⁷⁹ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, (June 2004). Prostitution of juveniles: Patterns from NIBRS, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

⁸⁰ Klain E, (1999). *Prostitution of children and child-sex tourism: An analysis of domestic and international responses*. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Retrieved December 16, 2008 from <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/415161/Commercial-Sexual-Exploitation-of-Children-What-do-we-Know-and-What-do-we-do-about-it---December-2007>

⁸¹ Minnesota Statute 609.342. Retrieved June 24, 2008 from <https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?year=2008andid=609.342>

⁸² Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, (June 2004). Prostitution of juveniles: Patterns from NIBRS, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.



The definition of a sex trafficking victim used in the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs' 2007 *Human Trafficking in Minnesota* report is consistent with the federal definition:

A trafficking victim can be anyone who is forced, defrauded, or coerced into commercial servitude regardless of movement.⁸³

In contrast, the United Nations Protocol considers any person prostituted by someone taking advantage of their vulnerability to be a victim, whether or not the prostituted person consented.⁸⁴

As noted earlier, under Minnesota law the conduct of the trafficker is supposed to be the basis used by courts to determine whether any person has been trafficked for sexual purposes. To date no one has ever been prosecuted for sex trafficking under the Minnesota law, so there is no “test case” for establishing victimization. On May 21, 2009, the Minnesota Legislature unanimously passed and the governor signed a bill amending Minnesota’s sex trafficking law, which will enable law enforcement and prosecutors to better hold perpetrators accountable. Specifically, the amendments:

- Provide law enforcement and prosecutors with the ability to arrest and charge sex traffickers with higher penalties where an offender repeatedly traffics individuals into prostitution, where bodily harm is inflicted, where an individual is held more than 180 days, or where more than one victim is involved;
- Increase the fines for those who sell human beings for sex;
- Criminalize the actions of those individuals who receive profit from sex trafficking;
- Categorize sex trafficking with other “crimes of violence” to ensure that those who sell others for sex are prohibited from possessing firearms; and
- Add sex trafficking victims to those victims of “violent crime” who are protected from employer retaliation if they participate in criminal proceedings against their traffickers.⁸⁵

For the purposes of this report, any woman or girl who has been sexually exploited for the benefit of her exploiter is considered a victim of commercial sexual exploitation, whether the exploiter receives some financial benefit or gains other things of value, including goods, power, and status. If the victim is under 18 and/or if the trafficker is compensated in cash or other things of economic value, she is considered a sex trafficking victim.

⁸³ Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center, (September 2007). *Human trafficking in Minnesota: A report to the Minnesota Legislature*, p. 4. St. Paul: Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center.

⁸⁴ United Nations General Assembly, (January 2000). *Revised draft protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children*, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, A/AC.254/4/Add.3/Rev.5, Article 3a. Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Seventh session, Vienna, 17-28.

⁸⁵ The Advocates for Human Rights, (June 2009). *Update on sex trafficking legislation*. Retrieved June 24, 2009 from http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/sites/608a3887-dd53-4796-8904-997a0131ca54/uploads/Website_update_-_passage_of_bill.doc



Survival sex

We use the term “survival sex” to describe the exchange of sex for money and other considerations such as food, shelter, transportation, or safety by women and girls who do not think of themselves as involved in prostitution but rather, as doing “what they have to do” to survive.

Runaway and thrown-away

A runaway is defined as a girl who leaves home or a place of legal residence without the permission of parent(s) or legal guardian(s) for at least 24 hours. If a girl has been told to leave or was locked out of her home and told not to return, if she is a runaway who was not actively sought by her parent(s) after leaving, or if her parent(s) or guardian(s) failed to provide food or basic needs and she left home to meet those needs, she is defined as thrown-away.

Pimp/trafficker

We use the terms pimp and trafficker interchangeable, defined as a person who promotes and/or profits from the sale and/or abuse of another person’s body or sexuality for sexual purposes, or from the production and/or sale of sexual images made of that person.

John

Because it is the most recognized term for a purchaser for sexual services, we use the term john to describe an adult male who provides some type of compensation to engage in a sexual encounter with a woman or girl. It is important to remember that if the girl is under the age of 18, this person is, in fact, a sex offender.



Honoring the efforts and resilience of Native people

The next two sections of this report present a large body of evidence that Native women face “a perfect storm” of victimization, oppression, and poverty that makes them tremendously vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation. The information presented here calls attention to some problems that must be solved in the larger society. It also identifies some problems that must be solved within our own Native communities, where victimized Native women and girls cannot always find the level of safety and support that they need.

Even so, it is important to recognize that the continued existence of American Indian communities is a tribute to the resilience of Native people and their unending efforts to retain their language, social relationships, and culture. Many, many Native people are working to strengthen and heal their communities and to provide healthy options and positive futures for Native youth, and those efforts do make a difference.

Today, hundreds of Dakota and Ojibwe children and adults are learning and speaking their Native languages at weekly language tables in the Twin Cities and in language preservation programs on reservations. There is also an immense variety of programs, camps, and other events in urban areas and on reservations where Native youth can learn their history, culture, and values, connected to caring elders that help them learn in the traditional way.

A number of tribes have urban offices to meet the needs of members not living on reservations. One operates a pharmacy in Minneapolis that provides free prescription medication to all American Indians eligible for services through the Indian Health Service. Native-specific organizations in urban areas constantly collaborate to share information and resources to better serve American Indian people. During American Indian Month (May) in 2009, tribal offices and American Indian programs and agencies in the Twin Cities coordinated and hosted 48 events, including sunrise ceremonies, a sweat lodge, and storytelling; plays, concerts and art exhibits; open houses and feasts; educational events, Indian Youth Olympics and youth group presentations; health presentations and fund-raising walks.

Our goal in developing this report was to give our Native communities and their allies in the larger society information that could help pave the path to healing. Much good is already being done, and we look forward to what is to come.



III. Prevalence

Involvement in prostitution

Data collected by MIWRC

At the two round tables hosted by MIWRC, advocates working with Native women and girls in housing, domestic violence, sexual assault, and other social service programs focused on meeting crisis needs described the practice of trafficking Native girls and women into prostitution as a significant problem in both Duluth and Minneapolis.


The Duluth area advocates reported that street prostitution is highly visible, particularly when ships are in port and during times of the year when tourism is at its highest, such as hunting season and during the summer. Twin Cities advocates reported that in both Duluth and in the Twin Cities, much of the local prostitution activity occurs in bars, which makes it relatively invisible. These are some of the advocates' comments regarding the severity, visibility, and geographic locations of prostitution-related activity:

All you have to do is drive down First Street and ask somebody. It is so frickin' visible. I can't even believe it...Where we're located right on the corner of First Ave East and First Street down here. [Second speaker] In Duluth. [First speaker] It's prime area for street prostitution and there's [names of three strip bars] there. So now, right around the corner from North Shore is another strip place, and so there's a lot that happens right there. The liquor store is right there too. So, especially in the summer...it's not invisible by any means, way shape or form. If you even sit on a corner for a day you'll know who they are. Because people are coming, they're just getting into cars...I've overheard people negotiating prices, so it's really visible. [Duluth advocate]

I work in the housing program portion of a women's shelter. I see the [Native] women and we accept the women escaping from prostitution. I did my data collection for a report and I couldn't believe how many people that we had...it was pretty close to 30 women, escaped from prostitution in a few short months. [Twin Cities advocate]

The [Native] women are inside the bars and prostitution is happening in the bars, which makes it harder for the police to catch because it's not an outside thing. I see more of that coming down here...it's not just the pimps, it's the establishments that are making money off that girl being in the bar, bringing those patrons in because they know she's there on Wednesdays. And the young girls that want to drink, they get a fake ID. That's the prime way to get them in and recruit them, because they've got a bar setting versus a car or in a house. [Twin Cities advocate]

At the Minneapolis round table, some of the advocates had been working with Native domestic violence and sexual victims for 25 to 30 years. Several of these long-time advocates reported that sex trafficking of American Indian women and girls is not a new development in either reservation or urban Indian communities. These are some of their comments:



This is an old story. This is not a new way of exploiting Native women, this has been happening since I was a child. I would hear those stories from women or people connected to my family network, about that happening to women. I'd hear my aunts or great aunts telling those stories, I'm talking about back to the 1940s. [Twin Cities advocate]

As [another long-time advocate] was talking, it flashed into my mind, a very dear friend of mine would disappear out of my life, for probably six months to a year, and even longer. And she'd come back, just really all anxious, and so we'd work...She never talked about where she was at, and I always kind of suspected that something was going on. But, she was being trafficked between here and Mexico. This was 20-some years ago. Just recently, well, 10 years ago, she called me up from Utah and we talked for quite a while. She said that she was involved in prostitution. She had been prostituted by this group of people here in Minneapolis that she was involved with, and the man she was living with was a chiropractor, pretty well respected. And, he was the one who was sending her off. [Twin Cities advocate]

This has been going on a hundred years on the ships. There's women my mom's age who talk about their grandmas working on the ships. [Duluth advocate]

Two of the Duluth advocates that worked extensively with younger Native girls reported that even though Native women have been prostituting to the ships in port for many years, the conditions have changed dramatically. This is how they explained those changes:

Girls have conversations with their mothers about their time, when the mothers were working on the boats. Many of the girls were conceived out of working on the boats. But the mothers have a different way of talking about it. The opportunities of the people she met and that sort of thing. I'm not saying it's any less dangerous, but I think times have changed considerably. The mother relates it to being her choice when she worked on the boats, and she really cherishes those relationships she has with other women that are her friends now. But she really fears for her daughter, that times have changed and it's a whole different arena that you're dealing with now. [Duluth advocate]

The violence has increased. I don't want say it but the nationality is a big thing for this family I am working with. The mother who worked on the boats, she is really intimidated by African American men in the community. A number of people that I'm working with, young women, have been recruited by African American men and immediately taken to Milwaukee, Chicago, or the Twin Cities. So, there's like this fear when the mom talks about it about, 'You really don't know what you're getting into. You don't know their family, you don't know their community, you don't know.' And what happens is, they take the girls from here further away. Away from their support system. [Duluth advocate]

The data from 95 Native women and girls entering MIWRC programs also suggest that the trafficking of Native girls into prostitution is a significant, though rarely discussed, problem. Overall, 40 percent of incoming clients reported involvement in some type of commercial sexual exploitation and 27 percent reported activities defined as sex trafficking under Minnesota law (see Figures 1 and 2).

MIWRC's screening process confirmed other studies' findings that Native victims frequently do not identify as having been sexually trafficked, instead presenting with other issues such as

domestic violence and sexual assault.⁸⁶ Not one of the 25 MIWRC clients meeting the state’s legal definition at intake had presented herself as a sex trafficking victim.

1. Percent of MIWRC clients reporting involvement in prostitution and pornography at intake (n=95)

	Number	Percent
Exchanged sex for shelter	24	25%
Exchanged sex for food	14	15%
Exchanged sex for money	32	34%
Exchanged sex for drugs or alcohol	30	32%
Exchanged sex for transportation	10	11%
Exchanged sex for some other type of assistance	5	5%
Asked to recruit or pimp other girls	21	22%
Pressured/forced to pose for nude photos or videos	11	12%

**Some reported multiple types of sexual exploitation, so percentages may total more than 100%.*

2. Percent of MIWRC clients trafficked into prostitution for the benefit of another person (n=95)

	Number	Percent
Trafficked for shelter	10	11%
Trafficked for food	7	7%
Trafficked for money	17	18%
Trafficked for drugs or alcohol	17	18%
Trafficked for transportation	4	4%
Trafficked for some other benefit	5	5%

**Some reported being trafficked for multiple benefits, so percentages may total more than 100%.*

Though prostitution arrests are often used to estimate the scope of prostitution in an area, the intake data collected by MIWRC confirm that these data are a poor indicator. None of the clients under age 18 that met the state definition for sex trafficking victims at intake had ever been arrested for prostitution, though 18 of the 25 trafficked adult women (72%) had one or more prostitution arrests (see Figure 3).

⁸⁶ Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, and Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center, (September 2007). *Human trafficking in Minnesota: A report to the Minnesota Legislature*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center.

3. Arrests for prostitution (only those MIWRC clients reporting prostitution involvement, n=37)

	Number	Percent
Arrested for any prostitution-related offense	18	46%
1-2 arrests	5	13%
3-5 arrests	3	8%
6 or more arrests	3	8%
Number of arrests not recorded	7	18%

Information from other sources

Very few reports and publications have addressed the number of Native women and girls involved in prostitution in Minnesota. The State of Minnesota Office of Justice Programs (OJP) reported that in 2006, there were a total of 3,989 trafficking and prostitution related arrests and 1,790 convictions, most of which were for prostitution. The number of American Indian women arrested for prostitution offenses is not available.

In 2007, the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs conducted an online human trafficking survey with service providers, nurses, and law enforcement statewide. Twelve respondents reported working with a total of 345 American Indian female victims of sex trafficking in the previous three years.⁸⁷ In response to OJP's 2008 human trafficking survey, twelve service providers reported working with a total of 79 American Indian sex trafficking victims in the three-year period prior to the interview.⁸⁸ In both years' surveys, respondents described movement of trafficked Native women and girls from reservations to the Twin City metro and other cities, from one city to another, and from Minnesota to another state. Responses to the two surveys were based on overlapping time frames, so the discrepancy in the 2007 and 2008 numbers suggests that one or more of the 2007 providers that reported high numbers of American Indian trafficking victims did not participate in the 2008 survey. The numbers reported by the service providers were also estimates, since most did not use a systematic method to track the number of Native victims.^{89,90}

Data provided by Hennepin County Corrections show a total of 313 arrests for prostitution-related offenses in 2008, twelve (4%) of which were American Indian women arrested for

⁸⁷ Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, and Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center, (September 2007). *Human trafficking in Minnesota: A report to the Minnesota Legislature*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center.

⁸⁸ Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, and Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center, (September 2008). *Human trafficking in Minnesota: A report to the Minnesota Legislature*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, and Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center, (September 2007). *Human trafficking in Minnesota: A report to the Minnesota Legislature*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Statistical Analysis Center.

prostitution or loitering with intent to commit prostitution. Though the number of Native women was small, their representation in prostitution arrests was almost double their representation in the county population. Hennepin County has recently switched to a new data system, so county trends in prostitution arrests of Native women cannot be determined.⁹¹

The Minneapolis Police Department was able to provide its number of arrests of American Indian women from 2004 to 2008 (see Figure 4). According to a Minneapolis police officer, the significant decline in arrests seen in these data does not reflect a decline in prostitution-related activities, but rather the low priority given to addressing prostitution when there has been no public outcry.⁹²

4. Arrests for prostitution-related offenses in Minneapolis, American Indian females 2004 - 2008⁹³

American Indian females	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Prostitution	83	57	70	53	9
Loitering with intent to commit prostitution	28	11	24	28	3
Promoting prostitution	1	3	2	3	-
Total, all prostitution-related offenses	112	71	96	84	12

A Minneapolis police officer and a Hennepin County Corrections staff member reported that by County policy, adolescents involved in prostitution-related crime are no longer arrested for prostitution, but may be arrested for a status offense such as truancy or runaway.^{94,95} No data were available from Hennepin County or the Department of Justice on the number of American Indian juvenile females apprehended for each type of status offense.⁹⁶

A recent study based on analysis of Hennepin County Corrections data found 70 women on probation for prostitution-related offenses in Hennepin County. Almost one-fourth (24%) were American Indian, while American Indian women represent only 2.2 percent of the county's population. Of the 17 Native women in the sample, 10 (59%) were arrested in the 3rd Precinct, which encompasses the Phillips neighborhood in which the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource is located. Five (29%) were arrested in the 5th Precinct, which is adjacent to the 3rd Precinct and borders the Phillips neighborhood. Over half of the Native women in the study lived in the same two precincts: seven lived in the 3rd Precinct and four lived in the 5th precinct.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Telephone conversation with Hennepin County Corrections data analyst, March 23, 2009.

⁹² Meeting December 31, 2008.


⁹³ Data faxed to MIWRC by the Minneapolis Police Department on December 19, 2008.

⁹⁴ Meeting December 31, 2008.

⁹⁵ Telephone conversation, March 23, 2009.

⁹⁶ Meeting with Lauren Martin, co-author of a report based on Hennepin County Corrections data, April 10, 2009.

⁹⁷ Martin L and Rud J, (October 2007). *Prostitution research report: Data sharing to establish best practices for women in prostitution*. Minneapolis: Prostitution Project, Hennepin County Corrections and the Folwell Center.



Racial miscoding in police incident data is a problem that inhibits accurate counts of prostituted American Indian women. It occurs frequently because individual officers identify the race of offenders and victims in their reports, with the result that the same person may have different racial designations in various reports. It is also difficult in many instances to determine whether the subject of the report is a victim or an offender, and even more so when it is a juvenile involved in prostitution. In 1988, the U.S. Department of Justice began replacing its long-established Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system with a more comprehensive National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Child sexual abuse experts David Finkelhor and Richard Ormrod have described the NIBRS as the only available source of geographically diverse and uniformly collected crime data that:

- Provides detailed descriptions of police-involved incidents of the commercial sexual exploitation of minors
- Includes a description of both the offender and the victim in sex-related crimes.

NIBRS data are collected, compiled, and entered by local law enforcement, but data coding continues to be problematic. Finkelhor and Ormond note that police are not provided coding guidelines for distinguishing between victims and offenders or for coding the race of a victim or an offender in the data they enter into the NIBRS. The researchers describe NIBRS data as even more limited for identifying the prevalence of minors used in pornography, because the number of jurisdictions participating in the NIBRS is still quite small.⁹⁸ In 2005, Minnesota received Bureau of Justice funding for Minneapolis and St. Paul Police Departments begin preparations for NIBRS participation, but that process does not appear to have moved beyond the planning phase at this point in time.⁹⁹

In the absence of data-based estimates of the number of women and girls in prostitution, estimates by organizations working with prostituted women and youth are generally considered the most reliable. Based on client intake interviews at Breaking Free, a non-profit organization serving women and girls in prostitution, Executive Director Vednita Carter has estimated that between 8,000 to 12,000 Minnesota women and children of all races are involved in prostitution on any given night, statewide.^{100,101} PRIDE (from Prostitution to Independence, Dignity and Equality), a program of the Family and Children Service of Minneapolis, estimates that there are at least 1,000 juveniles currently in prostitution in Minnesota. Neither of these organizations has published any estimate of the number of American Indian women and girls in prostitution.

⁹⁸ Finkelhor D and Ormrod R, (December 2004). Child pornography: Patterns from NIBRS. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

⁹⁹ Bureau of Justice Statistics, (undated). *Justice statistics improvement program: NIBRS implementation program—NIBRS grant activity*. Retrieved August 19, 2009 from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/nibrs2.htm>

¹⁰⁰ Carter V, (2004). Providing services to African-American prostituted women, in Farley M (Ed.), *Prostitution, trafficking, and traumatic stress*. New York: Taylor and Francis, Inc.

¹⁰¹ Carter V, (2000). Breaking free, in Hughes D (Ed.), *Making the harm visible: Global sexual exploitation of women and children*. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women.



In contrast to the relative absence of prevalence data in the U.S., there have been a number of Canadian studies of Aboriginal women’s and girls’ involvement in prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. In all that were identified for inclusion in this report, the Aboriginal proportion of prostituted women and youth was hugely disproportionate to their representation in the population (see Figure 5).

5. Aboriginal representation in Canadian studies with prostituted women

Year of study	Region	Native % of population	% found to be Aboriginal
2002	Vancouver BC ¹⁰²	1.7-7.0%	52%
2001	Victoria BC ¹⁰³	2.0%	15%
2001	Canada ¹⁰⁴	2 to 3%	14-60%
2001	Vancouver BC ¹⁰⁵	1.7-7.0%	63%

In Vancouver BC, the Women’s Information Safe Haven (WISH) Drop-In Centre Society, which serves about 200 women engaged in prostitution and/or survival sex every night, reports that Native women make up half of all women that come through its doors.¹⁰⁶ In research with 22 communities across Canada, Aboriginal children were found to represent up to 90 percent of children in the sex trade in some communities.¹⁰⁷ The Manitoba Youth and Child Secretariat reported more than two thousand commercially sexually exploited youth, noting that a large number of this group are Aboriginal.¹⁰⁸ More recently, youth crime expert Michael Chettleburgh estimated that 90 percent of all urban Canadian teenagers in prostitution are Aboriginal.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² Farley M and Lynne J, (2005). Prostitution of indigenous women: Sex inequality and the colonization of Canada’s Aboriginal women, *Fourth World Journal* 6(1): 21-29.

¹⁰³ Benoit C and Millar A, (2001). *Dispelling myths and understanding realities: Working conditions, health status, and exiting experiences of sex workers*. Victoria: Prostitutes Empowerment, Education, and Resource Society.

¹⁰⁴ Assistant Deputy Minister’s Committee on Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation of Youth, (2001). *Sexual exploitation of youth in British Columbia*. Victoria: Ministry of Attorney General, Ministry for Children and Families, and Ministry of Health.


¹⁰⁵ Farley M and Lynn J, (2000). *Pilot study of 40 prostituted women and girls in Vancouver, Canada*. Unpublished manuscript cited in Farley and Lynne, 2002, Prostitution of indigenous women: Sex inequality and the colonization of Canada’s Aboriginal women.

¹⁰⁶ Shannon K, Bright V, Allinott S, Alexson S, Gibson K, Tyndall M, and the Maka Project Partnership, (2007). Community-based HIV prevention research among substance-abusing in survival sex work: The Maka Project Partnership, *Harm Reduction Journal* (4) 20. Published online December 8, 2007. Retrieved March 4, 2009 from <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=2248179>

¹⁰⁷ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada, p. 41.

¹⁰⁸ Manitoba Youth and Child Secretariat, (1996). *Report of the Working Group on Juvenile Prostitution*. Winnipeg: Manitoba Child and Youth Secretariat.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Cherry T, (November 13, 2008). Flesh trade targets natives, *Toronto Sun*. Retrieved March 20, 2009 from <http://www.torontosun/news/canada/2008/09/29/6916776-sun.html>



The McCreary Centre Society, a non-profit community-based youth health research and youth engagement organization in Vancouver, conducted a series of five surveys with sexually exploited street youth in British Columbia over a 6-year period. In the communities participating in the 2000 and 2006 surveys, the proportion of female Aboriginal street youth increased from 38 percent at the time of the first survey to 56 percent at the time of the second. In all five surveys, 34 to 57 percent of the street youth reporting commercial sexual exploitation self-identified as Aboriginal, and of those that were Native females, 24 to 56 percent reported having been commercial sexually exploited.¹¹⁰ The 2006 survey involved 762 street-involved youth in BC, over half of whom were Aboriginal.

Involvement in the Internet sex trade

Data collected by MIWRC

Several of the advocates at the regional round tables described younger girls' use of technology and experiences with internet-based commercial sexual exploitation:

A lot of the [youth] drop-in centers now have computers...In St. Paul, they actually cleaned out their computers not too long ago, and they found quite a few of their youth that were uploading pictures off their phones onto the computers to post them onto Craigslist. [Twin Cities advocate].

My Space too. That's what I see with a lot of young girls, and starting to get victimized by men getting them to show their body or their body parts. [Second speaker] Sexting. [Girls are doing] that sex texting stuff too, sending nude photos to people through their phones. [Twin Cities advocates]

Advocates also identified Craigslist as a site used by Native girls in the sex trade, and noted pimps' use of the internet to recruit Native girls in the Twin Cities for the stripping and prostitution circuit in the northern part of the state during hunting and tourist seasons.


Information from other sources

In 1999, the Hofstede Committee Report on juvenile prostitution in Minnesota called attention to the ease with which johns could use the Internet to download naked images of commercially sexually exploited women, converse with their pimps, make appointments, and still retain anonymity. The Committee noted that law enforcement was challenged in two ways: determining the girls' ages, and distinguishing between legal escorts and prostituting women.¹¹¹

Similar to what was reported by the advocates at the round tables, a Twin Cities law enforcement officer recently described a case in which he arrested a 49-year pimp from Woodbury for prostituting a 23-year old woman and her 15-year-old sister via the Craigslist website's "erotic

¹¹⁰ Saewyc E, MacKay L, Anderson J, and Drozda C, (2008). *It's not what you think: Sexually exploited youth in British Columbia*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia School of Nursing. Report based on data from surveys conducted by the McCreary Centre Society, Vancouver BC. Retrieved May 1, 2009 from <http://www.nursing.ubc.ca/PDFs/ItsNotWhatYouThink.pdf>

¹¹¹ Hofstede Committee, (November 1999). *The Hofstede Committee report: Juvenile prostitution in Minnesota*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Attorney General's Office.



services” section. The pimp took some of their money, drove them to the hotel, and waited for them in the car while the women met the officer.¹¹² Another Minneapolis police officer with extensive experience working with prostitution crime and gang activity confirmed that in the Twin Cities, Craigslist is the primary venue for commercial sexual exploitation of Native adults and juveniles.¹¹³

A recent study of prostituted women and girls in Chicago found that eight percent were in contact with johns through the Internet, specifically Craigslist. The research team reported that at the time, Craigslist received more than 9 billion page views every month, and Craigslist users published more than 30 million new classified ads each month. Men were able to access live, interactive strip shows via web-cam in addition to the sex trade “resources” described 10 years ago by the Hofstede Committee, for most intents and purposes beyond the reach of law enforcement.¹¹⁴

IV. Patterns in entering the sex trade

Age of entry

Data collected by MIWRC

At the round tables hosted by MIWRC in Duluth and Minneapolis, advocates reported that the Native women and girls they work with have entered prostitution and other types of commercial sexual exploitation at two different life stages, each connected to specific life circumstances:

Everybody I've come across has been young [at the time they entered prostitution]. Like, 12, 13, 14 sometimes 15. I met one woman who was maybe 19, she was really the exception. There's definitely that 12-15 range. They seem like babies! [Duluth advocate]

Several of the women have talked about when they started, and the youngest so far was 12. [Twin Cities advocate]

I think the other age group are those [ages] 20 to 30 with young kids and their 5-year MFIP has run out. [Duluth advocate]

Among the women and girls that reported commercial sexual exploitation during intake at the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, 90 percent of the younger clients had entered prostitution before the age of 18, compared to about half of the older clients. Almost half of the younger women (42%) were 15 or younger when they first entered the sex trade. Three clients had entered prostitution between age 10 and 11, and one 14-year-old had been trafficked into pornography at the age of 11, reporting that she had been photographed or filmed for

¹¹² Chanen D, (March 20, 2009). Craigslist used to sell sex with teens, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. Retrieved March 30, 2009 from <http://www.startribune.com/local/41610897.html>

¹¹³ Meeting in Minneapolis, May 13, 2009.

¹¹⁴ Raphael J and Ashley J, (May 2008). *Domestic sex trafficking of Chicago women and girls*. Chicago: Schiller, DuCanto and Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University of Law.

pornography 10 times in the previous six months. Almost one-fourth (24%) of the incoming clients reporting involvement in prostitution had entered at age 27 or older, which supports the advocates' emphasis on Native mothers' vulnerability when their public assistance eligibility has ended.

6. Age at which MIWRC clients entered prostitution or pornography (n=32)*

Age at entry	Number	Percent
8-12	7	21%
13-15	7	21%
16-17	7	21%
18-23	5	15%
27-38	6	18%
39-55	1	6%

*Age of entry not reported for 5 clients. Percentages are based on the number for which age of entry was recorded.

Information from other sources

The 1999 Hofstede Report on juvenile sex trafficking in Minnesota reported that 14 was the average age of entry into prostitution at the time.¹¹⁵ Other studies of youth and adults in prostitution in the U.S. have reported the average age of entry ranging from 13 to 17, most often about age 14.¹¹⁶ Several studies conducted in Seattle, an area similar to Minneapolis in its population of low-income American Indians, found that almost all commercially sexually exploited girls enter the sex trade before the age of 16. One involving 60 women prostituted via escort services, street prostitution, strip clubs, phone sex, and massage parlors found that all had entered prostitution between the ages of 12 and 14.¹¹⁷ A second, involving 200 adult women in prostitution, found that 78 percent began as juveniles and 68 percent entered prostitution when they were 15 or younger.¹¹⁸ A third study found that 89 percent of the prostituted women that were interviewed had entered prostitution before the age of 16.¹¹⁹ A fourth study published in June 2008 reported that girls were entering prostitution in Seattle around the age of 12 or 13.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Hofstede Committee, (November 1999). *The Hofstede Committee report: Juvenile prostitution in Minnesota*. Saint Paul: Minnesota Attorney General's Office.

¹¹⁶ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, (November 2002). *Female juvenile prostitution: Problem and response*. Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

¹¹⁷ Boyer D, Chapman L, and Marshall B, (1993). *Survival sex in King County: Helping women out*. Report to the King County Women's Advisory Board. Seattle: Northwest Resource Associates.

¹¹⁸ Silbert M and Pines A, (1982). Entrance into prostitution, *Youth and Society* 13: 471-500.

¹¹⁹ Nadon S, Koverola C, and Schludermann E, (1998). Antecedents to prostitution: Childhood victimization, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 13: 206-221.

¹²⁰ Lowman J and Fraser L, (1989). *Street prostitution: Assessing the impact of the law*. Vancouver BC: Department of Supply and Services Canada.



Most advocacy groups working with women in prostitution in the U.S. agree with what has been found in the research studies. Vednita Carter of Breaking Free in Saint Paul has reported that the average age of entry into prostitution has been 13, but recently announced that her organization is seeing a larger number of younger girls.¹²¹ However, no U.S. studies have reported average age of entry for American Indian girls.

Though none reported separate averages by gender, several Canadian studies from the 1990s reported the average age of Aboriginal youth entering the sex trade as 14, but noted that some start as early as age 9.^{122,123,124,125, 126} More recent Canadian research suggests that Aboriginal youth are becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation at younger ages than before. In a series of surveys with street-involved youth in British Columbia, about one in three victims of commercial sexual exploitation reported their age of entry as 13 or younger.¹²⁷ Citizen groups involved in safety patrols in Winnipeg have reported children as young as eight years old being approached on the street or in back lanes by men in vehicles, presumably for the purpose of sexual exploitation.¹²⁸ A 2002 study by the Urban Native Youth Association in Vancouver found commercial sexual exploitation of children as young as 9, with age of first being trafficked into prostitution averaging 11 to 12 years of age.¹²⁹

¹²¹ Carter V, (March 13, 2008). *Press release: Local responses to prostitution*. Retrieved May 1, 2009 from <http://www.health.state.mn.us/injury/new/svpnews.cfm?gcNews=109>

¹²² Bramly L, Tubman M and Rapporteurs S, (1998). *International summit of sexually exploited youth: Final report*. Out From the shadows: The sexually exploited youth project. Vancouver: Save the Children Canada.

¹²³ Calgary Police Commission, (1997). *Children involved in prostitution: Report by The Task Force on Children in Prostitution*. Calgary: Calgary Police Commission.

¹²⁴ Jesson J, (1993). Understanding adolescent female prostitution: A literature review. *British Journal of Social Work* 23: 517-530.

¹²⁵ Manitoba Youth and Child Secretariat, (1996). *Report of the Working Group on Juvenile Prostitution*. Winnipeg: Manitoba Child and Youth Secretariat.

¹²⁶ McIntyre S, (1994). *The youngest profession: The oldest oppression*. PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield: Department of Law.

¹²⁷ Saewyc E, MacKay L, Anderson J, and Drozda C, (2008). *It's not what you think: Sexually exploited youth in British Columbia*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia School of Nursing. Report based on data from surveys conducted by the McCreary Centre Society, Vancouver BC. Retrieved May 1, 2009 from <http://www.nursing.ubc.ca/PDFs/ItsNotWhatYouThink.pdf>

¹²⁸ Gorkoff K and Runner J (Eds.), (2003). *Being heard: The experiences of young women in prostitution*. Halifax: Fernwood.

¹²⁹ Urban Native Youth Association, (2002). *Full Circle*. Vancouver: Urban Native Youth Association.



Modes of entry

Stripping, exotic dancing, and escort services

Data collected by MIWRC

At the round tables hosted by MIWRC, advocates often described girls entering the sex trade by stripping or nude dancing and then progressing to other types of commercial sexual exploitation:

Sometimes [Native girls] are on their own. Some other girls say ‘Hey, I’m making good money doing this stripping,’ and off they go. But then they end up with the drug thing [being prostituted for drugs]. [Second speaker] And they’re letting underage girls into stripping. They [pimps] helping them get their fake IDs and stuff. There are 16, 15-year-olds stripping in town here. [Duluth advocate]

...high school to early 20s with the dancing, they go out on the dancing circuit. And just being trafficked, maybe before, to Chicago, places like that. And then as they get farther along in their 20s and their 30s, then it’s the trading, the sex for the drugs or the housing, a place to stay. [Twin Cities advocate]


The advocates reported that most of the younger Native women and girls they worked with did not consider stripping or nude dancing to be sexual exploitation, instead viewing it as a somewhat glamorous way to make good money quickly. These are some examples of advocates’ comments:

[One of the girls in my family], she asked her father ‘What do you think about stripping?’ because her friends are doing it and it’s just becoming more and more common. [Twin Cities advocate]

Deer hunting season. Big stripping time. And they’re set-up joints. Like every little small bar has strip nights then and that’s part of that circuit. I worked with someone for a long time who considered herself to be an independent contractor [in prostitution]. During hunting time, it was her big season in terms of making money and she would just go from one little bar to another in South Dakota, that was the main place. [Duluth advocate]

The advocates described bars and strip clubs as prime recruiting grounds for pimps, asserting that bar and club owners are often complicit. At both round tables, advocates mentioned a “circuit” traveling throughout the state and sometimes to other states, for which young Native women are recruited to dance. Once they begin, they are quickly taken over by a pimp who moves them from place to place, prostituting them out of the bars and clubs in the circuit. These comments were part of those discussions:

[Traffickers] can have their own bachelor party-type setting, where they have it all set up and have the girls just coming in. Some pimp, male or female, has put this all together and provided everything, and just told her ‘All you have to do is dance.’ When you talk about entering prostitution, dancing doesn’t seem as harsh to the individual as actually street-walking. You don’t look at it as if you’re doing anything wrong, because you go to clubs and nowadays the dancers in clubs are more seductive than some of the stuff the girls do on the stage. [Twin Cities advocate]



You can walk into any strip club and you know, the people who work there are recruiters, so it seems so much less dangerous. I don't think other people think of it as sexual exploitation...A lot of Native girls work at [a local strip club]. [Second speaker] Yeah, [that club] is what I'm hearing about, too. There's a couple of pimps up at [that club] right now who've got a couple of girls...I know a few people who started off cocktail waitressing at a strip club and then it becomes normalized and then they're stripping. I had a friend who was cocktail waitressing and then she got a \$4,000 tip from a football player, and then after that she was stripping. [Twin Cities advocates]

They make their money on the side by the sex that they have with the customers. They don't make that much dancing, it's mostly the side thing. And then, there's drug involvement with it, too. But I've heard about where they go from here and there's a regular circuit where they go, like over to Wisconsin...This circuit that they travel, it just keeps going and going...and often times they are connected with [someone who] might be a gang connection that gets him out working and sends him out there. [Duluth advocate]

Where you have some person that's controlling it and the money's going to go to them, the girls are prostituting. They actually make the money, the people who own the bars, the people that bring them there. But the ones that are going on the stripping circuit on their own, they leave with the clothes on their backs, with 20 bucks maybe. [Duluth advocate]

One of the Duluth advocates noted that Native women in prostitution often decide to go back to stripping as a less risky option:

There's girls out there that are turning tricks that are saying, 'I'm going to go legal, so I'm going to go dance.' [Duluth advocate]

Several advocates at both round tables reported pimps moving Native girls to cities from reservations, and to and from cities throughout the Midwest for prostitution. These are some of their comments:

There's a new thing out of track houses where girls are being trafficked and they're brought from other states down to houses here because of the 'no turn off' heat rule that we have. Guys are coming and purchasing these houses that are in foreclosure, they are renting them for a few months, 6 months or whatever and they're bringing girls here and putting them in these houses and that's where they stay. They don't go anywhere, they stay in these houses and the girls are ranging from 12 to 21, but they're being transported here and they're being moved all through MN. Some are from Chicago...They're coming from Iowa, Detroit. New York. [Twin Cities advocate]

I also know of girls from out towards Bemidji, Red Lake, that way, that come this way that are brought down there to be prostituted on the boats. I don't know specifics about that, but they talk about it. [Duluth advocate]

Information from other sources

Each year, 40 new strip clubs open nationwide. Many are described as “gentlemen’s clubs,” catering to businessmen who may spend up to \$2000 a night on drinks, food, and “private dances” where patrons have physical contact with the dancer. One study found a disproportionate number of strip clubs in rural areas of the Upper Midwest where poverty and isolation had created a pool of women vulnerable for recruitment into the sex trade. For example, in 2003, Aberdeen, South Dakota had five strip bars despite a small population (25,000) and a



location 100 miles from any town of comparable size. Dancers in these bars and clubs reported that they were not only expected to work as strippers, but they are also required to accept degrading treatment, provide the club manager with sex during the “job interview,” and allow the manager to prostitute them to customers.¹³⁰ The study author quoted a survivor of prostitution and stripping, Heidi Somerset, who was giving a talk in Moorhead:

One woman had her pimp along...and she had to meet the quota. So she had to do whatever it takes to get that money. The men shoved bullets up her, beer bottles, shoved dollar bills up her, and this was the situation that I encountered.¹³¹

Though none reported findings by race, several studies in the U.S. have found that women and girls in prostitution are frequently involved in different types of commercial sexual exploitation at different times, including pornography, stripping and exotic dancing, escort services, and erotic massage services. Research with prostituted girls in Chicago found that 28 percent had started as escorts when first recruited, and at the time of the interview, 41 percent were currently working for an escort service. Almost 93 percent of the girls that had entered the sex trade via an escort service had a pimp at recruitment, and in addition to working in escort businesses, 43 percent were also trading sex at private parties and 68 percent were also trading sex at a hotel.¹³²

Canadian researchers have found a similar pattern to that described by the advocates at round table discussions. Aboriginal girls are recruited as dancers in their early teens and then moved across Canadian provinces for “dance shows,” where they are quickly routed into prostitution. Eventually losing ties with their communities, they become even more vulnerable as they age, and often moved into the more dangerous areas of the sex trade.¹³³

Research in Canada found that the sex trade has no distinct “career ladder.” One study found Aboriginal and other women in prostitution involved in a variety of types of commercial sexual exploitation, including pornography, street prostitution, strip bars, and escort agencies. Among those in escort services, 15 percent were Aboriginal though they represented only two percent of the region’s population. Frequently, participants reported involvement in two types of commercial sexual exploitation at the same time.¹³⁴ One Canadian study with a sample of Vancouver women actively engaged in prostitution or recently exited, over half of whom were Aboriginal, found that two-thirds had pornography made of them while also engaged in


¹³⁰ Short S, (2004). Making hay while the sun shines: The dynamics of rural strip clubs in the American Upper Midwest, and the community response, in Stark C and Whisnant R, (Eds.), *Not for sale: Feminists resisting prostitution and pornography*.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Raphael J and Ashley J, (May 2008). *Domestic sex trafficking of Chicago women and girls*. Chicago: Schiller, DuCanto and Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University of Law.

¹³³ Sethi A, (2007). Domestic sex trafficking of Aboriginal girls in Canada: Issues and implications, *First Peoples Child and Family Review* 3: 57-71.

¹³⁴ Benoit C and Millar A, (October 2001). *Dispelling myths and understanding realities: Working conditions, health status, and exiting experiences of sex workers (short report)*. Victoria BC: Prostitutes Empowerment, Education, and Resource Society (PEERS).



prostitution, while 64 percent reported being upset by a john's efforts to force them to perform an act that the john had seen in pornography.¹³⁵

Recruited or trafficked by pimps, boyfriends, and gangs

Data collected by MIWRC

In the two round table discussions, advocates reported that many of the Native women and girls they worked with were recruited by pimps, and almost always referred to their pimps as their “boyfriends” or “girlfriends.” The advocates discussed a number of strategies used by pimps to recruit and groom Native women and girls for prostitution:

They're just these really beautiful girls and those men will sit there and stroke that. Like, 'You're so beautiful,' and then just start to turn them into objects. Talking about their body like 'Oh, this is so nice about your body', or 'Your body is so much better,' and the pimp starts to separate them from the other girls. It is like, 'You're so special.' I think that's part of that breakdown, with starting to break down other people. It is so intentional. We have young men who go into this [pimping] knowing...how to like, break a girl down, because they know that they can make a lot of money off of that. [Duluth advocate]


[The pimp tells her] 'I want to take care of you.' Boyfriend or girlfriend, 'I'll take care of you.' With runaways, it's a place to sleep. [Second speaker] Yeah, so they're already doing survival sex kind of stuff. But it's like, [the pimp says] 'Don't worry, you won't need to go out on the street anymore. You won't need to do this. You can just stay here.' And then pretty soon it's like, 'You know, you have to start contributing. I'm not going to financially cover you. So, here, I can get you set up doing this. You're so hot, you're so good looking, you should go strip.' [Duluth advocate]

First of all, he offered to chauffeur her [an adolescent client] around. He doesn't come across as saying, you know, 'Let's do this, and you're gonna get paid for any kind of sex act.' It's like, 'I've got this big car and you can drive me from place to place and get paid that way.' And, it's just like all these things lead up to other things. [Twin Cities advocate]

Advocates in the Twin Cities and in Duluth described pimps, especially those affiliated with gangs, recruiting Native girls at parties deliberately set up for recruitment purposes. Others described boyfriends targeting girls who have access to money and moving them into prostitution when the money is gone. These are some of their comments:

So they're fourteen and they want something better and they're running around searching and they don't know where to find it they don't know where it is. So they come to Duluth, they go to the party, or they meet the guy down at the Holiday center, and he says 'Hey, why don't you come hang out with us?' The girls are just looking for anything. So part of that is, pimps and some of the tricks too, is that 'Well, you came looking for me, I didn't come looking for you, you came looking for me, you wanted this. You came here.' But they're deliberately exploiting the girls. [Duluth advocate]

¹³⁵ Farley M and Lynne J, (2005). Prostitution of indigenous women: Sex inequality and the colonization of Canada's Aboriginal women, *Fourth World Journal* 6(1): 21-29.



The older guys will look for the younger girls at parties and so that's where I've seen some of the women get recruited. And then what happens is they'll start like dating or seeing the pimp and then so they engage that way. And then they'll take 'em, like 'Let's go down to the cities for a trip.' And then they'll be brought down to the cities, and then it'll be 'Lets go down to Morton' and they'll get further and further away, until they end up in Illinois or Iowa, and then they're stuck. [Twin Cities advocate]

One other thing too, some girls get targeted for when they're gonna turn 18 and they're gonna get their per capita payment, and guys will talk about 'That's the way to come up' because they'll take the girl's money. But that also starts that pattern of using them, and then using them and using them. [Duluth advocate]

Some advocates described Native women with children whose landlords had forced them or their children into prostitution by threatening the family's ability to stay in safe housing. These are some of the advocates' stories:

This young lady was in this unit with her kids, and she was supposed to pay a certain amount of rent. And MFIP [welfare] wanted her to verify that through a shelter statement. The landlord refused to write the shelter statement, so then she got sanctioned. So then she didn't have enough money to pay her rent. Then she was offered to do some prostitution. [Twin Cities advocate]


The landlord piece is not uncommon, not uncommon at all. Landlords put the woman in a situation where they actually end up owing rent or they know they're getting rates half off of rent, or some landlords even up the rent. It was in the woman's range at first and now she fell on hard times, she lost a job, she still owes rent and the landlord will go ahead and proposition them in that manner, swap or trade. And if not for the mother, then for the daughters. And the fact that the mom says, 'We need a place to live.' You know, 'You just gotta go in there, he's not going to do anything to you, just go, you don't wanna be out on the streets.' And the kid feels, you know, 'I owe this to our family', the loyalty piece, so you do it. And once it's done once, that's all it takes. [Twin Cities advocate]

In both Duluth and Minneapolis, advocates described the pimps they knew to be recruiting Native girls as primarily African-American or Latino, and reported that the number of pimps in the area seemed to vary at different times. These are some of the advocates' descriptions:

Some of the girls I work with were approached right on the street, right in Phillips. They were talking about how they were approached on the street, they were offered money over there by 26th and Cedar. That's a hot spot and I don't know what's going on over there, but they're very young girls. They're usually walking around late at night so obviously they're not being supervised. These are girls that are vulnerable and out there. They're 12, 13, 14. It was Latino men that approached them. [Twin Cities advocate]

Most of the pimps I've run into, they're not Native...And they were not from here, they came here and more of them were African-American. And there was this one period of time where there's like four of them in a row, and then I don't hear anything, don't see anything. It kinda goes in waves like that. [Duluth advocate]

Several of the advocates described Native women and girls being sent out by pimps to recruit, especially in shelters and youth centers where vulnerable Native women and girls go to be safe. These are some of the ways that pimp-controlled Native women and girls convince others to join them in prostitution:



I see [young girls thinking the sex trade is glamorous] as a new trend for the ones that I am working with. [Second speaker] They're all into that glamorized type of talk amongst one another. [First speaker] And I see more of the stuff that comes through Duluth as being more glamorized. And the girls recruiting other girls because then they won't have to do so much work and that's what they're expected to do. Then, the girls fight amongst each other over this guy! [Duluth advocates]

They [pimps] are working them right out of the shelter...there are women that will pose [as battered women] to get in the shelter and bring women out...And that homeless youth drop-in center, that is a target place and it has been a target place ever since it's been open, and it continues. And advocates are always trying to figure out, you know, you want kids coming in for services, how you keep them safe. [Duluth advocate]


The Duluth advocates also described pimps and Native women and girls already in prostitution using violence to coerce younger women and girls into the sex trade. These are some of those stories:

I encountered this woman this summer. She was older, 18, 19...a couple of girls had talked her into it. Kind of bribed her. Not bribed, but the same thing, like the description of 'Look at this, look at what I have, you should come up here it could be yours too.' And then...when she got up here, she realized she didn't want to do this and she thought she could walk away, but she couldn't. Those girls actually beat the crap out of her, so she ended up in the hospital. Somebody, not her, called the cops, but she was a mess and they beat the hell out of her. And the guy [pimp] had never had anything to do with it. [Second speaker] He didn't have to...They're handling it. [Duluth advocates]

I'm working with someone who's been trafficked out by her family for a very long time. She's probably 17 now or 18. Another girl we work with just reported a sexual assault against this girl, and our understanding of the intention was someone was trying to recruit her for prostitution, as a part of her ring. And then that person sexually assaulted the girl, pretty brutally. Skin chunks out of her and things like that. That was woman on woman. The unfortunate part of that was that when this girl tried to report, a lot of people told her female on female wasn't sexual assault, so it took her a long time to find any help. [Duluth advocate]

Advocates reported significant involvement of Native gangs and Native branches of other street gangs in prostituting Native girls. Either the girl's boyfriend was a gang member, or female gang members used violence to coerce Native girls into prostitution. Two gangs were mentioned most frequently, Native Mob and Gangster Disciples, though some advocates also mentioned Mexican or Latino gangs without specifying the name of the gang. These are some of the advocates' stories about gang involvement in recruiting Native girls for prostitution:

There's times when it's more organized than at other times...what will happen is that the gangs come in and it gets real organized. And then, instead of seeing those women on the street, they're in a hotel room somewhere and people are coming to their hotel room, one right after another...after a period of time they make their money and they leave. [When asked what gang] Gangster Disciples, from Chicago. [Duluth advocate]



This guy [from one of the wealthy tribes] is buying gifts, buying a car for her. For one thing, he couldn't get a car because he had no license and no credit or nothing. She could buy the car with his money and then he could take it back at any time, and then all the clothing because then she would look good and of course the love connection...then there's the domestic abuse, and the addiction part. And, so, in order to get the drugs and the money she has to be doing what he wants. Otherwise, she'll get beat up. And there's also a gang connection involved in this, Native Mob. That other gang members will beat her up. Or other women that are connected with the other gang members and doing the same kind of thing will beat her up. [Duluth advocate]

We sometimes see younger girls, in the 12-13 age range, especially the girls that are involved with Mexican gangs that are being sexually exploited. I'm thinking of one in particular. She has not said that, but they [staff] see her continuously being dropped off by different older gang members to school every day. [Twin Cities advocate]

When screening incoming clients for commercial sexual exploitation, MIWRC staff asked all that met the state definition of a trafficking victim about factors that might put them at risk of re-involvement in commercial sexual exploitation. Eighty percent of the younger women reported that they were at risk of further commercial sexual exploitation due to fear of violence against themselves or others; one of these had specifically said that she had been trafficked into prostitution by a gang.

Information from other sources

Similar to the grooming process that advocates described at the MIWRC round tables, a 2005 study of prostituted girls in Atlanta described pimps' grooming strategies as two-stage. Initially, the pimp makes the girl feel attractive and valued, developing a sexual relationship with her, spending money on her, introducing drugs, and providing focused attention and validation that she is "special." The second phase involves moving the girl around to eliminate her relationships with family and others, then breaking her will and self-esteem through physical and verbal abuse. The researchers found that this process results in the girl forming a deep attachment to her pimp and having no option to refuse when he demands that she begin prostituting.¹³⁶

Also similar to what advocates described at the round tables, research with adolescent girls in corrections placement for prostitution found that girls had been approached by pimps and recruiters in many locations: while walking, hanging out with friends on the street or at malls and corner stores, at friends' homes, and even outside the juvenile justice center while waiting to meet with a probation officer. The study found that two major recruitment methods were used: "finesse pimping" and "guerilla pimping." "Finesse pimping" involved the same grooming process described by the advocates at round tables and found in the Atlanta study cited above: putting vulnerable girls in a position where they felt obligated to repay the trafficker by encouraging her to move in, taking care of her basic needs, purchasing small gifts, providing free drugs, and generally treating her with great kindness. The next step was to present her with "opportunities" for a lucrative "modeling" career working for an escort service, which she later

¹³⁶ Priebe A and Suhr C, (September 2005). *Hidden in plain view: the commercial sexual exploitation of girls in Atlanta*. Atlanta: Atlanta Women's Agenda.



found was prostitution and a source of income for the pimp. By then, her drug habit and her emotional dependency on the pimp made it very difficult to refuse. “Guerilla pimping,” similar to advocates’ descriptions of violent gang and prostitution ring tactics during round table discussions, was recruitment by force: using threat, physical violence, and intimidation against the girl or against someone she cared about to coerce her into prostitution. Reflecting the stories told by advocates at the MIWRC round tables, the Atlanta study found that women played multiple roles: pimps, recruiters, groomers, watchers who made sure girls got to and from their assigned locations, and wife-in-laws (other women trafficked by the same pimp) living together and supervised by the pimp or the woman closest to him.¹³⁷


Studies of gang activity in the U.S. also support the advocates’ stories of Native girls trafficked into prostitution by gangs. In 2001, research on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico found significant gang involvement. The authors reported that girls in Native gangs were expected to be emotionally supportive of male members, including providing sex on demand.¹³⁸ A second gang study found that American Indian and African-American gangs involve their girl members in prostitution more frequently than Latino and other gangs, framing it as the girls’ fair contribution to the gang’s economy.¹³⁹

Other research in Minnesota and the U.S. has found that Native female gang members participate in the guerilla recruitment of younger Native girls for prostitution, similar to the advocates’ reports at round tables. In one study from 1995 to 1998, 100 current and former gang members were interviewed. Fourteen interviews were with Native youth members of four different gangs: Latin Kings (a female from St. Paul, two males and one female from Mille Lacs reservation, and a male from Hayward, Wisconsin); Vice Lords (two females from Mille Lacs reservation, one male from Duluth, and one male from Minneapolis); Gangster Disciples (a female from Red Lake reservation, a female from Minneapolis, and a male from Morton); and Native Mob (two males, one from Mille Lacs reservation and one from Minneapolis). The Native girls all reported that most girls involved with the gangs provided male members with sex on demand and/or were trafficked for drugs and money. A female Gangster Disciple from Red Lake described women’s roles and status in her gang:

¹³⁷ Williamson C and Prior M, (January 2009). Domestic minor sex trafficking: A network of underground players in the Midwest, *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma* 2(1): 46-61.

¹³⁸ Estes R and Weiner N, (2001). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico: Full report of the U.S. national study*. Philadelphia: Center for the Study of Youth Policy, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work.

¹³⁹ Harris M (1994). Cholas: Mexican-American girls and gangs, *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 330(3-4):289-301.



I got beat-in six times, stopped one minute each time, got beat-in again...I took six minutes, because...If I don't have respect they can treat me like shit...But, if I had respect I would be able to violate people if they were like throwing up signs that they weren't supposed to throw up or else wearing the wrong color. I'd feel more better and then I would have control over most a the people who did not have respect. And, that would just make it easier on me...Once in a while the girls just go chill by themselves...But, if [my homie's] boyfriend [wants to] come with her, he'll come. She has no say in it. See, her boyfriend is our superior and even though we're not supposed to be like dating other people in the gang, he can just pass her on, pass her on to another gang member. When they pass her on, she just goes lower and lower.¹⁴⁰

A Native male Latin King member described girls' initiation into his gang:

When you get a girlfriend, she gotta be gang raped. She's gotta go around and get boned by all of us guys. All of us Kings...We meet girls and stuff at pow-wows and they hang around with us and then they get the idea that we wanna go out with them, but we really don't. And then they just bring it up. 'Is it all right if we roll with you? Make us a Queen or something?' Then we're like, 'Yeah, we'll make you a Queen.' Then we'll take them back to our house...Everybody on the rez has got their cellular phones or their pagers. Then we'll each get a page and we'll go call somebody and say, 'Hey, there's gonna be an initiation'...You take them in your bedroom or on the couch. In the back or down in the basement. Wherever. Then whenever they're done, they'll come out. Then whoever is next, they'll take. She stays in the bedroom. She can't come out and then whoever got done with her will come back out and say 'Hey, whoever's next, go ahead.'¹⁴¹

A Minneapolis police officer with extensive knowledge of local gang activities confirmed that girls' status in Native gangs is very low, and regardless of the male member they "belong" to, none have a level of status that would protect them from being prostituted.

More recent U.S. studies suggest that gangs are playing an increasingly large role in the sex trafficking of American Indian girls and women. In 2006, *Minnesota Public Radio* described gangs as a big problem on Minnesota's American Indian reservations, reporting that authorities estimate hundreds of young Native men on White Earth, Red Lake, and Leech Lake reservations that consider themselves part of a gang.¹⁴² Amnesty International reported that in interviews with sexual assault survivors on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, there were several reports of gang rapes. A June 2008 study of prostituted youth in Seattle noted a recent increase in gang activity in that area, also finding that 100 percent of the gang-affiliated youth in the study were being trafficked in street prostitution.^{143,144}

¹⁴⁰ Harrington J and Cavett K, (2000). *G is for Gangsta: Introductory assessment of gang activity and issues in Minnesota*. St. Paul: Hand in Hand.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Robertson T, (March 16, 2006). *The huge influence of gangs*. Minnesota Public Radio.

¹⁴³ Amnesty International, (2007). *Maze of injustice: The failure to protect indigenous women from sexual violence in the U.S.* London: Amnesty International.

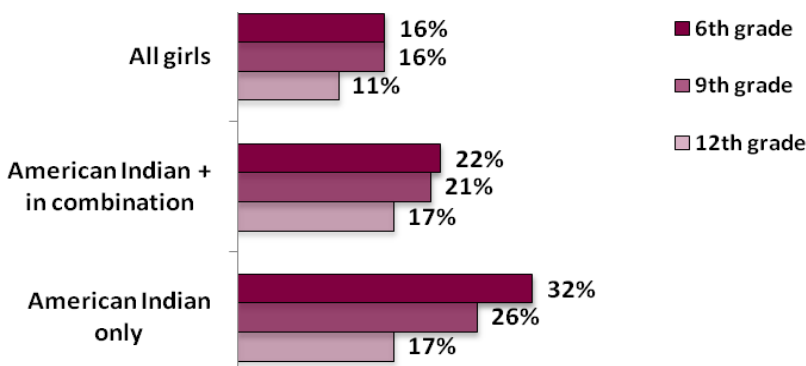
¹⁴⁴ Boyer D, (June 2008). *Who pays the price? Assessment of youth involvement in prostitution in Seattle*. Seattle WA: City of Seattle Human Services Department, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Division.



In January 2009, the National Gang Intelligence Center reported that several American Indian gangs, particularly Native Mob, have expanded on and off reservations, beyond Indian Country. The report described Native Mob as one of the largest and most violent Native American gangs operating in the United States, currently most active in Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The report noted that Native Mob and other urban and suburban gangs in Minnesota are expanding their drug distribution activities, sometimes working in conjunction with Mexican drug trafficking and criminal organizations.¹⁴⁵

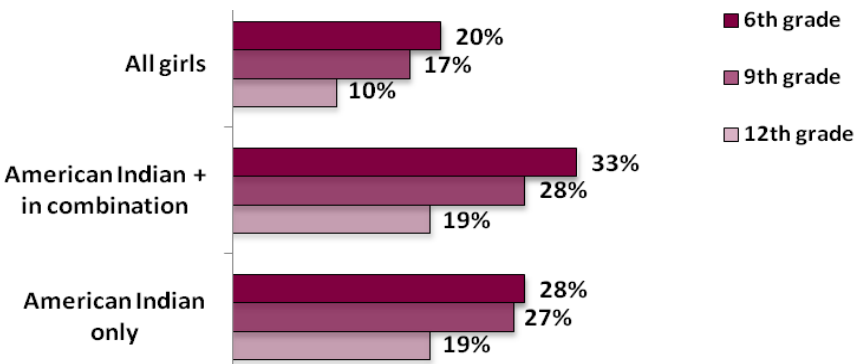
Findings from the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey strongly suggest that American Indian girls in Minnesota are more affected by gangs than girls in the general population (see Figure 7). A significantly larger percentage of Native girls also reported having been threatened at school than girls in the general population (see Figure 8). It cannot be determined whether some of these threats may be related to guerilla recruitment, but they clearly indicate a lack of safety at school.

7. Girls reporting “illegal gang activity is a problem at my school,” statewide*




*2007 Minnesota Student Survey

8. Girls reporting that they have been threatened at school during the past 12 months, statewide *



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey

¹⁴⁵ National Gang Intelligence Center, (January 2009). *National gang threat assessment 2009*. Retrieved April 12, 2009 from <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs32/32146/index.htm>



In Canada, there is significant evidence that pimps and their recruiters are targeting Native girls. In 2005, the principal of a Vancouver elementary school went before the City Council's Planning and Environment Committee to report that recruiters had repeatedly tried to come on school grounds to target Aboriginal girls ages 10 to 12, and to urge the Committee not to expand the park next to the school because the school would be unable to police it. While teachers had been able to deal with recruiters by issuing "no trespassing" orders when they entered school grounds, they would not have the same authority in a public park.¹⁴⁶ Similar school-based recruitment has been found in other Canadian cities with high concentrations of Aboriginal peoples, including Winnipeg.¹⁴⁷

Similar to the advocates' stories, Canadian research has also found that it is common for prostituted Aboriginal girls to refer to their pimps as "boyfriends" and to refuse to consider themselves sexually exploited.¹⁴⁸ Canadian pimps also use force or manipulation to coerce Native girls into approaching friends and peers with tales of a better, more glamorous lifestyle, inviting Aboriginal girls to parties at "trick pads," providing them with drugs, and then trafficking them for prostitution.¹⁴⁹ Recently, drug dealers and gang members have largely taken over the role of the pimp, sometimes using the same grooming process that is seen in finesse pimping.¹⁵⁰

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) recently identified four primary Native gangs in Canada: the Indian Posse, Redd Alerts, Warriors, and Native Syndicate. NWAC reported that Native girls were currently being "banged-in" by the four gangs, required to have sex with multiple members of the gang in order to become a member.¹⁵¹ A 2001 study in Winnipeg, Manitoba found significant involvement of Native women and girls with gangs. Most "gang girls" were between the ages of 14 and 24, though the fastest-growing segment was under the age of 16. Key informants reported that 70 to 80 percent of the female street youth that they see are affiliated with a gang, and one reported that over 90 percent of male and female gang members are Aboriginal. The study found that female Native gang members frequently used guerilla pimping to recruit girls for prostitution to increase their own status in the gang.¹⁵² This is

¹⁴⁶ West J, (Summer 2005). Pimps and drug traffickers target First Nations school girls, *First Nations Drum*. Retrieved May 5, 2009 from <http://www.firstnationsdrum.com/Sum2005/WomGirls.htm>

¹⁴⁷ Sethi A, (2007). Domestic sex trafficking of Aboriginal girls in Canada: Issues and implications, *First Peoples Child and Family Review* 3: 57-71.


¹⁴⁸ Thrasher P, (2005). *Child sexual exploitation, Port Alberni, BC*. BC: Port Alberni's Women's Resources Society. Cited in Sethi A, (2007). Domestic sex trafficking of Aboriginal girls in Canada: Issues and implications, *First Peoples Child and Family Review* 3: 57-71.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Scheirich W, (April 2004). Manitoba's strategy: Responding to children and youth involved in sexual exploitation, *Envision: The Manitoba Journal of Child Welfare* 3(1). Retrieved March 19, 2009 from <http://www.envisionjournal.com/application/Articles/59.pdf>

¹⁵¹ Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), (June 20-22, 2007). *Aboriginal women and gangs: An issue paper*, p. 2. Prepared for the National Aboriginal Women's Summit in Corner Brook, New London, Canada.

¹⁵² Nimmo M, (2001). *The "invisible" gang members: A report on female gang association in Winnipeg*. Manitoba: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.



how one key informant described guerilla recruitment of vulnerable Native girls by Aboriginal female gang members:

The latest one that I had contact with, she's twelve years old. She's a gang member now...She fought it, trying to stay away from [the gang]. She kept coming to me for about a month...Because of her friends, her family, the sort of lifestyle where she lived, it was all around her. And her friends kept saying, 'Oh, come on, come on. Join. You've got to be part of us'...And then she came one Sunday, and she pulled out her rag [gang bandana], and said, 'I'm a member. I was initiated over the weekend.' She was 'jumped in,' beat up, and she had to do something. I'm afraid she's going to have to do a lot more.¹⁵³

As this report was being completed, a flurry of news articles described rapid expansion of Native gangs in Canada. In late May 2009, the National Aboriginal Gang Commission held a conference, gathering testimonies to determine how to stem the tide of Native gangs in Canada. Some testimony described Native gangsters' growing involvement in drug trafficking and prostitution, branching out to other aspects of the sex trade by owning strip clubs and producing pornography. De Lano Gilkey, a gang expert from the U.S., warned that addressing younger Native youth's admiration of the gangster lifestyle is of critical importance, saying "These wanna-bes are the gonna-bes. They have something to prove."¹⁵⁴ NWAC and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples have both suggested that Aboriginal youth are attracted to gangs because they have suffered a loss of cultural ties and believe they will find an alternative "family" in a gang.^{155,156}

Recruited or trafficked by family members and friends

Data collected by MIWRC

One advocate reported that of the three Native pimps she had encountered, two were Native mothers trafficking their children. The frequency of reports of Native adults prostituting their young female relatives and/or a mother's pimp recruiting her daughters was one of the most disturbing findings of the round table discussions. Advocates in both Minneapolis and Duluth described Native girls deciding to begin working for a pimp or on their own so they could have their own money after having been trafficked by a family member. For example:

There's a couple of families in town, I've heard about that, that they, grandma, moms, daughters—they're living through organizing [prostitution of Native girls to the ship crews] that way. [Duluth advocate]

¹⁵³ Nimmo M, (2001). *The "invisible" gang members: A report on female gang association in Winnipeg*. Manitoba: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

¹⁵⁴ Hanon A, (May 28, 2009). National Aboriginal Gang Commission is gathering testimonies to help stem the tide of Native gangs in Canada, *Edmonton Sun*. Retrieved May 28, 2009 from http://www.edmontonsun.com/news/columnists/andrew_hanon/2009/05/28/9595796-sun.html

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), (1996). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

Family traffics them first, and then if they run away, whoever they meet, that's their boyfriend, their pimp. [Duluth advocate]

It was basically based on her mom trafficking her in the house room to room [at age 12], but her mom was doing it [prostituting] as well, so it was just family. They needed to pay rent and get what they need, food. [Twin Cities advocate]

Advocates also reported that Native girls are being recruited for prostitution by their friends. For example:

We just talked to a young girl that walked into my office that was 14 years old, that was recruited when she was 12 by another 14 year old girl. Which is not as intimidating, when your girlfriend comes over and says, 'Hey, come see what I'm doing to make some money.' [Twin Cities advocate]

The intake data collected by MIWRC over a 6-month period showed that, of the Native women and girls that reported having been trafficked into prostitution, most were recruited by one or more friends, followed by family members and boyfriends (see Figure 9).

9. MIWRC clients' recruitment into prostitution (those reporting prostitution that also named their recruiter), n=28)

Recruited by:	Number	Percent
Friend/friends	14	50%
Family member (mother, aunt, step-uncle, uncle)	5	18%
Boyfriend	5	18%
Pimp/gang/landlord	3	11%
Neighborhood/self	3	11%


** Some reported being recruited by two people acting together, so percentages add to more than 100%.*

Information from other sources

Though none have focused specifically on Native girls, some U.S. studies have reported family involvement in prostituting their children while others have not. In one large study of commercially sexually exploited youth in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, molestation by family members was reported to be a common type of child sexual exploitation, but there was no mention of trafficking by family members.¹⁵⁷ In contrast, research with prostituted girls in Atlanta and Chicago found significant involvement of families in the sex trafficking of underage girls. The Atlanta study also found that while pimps' use of female recruiters was becoming increasingly common, these recruiters were frequently a girl's peers or family members, male and female. Sometimes they were siblings only slightly older than the girls being recruited.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Estes R, (2002). The silent emergency: The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, in Michigan Family Impact Seminars, (2002), *Prostituted teens: More than a runaway problem*. Briefing Report No. 2002-2. East Lansing MI: Michigan State University and Wayne State University.

¹⁵⁸ Priebe A and Suhr C, (September 2005). *Hidden in plain view: the commercial sexual exploitation of girls in Atlanta*. Atlanta: Atlanta Women's Agenda.



The Chicago study found that ten percent of the prostituted women and girls in the sample had been recruited by a family member, most often a sister or a cousin.¹⁵⁹

Only a few U.S. studies mention the role of friends in recruitment for prostitution. In the Chicago research described above, 19 percent of the prostituted girls that were interviewed reported having been recruited by a girlfriend.¹⁶⁰ A recent study in Ohio found that girls were usually recruited for prostitution by a friend or a friend of a friend who worked for a pimp, often someone they knew from their neighborhoods.¹⁶¹ Other research has found that youth in conflict with their families often have friends and siblings already in prostitution. Wanting to demonstrate their autonomy, many become involved in prostitution as a form of sexual experimentation in which they can receive money for acts they find enjoyable.^{162,163}

Similar to advocates' and MIWRC clients' reports, a Canadian study with 150 commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal youth found that they often had friends who had told them about the "easy money" and the potential to have some sense of control in their lives by entering the sex trade. This is how one Aboriginal girl described her own recruitment into prostitution by peers and a pimp "boyfriend":

*My friends liked to take me along [when they were prostituting] and that's how it started for me. 'Look how easy it is, and you get this much money,' and then the boyfriend who says, 'Come on, I love you so much. Go out and make me some money...because if we don't have money, we can't spend time together.'*¹⁶⁴

Research in Canada has also found family-based sex trafficking to be quite common in some Aboriginal communities.¹⁶⁵ In one study with 45 Native women in prostitution, ten (22%) were from families involved in prostitution: five had sisters in prostitution, four had mothers (one of whom also had a prostituted grandmother), two had pimp fathers, and one had a father who pimped out the research participant and her mother.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Raphael J and Ashley J, (May 2008). *Domestic sex trafficking of Chicago women and girls*. Chicago: Schiller, DuCanto and Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University of Law.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Williamson C and Prior M, (January 2009). Domestic minor sex trafficking: A network of underground players in the Midwest, *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma* 2(1): 46-61.

¹⁶² Steinberg L, (2001). Adolescence, in Gale Group (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of childhood and adolescence*. Farmington Hills MI: The Gale Group.

¹⁶³ Peterson S, Nachtman C, and Roman J, (2002). What are the risk factors for becoming a prostituted teen?, in *Prostituted teens: More than a runaway problem. Briefing report No. 2002-2, Michigan Family Impact Seminars*. Michigan State University and Wayne State University.

¹⁶⁴ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada

¹⁶⁵ Lynn J, (1998). *Colonialism and the sexual exploitation of Canada's Aboriginal women*. Paper presented at the American Psychological Association 106th Annual Convention, San Francisco, August 17, 1998.

¹⁶⁶ Tutty L and Nixon K, (2003). That was my prayer every night: Just to get home safe, in Gorkoff K and Runner J, (Eds.), *Being heard: The experience of young women in prostitution*, pp. 29-45. Halifax: Fernwood.



V. Factors that facilitate entry

Generational/historical trauma

Data collected by MIWRC

At both round tables, advocates kept returning to the impact of generational or historical trauma and the cultural loss resulting from it as they described the unique vulnerability of American Indian girls to commercial sexual exploitation and the absence of safety in these girls' lives:

A lot of the women who are being prostituted, it's just the bottom line that was there. The majority of the time it means that we need to recognize where this came from in our communities. I mean, American Indian people say over and over again 'This is not how we treat our children. This is not where we are as far as respecting youth.' And I think traditionally that was true, but something dramatic like genocide happened. It was like a nuclear bomb, so the war site is exactly the best example of what happened to our communities. [Twin Cities advocate]

I think [cultural loss] is part of what leads to that whole addiction thing because they can't relate to where they're stuck in this life here and they can't figure out how that cultural strength is going to help them...And in the high school years they get into just starting with pot and those kinds of things...and then it's easier to exploit them. [Duluth advocate]


We don't necessarily talk about relocation, which was a formal government policy, and that relocation in particular made our families vulnerable. It was both extreme poverty there [on the reservation] and extreme poverty here [in the city]. Our families lived on the banks of the Mississippi in Minneapolis when we first came here because we couldn't get houses, we couldn't get jobs, nothing. We couldn't live together either. [Twin Cities advocate]

Information from other sources

Though a significant body of U.S. literature links generational/historical trauma to substance abuse, child abuse, and violence in American Indian communities, we were unable to identify any that described its role in the commercial sexual exploitation of American Indian women and girls. However, a number of studies with prostituted Aboriginal women and girls in Canada have found that generational/historical trauma plays a critical role in their exploitation. In an article describing her research with domestically trafficked Aboriginal girls in Canada, Anupriya Sethi described the legacy of colonization and residential schools as a root cause of their vulnerability to being trafficked for sexual purposes.¹⁶⁷

A study involving 150 commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal youth across 22 Canadian communities reported findings that reflect the same trauma-related vulnerability described by advocates at the MIWRC round tables:

¹⁶⁷ Sethi A, (2007). Domestic sex trafficking of Aboriginal girls in Canada: Issues and implications, *First Peoples Child and Family Review* 3: 57-71



All of the Aboriginal youth who were consulted during the focus groups spoke of the physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse they experienced in their home lives, as parents, relatives, care givers, and neighbors continued to suffer from the legacy of cultural fragmentation...their early years were filled with adults who were unable to break the cycle of pain and despair...their families and communities turned to alcohol, drugs, and violence to make their own sense of hopelessness...these youth lacked the skills and models necessary to create a healthy life for themselves.¹⁶⁸

From the perspectives of the advocates attending both MIWRC round tables, every one of the additional risk factors described below is directly linked to historical trauma and cultural loss. Within that context, these are the factors identified by the advocates that facilitate Native girls' and women's entry into the sex trade.

Runaway, thrown away, and/or homeless

Data collected by MIWRC

Advocates working with younger Native girls in prostitution reported that many had run away from home as a result of abuse or neglect. Some described girls from impoverished northern reservations who, seeing very few opportunities for a glamorous or affluent lifestyle at home, run away to Duluth or the Twin Cities in hope of attaining their dreams. These are some of the advocates' comments:

Kids running away. Running away from home. And that still happens on the remote reservations. I work with the girls on reservations, there is nothing going on, they don't know what to do, they got to get out of there...[They say] 'I'm outta here. I have family in Duluth, I have a sister in Duluth or someone in Duluth.' It seems like Duluth is the place to be with that stuff or something. Easier to get to, it's friendly...that's a lot of the wording: 'I gotta get out of here, there's absolutely nothing, I got nothing, I got to live wherever I can live.' [Duluth advocate]

They'll do what they have to do to survive and stay on a couch or sleep on someone's couch overnight. Some of them, because of the duration, have gone into working in the dope house itself, and that comes with residency. They're taken advantage of in more ways than one inside those houses. [Twin Cities advocate]

Most of the prostituted girls I've encountered, their parents would not ask or comment on whether they knew the person they were going to anyways. Especially for the younger kids that are trying to get drunk, they are trying to find drugs or whatever. And so they know somebody who knows somebody, there you go. [Duluth advocate]

Some advocates talked about their own and other Native women's experiences in prostitution, in which they had come to view commercial sexual exploitation as a reasonable choice when they had no other way to support and sustain themselves. Others described women's need for shelter as the motivating force keeping them in prostitution:

¹⁶⁸ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada, p. 13.

There's the survival aspect. And that's what they're doing, the ones that I see out on the reservation. They would never identify themselves as prostituting or using sex to get what they want. But that's what they're doing. And, when I think about it now, now that we're identifying more of what goes into this trafficking, how broad the scope is, this trading sex for things like survival, there's a lot of that going on at the reservations. [Duluth advocate]

Sexual exploitation for the young women and the girls we work with is such a secondary issue. It's like, 'Help me find shelter, help me find food, help me find clinics.' And then if you work with them long enough, it's 'Oh yeah, I was sexually exploited.' [Twin Cities advocate]

Information from other sources

Though none described findings for American Indians specifically, studies with women and girls in prostitution in the U.S. have consistently found that 50 to 75 percent ran away from home as adolescents.^{169,170} In recent research with women on probation for prostitution in Hennepin County, 61 percent of the participants reported that they had run away when they were minors. Most described their reason for running away as “family problems.”¹⁷¹

Researchers have consistently found that when youth run away from home with no place to go, it is usually because of parental neglect, physical or sexual abuse, family substance abuse, and/or family violence.^{172,173,174,175} In one study with runaways in medium-sized cities in the Midwest, 81 percent of the participating youth had been pushed or grabbed in anger by an adult in their home, 64 percent had been threatened with a gun or knife, 59 percent felt neglected, 28 percent were abandoned by their parents for at least 24 hours, and 21 percent had been forced by a caregiver to engage in a sexual activity.¹⁷⁶ In a second study with runaway adolescents, 43 percent said that they had left home because of physical abuse, and 24 percent had left because of sexual abuse.¹⁷⁷

Children of the Night, a national organization that works to rescue children from prostitution, says that of the one and one-half million children that run away each year in the U.S., it is safe to

¹⁶⁹ Raphael J and Shapiro D, (August 2002). *Sisters speak out: The lives and needs of prostituted women in Chicago—a research study*. Chicago: Center for Impact Research.

¹⁷⁰ Flowers B, (2001). *Runaway kids and teenage prostitution: America's lost, abandoned, and sexually exploited children*. Westport CT: Greenwood Press.

¹⁷¹ Subset of data provided by Julie Rud, Minneapolis Police Department, from dataset used to produce Martin L and Rud J, (2007) *Prostitution research report: Data sharing to establish best practices for women in prostitution*. Minneapolis: Prostitution Project, Hennepin County Corrections and the Folwell Center.

¹⁷² Smoller J, (September 2001). Homeless youth in the United States, *Prevention Researcher* 8(3): pp. 1, 3-5.

¹⁷³ Janus M, McCormack A, Burgess A, and Hartman C, (1987). *Adolescent runaways: Causes and consequences*. Lexington MA: Lexington Books.

¹⁷⁴ Whitbeck L, Hoyt D, and Ackley K, (1997). Abusive family backgrounds, and later victimization among runaway and homeless adolescents, *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 7: 375-392.

¹⁷⁵ Janus M, Archambault F, Brown S, and Welsh L, (1995). Physical abuse in Canadian runaway adolescents, *Child Abuse and Neglect* 19: 433-447.

¹⁷⁶ Whitbeck L and Hoyt D, (1999). *Nowhere to grow: Homeless and runaway adolescents and their families*. Hawthorne NY: Walter de Gruyer, Inc.

¹⁷⁷ Molnar B, Shade S, Kral A, Booth R, and Watters J, (1998). Suicidal behavior and sexual/physical abuse among street youth, *Child Abuse & Neglect* 22(3):213-222.

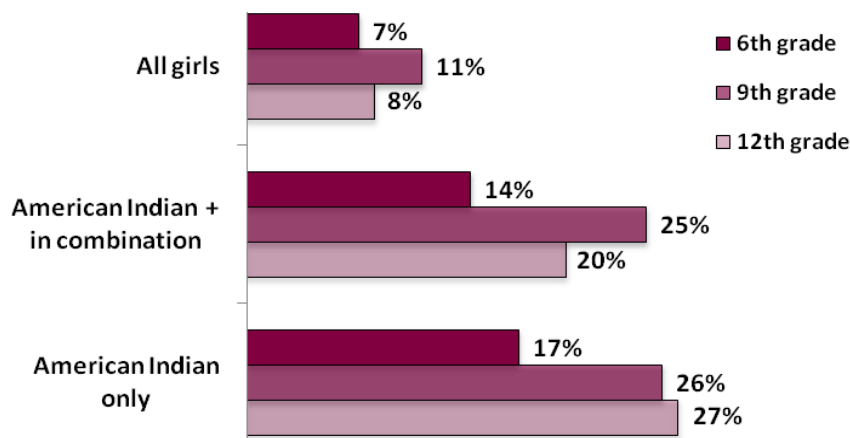


estimate that about one-third will have some type of involvement with prostitution and/or pornography.¹⁷⁸ A statewide study in Michigan reviewed youth arrests for running away and estimated that 2,000 youth arrested as runaways (a little over 57%) were likely to have become involved in prostitution.¹⁷⁹ The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported that up to 77 percent of prostituted teens have run away from home at least once before turning to prostitution as a way to support themselves.¹⁸⁰

Runaway and thrown-away youth have very few legitimate ways to pay for their basic needs. Getting a job is very difficult without an address, phone number, high school diploma, work experience, or references, and even if they succeed, they usually do not have the identification needed to open a checking account or cash a check. Some fear being sent back home if they use their real name or home address.^{181,182}

In the 2007 statewide Minnesota Student Survey, a much higher percentage of American Indian high school girls reported having run away at least once in the previous 12 months than girls in the general population (see Figure 10).

10. Girls that ran away in the past 12 months, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey

¹⁷⁸ Children of the Night, (2009). *Frequently asked questions*. Retrieved May 19, 2009 from <http://www.childrenofthenight.org/faq.html>

¹⁷⁹ Walker N, (2002). Prostituted teens: A problem for Michigan too, in *Prostituted teens: More than a runaway problem*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Institute for Children, Youth, and Families.

¹⁸⁰ Cited in Flowers B, (2001). *Runaway kids and teenage prostitution: America's lost, abandoned, and sexually exploited children*. Westport CT: Greenwood Press.

¹⁸¹ Whitbeck L and Hoyt D, (1999). *Nowhere to grow: Homeless and runaway adolescents and their families*. Hawthorne NY: Walter de Gruyter, Inc.

¹⁸² Robertson M and Toro P, (1998). *Homeless youth: Research, intervention, and policy*. Washington DC: The National Symposium on Homelessness Research. Retrieved May 29, 2009 from <http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/3-youth.htm>



Research with Aboriginal youth in Canada has also identified running away from home as a major risk factor for entering prostitution. A study that analyzed 400 youths' social services case files in two large Canadian cities found that among the Aboriginal youth that had run away at least once, 44 percent had become involved in prostitution, compared to 13 percent of Aboriginal youth that never ran away.¹⁸³ Targeted by pimps promising a glamorous life in the big city, Aboriginal girls quickly find themselves trapped. One researcher working with prostituted Aboriginal women and girls noted:

These are young, naïve and emotionally vulnerable Aboriginal women who are brought into cities like Toronto with the promise of shelter, a secure job, and a new start...what they get is sexual exploitation up to 10 to 15 times a day with no say in what percentage of their daily earnings they will get to keep for themselves. Once they realize what the reality is, it's too late to get out of the sleazy business, and those who do build up the courage to try and opt out are usually never seen again—they are killed.¹⁸⁴

Homelessness, the direct result of running away from home, has also been identified as a primary risk factor for the commercial sexual exploitation of youth.¹⁸⁵ One study found that being homeless for more than 30 days is the single most determining factor in young children and teens entering prostitution, and youth advocacy groups report that homeless youth can expect to be approached by a pimp, john, or drug dealer within 36 hours when they are first on the street.^{186,187, 188}

A study of commercially sexually exploited youth in Winnipeg found that 86 percent had been homeless for 40 days or more.¹⁸⁹ In three surveys of street-involved youth in British Columbia in which 34 to 57 percent of participants were Aboriginal, researchers found that 34 to 44 percent of younger victims of commercial sexual exploitation were living or had recently lived in precarious housing situations, including living on the street, couch-surfing, and staying in shelters, transition houses, hotels, squats, abandoned buildings, tents, and cars. The proportion of

¹⁸³ Schissel B and Fedec K, (1999). The selling of innocence: The gestalt of danger in the lives of youth prostitutes, *Canadian Journal of Criminology*. Pp. 35-56.

¹⁸⁴ Polera V, (October 22, 2008). Ignoring the plight of Aboriginal women: An interview with Anupriya Sethi, *Excalibur—York University and Community Newspaper (web edition)*. Retrieved December 27, 2008 from http://excal.on.ca/cms2//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6446&Itemid=2


¹⁸⁵ Williams L, Powell A, and Frederick M, (November 2008). *Pathways into and out of commercial sexual exploitation: Preliminary findings and implications for responding to sexually exploited teens*. Retrieved February 3, 2009 from http://thewomensfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/pathways_11-18-08.pdf

¹⁸⁶ Carter V, (Executive Director of Breaking Free), (March 13, 2008). *Press release: Local responses to prostitution*. Retrieved December 27, 2008 from the Minnesota Department of Health Injury Prevention News website, <http://www.health.state.mn.us/injury/new/svpnews.cfm?gcNews=109>

¹⁸⁷ Paul and Lisa Program Study, (1999). New York City. Cited in *The Hofstede Committee report: Juvenile prostitution in Minnesota* (1999), p.6.

¹⁸⁸ Nadon S, Koverola C and Schledermann E, (April 1998). Antecedents to prostitution: Childhood victimization, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 13: 206-207.

¹⁸⁹ Nadon S, (1991). *Childhood victimization: Antecedents to prostitution*. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Cited in Scheirich W, (April 2004). Manitoba's strategy: Responding to children and youth involved in sexual exploitation, *Envision: The Manitoba Journal of Child Welfare* 3(1). Retrieved March 19, 2009 from <http://www.envisionjournal.com/application/Articles/59.pdf>



older prostituted youth reporting similar housing instability was even higher: 50 percent had lived in precarious housing during the past year and 95 percent had done so at some point in time.¹⁹⁰ In five surveys of British Columbia's street-involved youth over a 6-year period, the McCreary Centre Society found that an average of 61 percent reported a great need for safe housing.¹⁹¹

Homelessness is also a factor that facilitates women's and girls' entry into prostitution. Studies with prostituted women have found that 84 to 90 percent are currently homeless or have been homeless in the past.^{192,193} In the 2006 Wilder Research statewide study of homelessness, non-reservation American Indians represented 28 percent of the unaccompanied homeless youth ages 17 or younger in outstate Minnesota and 12 percent in the Twin Cities area, though they are only two percent of Minnesota's youth population.¹⁹⁴ On Indian reservations, Native youth more frequently doubled up in other people's homes for shorter stays, while single adults were more likely to describe long periods of living with family members and friends.¹⁹⁵ Over the years that Wilder's homelessness survey has been conducted (every three years since 1994), there has been a significant increase in the proportion of American Indians among unaccompanied homeless youth, from 10 percent in 1994 to 20 percent in 2006.¹⁹⁶ Sixty percent of non-reservation homeless Native girls 17 and younger reported having left home to be on their own by the age of 13.¹⁹⁷

Pertinent to the advocates' stories of Native mothers with children being vulnerable to landlords threatening eviction to recruit the mother or her daughters into prostitution, many of the non-reservation Native women and girls interviewed in the 2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness had children. Two-thirds had children under the age of 17, including 20 percent of the girls ages 17 and younger.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁰ Saewyc E, MacKay L, Anderson J, and Drozda C, (2008). *It's not what you think: Sexually exploited youth in British Columbia*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia School of Nursing. Report based on data from surveys conducted by the McCreary Centre Society, Vancouver BC. Retrieved May 1, 2009 from <http://www.nursing.ubc.ca/PDFs/ItsNotWhatYouThink.pdf>

¹⁹¹ Saewyc E, Bingham B, Bruananski D, Smith A, Hunt S, Northcott M, and the McCreary Centre Society, (2008). *Moving upstream: Aboriginal marginalized youth and street-involved youth in B.C.* Vancouver B.C.: McCreary Centre Society.

¹⁹² Farley M and Barkan H, (1998). Prostitution, violence against women, and posttraumatic stress disorder, *Women and Health* 27(3): 37-49.

¹⁹³ Council for Prostitution Alternatives, (1991). Characteristics of 800 CPA participants, in Weitzer R (Ed.), *Sex for sale: Prostitution, pornography, and the sex industry*, pp. 139-155. New York: Routledge.

¹⁹⁴ Wilder Research, (June 2008). *Overview of youth and young adult homelessness in Minnesota*. St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

¹⁹⁵ Wilder Research, (November 2007). *Homeless and near-homeless people on northern Minnesota Indian reservations*. Saint Paul: Wilder Research.

¹⁹⁶ Wilder Research, (June 2008). *Overview of youth and young adult homelessness in Minnesota*. St. Paul: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

¹⁹⁷ Based on analysis of the non-reservation American Indian female subset of the 2006 Homelessness in Minnesota data, provided by Wilder Research.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*



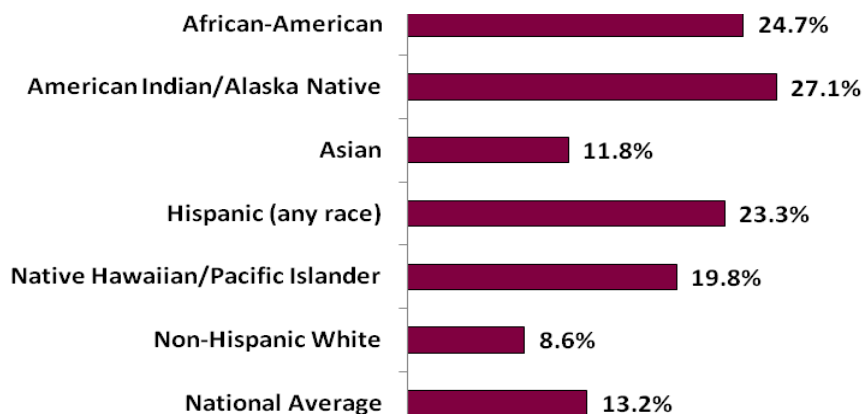
Poverty is a major contributor to homelessness. In the 2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness, about one-third of homeless non-reservation American Indian women and girls reported leaving their most recent regular or permanent housing for reasons related to poverty (see Figure 11).

11. Poverty-related reasons Native girls and women left stable housing (2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness in Minnesota)¹⁹⁹

Partial or main cause of current homelessness	Age group		
	17 & under (n=20)	18-21 (n=31)	22 + (n=208)
Could not afford rent or house payments	29%	39%	42%
Eviction, foreclosure, or the lease not being renewed	29%	33%	39%
Family lost their housing (youth & young adults only)	33 %	27%	Not asked

National 2008 poverty rates released by the U.S. Census in September 2009 show that American Indians are more likely to live in poverty than any other group in the nation (see Figure 12).

12. Percent living in poverty by race and Hispanic ethnicity, nationwide 2008²⁰⁰



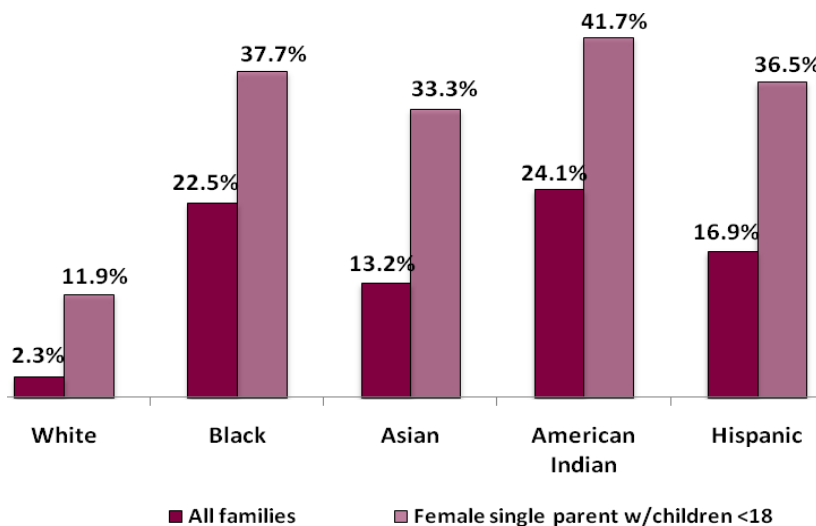
Poverty data for 2008 are not available at the state or county level, but in 2000, over 40 percent of Hennepin County’s Native single mother-headed households (which represent 47% of Native households and one-third of Native children) were living in poverty²⁰¹ (see Figure 13).

¹⁹⁹ Based on analysis of the non-reservation American Indian female subset of the 2006 Homelessness in Minnesota data, provided by Wilder Research.

²⁰⁰ Source: U.S. Census 2008 estimates, cited in Families USA, (September 2009). *Fact sheet: Health coverage in communities of color—Talking about the new Census numbers*. Retrieved September 18, 2009 from <http://www.familiesusa.org/assets/pdfs/minority-health-census-sept-2009.pdf>

²⁰¹ Children’s Defense Fund Minnesota, (November 2007). *10 quick facts about child poverty in Minnesota*. St. Paul: Children’s Defense Fund Minnesota. Retrieved March 12, 2009 from <http://www.cdf-mn.org>

13. Percent of Hennepin County families in poverty by race and Hispanic ethnicity²⁰²



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Similar to Native women in the U.S., poverty contributes to Aboriginal women’s and girls’ homelessness in Canada and to their involvement in the sex trade. In a survey of 183 prostituting women in Vancouver, almost one-third of whom were Aboriginal, 40 percent reported entering prostitution because they needed the money.²⁰³ In another study of prostituting women in Vancouver, over half of whom were Aboriginal, 86 percent reported past or present homelessness and cited housing as current, urgent need.²⁰⁴ In the British Columbia study of active and exited women in prostitution described earlier, nearly 25 percent were without stable housing at the time of the interview. The percentage without housing was even higher for women currently engaged in street prostitution.²⁰⁵

Repeated exposure to abuse, exploitation, and violence

Childhood abuse

Data collected by MIWRC


Advocates at both round tables reported that most if not all of the prostituted Native women and girls they had encountered had been sexually abused as children. Many of the advocates described childhood sexual abuse as the key experience setting the stage for Native girls’ entry

²⁰² Source: Census 2000, cited in American Indian Families Project (September 2003). *A look at American Indian families in Hennepin County*, p. 6. Minneapolis: Hennepin County Office of Planning and Development.

²⁰³ PACE Society, (2000). *Violence against women in Vancouver’s street-level sex trade and the police response*. Vancouver BC.

²⁰⁴ Farley M and Lynn J, (2004). Prostitution in Vancouver: Pimping women and the colonization of Aboriginal, in Stark C and Whisnant R (Eds.), *Not for sale: Feminists resisting prostitution and pornography*. North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Spinifex Press.

²⁰⁵ Benoit C and Millar A, (2001). *Dispelling myths and understanding realities: Working conditions, health status, and exiting experiences of sex workers*. Victoria: Prostitutes Empowerment, Education, and Resource Society.



into the sex trade, as the primary reason that girls Native run away from home and then enter prostitution in order to survive. For example:

I know women I've worked with that have been sexually assaulted by family members and it was ongoing, and that's why they left. And then they found out they could get paid for it, so think 'What's the difference?' [Duluth advocate]

I can't think of even one that doesn't have sexual assault in their history, that doesn't have domestic violence in their history, that didn't start...being expected to service Dad's friends. So, they weren't being paid for it, but what's really that different? [Twin Cities advocate]

Some advocates also emphasized the impact of childhood sexual abuse on Native girls' ability to even recognize sexual exploitation, reporting that many view sexual abuse by a family member as relatively harmless compared to sexual exploitation by someone outside the family. This is one of the comments from that discussion:

I was talking to some of the young girls there about incest, and they really don't think that incest is as bad as a pedophile having sex with a two-year-old. So they thought, 'Well, it's a family member, it's at home and it's safe.' They really didn't correlate that it's the same thing. It is as bad, as damaging, and they don't get it. [Twin Cities advocate]

Information from other sources

Supporting advocates' identification of sexual abuse as a primary facilitating factor at the round tables, studies in the U.S. have found that 60 to 73 percent of youth in prostitution and 55 to 90 percent of adult women in prostitution were sexually abused at home.^{206,207,208,209,210} One study with 602 runaway adolescents in four Midwestern states found that the more abuse an adolescent had experienced at home, the more time they spent on their own and the more likely they were to have friends who sold sex.²¹¹ Other research has confirmed that the amount of time that runaway youth have been on their own without a caring adult is strongly related to increased use of substances and to substance abuse, which are in turn related to increased risk of commercial sexual exploitation.^{212,213}

²⁰⁶ Silbert M and Pines A, (1981). Sexual child abuse as an antecedent to prostitution, *Child Abuse and Neglect* 5:407-411.

²⁰⁷ Silbert M and Pines A, (1982). Entrance into prostitution, *Youth and Society* 13(4): 471-500.

²⁰⁸ Bagley C and Young L, (1987). Juvenile prostitution and child sexual abuse: A controlled study, *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health* 6: 5-26.

²⁰⁹ Simons R and Whitbeck L, (1991). Sexual abuse as a precursor to prostitution and victimization among adolescent and adult homeless women, *Journal of Family Issues* 12(3): 361-379.

²¹⁰ Belton R, (October 22, 1992). *Prostitution as traumatic re-enactment*. Paper presented at the 8th Annual Meeting of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, Los Angeles CA.

²¹¹ Tyler K, Whitbeck L, Hoyt D, and Yoder K, (2000). Predictors of self-reported sexually transmitted diseases among homeless and runaway adolescents, *Journal of Sex Research* 37(4): 269-377.

²¹² Whitbeck L, Hoyt D, and Yoder K, (1999). A risk-amplification model of victimization and depressive symptoms among runaway and homeless adolescents, *American Journal of Community Psychology* 27: 273-296.

²¹³ Kipke M, Montgomery S, Simon T, and Iverson E, (1997). Substance abuse disorders among runaway and homeless youth, *Substance Use and Misuse* 37:969-986.

Physical abuse at home has also been identified as a major risk factor for youth entry into the sex trade.²¹⁴ The 2008 rate of American Indian child maltreatment reports in Minnesota was more than six times their proportion in the population, and American Indians also had the highest rates of recurring maltreatment at six- and twelve-month follow-up. The vast majority of American Indian maltreatment reports were for neglect, but Native rates for reported physical abuse and sexual abuse were also higher than those of any other group (see Figure 14). As of April 2009, the Minnesota Department of Human Services reported that American Indian children accounted for 10 percent of child maltreatment victims statewide, more than six times their representation in the child population.²¹⁵

14. Child maltreatment by race, statewide 2008²¹⁶						
	American Indian	Black	Asian	White	2 or more races	Hispanic (any race)
Total maltreatment reports per 1,000 in the MN child population	78.5	51.0	8.5	11.9	42.0	29.7
Neglect (non-medical)	62.4	37.2	5.5	7.6	32.4	19.4
Physical abuse	17.4	13.9	2.8	3.7	10.5	7.6
Sexual abuse	6.7	3.9	0.7	1.3	3.5	2.5
Medical neglect	1.4	0.9	0.2	0.1	0.6	0.3
Percent recurring within 6 months	5.8%	8.1%	3.9%	3.7%	6.6%	3.6%
Percent recurring within 12 months	14.5%	13.1%	3.9%	5.8%	11.7%	5.7%

*Children in the Hispanic category can be any race(s).

Though the number of Native children separated from their families is itself alarming, foster placement is also a risk factor for entering the sex trade. In their book *Being Heard: The Experiences of Young Women in Prostitution*, Gorkoff and Runner reported that 63 percent of prostituted girls and young women in their study had been involved with the child protection system as children. Over three-fourths had been in foster and group homes, often for many years.²¹⁷ The most recent available statewide data (2008) on out-of-home placement of Minnesota children indicate that almost nine percent (8.81%) of the children in foster care were American Indian.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Estes R and Weiner N, (2001). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico: Full report of the U.S. national study*. Philadelphia: Center for the Study of Youth Policy, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work.

²¹⁵ Minnesota Department of Human Services, (April 2009). *Child abuse and neglect prevention: Strengthening families is fundamental*. Retrieved June 5, 2009 from <http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-4735-ENG>

²¹⁶ Children and Family Services, Minnesota Department of Human Services, (July 2009). *Minnesota's Child Welfare report 2008: Report to the 2009 Legislature*. Retrieved August 18, 2009 from <http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5408A-ENG>

²¹⁷ Gorkoff K and Runner J (Eds.), (2003). *Being heard: The experiences of young women in prostitution*. Halifax: Fernwood.

²¹⁸ Ombudsperson for Families, State of Minnesota, (January 2009). *2010-11 Biennial budget*, p.2. Retrieved September 6, 2009 from <http://www.admin.state.mn.us/fmr/documents/BBS-1011%20Other%20Agency,%20Obds,%20councils,%20comm/Ombudsperson%20for%20Families.pdf>

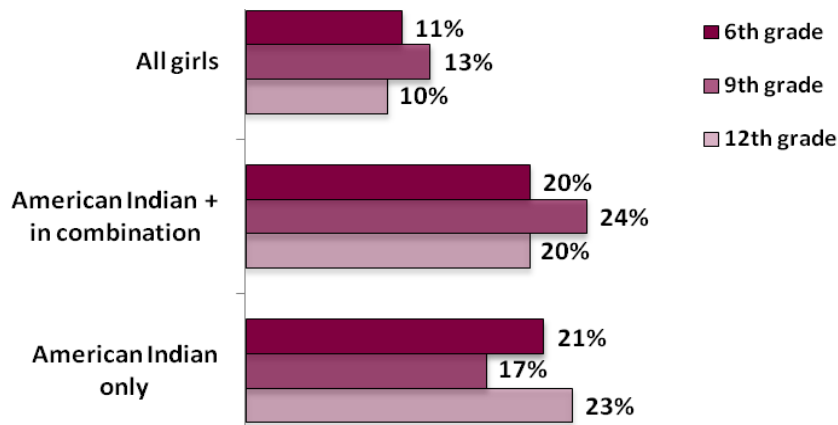


In Hennepin County, the most recent available data (2006) show eight percent of the confirmed child maltreatment cases to be American Indian, four times their representation in the county’s child population.²¹⁹ Native children represented an even larger percentage of Hennepin County children in foster care (9%).²²⁰

Some Native researchers have suggested that the disproportionate number of American Indian child neglect reports may be related, at least in part, to standard definitions of neglect being based on a nuclear family model, while American Indian child rearing norms are based on the assistance of an extended family and community network.^{221,222} However, in 2008 the National Indian Child Welfare Association described child neglect in American Indian communities as “serious, large scale, and persistent,” pointing out Indian Health Service data show the leading cause of death for Native children under the age of 14 to be accidents, mostly alcohol-related.²²³

Supporting the advocates’ reports at round tables that abuse at home is a common experience for Native girls, findings from the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey suggest that Native girls in Minnesota experience much higher rates of physical and sexual abuse at home than their peers in the general population (see Figures 15 and 16).

15. Girls’ reports of physical abuse at home, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey

²¹⁹ Hennepin County Child Protection Task Force, (June 2007). *Hennepin County Child Protection Task Force final report*. Retrieved January 20, 2009 from <http://hennepin.us/portal/site/HCIInternet/menuitem.3f94db53874f9b6f68ce1e10b1466498/?vgnnextoid=5895287c61a64110VgnVCM1000000f094689RCRD>

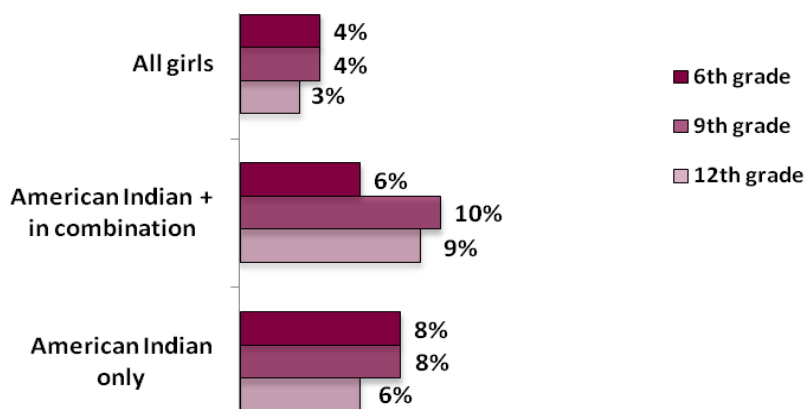
²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ Cross T and Simmons D, (April 14, 2008). *Child abuse and neglect and American Indians*. Portland OR: National Indian Child Welfare Association.

²²² Horesji C, Heavy Runner-Craig B , and Pablo J, (1992). Reactions by Native American parents to Child Protection agencies: Cultural and community factors, *Child Welfare* 71(4): 329-342.

²²³ Cross T and Simmons D, (April 14, 2008). *Child abuse and neglect and American Indians*. Portland OR: National Indian Child Welfare Association.

16. Girls' reports of sexual abuse at home, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey

Homeless American Indian women and girls are even more likely to report having experienced childhood abuse. In the 2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness in Minnesota, 40 to 50 percent of Native girls and women disclosed physical or sexual maltreatment or parental neglect as a child. Native girls and younger women frequently cited not feeling safe from violence in the home or abuse by someone in the household as the reason for their current homelessness (see Figure 17).


17. Homeless Native females' history of abuse or neglect (2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness in Minnesota)²²⁴

Percent of homeless Native females that reported...	Age group			
	11-17	18-20	21	22+
Physical mistreatment as a child or youth	45%	41%	40%	54%
Sexual mistreatment as a child or youth	30%	41%	20%	51%
Parental neglect (no food, shelter, or medical care; absence)	32%	33%	60%	41%
Homeless now due to feeling unsafe from violence in the house	28%	31%	Not asked	
Homeless now due to physical/sexual abuse in the home	17%	31%	Not asked	

In Canada, a national study involving interviews with 150 commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal youth found that 80 percent had been physically, sexually, emotionally, and verbally abused in their homes, which led to them running away. Many also reported significant trauma at the hands of family friends, neighbors, and/or peers.²²⁵ In a smaller study, 48 percent of prostituted youth in Winnipeg, many of whom were Aboriginal, reported physical abuse or

²²⁴ Based on analysis of the non-reservation American Indian female subset of the 2006 Homelessness in Minnesota data, provided by Wilder Research.

²²⁵ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada, p. 13.



neglect at home, and 68 percent reported sexual abuse.²²⁶ Research with women in street prostitution in Vancouver also found histories of abuse among almost all of the women interviewed, 52 percent of whom were Aboriginal women. Close to three-fourths of the participants reported physical abuse in childhood, and 82 percent reported childhood sexual abuse.²²⁷

In a review of over 400 youth probation files compiled by the Department of Social Services in two large Canadian cities, researchers found that 41 percent of Aboriginal youth in the sex trade had experienced neglect, compared to five percent of non-Aboriginal youth.²²⁸ Clinical and anecdotal evidence from Canada suggests that in some communities, the incidence of childhood sexual abuse among Aboriginal people is 80 percent or higher.^{229,230}

Physical and sexual victimization as older teens and adults

Though no U.S. studies were identified that described rates of physical and sexual victimization of prostituted American Indian women or girls, a significant body of research has found high rates of physical and sexual victimization among American Indian adult women and older teen girls in general (see Figure 18). National data show Native women to be over 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than women in the general population.²³¹

Analysis of the National Crime Victim Survey data showed that half of the Native women who reported having been raped also reported suffering physical injuries in addition to the rape, compared to 30 percent of U.S. women in the general population.²³² Based on a national survey, researchers have estimated that over one-third of Native women will be raped during their lifetimes, compared to less than one in five women in the general population.²³³

²²⁶ Nadon S, (1991). *Childhood victimization: Antecedents to prostitution*. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Cited in Scheirich W, (April 2004). Manitoba's strategy: Responding to children and youth involved in sexual exploitation, *Envision: The Manitoba Journal of Child Welfare* 3(1). Retrieved March 19, 2009 from <http://www.envisionjournal.com/application/Articles/59.pdf>

²²⁷ Farley M, Lynne J and Cotton A, (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the colonization of Aboriginal women, *Transcultural Psychiatry* 42: 242-271.

²²⁸ Schissel B and Fedec K, (1999). The selling of innocence: The gestalt of danger in the lives of youth prostitutes, *Canadian Journal of Criminology*. Pp. 35-56.

²²⁹ McEvoy M and Daniluk J, (1994). Wounds to the soul: The experiences of Aboriginal women survivors of sexual abuse, *Canadian Psychology* 36(3): 221-235.

²³⁰ Farley M and Lynne J, (2005). Prostitution of indigenous women: Sex inequality and the colonization of Canada's Aboriginal women, *Fourth World Journal* 6(1):1-29.

²³¹ Perry S, (December 2004). *American Indians and crime—A BJS statistical profile 1992-2002*. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

²³² Bachman R, (September 29, 2003). *The epidemiology of rape and sexual assaults against American Indian women: An analysis of NCVS data*, presented to a federal and tribal working group on sexual assault against Native women. Cited in Sarah Deer, 2005, Sovereignty of the soul: Exploring the intersection of rape law reform and Federal Indian law, *Suffolk University Law Review* 38: 455.

²³³ Tjaden P and Thoennes N, (2000). Full report of the prevalence, incidence, and consequences of violence against women. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice.



18. Lifetime rates of women’s physical and sexual victimization, by race

Year	Authors	n	Sample	Type of vctimization	AI/AN	White	Black	Hisp
1999	Walters & Simoni ²³⁴	68	New York City	Nonpartner sexual violence	27%			
1999	Walters & Simoni ²³⁵	68	New York City	Interpersonal violence	25%			
2000	Tjaden & Thoennes ²³⁶	88	National	Intimate partner rape	16%	8%	7%	8%
1998	Tjaden & Thoennes ²³⁷	88	National	Rape	34%	18%	19%	15%
2004	Malcoe, Duran & Montgomery ²³⁸	312	Oklahoma	Severe physical IPV	39%			
2004	Malcoe & Duran ²³⁹	422	Oklahoma	Sexual IPV	49%			
2003	Bohn, 2003 ²⁴⁰	30	Minnesota	Physical or sexual IPV	87%			

Note: IPV=intimate partner violence. Comparisons with other racial/ethnic groups are given when included in the study. Otherwise, the entire sample was American Indian.

Low-income Native women have been found to be extremely vulnerable to partner violence. In a study of 312 low-income pregnant and childbearing Native women recruited from a tribal WIC clinic in southwestern Oklahoma, researchers found that more than half reported lifetime physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence and 40 percent reported injuries from partner-perpetrated violence.²⁴¹

In the 2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness, almost half of the homeless non-reservation Native women ages 18 to 21 reported having been in an abusive relationship, and the same proportion reported staying in one because they had no other housing options (see Figure 19).

²³⁴ Walters K and Simoni J, (1999). Trauma, substance use, and HIV risk among urban American Indian women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 5(3): 236-248.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Tjaden P and Thoennes N, (2000). *Extent, nature, and consequences of intimate partner violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. Washington, DC: National Institutes of Justice.

²³⁷ Tjaden P and Thoennes N, (November 1998). *Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.

²³⁸ Malcoe L, Duran B and Montgomery J, (2004). Socioeconomic disparities in intimate partner violence against Native American women: A cross-sectional study, *BMC Medicine*. Retrieved May 16, 2009 from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1741-7015/2/20>

²³⁹ Malcoe L and Duran B, (in press). Intimate partner violence and injury in the lives of low income Native American women, in B. Fisher (Ed.), *Violence Against Women and Family Violence: Developments in Research, Practice, and Policy Conference Proceedings*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved April 7, 2009 from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/199701.pdf>

²⁴⁰ Bohn D, (2003). Lifetime physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, depression, and suicide attempts among Native American women, *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 24(3): 333-352.

²⁴¹ Malcoe L, Duran B and Montgomery J, (2004). Socioeconomic disparities in intimate partner violence against Native American women: A cross-sectional study, *BMC Medicine*. Retrieved May 16, 2009 from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1741-7015/2/20>

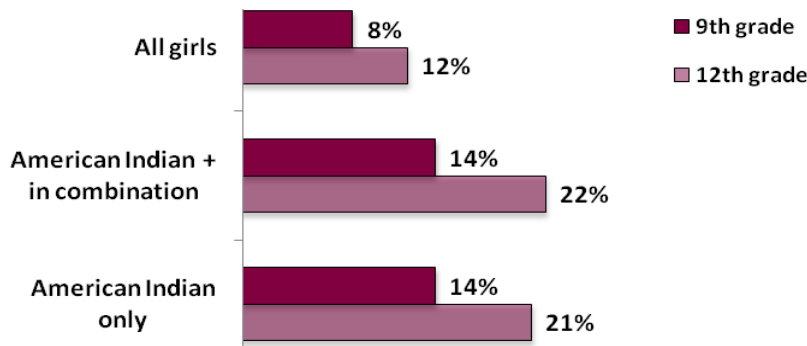


19. Experiences with violent victimization (2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness in Minnesota, n=44)²⁴²

Percent of homeless Native girls and women that reported...	Age group		
	11-17	18-21	22+
Being in physically abusive relationship during past 12 months	20%	48%	25%
Staying in an abusive situation because she did not have other housing options	5%	48%	50%
Physically or sexually attacked or beaten while without a regular place to stay	10%	16%	31%

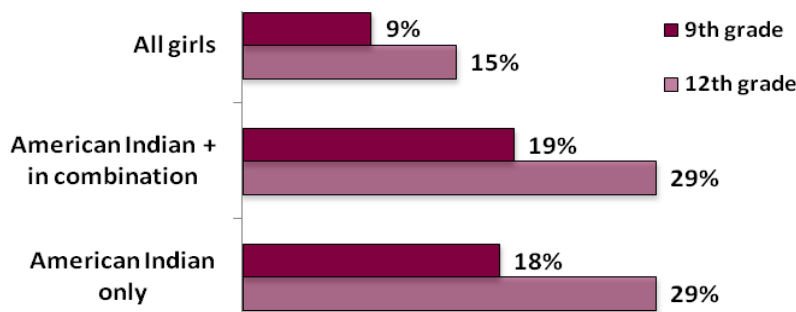
Violent victimization by a partner appears to begin early for many American Indian girls in Minnesota. In the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey, both 9th and 12th grade Native girls reported physical and sexual violence by dates much more frequently than girls in the general population (see Figures 20 and 21).

20. Girls reporting sexual assault by a date, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey. Sixth grade girls were not asked this question.

21. Girls reporting physical assault by a date, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey. Sixth grade girls were not asked this question.

²⁴² Based on analysis of the non-reservation American Indian female subset of the 2006 Homelessness in Minnesota data, provided by Wilder Research.



Normalization of sexual exploitation and violence

Data collected by MIWRC

Advocates at the round tables reported that Native girls' frequent exposure to violence, abuse, and commercial sexual exploitation in their homes, their peer groups, and communities tends to normalize these behaviors. Several advocates working with adolescent Native girls described the ways that girls' social environments often lead them to view threats to their safety and sexual exploitation as "no big deal." For example, this is one advocate's description of a Native girl's response after being trafficked to Mexico:

We had a young lady who was being held in Mexico for three years, and she didn't think that she was traumatized. [Twin Cities advocate]

Some advocates described the way that childhood exposure to prostitution can make it seem normal. These are some comments from those discussions:

If the mom is being trafficked, then she puts the child, the daughter at high risk. They may not intentionally want them involved in that, but then they'll be around that and they're vulnerable, and then they get pulled into it. [Duluth advocate]

I grew up with a bunch of women who did trade sex for money, clothing, food, shelter, housing, sold underwear, did whatever they had to do to keep me in a private education and a good home. [I] want to be able to move on from that so we're not raising more kids who normalize that activity as part of everyday life. [Twin Cities advocate]

Other advocates described some prostituted Native women and girls that viewed free-lancing, prostitution without a pimp, as a way to empower themselves. These girls and women viewed prostituting themselves and/or working with other women in a collective group as a way to have some control over their lives. These are some of the advocates' comments:

A majority of them have been exposed to sexual abuse. And so, it's kind of like, they're making the decision now, they're in control of their bodies and they're going to do what they need to do to get what it is that they want. [Duluth advocate]

The other aspect that we're seeing too is the idea of liberation, 'My body, my choice, I can do it myself.' All woman-run. You're seeing more women that know how to do these things and are very skilled at how to prevent more harm from coming to themselves. And so they're banding together creating all female call services. [Twin Cities advocate]

They're choosing to take this road because it is what they've always done. Or how they can survive right now. Because it's normal. [Duluth advocate]

During the six months that MIWRC collected data from women and girls entering MIWRC programs, counselors asked incoming clients if they knew anyone who sells or trades sex, and if they knew anyone who makes others sell or trade sex. Clients' responses suggest that Native girls are exposed to prostitution as a "career option" at very young ages. Almost half (46%) of the 95 women screened for commercial sexual exploitation reported a personal friend in prostitution, and over one-fourth (26%) reported a prostituting family member (see Figure 22). Over one-fourth (28%) of the incoming MIWRC clients said they knew someone who makes others sell or trade sex, most frequently their boyfriend (see Figure 23).

22. MIWRC clients that knew someone in prostitution (n=95)

Clients reporting that they...	Number	Percent
Know at least one person in prostitution	45	47%
Personal friend	44	46%
Family members (all categories)	25	26%
Cousin(s)	10	11%
Aunt	8	8%
Sister	4	4%
Mother	2	2%
Two or more family members	7	7%
Mother's friend	1	1%

23. MIWRC clients that knew someone who traffics others (n=95)

Clients reporting that they...	Number	Percent
Know at least one trafficker	27	28%
Boyfriend/husband/partner	13	14%
Landlord	4	4%
Friend(s)	3	3%
Drug dealer(s)	3	3%
Unspecified family member	2	2%
Pimp(s)	2	2%
Uncle and brother	1	1%
Friend of mother/aunt	1	1%
Friend of boyfriend/husband	1	1%
Unspecified person/people	9	10%

Information from other sources

The advocates' reports of Native girls viewing violence and sexual exploitation as "no big deal" as a result of their social environments are echoed by National Indian Child Welfare Association:

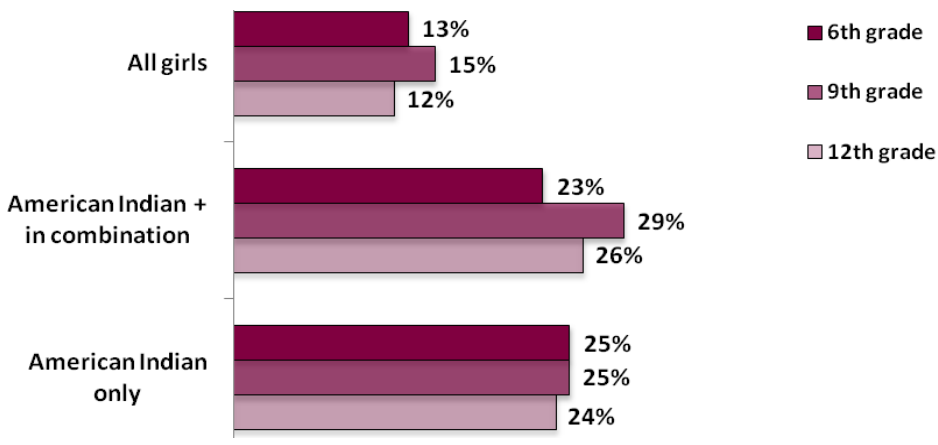
Unrecognized and untreated child victims are at a high risk of growing up to become dysfunctional adults, and the repeated risk of sexual abuse greatly increases, generation after generation, within the community. The victims themselves become used to being victimized and see victimization as a fact of life.²⁴³

²⁴³ Cross T and Simmons D, (April 14, 2008). *Child abuse and neglect and American Indians*. Portland OR: National Indian Child Welfare Association.



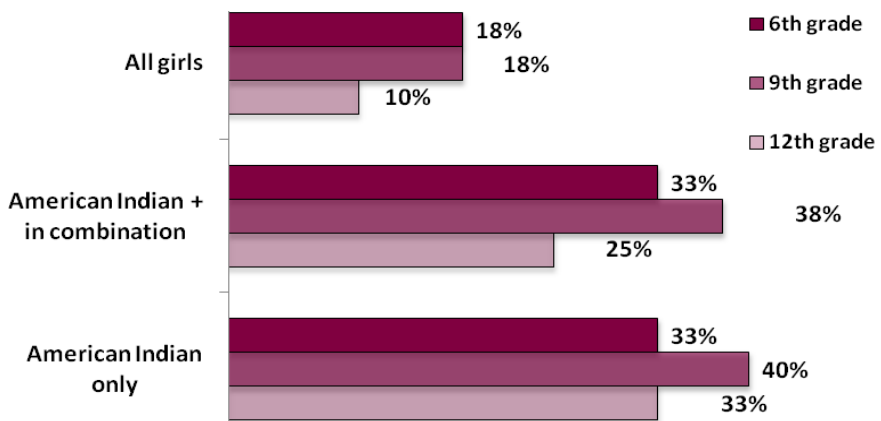
Native girls' responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey indicate that they are not only frequent victims of family-perpetrated physical and sexual abuse, but they are also often witnesses to violence against others in the home. Native girls were much more likely than girls in the general population to report that a family member had physically assaulted another family member at home (see Figure 24). Given the amount of violence that Native girls encounter at home, at school, and in relationships, it is disturbing but not surprising that Native girls also reported being in physical fights much more frequently than girls in the general population (see Figure 25).

24. Girls reporting that a family member physically assaulted another family member*




*2007 Minnesota Student Survey.

25. Girls reporting that they hit or beat up another person in the past 12 months*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey.

In Canada, studies with Aboriginal youth living on the street have found that these youth often report violence to be part of their daily life. A national study of 640 runaway and thrown-away



youth in shelters and 600 living on the street found high levels of violence among vulnerable and prostituted Aboriginal youth. About one-half of youth living in shelters and two-thirds of the street youth reported carrying a weapon; one-fourth of street youth said they had committed a violent act using a weapon.²⁴⁴ In research conducted in five areas of British Columbia, prostituted Aboriginal youth noted that a cycle of violence had been normalized in their communities, which they felt made it impossible for many caught in that cycle to break the pattern.²⁴⁵

Other studies have found that children's exposure to prostitution contributes to their entry into the sex trade. An international study of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico found that exposure to a pre-existing adult prostitution zone and social groups that condone or tolerate child-adult sexual relationships is a key contributing factor in youth entering prostitution.²⁴⁶ A study with prostituted Canadian women has found that over 20 percent grew up in environments where prostitution was common. Research participants described their own involvement in commercial sexual exploitation as a result of learned behavior and day-to-day survival within their families for generations.²⁴⁷ One Canadian researcher whose participants included a large number of Aboriginal youth noted that, to youth living in impoverished neighborhoods where street prostitution is concentrated and they have no other access to money, an offer to watch an indecent act by a man cruising by in his car can easily seem reasonable and worthwhile.²⁴⁸

Similar to the advocates' comments about Native women and girls involved in "free-lancing," studies with Aboriginal youth that had been sexually exploited by family members at a young age found that many viewed the sex trade as a way to have some control over their lives. These youth saw no harm in being paid for sex since it was taken for free when they were still at home.²⁴⁹ One study with commercially exploited youth and 22 Aboriginal communities across Canada reported that for many Aboriginal youth in the sex trade, prostitution presented them with an illusion of escape and independence.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁴ Administration for Children and Families, (October 1995). *Youth with runaway, throw-away, and homeless experiences: Prevalence, drug use, and other at-risk behaviors—A FYSB research summary*. Silver Spring MD: Family and Youth Services Bureau, National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth.

²⁴⁵ Hunt S, (2006). *Final Report—Violence in the lives of sexually exploited youth and adult sex workers in BC: Provincial research*. Justice Institute of British Columbia, Centre for Leadership and Community Learning. Retrieved April 20, 2009 from <http://peers.bc.ca/images/orchidupdat0407.pdf>

²⁴⁶ Estes R and Weiner N, (2001). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico: Full report of the U.S. national study*. Philadelphia: Center for the Study of Youth Policy, University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work.

²⁴⁷ Tutty L and Nixon K, (2003). Selling sex? It's really like selling your soul, in Gorkoff K and Runner J (Eds.), *Being heard: The experience of young women in prostitution*, pp. 29-45. Halifax: Fernwood.

²⁴⁸ Scheirich W, (April 2004). Manitoba's strategy: Responding to children and youth involved in sexual exploitation, *Envision: The Manitoba Journal of Child Welfare* 3(1). Retrieved March 19, 2009 from <http://www.envisionjournal.com/application/Articles/59.pdf>

²⁴⁹ Urban Native Youth Association, (2002). *Full circle*. Vancouver BC: Urban Native Youth Association. Retrieved February 29, 2009 from <http://www.unya.bc.ca/resources>

²⁵⁰ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada.



Addiction

Parents' addiction as a risk factor

Data collected by MIWRC

Advocates at both round tables described a parent's substance abuse, particularly drug abuse, as playing a role in some Native girls' entry into prostitution. This is an example of those stories:

Two years ago I was working with three sisters who had been prostituted by their mother since they were two, and the girls were about 15, 16, 17. They were just shifting and turning on their mother and taking their profits...it was kind of a struggle, mom still wanted money for her drug addiction, and they were starting to want to take their [own] money. [Twin Cities advocate]

Information from other sources

Research has found that family substance abuse is strongly related to youth running away, which puts them at greater risk of sexual exploitation. In a national U.S. study, researchers found that 31 percent of 640 runaway and thrown-away youth in shelters and 45 percent of 600 runaway and thrown-away youth living on the street reported problematic substance use by a family member (most frequently a step-parent) during the 30 days before the youth left home. These youth told interviewers that when family members used substances, they were more likely to get into arguments with the youth, to neglect or ignore them, or to hit them.²⁵¹ The Michigan Network of Runaway, Homeless, and Youth Services reported that 41 percent of the youth they had served in 1995 reported leaving because of adult substance abuse in the home.²⁵²

In the statewide study of homelessness conducted by Wilder Research, over half (56%) of the Native girls age 21 and younger described their parents' drug and alcohol use as the partial or main reason they were currently homeless.²⁵³ Findings from the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey also suggest that family alcohol and drug abuse are significant problems for many Native high school girls. Statewide, American Indian girls reported problematic alcohol use by a family member at more than double the rate of girls in the general population (see Figure 26). The same pattern is seen in Native girls' Minnesota Student Survey reports of a family member's drug use causing problems. The percentage of American Indian girls reporting problematic family drug use was also high, two to three times that of girls in the general population for the three grade levels (see Figure 27).

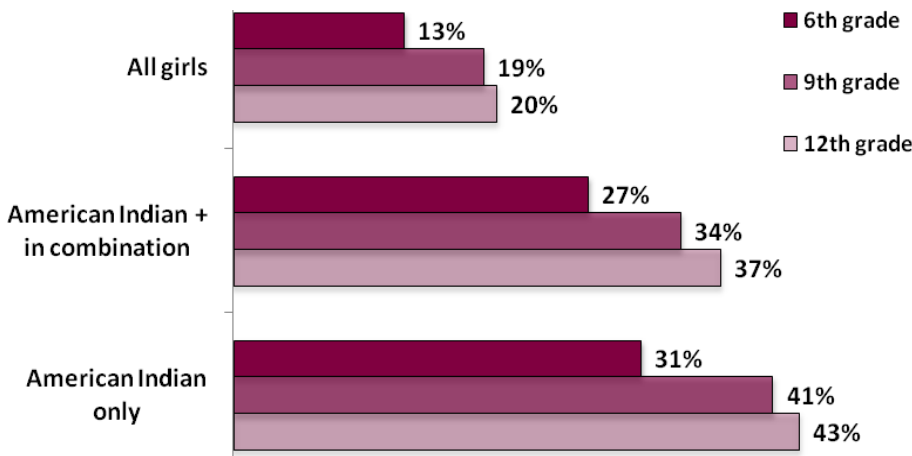
²⁵¹ Administration for Children and Families, (October 1995). *Youth with runaway, thrown-away, and homeless experiences: Prevalence, drug use, and other at-risk behaviors—A FYSB research summary*. Silver Spring MD: Family and Youth Services Bureau, National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth.

²⁵² Cited in Walker N, (2002). Prostituted teens: A problem for Michigan too, in *Prostituted teens: More than a runaway problem*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Institute for Children, Youth, and Families.

²⁵³ Based on analysis of the non-reservation American Indian female subset of the 2006 Homelessness in Minnesota data, provided by Wilder Research.

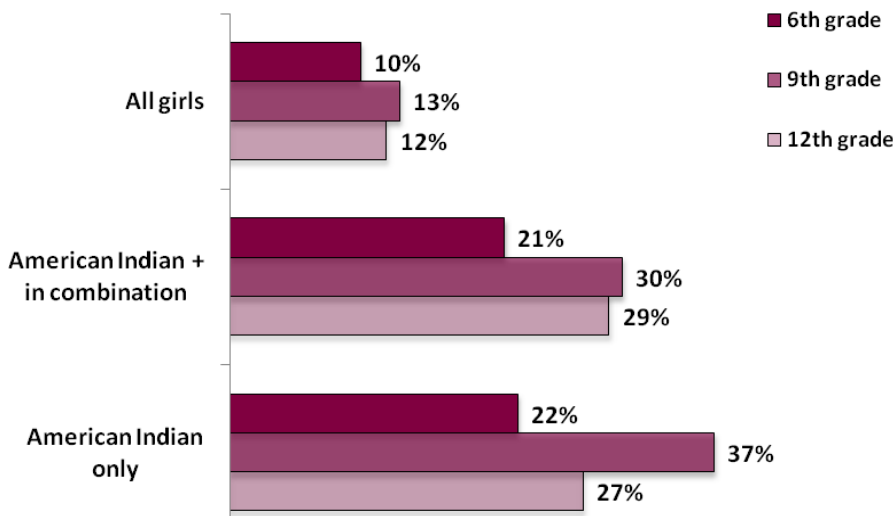


26. Girls reporting that a family member's alcohol use repeatedly caused family, health, job, or legal problems, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey.

27. Girls reporting that a family member's drug use repeatedly caused family, health, job, legal problems, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey.

As noted earlier, Canadian studies with prostituted youth have also identified parental substance abuse as a primary factor in the physical and sexual abuse of Native youth, Native youth's decision to run away from home, and their resulting recruitment for prostitution.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada.



Personal addiction as a risk factor

Data collected by MIWRC

Advocates at both round tables described Native women's and girls' own addiction as a major facilitating factor in their entry into prostitution, and one that keeps them in the sex trade even when they want to leave. The Duluth advocates emphasized pimps' practice of providing girls with free drugs to get them addicted and then prostituting them. These are some of their comments:

There are a lot of women who enter after the age of 20. Who don't have parents in prostitution. A lot of those women are at that point where they have addictions. [Twin Cities advocate]

I think they come into prostitution with addictions. I think they start, you know, they're experimenting around with drugs and then they find a ready source, because pimps latch onto that as a method to get them into it. [Duluth advocate]

I also know a girl here, she got turned out with drugs, and she had to feed her addiction. So, she was really young and they gave her whatever, and then she had to keep that up. And it doesn't matter what your family status is, period. Because this girl I knew, her family status is pretty good. [Duluth advocate]

Information from other sources

The Administration for Children and Families reported that family substance abuse is strongly related to runaway and thrown-away youths' own use of substances, which other research has shown to be a risk factor for entering the sex trade.²⁵⁵ A number of studies have identified prostituted women's and girls' substance abuse as a precursor to their involvement in prostitution.^{256,257, 258,259} In research based on a national sample of 200 prostituted juveniles and adults, 55 percent reported being addicted to drugs prior to entering the sex trade, 30 percent had become addicted following entry, and 15 percent said they became addicted at the same time they entered.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁵ Administration for Children and Families, (October 1995). *Youth with runaway, thrown-away, and homeless experiences: Prevalence, drug use, and other at-risk behaviors—A FYSB research summary*. Silver Spring MD: Family and Youth Services Bureau, National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth.

²⁵⁶ Clatts M, Rees-Davis W, Sotheran J, and Atillasoy A, (1998). Correlates and distribution of HIV risk behaviors among homeless youths in New York City: Implications for prevention and policy, *Child Welfare* 2: 195-207.

²⁵⁷ Pfeifer R and Oliver J, (1997). A study of HIV seroprevalence in a group of homeless youth in Hollywood, California, *Journal of Adolescent Health* 20: 339-342.

²⁵⁸ Whitbeck L, Hoyt D, and Yoder K, (1999). A risk-amplification model of victimization and depressive symptoms among runaway and homeless adolescents, *American Journal of Community Psychology* 27: 273-296.

²⁵⁹ Kipke M, Montgomery S, Simon T, and Iverson E, (1997). Substance abuse disorders among runaway and homeless youth, *Substance Use and Misuse* 37:969-986.

²⁶⁰ Sweeney P, Lindegren M, Buehler J, Onorato I, and Janssen R, (1995). Teenagers at risk of human immunodeficiency virus Type I infection: Results from seroprevalence surveys in the United States, *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* 149: 521-528.

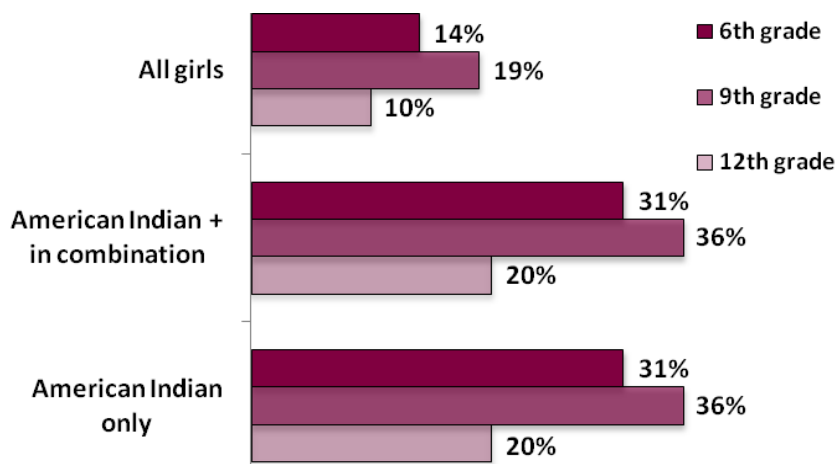


In the Hennepin County study of women on probation for prostitution described earlier, 64 percent of the American Indian women for whom data were available reported drug use at the time of their arrest. One in five used both drugs and alcohol at the time of arrest, and half had received prior treatment for chemical dependency.²⁶¹

American Indian women are more likely than women in other racial groups to become alcohol dependent as a response to childhood abuse. A study involving interviews with 979 American Indian women in seven tribal communities found that parental alcoholism, sexual abuse, combined physical and sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and emotional neglect as a child each doubled the risk of alcohol dependence. Those who had experienced four or more categories of these adverse experiences in childhood had seven times the risk of alcohol dependence.²⁶²

Early use of alcohol is a significant problem in American Indian communities. American Indian high school girls responding to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey also reported early use of alcohol at much higher rates than girls in the general population (see Figure 28). In the Wilder Research study of homeless in Minnesota, one-third of homeless American Indian girls ages 11-17 and 42 percent of those ages 18-21 reported that their own use of drugs or alcohol was partial or main cause of their current homelessness.²⁶³

28. Girls reporting first use of alcohol at age 12 or younger, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey.

In the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey, 9th grade Native girls reported problematic drug and alcohol use at a rate close to double that of girls in the general population (see Figure 29).

²⁶¹ Subset of data provided by Julie Rud, Minneapolis Police Department, from dataset used to produce Martin L and Rud J, (2007) *Prostitution research report: Data sharing to establish best practices for women in prostitution*. Minneapolis: Prostitution Project, Hennepin County Corrections and the Folwell Center.

²⁶² Koss M, Yuan N, Dightman D, Prince R, Polacca M, Sanderson B, and Goldman D, (2003). Adverse childhood exposures and alcohol dependence among seven Native American tribes, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 25 (3): 238-244.

²⁶³ Based on analysis of the non-reservation American Indian female subset of the 2006 Homelessness in Minnesota data, provided by Wilder Research.



Among 12th grade Native girls, 20 to 35 percent reported at least one indicator of a substance abuse problem, over double the proportion of girls in the general population (see Figure 30).

29. 9th grade girls reporting problematic substance abuse, statewide (2007 Minnesota Student Survey)

Percent of girls reporting they...	Indian only	Indian + in combination	All girls
Could not remember what said or did after using alcohol/drugs 2 or more times	16%	15%	8%
Used more alcohol/drugs than intended 2 or more times	16%	14%	8%
Continued to use alcohol even though it was hurting relationships with friends or family	20%	16%	8%
Have needed to use more alcohol/drugs to get the same effect in the past 12 months	18%	16%	8%
Had 5 or more drinks in a row at least once in the past 2 weeks	29%	23%	13%


30. 12th grade girls reporting problematic substance abuse, statewide (2007 Minnesota Student Survey)

Percent of girls reporting that they...	Indian only	Indian + in combination	All girls
Could not remember what said or did after using alcohol/drugs 2 or more times	22%	21%	15%
Used more alcohol/drugs than intended 2 or more times	21%	21%	16%
Continued to use alcohol even though it was hurting relationships with friends or family	20%	15%	9%
Have needed to use more alcohol/drugs to get the same effect in the past 12 months	21%	17%	12%
Past 2 weeks, had 5 or more drinks in a row at least once	35%	32%	25%

Similar to research in the U.S., Canadian research has found substance abuse to be both a predictor for and a consequence of involvement in prostitution, particularly among Aboriginal women. A Montreal study involving interviews with 165 female street youth initially not involved in prostitution found at follow-up that substance abuse was a significant predictor for entering the sex trade.²⁶⁴ A second Canadian study with young prostituted women, many of whom were Aboriginal, found that while drug use had facilitated their entry into prostitution, participants' use had also escalated as a result of being in prostitution.²⁶⁵ Similar to the

²⁶⁴ Weber A, Roy E, Blais L, Haley N, and Boivin J-F, (2001). Predictors of initiation into prostitution among female street youth. Included as part of Weber A, (2001). *HIV risk behavior and predictors of initiation into prostitution among female street youth in Montreal, Canada*. Master's thesis. Montreal, Canada: Department of Epidemiology and Biostatics, McGill University.

²⁶⁵ Tutty L and Nixon K, (2003). Selling sex? It's really like selling your soul, in Gorkoff K and Runner J (Eds.), *Being heard: The experience of young women in prostitution*, pp. 29-45. Halifax: Fernwood.



advocates' remarks at the round table discussions, 60 percent of 183 prostituting women in Vancouver, about half of whom were Aboriginal, told researchers that they remained in the sex trade to maintain a drug habit.²⁶⁶

Risk due to fetal alcohol spectrum disorders

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) currently use the term Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders to describe three alcohol-related disorders: fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), fetal alcohol effects (FAE), and alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND). The CDC describes how these three disorders differ:

*The term FAE has been used to describe behavioral and cognitive problems in children who were prenatally exposed to alcohol, but who do not have all of the typical diagnostic features of FAS. In 1996, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) replaced FAE with the terms ARND and ARBD. Children with ARND might have functional or mental problems linked to prenatal alcohol exposure. These include behavioral or cognitive abnormalities or a combination of both.*²⁶⁷

Data collected by MIWRC

Advocates at both MIWRC round tables reported working with Native girls and women in prostitution who were affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. The advocates described FASD as a critical risk factor, since it results in impaired judgment and impulsiveness, putting younger girls at very high risk of commercial sexual exploitation. Advocates also described FASD as a factor in Native parents prostituting their children, and the prevalence of FASD in Native youth in foster care. These are some of their comments:

One of the clients I work with, she comes and goes, she knows she's been diagnosed with FAE and her children have been diagnosed as well. So her mother drank and she drank while she was pregnant with her kids. So, she's working to keep herself in a home and she's exchanging sex for her home and so she has no problem with her kids doing the same thing, her daughters. [Second speaker] I think the other thing with FASD what we know about that brain damage, is you have a 15 year old girl's body but you have an 8 year old girl's mental capacity, because your brain is not formed correctly because you're brain damaged. [Twin Cities advocates]

This is something that I always see, and I don't know that we know so much about, is how many people are affected by fetal alcohol. Some individuals are really aware of it, they have been tested, and usually those are the kids that are coming out of foster care, like they might have had that testing so they're aware of it. But when those two things get coupled, FAS and also foster care, that's its own dynamic. But also, there are the kids that might have FAS but don't know it and other people don't know it either, which makes them really vulnerable. [Duluth advocate]

²⁶⁶ PACE Society, (2000). *Violence against women in Vancouver's street-level sex trade and the police response*. Vancouver BC.

²⁶⁷ Centers for Disease Control, (May 2, 2006). *Information, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome*. Retrieved April 18, 2009 from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/fasask.htm>



Information from other sources

In research by the Centers for Disease Control, the fetal alcohol syndrome rate among American Indians has been found to be 30 times the rate among whites.²⁶⁸ Other research in the U.S. has found that adolescents affected by FASD are at high risk of sexual exploitation. The authors of one study reported:

Teenagers and adults with FAS or FAE seem to ‘plateau’ academically and in daily functioning but their problems grow more serious as attention deficits, poor judgment, and impulsivity create obstacles to employment and stable living. Adolescents and adults with FAS/FAE have been described as ‘innocent,’ ‘immature,’ and easily victimized.’²⁶⁹

Findings from a study involving structured clinical interviews with 25 FASD-affected adults suggest that this group often suffers from substantial mental illness as well, including major depression, psychotic disorders, and anxiety disorders.²⁷⁰ Ann Streissguth, a national expert on FASD, reported these findings from her own and others’ research with this vulnerable population:²⁷¹

- 62% have had a disrupted school experience between the ages of 12 and 20.
- 90% have had mental health problems diagnosed.
- 40% of youth ages 6-11, 48% of people ages 12-20, and 52% of those over age 21 have exhibited inappropriate sexual behavior and have been sexually victimized.
- 79% of girls ages 12 and up have exhibited sexually inappropriate behavior.

FASD also disproportionately impacts Native communities in Canada.^{272,273} Canadian research with prostituted youth has found that those affected by FASD are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation by pimps using violent “guerrilla recruitment” methods, sometimes first offering them free drugs at house parties. Once addicted, FASD-affected youth are threatened and told they must work off their debt through prostitution.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ Cited in [kaisernetwork.org](http://www.kaisernetwork.org), (October 24, 2007). *Kaiser health disparities report: A weekly look at race, ethnicity, and health*. Retrieved March 27, 2009 from http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=48423

²⁶⁹ Olson H, Burgess D and Streissguth, A, (1992). Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and fetal alcohol effects (FAE): A lifespan view, with implications for early intervention, *Zero to Three: National Center for Clinical Infant Programs*, 13(1), 24-29.


²⁷⁰ Famy C, Streissguth A and Unis A, (April 1998). Mental illness in adults with fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effects, *American Journal of Psychiatry* 155: 552-554.

²⁷¹ Streissguth A, (May 4, 2005). *FASD: Juvenile Justice and the community*. Keynote lecture at the kick-off for the Hennepin County Juvenile Justice Project. Minneapolis MN.

²⁷² Boland F and Durwyn M, (1999). *Fetal alcohol syndrome: Understanding its impact*. Correctional Service of Canada. Cited in Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000), *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada.

²⁷³ Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, (1999). *Healing ways: Aboriginal health and service review*. Retrieved May 6, 2009 from http://www.vch.ca/community/Docs/healing_ways.pdf

²⁷⁴ Hunt S, (2006). *Final Report—Violence in the lives of sexually exploited youth and adult sex workers in BC: Provincial research*. Justice Institute of British Columbia, Centre for Leadership and Community Learning. Retrieved April 20, 2009 from <http://peers.bc.ca/images/orchidupdat0407.pdf>



In a study in British Columbia that involved interviews with FASD-affected adults, one research participant described the ways that FASD puts her at risk:

I have trouble making decisions, if they're bad or they're right, and that's what has been hardest throughout my life. I realize that it's right or wrong after I've done it, and then that's what makes it really bad...because you can get in a lot of trouble and I've gotten into lots of trouble...it's hard to say no to things...I used to do anything and everything, just, you know, for the hell of it, or just to have fun...but there'd be so much trouble...you think of having fun, you think you're going to have fun, and what's wrong with that and then you realize fun turns into trouble and trouble turns into danger.²⁷⁵

Involvement with child protection systems

Data collected by MIWRC

A number of the advocates working with runaway and street youth described a history of removal from the home and placement in a foster care as an important risk factor for Native girls' entry into prostitution. One advocate described working with a Native girl in prostitution whose mother ran away from foster care:

Mom aged out of foster care and came to this community on her own from a rural area and just kinda connected really young. She came here probably, I wouldn't say she aged out of foster care, she ran when she was about 16 years old. Came to this area and nobody looked for her, more or less. She ended up connecting with people who were willing to take care of her, females. Who also had experiences of running back to this area because this is where her family is, or was. And she went from there, just started working on the boats. [Duluth advocate]

Other advocates described working with prostituted Native girls who had been in foster care, and the role of Native parents' own foster placement in trafficking their children. These are some of those comments:


[One girl] had just aged out of foster care and she ended up here. [Second speaker] I think removal from the homes, girls in foster care. We've got a lot of kids running from foster homes, you know. [Duluth advocate]

Every person I've known in my personal life that has ever been in foster care and that's Native has always been sexually abused. [Second speaker] I think that is a really big issue...What happened to the mom that she [trafficked] her child? [Twin Cities advocate]

Information from other sources

Research has found that many commercially sexually exploited youth have been involved in the child welfare system. In their book *Being Heard: The Experiences of Young Women in Prostitution*, Gorkoff and Runner reported that 63 percent of prostituted girls and young women in their Canadian study had been involved with the child welfare system as children. Over three-

²⁷⁵ Straarup D, (1997). Master's thesis: *Maneuvering the maze: Exploring the experiences of fetal alcohol effected adults*, pp. 71 and 72. School of Social Work, University of British Columbia. Retrieved May 16, 2009 from https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/2429/6445/1/ubc_1997-0483.pdf



fourths had been in foster and group homes, often for many years.²⁷⁶ A national study of homeless, runaway and thrown-away youth in the U.S. found that 58 percent of 640 youth staying in shelters and 71 percent of 600 street youth had been placed or spent time in an institutional setting such as a foster home, group home, psychiatric or mental hospital, juvenile detention, or jail.²⁷⁷

American Indian youth have the highest rates of out-of-home placement in the state, representing 12 percent of children in foster care but only one percent of the state's child population. Reflecting the data on recurrence in Native child maltreatment cases at six-month and twelve-month follow-up, almost 20 percent of American Indian children that entered foster care in 2007 (19.8%) had re-entered within twelve months of a prior episode.²⁷⁸ In 2009, nine percent of the children in Hennepin County foster care were American Indian, more than four times their representation in the county's child population.²⁷⁹

Foster placement was also a common background experience among non-reservation Native women and girls participating in the 2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness. Over one-fourth of the non-reservation Native girls ages 17 and under (28%) and 24 percent of those ages 18 to 20 reported having left foster care or a group home without a permanent place to go. Overall, almost 30 percent had lived in a group home at some point in time.²⁸⁰

Failure to finish high school

Research has found that a minor who has been expelled from school, or who is no longer interested in finishing school, is at a high risk of becoming involved in prostitution.²⁸¹ In the Hennepin County study of 70 women on probation for prostitution described earlier, only one of the 17 American Indian women had completed high school.²⁸²

Statewide, about 41 percent of American Indian students graduated on time in the 2006-2007 school year. Except for Hispanic students, many of whom are English Language Learners, American Indians had the highest dropout rate (34.5%) of any group statewide (see Figure 31).

²⁷⁶ Gorkoff K and Runner J (Eds.), (2003). *Being heard: The experiences of young women in prostitution*. Halifax: Fernwood.

²⁷⁷ Administration for Children and Families, (October 1995). *Youth with runaway, thrown-away, and homeless experiences: Prevalence, drug use, and other at-risk behaviors—A FYSB research summary*. Silver Spring MD: Family and Youth Services Bureau, National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth.

²⁷⁸ National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), (November 2007). *Time for reform: A matter of justice for American Indian and Alaskan Native children*. Portland OR: National Indian Child Welfare Association.

²⁷⁹ Minnesota Department of Human Services Social Services Information System, (May 2, 2007). Cited in Hennepin County Child Protection Task Force: Final report. Minneapolis.

²⁸⁰ Based on analysis of the non-reservation American Indian female subset of the 2006 Homelessness in Minnesota data, provided by Wilder Research.

²⁸¹ Cited in Walker N, (2002). Prostituted teens: A problem for Michigan too, in *Prostituted teens: More than a runaway problem*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Institute for Children, Youth, and Families.

²⁸² Subset of data provided by Julie Rud, Minneapolis Police Department, used to produce Martin L and Rud J, (2007) *Prostitution research report: Data sharing to establish best practices for women in prostitution*. Minneapolis: Prostitution Project, Hennepin County Corrections and the Folwell Center.

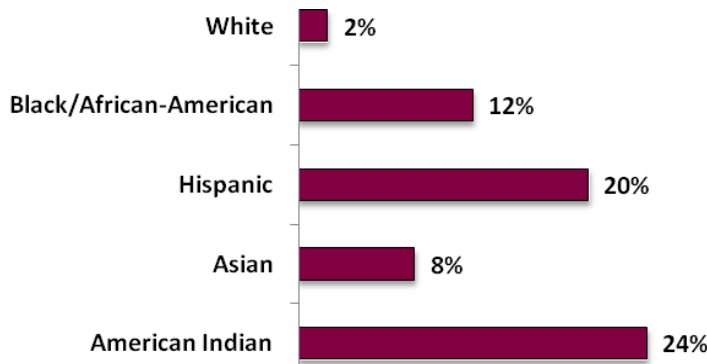


In Hennepin County, the graduation rate for American Indians was even lower. Unlike other racial groups in the county, American Indian graduation rates did not improve since the previous year, but actually declined from 32.2 percent graduating on time in 2005 to only 30.2 percent graduating on time in 2006. Almost one-fourth (24%) dropped out of school that year (see Figure 32).

31. High school graduation rates, Minnesota public schools 2006-2007 (National Governor’s Association rates)²⁸³

	Graduated on time	Dropped out	Were continuing
All students statewide	73.1%	6.3%	14.3%
American Indian students	41.4%	18.6%	27.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander students	65.7%	6.0%	19.2%
Black students	41.3%	13.3%	32.6%
White students	80.4%	4.2%	10.7%
Hispanic students (any race)	41.3%	19.5%	23.6%

32. Percent of Hennepin County high school students that dropped out of school in 2006, by race²⁸⁴



In their responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey, American Indian girls showed the least attachment to school when compared to girls in other racial groups. Statewide, Native girls were

²⁸³ According to the Minnesota Department of Education, the NGA rate is a four-year, on-time graduation rate agreed to by all 50 states. In addition to grads and drops, it considers continuing and unknown students: these two additional groups add approximately 16,000 students statewide into the measure. For the Class of 2007, the cohort of students was determined by counting first time ninth graders in 2004 plus transfers into the group minus transfers out over the next four years. The NGA rate only considers students who graduate in four years. Data retrieved April 2, 2009 from http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Data/Data_Downloads/Student/Graduation_Rates/index.html

²⁸⁴ Minnesota Department of Education. Data retrieved April 2, 2009 from http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Data/Data_Downloads/Student/Graduation_Rates/index.html



least likely to report that they like school (74.9%) and most likely to report truancy in the past 30 days (44.5%).²⁸⁵

Canadian research has found similarly high drop-out rates among Aboriginal youth. In Canada’s 2001 Census, 62 percent of Aboriginal people living on reserves and 48 percent of those living off-reserve had less than a high school education.²⁸⁶ In Canadian studies of gang-affiliated youth, most Native girls were typically two to three years behind their age cohort if they were still in school, and few finished even a 10th grade education.²⁸⁷ Two surveys of street-involved Canadian youth over a six-year period found that youth involved in commercial sexual exploitation were much less likely to be in school than those that were not, and the difference in exploited and non-exploited youth’s participation in school increased between 2000 and 2006. Though in general, street-involved girls tended to be in school more often than street-involved boys, those that were not engaged in prostitution were much more likely to be attending school than those that were (see Figure 33).

33. Percent of Native street-involved youth in Manitoba studies currently attending school²⁸⁸

Percent currently attending school	Prostituted youth	Unprostituted youth
2000 Street-Involved Youth Survey (boys and girls)	58%	63%
2006 Street-Involved Youth Survey (boys and girls)	57%	66%
2006 Street-Involved Youth Survey (girls only)	60%	76%

Mental and emotional vulnerability

Data collected by MIWRC


Advocates at both MIWRC round tables described issues related to mental health as a significant factor in Native girls’ vulnerability to recruitment into the sex trade. Several advocates emphasized the effect of generational trauma on Native families, and by extension, the effect on Native girls’ emotional vulnerability. These are some of their comments:

²⁸⁵ Cited in Women’s Foundation of Minnesota, (April 2008). *Status of girls in Minnesota*. Retrieved April 3, 2009 from http://www.wfmn.org/PDFs/StatusOfGirlsInMN_FullReportFINAL.pdf

²⁸⁶ Dyck L, (November 2006). *Reaching Aboriginal youth: Issues and challenges in education*. Presentation at the STAN conference.

²⁸⁷ Nimmo M, (2001). *The “invisible” gang members: A report on female gang association in Winnipeg*. Manitoba: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

²⁸⁸ Saewyc E, MacKay L, Anderson J, and Drozda C, (2008). *It’s not what you think: Sexually exploited youth in British Columbia*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia School of Nursing. Report based on data from surveys conducted by the McCreary Centre Society, Vancouver BC. Retrieved May 1, 2009 from <http://www.nursing.ubc.ca/PDFs/ItsNotWhatYouThink.pdf>



And then another situation is young women who are vulnerable to mental health issues. This is something that I always see. [Second speaker] Their home life is not as functional, there's a lot of chaos. So, there's all this chaos going on, so the other supports that other kids might have, like at school or those things, they're just not in place. [Duluth advocates]

We're talking mental health, we're talking about borderline personality disorders, post-traumatic stress, anxiety. Bipolar. And I think in the beginning, it's dissociation. [Second speaker] Right, because that's the only way to deal with it, is you dissociate, it's like an out of body experience. They go somewhere else or they become someone else to be able to detach what they just had to go through, so they turn into nicknames and secondhand names. I was Diamond on the street, even though I'm _____ in real life, and Diamond is a whole another personality. [Twin Cities advocate]

That void. Culture and identity, all those things that lead to that searching and that hopeless feeling of 'There's no place for me,' all that conflict between two worlds and just being vulnerable to being taken somewhere down a path. [Duluth advocate]

Information from other sources

American Indian women's high rates of violent physical and sexual victimization have mental health consequences. Depression in Native women is frequently linked to a history of child abuse, adult revictimization, and lifetime abuse.²⁸⁹ The American Psychological Association (APA) describes anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, flashbacks, emotional numbing, avoidance of situations or activities and/or hypervigilance as manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can result when a person has “experienced, witnessed, or been confronted with an event or events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others,” and when “the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.”²⁹⁰

Researchers have found high rates of PTSD among American Indian women.²⁹¹ One study found that depression, PTSD, and suicide are strongly related to Native women's experiences with forced sex by a partner.²⁹² Exposure to racial discrimination has also been found to play a role Native girls' mental health, often resulting in withdrawn behavior, anxiety, depression, and physical complaints related to stress.²⁹³ In a study of American Indian teen mothers, 61 percent reported interpersonal violence. There was a significant relationship between the teens' violent

²⁸⁹ Bohn D, (2003). Lifetime physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, depression, and suicide attempts among Native American women, *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 24(3): 333-352.

²⁹⁰ American Psychiatric Association, (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders DSM-IV-TR (Fourth ed.)*. Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.

²⁹¹ Robin R, Chester B, and Goldman D, (1996). Cumulative trauma and PTSD in American Indian communities, in Marsella A, Friedman J, Gerrity E, and Scurfield R (Eds.), (1996). *Ethnocultural aspects of posttraumatic stress disorder: Issues, research, and clinical applications*, pp. 239-254. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

²⁹² Hamby S and Skupien M, (1998). Domestic violence on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation: Rates, associated psychological symptoms, and current beliefs, *The Indian Health Service Primary Care Provider* 23: 103-106.

²⁹³ Whitbeck L, Hoyt D, Simons R, Conger R, Elder G, Lorenzo L, and Huck S, (1992). Intergenerational continuity of parental rejection and depressed affect, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63:1036-1045.

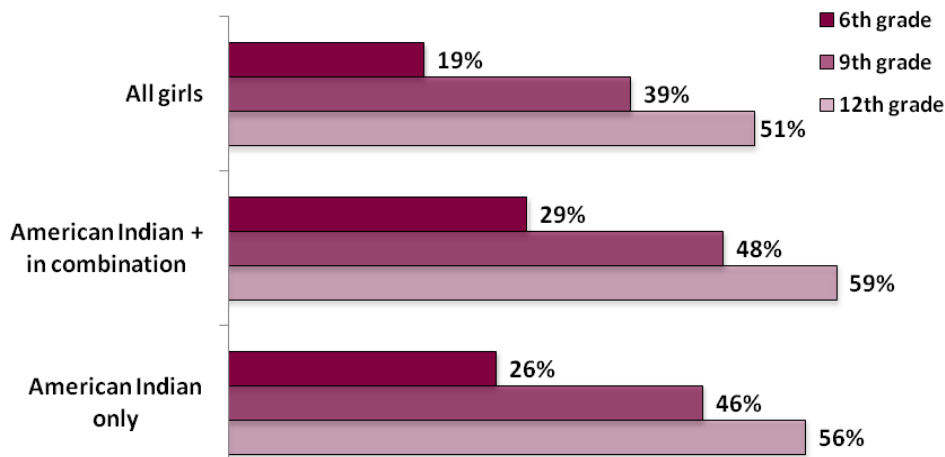
victimization and their likelihood of substance abuse and PTSD symptoms such as dissociation, defensive avoidance, intrusive experiences, and anxious arousal.²⁹⁴

In a recent study with prostituting women in Vancouver, over half were Aboriginal. Researchers found that 89 percent had at least one post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptom: 81 percent reported at least three numbing and avoidance PTSD symptoms, and 85 percent reported at least two physiological hyper-arousal symptoms.²⁹⁵ These included:

- Having a difficult time falling or staying asleep
- Feeling more irritable or having outbursts of anger
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling constantly "on guard" or like danger is lurking around every corner
- Being "jumpy" or easily startled

Native girls responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey indicate that many are experiencing some level of emotional stress. At all three grade levels, a larger proportion of Native girls reported feeling high levels of emotional stress when compared to girls in the general population (see Figure 34).

34. Girls that felt under stress/pressure "quite a bit" or "almost more than I could take," statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey

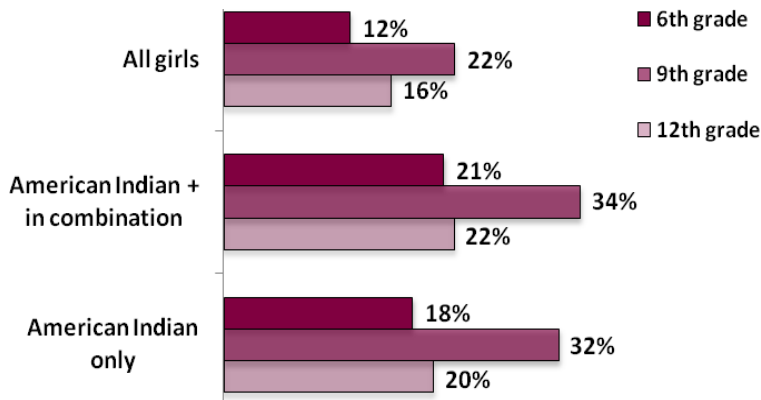
Native girls responding to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey also more frequently reported that they had thought about suicide and that they had attempted suicide in the past 12 months than girls in the general population (see Figures 35 and 36).

²⁹⁴ Mylant M and Mann C, (July 31, 2008). Current sexual trauma among high-risk teen mothers, *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*. Retrieved June 1, 2009 from http://www.blz.com/news/2008/09/02/Current_Sexual_Trauma_Among_High-Risk_9060.html

²⁹⁵ Farley M, Lynne J, and Cotton A, (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the colonization of Aboriginal women, *Transcultural Psychology* 42: 242-271.

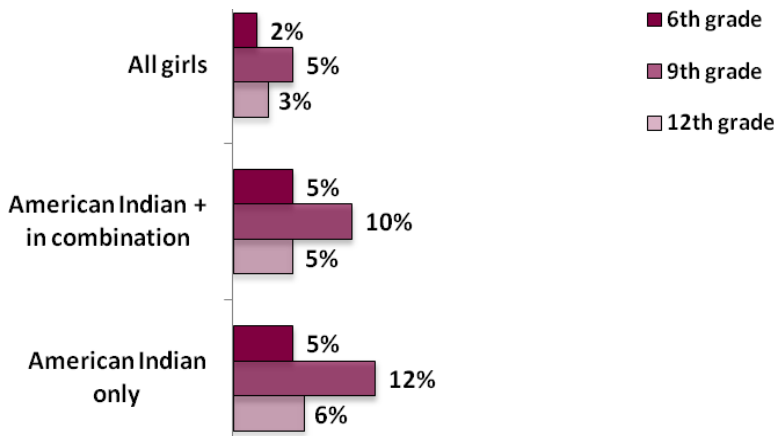


35. Girls that thought about killing themselves during the past year, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey

36. Girls that tried to kill themselves during past year, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey

A recent study found that 29 percent of American Indian teens believed they had only a 50-50 chance of living to age 35, compared to 10 percent of white teens. Teens that predicted a high likelihood of early death were much more likely to engage in subsequent risky behavior.²⁹⁶ SAVE (Suicide Awareness Voices of Education) reports that the suicide rate for American Indian youth ages 10 to 15 in Minnesota is two to three times the rate of other groups in the state.²⁹⁷ In Canada, the 2003 completed suicide rate for Aboriginal female youth ages 15 to 24 was almost 9 times that of female youth in the general population.²⁹⁸ Many Native youth also do

²⁹⁶ Borowsky I, Ireland M and Resnick M, (2009). Health status and behavioral outcomes for youth who anticipate a high likelihood of early death, *Pediatrics* 124(1): 81-88.

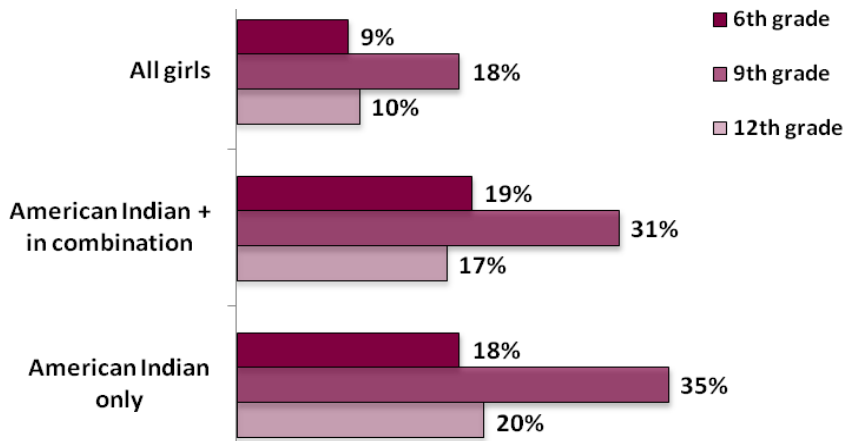
²⁹⁷ Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE), (no date). Minnesota youth suicide statistics. Retrieved June 29, 2009 from http://www.save.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=E9794786-DA70-AAB0-BABB61E8CC2F8EE0

²⁹⁸ Health Canada, (2003). *A statistical profile on the health of First Nations in Canada*. Ottawa: Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch.

not seek help when they feel distressed. A study with 101 American Indian youth who had attempted suicide found that 74 percent had not sought any help. Their most common reasons were embarrassment, not recognizing the problem, a belief that nobody could help, and feeling a need to rely on themselves.²⁹⁹

Self-injury (self-cutting/slashing or burning) is often used as a proxy measure for emotional well-being. Self-injury appears to be common among American Indian girls in Minnesota. Sixth and 9th grade Native girls responding to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey reported having deliberately hurt themselves during the past year much more frequently than other girls (see Figure 37). The reduced percent of Native 12th grade girls reporting self-harm and their lower rates of reporting problematic alcohol use may be related to the extremely high American Indian drop-out rate. It is possible that Native girls that continue in school to this grade level are those with the strongest coping strategies, support systems, and/or life skills.

37. Girls that hurt themselves on purpose during the past year, statewide*



*2007 Minnesota Student Survey


Research with homeless youth in the U.S. has resulted in similar findings. In a study of 428 street youth in Washington State, 14 percent were American Indian. Self-injurious acts were found to be extremely common; 69 percent of the youth reported that they had engaged in self-injury. A history of sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect, and what the authors described as “deviant survival strategies” were found to be related to self-injury.³⁰⁰

Canadian research with prostituted Aboriginal adolescents on probation found that almost one-third had engaged in self-harm (self-cutting or slashing),³⁰¹ a rate very similar to that of 9th grade

²⁹⁹ Freedenthal S and Stiffman A, (2007). “They might think I was crazy”: Young American Indians’ reasons for not seeking help when suicidal, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 22: 58-77.

³⁰⁰ Tyler K, Whitbeck L, Hoyt D, and Johnson K, (2003). Self-mutilation and homeless youth: The role of family abuse, street experiences, and mental disorders, *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 13(4): 457-474.

³⁰¹ Schissel B and Fedec K, (January 2009). The selling of innocence: The gestalt of danger in the lives of youth prostitutes, *Canadian Journal of Criminology*. Pp. 35-56.



Native girls responding to the Minnesota Student Survey. A Canadian study of incarcerated Canadian women who reported engaging in self-harm found that 64 percent were Aboriginal. These are some of the reasons participants gave when asked what motivated them to cut or slash themselves:

- A cry for attention or nurturing
- Self-punishment or self-blame
- Coping with isolation or loneliness
- Distracting themselves from or cleansing themselves of emotional pain
- A way to feel again, or to re-connect with reality
- Expression of painful life experiences
- Feeling in control, having power over self³⁰²

VI. Barriers to exiting the sex trade

The vast majority of prostituted women and girls want to leave prostitution.^{303, 304} Despite that desire, most remain in the sex trade, for a variety of reasons. The following are the major barriers described by advocates attending the MIWRC round tables and in the literature produced by researchers and programs working with prostituted Native women and girls.

Inadequate support to ensure safety

Limited access to emergency or supportive housing

Studies of women and girls in prostitution cite a lack of safe shelter as the primary barrier to assisting those who want to leave the sex trade.^{305,306} The advocates attending the MIWRC round table discussions also identified the absence of safe housing options as the major barrier for women and girls seeking to escape prostitution. These are some of their comments:


³⁰² Wichmann C, Serin R and Abracen J. (2002). *Women Offenders Who Engage in Self-harm: A Comparative Investigation*. Ottawa: Correctional Service Canada.

³⁰³ Farley M and Lynne J, (2005). Prostitution of indigenous women: Sex inequality and the colonization of Canada's Aboriginal women, *Fourth World Journal* 6(1): 21-29.

³⁰⁴ Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto, (1987). *Streetwork outreach with adult female prostitutes: Final report*. Cited in Farley M, Lynne J, and Cotton A, (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the colonization of Aboriginal women, *Transcultural Psychology* 42: 242-271.

³⁰⁵ Priebe A and Suhr C, (September 2005). *Hidden in plain view: the commercial sexual exploitation of girls in Atlanta*. Atlanta: Atlanta Women's Agenda.

³⁰⁶ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada.



It's like, 'Why would I waste my time talking with you about the situation, because there is nothing as a housing resource or as an advocate that you are going to be able to do. I think they're very aware that they're alone in that. [Duluth advocate]

It's really frustrating when you have someone come in who says, 'I'm in this situation where I'm getting brought down to the Cities and I need to come back home.' Okay, we get a ticket so that person can come back home, and then it starts happening again by another family member, and then they're homeless and we can't move. We need a network of resources that are aware of the issue, and that can talk openly with about what we can do, and bring those resources together. We just don't have that right now. [Duluth advocate]

Several advocates described federal regulations for public housing programs as a significant barrier for many prostituted Native women and girls with a felony conviction, which makes them automatically ineligible. Some advocates reported that most transitional housing programs and domestic violence shelters will refuse women and girls entry if they disclose that they have been prostituted. Minnesota state law also allows landlords and managers of subsidized housing to refuse to rent to a person with a history of prostitution.³⁰⁷

Some advocates described additional rules at battered women's shelters that effectively lock out Native women and girls in prostitution, simultaneously sabotaging advocates' efforts to help them exit the sex trade. These are examples of the stories they told:

I worked with someone for three years who was stripping. She was sexually abused as a child, got married at eighteen to someone who was abusive to her and when they got divorced she did all the things she was supposed to. Got her child got out, that's it. There's a strip club down the road that she made a little money at and she was good looking and was able to do that, and pretty soon now that's the only work experience she has, that's her whole entire life. She managed to get her son through high school and now he's out. She's traveling the circuit, she can't make any money, she's getting stuck places, sleeping in her car, staying at guys' houses who are holding guns to her head. She doesn't use, completely sober. And I spent three years with appointments over the phone, she'd call me from all over and talk. What kind of brought her to leaving is that she just could never be safe. There was no place to go. She couldn't get a job, she couldn't get into a [women's] shelter where she lived, and so I said if she could get up here we would get her into a shelter up here. And they kicked her out almost immediately and told her to go to the homeless shelter. She was used to being up all night, and that was an issue at the shelter. That was her job hours. I mean she was up until six in the morning and then slept all day, and that was what she got in trouble for and got kicked out for. [Duluth advocate]

All of the places we outreach workers have to refer these young women and girls to, there's rules, there's curfews, you can't be chemically dependent or anything...they'll be at the point where they want help. They'll try it out and realize 'No, this isn't working for me. I'm not getting my needs met' and they go back into the same situation and they burn a lot of bridges. They have shelters saying 'No, you've been here once before. You can't come back.' Then they have nowhere to go. [Duluth advocate]

³⁰⁷ Carter V, (1999). Breaking Free, in Hughes D (Ed.), *Making the harm visible: Global sexual exploitation of women and children*. Kingston RI: The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women.



Absence of other options for self-sufficiency

As noted earlier in this report, most American Indian women and girls in the sex trade have not completed high school, so they rarely have marketable job skills or a formal employment history. Though 90 to 95 percent want to get out of the sex trade, most do not feel they have any other realistic options for earning enough money to survive.^{308,309}

Distrust of law enforcement

Advocates at both round tables described Native women's and girls' distrust of police, fear that they would be arrested if they asked police for help, and fear that their trafficker would suffer no real consequences even if they did file a complaint and agree to testify. Some Minneapolis advocates reported interactions with city police in which they or their clients felt they were not treated well, and advocates working with prostituted Native girls in Duluth expressed frustration that the FBI chose not to prosecute a recent case involving four trafficked girls even though the girls were willing to testify and Duluth police had gathered extensive evidence. Echoing the Duluth advocates' stories, Kathy Black Bear at Rosebud Tribal Services in South Dakota reported that last year, an underage Rosebud girl living in Sioux Falls was trafficked to Mexico and kept there from January to March 2008. Ms. Black Bear reported that the FBI declined to investigate the case, so the tribe hired a private investigator to travel to Mexico, who successfully found the girl and brought her home. No charges were ever brought against the trafficker.³¹⁰

Conversations with police officers suggest that limited staff time and budget constraints are often the reason that more pimps are not investigated. A Minneapolis police officer explained that this is difficult when only two officers are assigned to prostitution-related crime citywide, and their other responsibilities allow them to spend an average of one week per month on prostitution-related investigations.³¹¹ A second Minneapolis police officer reported that his unit would like to do more to apprehend pimps, but to do so requires significant planning, the cooperation of the person being prostituted, and a task force of five or six officers. He said that these costs tend to limit law enforcement efforts to the investigation of large prostitution rings that traffic minors, preferably those that also traffic drugs.³¹² The same officer acknowledged that arresting the prostituted woman is generally considered the most expedient way to ensure her cooperation in securing adequate evidence to successfully prosecute her pimp.³¹³

³⁰⁸ Farley M, Lynne J, and Cotton A, (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the colonization of Aboriginal women, *Transcultural Psychology* 42: 242-271.

³⁰⁹ Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto, (1987). *Streetwork outreach with adult female prostitutes: Final report*. Cited in Farley M, Lynne J, and Cotton A, (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the colonization of Aboriginal women, *Transcultural Psychology* 42: 242-271.

³¹⁰ Telephone interview with Kathy Black Bear, Rosebud Sioux Tribal Services, on April 6, 2009. Cited with permission.

³¹¹ Interview with Minneapolis police officer, December 31, 2008.

³¹² Meeting in Minneapolis, May 13, 2009.

³¹³ *Ibid.*



A study of prostituted women in Hennepin County using SIP (Subject in Process) numbers from the Hennepin County Court system confirmed that each woman convicted of prostitution had an average of eight prostitution-related arrests.³¹⁴ Minneapolis Police Department 3rd Precinct Inspector Lucy Gerold reported that the department does conduct “john stings” to arrest purchasers of sexual services, but noted that most have been allowed to plea bargain their sentences down to restorative justice.³¹⁵ In September 2008, Susan Segal, the Minneapolis City Attorney, reported that her office was currently reviewing its plea bargain standards in “john cases,” and that prevention and treatment for prostituted girls is the focus of the department’s work and the direction taken in the prostitution review calendar with the court.³¹⁶

In a series titled “Lawless Lands,” the *Denver Post* reported that from 1997 to 2006, federal prosecutors rejected almost two-thirds of reservation cases brought to them by FBI and Bureau of Indian Affairs investigators. The newspaper described some of the reasons that this occurred:

Investigative resources are spread so thin that federal agents are forced to focus only on the highest-priority felonies while letting the investigation of some serious crime languish for years. Long delays in investigations without arrest leave child sexual assault victims vulnerable or suspects free to commit other crimes, including, in two cases the Post found, homicide. With overwhelmed federal agents unable to complete thousands of investigations or supplement those done by poorly trained tribal police, many low-priority felonies never make it to federal prosecutors in the first place... Federal investigators usually take the lead when the victim is 9 or younger, authorities say; tribal investigators take the lead with older victims. But federal prosecutors often decline those cases precisely because the victim has been interviewed too many times or by investigators who aren't specially trained to handle child sexual assault.³¹⁷

It was outside the scope of this report to get extensive input from law enforcement personnel on this barrier, but a larger discussion of their perspectives should be included in future reports on this topic.

Child protection policies


Some advocates working with adolescent girls reported encountering challenges when child protection policies and priorities prevented opening a case for an adolescent girl who was being prostituted or was at extremely high risk of being prostituted. These are two of their stories:

³¹⁴ Hope L and Martin L, (2006). *Prostitution Project*. Cited in Martin and Rud (2007). *Prostitution research report: Data sharing to establish best practices for women in prostitution*. Minneapolis: Prostitution Project, Hennepin County Corrections and the Folwell Center.

³¹⁵ E-mail correspondence from Inspector Gerold to Suzanne Koepplinger, Executive Director of the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, September 2, 2008.

³¹⁶ E-mail correspondence from City Attorney Segal to Suzanne Koepplinger, Executive Director of the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center, September 12, 2008.

³¹⁷ Riley M, (November 11, 2007). Lawless lands: Promises, justice broken. *Denver Post*. Retrieved February 2, 2009 from http://www.denverpost.com/ci_7429560



We dealt with a case where the girl was screaming for help and even did a self-report and they wouldn't open the case until the mother abandoned the kids. One of the things is, it's very dependent upon the youth's age. If they are 16, 17, they all just become disposable, forgotten. And if you don't get all of the information from the youth, if you don't have enough substantiated evidence about who, what, when, where, why, they can't open cases, they have nothing to work with. And the girls are not gonna talk. [Second speaker] Exactly. Even though we're mandated reporters and we're supposed to tell those things, if we don't have enough information, they can't open the case. You have to have enough information to warrant the opening of the case, or to even get them to investigate. [Twin Cities advocates]

Number one, there's instances where child protection should be called, but we're finding gaps on why they can't be called. Two, there's this concern among mothers about child protection, that it's bad. In some of these cases I think that it would be helpful... These are younger girls, and they are being prostituted or are at very high risk of being prostituted. In the one case I couldn't prove nothing but the mother wouldn't let her get medical treatment, and I called around and they wouldn't let me take her as an advocate without Mom's signature. And so, I couldn't even get her the medical treatment without mom and the county didn't think that it would be a child protection case. But then I called it in three times just to see if I could get help. I just said 'I don't even want it to be a child protection case. I just want you to find me a loophole.' They did find me a loophole. [Twin Cities advocate]

The scope and time frame for this report also limited our ability to access the perspectives of county child protection workers, which should be included in further discussions of this issue.

Limited resources for support and healing


Lack of services designed for Native women and girls in prostitution

Advocates repeatedly emphasized the fact that very few of the programs and services available to prostituted Native women and girls are designed to meet their needs, especially when they have not yet reached the point where they have made a firm commitment to leaving prostitution.

These are some of their comments:

When she has to stay places where people hold guns to her head, when she has to sleep in her car, when she's taking off all of her clothes off for a dollar, and she doesn't have anything, she's never ever once applied for a job, has no job history, nothing. She's going into her fifties. She's also aging out of the business. So what ended up happening [when we couldn't get her into a shelter] was we found a place for her where she could go for a period of time in a whole different city and we got four tires donated for her car and filled it full of gas and off she went. And that was the best we could do. And she was here and she knew us, we could provide counseling and we could provide stuff. It was just so, I don't know, a very sad situation. [Duluth advocate]

We ask our women, 'What do you need?' but our services aren't set up to help them, and I feel like it's an injustice to them, to pry into their life and say 'What the hell is going on, and how can I help you?' We don't even know, and our services aren't set up for that, so what can we do as organizations to make sure that we're all on the same page, that we treat the survivor the same no matter way? [Twin Cities advocate]



Advocates also described the absence of programming that holistically addresses Native girls' and women's mental health, substance abuse, and safety issues. This is one of their comments:

What are you going to do to get her out? Because recognizing them, identifying them, that's great—but once she's ready to get out, are you going to have a place for her? This is not an overnight fix. This is not just 'Get her housing and her whole life is going to be better.' We're talking about incest, mental health issues, trauma that is life-long. [Duluth advocate]

Advocates at both round tables described the ways that funders' requirements can impede prostituted Native women's and girls' access to the support they need. These are some examples of their comments:

[The programs I work with] are battered women's programming, and the attitude is 'It doesn't happen here' because there's no money for it [working with trafficked women], for them to have that kind of programming. When I used to run the shelter here, we never touched on that, that wasn't something we ever, ever talked about...But, like in Red Lake...the [reservation's] shelter there doesn't have programming for helping women in prostitution either. [Duluth advocate]

The other piece is that in housing funding streams, the programming has become more and more [difficult]. The reporting and the documentation and the things that they're supposed to track, that advocates can't keep up with just 'Let's get you into housing.' Housing is really complicated, it takes a lot of time and energy to get all that stuff in place.' [Duluth advocate]

Advocates and others have commented that there is also a significant lack of federal funding or state funding for assisting domestically trafficked and prostituted adult women. Though the Trafficking Victims Protection Act provides for a grant program that local and state authorities can use to provide services to mostly U.S. citizen victims, those funds were never requested by the Department of Justice, and subsequently no programs were ever funded.³¹⁸ Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) monies can be used for services to women in prostitution, but cannot be used for services to domestic victims of sex trafficking.^{319,320} Victims of domestic violence and physical or sexual assault are eligible for reparations through Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, but not if they were “committing a crime or any misconduct that is connected with the incident”—which automatically excludes prostituted women who have been beaten or sexually assaulted by a pimp or a john.”³²¹

Inadequate support from the mental health system

Earlier in this report, we described the overall emotional and mental vulnerability of Native girls and women, particularly the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Life in

³¹⁸ Hughes D, (July 30, 2007). Enslaved in the U.S.A.: American victims need our help, *National Review Online*. Retrieved June 14, 2009 from <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ZDU0OGNIMDcwM2JmYjk0N2M0OTU4NGVIMTBIMmEyMjl>

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, (2007). *Violence Against Women Act FFY 2007-2009: Minnesota Office of Justice Programs State implementation plan*, p.6. Retrieved July 24, 2009 from http://www.ojp.state.mn.us/publications/VAWA_FFY07-09_Implementation_Plan.pdf

³²¹ Minnesota Senate, (April 22, 2009). *Public Safety Budget Division update*. Retrieved May 30, 2009 from http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/committees/2009-2010/finance_public_safety/update.htm



prostitution adds another layer of significant mental health consequences to pre-existing emotional problems. The advocates described many prostituted Native women and girls as living in a constant state of fear that is based on past experiences and current threat.

Research has found that prostituted women and girls often dissociate to survive psychologically, allowing their minds to distance themselves from experiences that are too much for them to process at the time.^{322,323} Some survivors of abuse describe this as “leaving your body.”³²⁴ Frequent dissociation leads to a lack of connection in a person’s thoughts, memory and sense of identity.³²⁵ This significantly hampers a prostituted woman’s or girl’s ability to take steps to remove herself from a painful or dangerous situation.

In order to reach a level of stability that is needed to successfully exit the sex trade, many need mental health services while they are still in prostitution. As the advocates noted, most mental health professionals have no experience providing services to women living in the equivalent of a war zone, where rape and injury are routine occurrences and there is no protection against either. Though recognizing a need for psychiatric and psychological services for severely traumatized and mentally ill prostituted women, many of the advocates at the Minneapolis round table reported significant discomfort with having to secure a mental health diagnosis as a condition for rapid access to emergency or supportive housing. Some were also concerned about the mental health field potentially becoming the favored approach for addressing prostitution. These are some of the comments from that discussion:

Right now mental health is what is being funded the most, so a lot of times our women cannot receive resources until we get her the diagnosis. People are handing out the diagnosis, and that can be because they know housing comes first, and the most open model to people in prostitution is ‘We’ll take you where you’re at and we’ll move you forward rather than making you do those steps.’ You can’t even get them into a lot of housing programs that focus on where you are now, until you get a diagnosis. We have one woman we’re working with, she got a diagnosis from, like, five doctors. [Twin Cities advocate]

Plenty of women that I have worked with have been diagnosed as bipolar then get the medication that goes along with it. So it concerns me, that once women have that diagnosis, then the medication is it, that’s the treatment. None of the other issues are addressed. [Twin Cities advocate]

In addition to these concerns, advocates also described misdiagnosis and over-diagnosis as significant problems in assisting Native women and girls in prostitution as well as those trying to exit. Some questioned whether the criteria for certain mental health disorders were even appropriate for prostituted American Indian women and girls. These comments are part of those discussions:

³²² McLeod E, (1982). *Women working: Prostitution now*. London: Croom Helm.

³²³ Hoigard C and Finstad L, (1992). *Backstreets: Prostitution, money, and love*. Cambridge: Polity.

³²⁴ Cori J and Scaer R, (2008). *Healing from trauma: A survivor’s guide to understanding your symptoms and reclaiming your life*. Cambridge MA: Da Capo Press.

³²⁵ National Mental Health Association, (2009). *Fact sheet: Dissociation and dissociative disorders*. Retrieved June 29, 2009 from <http://www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/dissociation-and-dissociative-disorders>

That diagnosis of bipolar, I think it's archaic. We're talking about trauma, multiple generations of trauma. There's papers out about the trauma of racism which Native women experience. It's like not only the racism, the sexism, a lack of acknowledgement of the history of Native people and what this particularly means for women who have been exploited. That diagnosis doesn't accurately describe our experiences. And so the mental health field is kind of off the hook in addressing the social problems that go with that. And it's like, 'Here, we've done our share, this is what she has, give her the pills and refer her onto someone else.' [Twin Cities advocate]

There's one other side to dissociation, there's a positive side to that, and where that takes you is just spirituality. When you go out of body it's like you go into the spirit world. What does that mean? What is that about? Healing. Instead of all this 99.99% of negative stuff about what happening to you. And so, I've found women responsive to that and questioning what that meant for them. And that leads us right down the road of healing and spirituality. 'What does dissociation mean for you, and how do you find safety in that?' [Twin Cities advocate]

A counselor or a therapist can recognize some of the symptoms of PTSD as bipolar, or as schizophrenic. And unless you are well versed, or, I don't want to discredit any therapist, but I think doing more research and more involvement of what happens with mental health is needed, and I don't think a lot of therapists do that. Then you're stuck into a category. Because research is showing that PTSD has a lot of symptoms and if you're saying 'Oh, well she has disassociated, therefore she's schizophrenic...' [Twin Cities advocate]

Dependency, denial, and distrust of advocates

Advocates at both round tables described the tendency of prostituted Native women and girls to insist that they are in prostitution by choice, and to minimize or deny any harm they have experienced. These are some examples of those comments:


Finally, it got to the point where she wanted to leave, but this was absolutely not abuse to her. She was in control of her body, and those guys were idiots that wanted to give her any money for it. And, the fact of the matter was that she was never safe. [Duluth advocate]

Their mentality is 'This guy is taking care of me. He has provided for me. My family has let me down and this man cares about me. So, no matter what you guys are trying to tell me, I'm not trying to hear that because when you're gone at 5 o'clock he's still gonna be here. So everything you're telling me is a lie because he takes me home, he takes care of me, and me turning tricks is okay because I need to help out somehow. I can't work, I don't have a job and I can't find a job, so I'm doing what I can to help out.' [Twin Cities advocate]

One of the girls' mom used to work out on the boats and she came in and wanted to get an order against the guy who she thought but couldn't prove was pimping out her girl. That girl to this day still says 'He loves me and blah blah blah.' Puke everywhere, because he doesn't love you. He's shamelessly exploiting you and using you. [Duluth advocate]

Joe Parker, co-founder of a foundation that provides services to prostituted women and men, argues that this type of loyalty must be viewed as a manifestation of Stockholm Syndrome, a psychological condition common to hostage situations in which the hostage becomes emotionally bonded to her captor.^{326,327} In a book chapter, Parker wrote:

³²⁶ Parker J, (2004). How prostitution works, in Stark C and Whisnant R (Eds.), *Not for sale: Feminists resisting prostitution and pornography*, pp. 3-14. North Melbourne: Spinifex Press.



When the victim cannot fight or flee, she may try to form a protective relationship with her captor. She hopes that if she can prove her love and loyalty to the pimp, she can ‘love’ him into being good. This can become such a desperate attachment that she actually believes she loves him, and passes up chances to escape. Stockholm Syndrome is often the real reason for what others see as the ‘choice’ to stay in the sex industry.³²⁸

At the round tables, advocates emphasized the extensive period of time it takes to build enough trust that prostituted Native women and girls are even open to considering that they are being exploited, and the longer period of time it takes until they become willing to leave the sex trade. Several advocates described their methods for giving younger girls time and space to tell what happened to them, to begin building that trust. This is one of their comments:

You've got to have that relationship, it isn't even a matter of asking the right question...I mean, once I know I've got that confidence with them and they're talking about problems and living in the cities, whatever, how horrible it was down there. So I ask questions about that. Maybe we're just starting to ask. But there still needs to be that relationship there. We're not doing the intake form with them. You know, when I get women where they start talking for some reason it's in the car. Even if we're sitting in the office it's ‘Let's get some Dairy Queen,’ just so I can get them in the car. [Duluth advocate]

Some advocates cautioned that prostituted Native girls and women need to be offered options, saying that any programming that requires them to adopt a belief system, even one based on Native spirituality and healing, could potentially have a negative impact. This is one of their comments:


With some people who have been through so much trauma, are they even gonna be able to have faith right away in anything? So if you put them in [an immersion program based on Native spirituality] right away, is it gonna maybe push them away from that? What about people who go do that and then say ‘That's just one more person playing on my vulnerability,’ even if it was well intended? I wouldn't get my [Indian] name at that point, I would not...I look back and I think ‘That's asking a lot. You know, it's one thing to sort of have my body but you will never have my mind,’ right? When you're coming from that very protective space, you just get irritated and hate everybody. [Duluth advocate]

Fear, shame, and the “don’t talk” rule

During the round table discussions, several advocates commented that Native communities are often aware that certain families in the community are sexually exploiting and trafficking their girls into prostitution, but ignore the signs that this is occurring because they are reluctant to “interfere.” Long-time advocates described this as the “don’t talk” rule, and reflected that at one time, this same silence existed around domestic violence in Native communities. They felt that until communities start talking openly about sexual abuse, sexual assault, and commercial sexual exploitation, these problems will not cease. These are some comments from those discussions:

³²⁷ Carver J, (undated). Love and Stockholm Syndrome: The mystery of loving an abuser (Part 1), *Counseling Resource*. Retrieved June 29, 2009 from <http://counselingresource.com/quizzes/stockholm/>

³²⁸ Parker J, (2004). How prostitution works, in Stark C and Whisnant R (Eds.), *Not for sale: Feminists resisting prostitution and pornography*, pp. 3-14. North Melbourne: Spinifex Press.



We've got families that have been in prostitution for generations and you get one that starts talking, she's out of the family. You know, even sisters who were sexually abused by their father also, they're mad at her, you know, 'You better not move back to our rez.' [Second speaker] And then that causes a lot of drinking and drugs because they're ousted. [Duluth advocates]

You do not call the police. I don't care what is going on, you call the police and your house will get stoned. Even neighbors who were not involved in what was happening. You just do not do it. That is a big piece that these women and girls are getting, when they're little. [Duluth advocate]

One of the things we need to work on is that denial. We first have to recognize that this is happening...In our community, what is slowly killing us is that denial, that there is sexual abuse, there is incest happening, and as a result we're setting our future off to be utilized by someone else sexually. [Twin Cities advocate]

When some of the advocates were discussing the need to get the community talking about commercial sexual exploitation, especially families prostituting their children, others responded that when they had opened discussions about incest and sexual assault in their own communities, many elders disapproved. This is an example comment from that discussion:


Um, some of the elders don't appreciate that. [Second speaker] Oh, I know, I know. I was 'that nasty girl who talks nasty.' [Duluth advocates]

Research with Native child victims of physical and sexual abuse, physical and sexual assault, and commercial exploitation supports the advocates' reports. In one study with American Indian survivors of childhood sexual abuse, participants told researchers that when Native women or girls are sexually assaulted by a family member, they often fear being ostracized by their extended family if they report the assault. Reporting a family member, or even a member of another Native family in the same community, could result in significant social repercussions, so most victims do not report the assault.³²⁹ In recent interviews with sexual violence survivors, activists, and support workers in three regions of Indian Country (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North and South Dakota, the State of Oklahoma, and the State of Alaska), Amnesty International also found that violence against Native women often goes unreported. In fact, a number of the women that were interviewed agreed to speak only if their anonymity was guaranteed. The researchers described barriers to reporting that included fear of breaches in confidentiality, fear of retaliation, and a lack of confidence that reports will be taken seriously or result in perpetrators being brought to justice.³³⁰

In the Canadian study with 150 commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal youth in 22 communities described earlier, prostituted youth that had run away from home told interviewers that in their home communities, there is no one they could talk to about the physical and sexual violence they had experienced at the hands of family members and other adults in the

³²⁹ Gonzales J, (1999). Native American survivors, in California Coalition Against Sexual Assault, *Support for survivors manual*, pp. 257-259.

³³⁰ Amnesty International, (2007). *Maze of injustice: The failure to protect indigenous women from sexual violence in the U.S.* London: Amnesty International.



community. The youth reported that people are often reluctant to “interfere,” which leaves victims with no source of help or support. The youth felt that either they would not be believed, and/or that telling someone would simply trigger new violence.³³¹

Absence of a common, evidence-based approach

At the round tables, advocates described two additional barriers they have encountered in trying to determine what services and approaches would result in the best outcomes.

The first is the absence of appropriate training for anyone working with prostituted Native women and girls, provided by people with cultural knowledge and extensive experience working with this population. The advocates reported that because addressing this issue is relatively new to Native communities, no common language or body of knowledge has been established. They felt that participating in the round tables and sharing information and perspectives had significantly increased their own knowledge and awareness, but felt that training is extremely important for advocates that have never been exposed to hearing stories of trauma this severe. The advocates with long-term experience working with prostituted Native women and girls emphasized the importance of training advocates on self-care, which they felt to be critical for working with such a traumatized population while staying balanced and avoiding burn-out.

The second barrier the advocates requested assistance in surmounting is the lack of a systematic approach to collecting reliable data about the number of Native women and girls involved in the various forms of commercial sexual exploitation, the number that meet the state’s legal definition for trafficking, their current paths of entry, the prevalence of violence they are experiencing, and their needs while in prostitution and when trying to exit. Many of the advocates at both round tables voiced a high level of interest in participating in a collaborative data collection effort if MIWRC or a collaborative group would provide a questionnaire and technical assistance and enter and analyze those data. There was strong agreement at both round tables that these data are essential for effective planning and services.

³³¹ Kingsley C and Mark M, (2000). *Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation*. Save the Children Canada.



VII. Conclusions

On July 22, 2009, MIWRC held a listening session with 33 Native community leaders and elders to discuss the draft of this report and to gather input on recommended action steps. Their comments are included in the following discussion.

The social ecology of vulnerability

Overall, the information we gathered for this report demonstrates that the sex trafficking of Native women and girls is neither a new problem nor a rare occurrence. It is, however, a very complex problem in its origins, activities, and solutions.

In reviewing our findings, we recognized that a social ecology framework is a useful lens for summarizing the influences that contribute to Native girls' and women's involvement in the sex trade. Social ecology is the study of people in their environment and the influence of that environment on human development and behavior.³³² This theoretical model allows for examination of layered social and economic influences on Native children's ability to develop the four beliefs described at the beginning of this report as essential for a coherent and resilient sense of self:

- The world is a good and rewarding place
- The world is predictable, meaningful, and fair
- I am a worthy person
- People are trustworthy.³³³

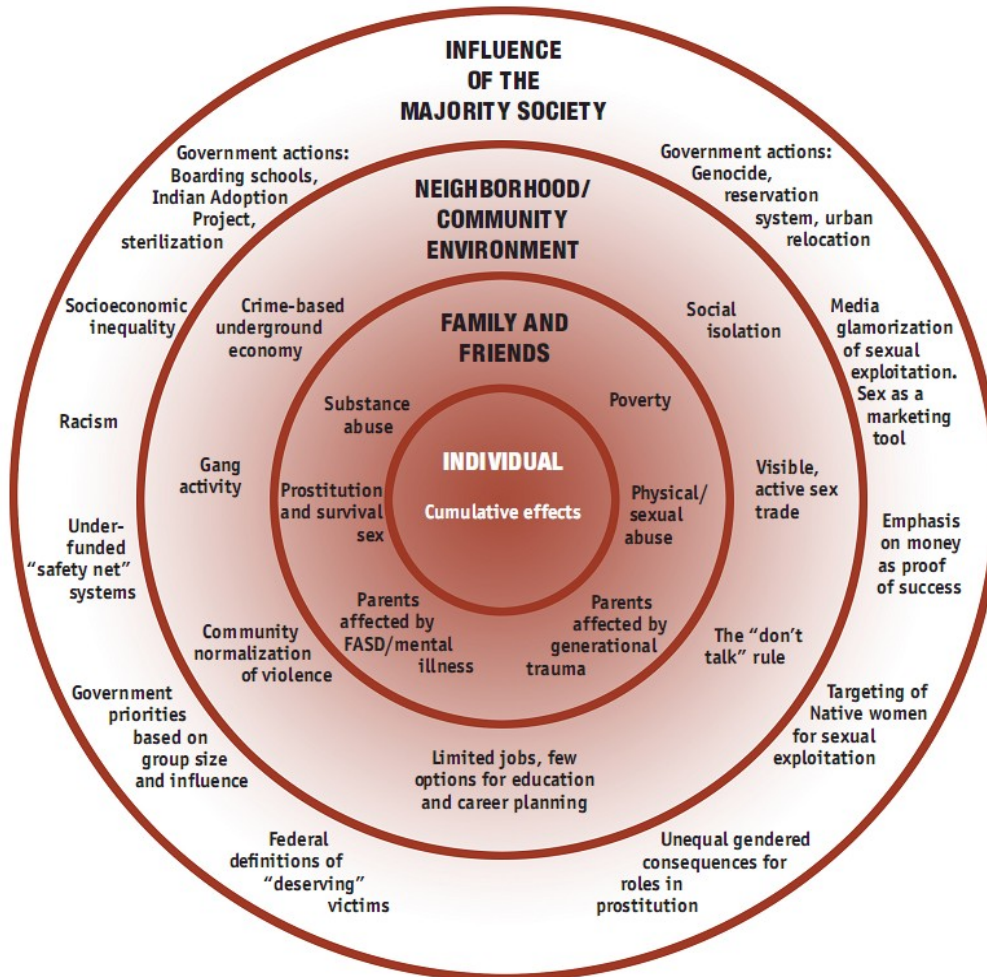
Using a social ecology lens to view the information presented in this report, we identified four major layers of influences that in combination make American Indian women and girls extremely vulnerable to sex trafficking:

- The impact of the majority society
- Neighborhood and community environments
- The influence of family and friends
- The cumulative impact on the individual

³³² Hawley AH, (1950). *Human ecology: A theory of community structure*. New York: Ronald Press.

³³³ Roth S and Newman E, (1995). The process of coping with sexual trauma, in Everly G and Lating J (Eds.), *Psychotraumatology: Key papers and core concepts in post-traumatic stress*. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 321-339.

The social ecology of Native girls' vulnerability



Influence of the majority society

Government actions

The first and most pervasive layer of influence is that of the majority society. The historical review provided as context for this report describes a series of U.S. government actions that contributed to the poverty and social problems that plague American Indian communities today.³³⁴ These include:

³³⁴ See pp. 4-13.

- The removal of Native people from their traditional land base to remote rural reservations, which forced them to become dependent on the U.S. government for food and other survival needs
- The large-scale removal of Native children from their families and communities to boarding schools and adoptive homes, which prevented intergenerational transmission of language and cultural norms for community and family roles and individual responsibilities to family and community
- The widespread physical and sexual abuse of Native children in boarding schools, which significantly impacted their ability to parent their own children in healthy ways
- Prohibitions against practicing traditional spirituality and participating in ceremonies, which impeded grieving of losses and healing from trauma
- Urban relocation initiatives that failed to provide the promised resources, leaving Native families in dire poverty and isolated from the community support that had been present on the reservation
- Government-sponsored assaults on Native women's rights to their bodies, including rape in military action and involuntary sterilization by Indian Health Service physicians

Racism and the targeting of Native women for sexual violence

In the historical review, advocates' round table discussions, Canadian studies of prostituted Native women and youth, and the listening session with community leaders and elders, racism was consistently identified as a key factor in sexual violence against Native women and girls and in extreme physical and sexual violence against prostituted Native women and youth.³³⁵ Research cited in this report also shows that Native women and girls are more frequently victims of sexual violence than any other group of women in the country, and that they more frequently sustain injuries in those assaults.³³⁶

In the listening session, one of the community leaders commented on the majority society's casual acceptance of the sexual exploitation of Native women:

I remember going to some kind of historical presentation where they were talking about the Voyageurs, and how they would keep an Indian woman in a trundle bed under their bed for 'their purposes.' And I was so appalled that anybody in the Historical Society would still be dramatizing that, like this was some great and wonderful historical event. And I was really hurt because I'm an Indian woman, and I went there with a group of school kids...if I'm appalled and offended, think of what it's doing to these poor little minds. They're being taught that, 'Oh, Indian women. All they're good for is sex.' [Native community leader at the listening session]

³³⁵ See pp. 6-8, 11-13,16-17.

³³⁶ See pp. 65-66.



Media glamorization of sexual exploitation and sex as a marketing tool

Advocates participating in the two round tables made frequent reference to Native girls' perception of the sex trade, particularly dancing in strip clubs, as a glamorous career option in which they could make a lot of money very quickly.³³⁷ A number of community leaders and elders at the listening session described the influence of the media (especially the sexualized nature of music videos) and the aggressive use of sex in marketing as significant majority-society influences that encourage Native girls and boys to view sexual exploitation as glamorous. These are a few of their comments:

I'm currently the chief baby-sitter for my granddaughters, who are both 13, the critical age, and one of them is wearing the Britney Spears look. And, I'm like, 'Don't you want to put something over that?' And, you know, monitoring their Internet activity...it's the clothing and the cosmetics and the ads that all say women are less valued than men...it is a sort of hammering, constant message. [Native community elder and leader at the listening session]

I have a 10-year-old now, and...when we set up camp [at a pow-wow] he wants to be gone and run around, and all the boys are running around...and then when they go to the vendor booths, the first place they always go is the one where they have all the hats and the pimp gear and all the bling and all that. He always wants to buy that stuff. He always wants that hat with the bunny sign on it. [Native community leader at the listening session]

Socioeconomic inequality and the emphasis on money as proof of success

The advocates' stories, the Canadian literature on the relationship between poverty, homelessness, and Aboriginal women and youth entering the sex trade, and the over-representation of Native women and girls in the Wilder Research study of homelessness in Minnesota all show socioeconomic inequality to be a major factor facilitating Native women's and girls' entry into the sex trade. As we reported earlier, American Indian poverty is the highest in the nation, increasing over the past three years while Black, Hispanic, and White poverty rates declined.³³⁸


Poverty is clearly a major factor in facilitating Native women's and girls' entry into the sex trade. The advocates' stories, the Canadian literature on the relationship between poverty, homelessness, and Aboriginal women and girls entering the sex trade, and the over-representation of Native women and girls in the Wilder Research study of homelessness in Minnesota all illustrate the continuing influence of economic inequality on the choices available to Native women and girls.³³⁹

The advocates' discussions at the two round tables and the Canadian literature on studies of prostituted Aboriginal youth both described young Native girls' belief that the money they could earn in the sex trade would empower them, allowing them the freedom to run their own lives and

³³⁷ See pp. 39-40, 42-44, 52, 57, 68, 71.

³³⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, (August 29, 2006). Income climbs, poverty stabilizes, uninsurance rate increases, *U.S. Census Bureau News*. Retrieved February 19, 2009 from http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/income_wealth/007419.html

³³⁹ See pp. 39-41, 54-55, 57-60.



make their own choices. Advocates repeatedly described pimps' emphasis on money as a way to solve problems and realize dreams as a major incentive for Native girls to begin dancing in strip clubs and then move into prostitution.³⁴⁰ One of the community leaders at the listening session described a recent experience that illustrates the way that poverty affects Native girls' attitudes toward sexual exploitation:

It wasn't too long ago, I was at a venue of Native people and I was within ear's length of a group of young girls. One of the young girls said that her baby needed diapers and so she did a booty call so she could get money to get diapers for her kid...so that was prostitution in the definition of the word. But she didn't see that. That was the normalcy of it, you know, 'I need this for my child and I'm going to use what I have.' If you have money, you can go to the store...If you don't have money, you have to use what you have at your disposal...And that was shared with a bunch of young girls, and none of them were appalled by it. There was more of a 'Yeah, I understand that,' than 'Oh, my god, how could you do something like that?' [Native community leader at the listening session]

Government priorities based on group size and influence

American Indians are a small demographic group in Minnesota, representing only 1.6 percent of the state's population.³⁴¹ Research has shown that whenever decisions must be made about the allocation of government resources, small, low-income groups have limited influence over those decisions in comparison to larger, more affluent, or higher-status groups.³⁴²

Underfunded "safety net" systems

Our discussions with local police and advocates' stories about trying to find help from law enforcement and child protection units of local government highlighted limited funding as a significant barrier to identifying and protecting Native girls who had been trafficked into prostitution, and to active pursuit of pimps that traffic adult Native women.³⁴³

The prevalence of homelessness among Native women and girls described in the research literature, the high rates of running away among Native girls participating in the Minnesota Student Survey, and advocates' descriptions of the severe shortage of housing options for Native women and girls trying to escape the sex trade reflect an inadequate system for meeting the emergency shelter needs of low-income, sexually exploited Native girls and women.³⁴⁴ Not only does the absence of an effective safety net make Native girls more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, it also makes it extremely difficult for trafficked girls to successfully exit the sex trade.

³⁴⁰ See pp. 39, 42, 44-46, 49, 51-52.

³⁴¹ 2000 U.S. Census, (2006). *Profile of populations on American Indian reservations*. St. Paul: State Demographic Center, Minnesota Department of Administration. Retrieved June 3, 2009 from <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/Cen2000profiles/Cen00Reservations.html>

³⁴² Gilens, Martin. 2005. Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness, *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69: 778-796.

³⁴³ See pp. 89-91.

³⁴⁴ See pp. 54-60, 91-92.



Unequal gendered consequences for roles in prostitution

The attribution of responsibility for women's involvement in the sex trade is deeply rooted in the notion that prostitution is a business transaction between equals and prostituted women have chosen the sex trade as a form of employment. Popular use of the term "the oldest profession" perpetuates this idea, despite a body of research indicating that most women and girls in prostitution want out of the sex trade, but have no other way to support themselves.³⁴⁵

There is significant bias in social and legal sanctions for women and girls in prostitution compared to those experienced by men that purchase sex. Catharine McKinnon has described a gap between the promise of civil rights and the real lives of prostituted women. McKinnon notes the ways that the law fails to protect the civil rights of women involved in prostitution while favoring the civil rights of pimps and johns, citing court decisions to make these points:

- The law does not protect prostituted women's freedom from arbitrary arrest, because it makes women into criminals for being victimized as women, and enforcement of prostitution law has traditionally involved police officers impersonating johns in order to arrest prostituting women.
- The law does not protect a prostituted woman's rights to property, since she cannot declare any parts of herself off-limits, while pimps and johns retain the right to use her body as they choose.
- The law does not protect prostituted women's right to liberty, since liberty is the ability to set limits on one's condition or to leave it.³⁴⁶

Our conversations with law enforcement personnel and advocates' stories at the round tables show that purchasers of sexual services typically receive light sentences and are frequently permitted to do community service or restorative justice rather than jail time.³⁴⁷ This unequal treatment disproportionately excuses men's purchase of sexual services while it criminalizes and stigmatizes women engaged in the same transaction.

One of the Minneapolis police officers we talked with acknowledged that arresting the prostituted woman is considered the most expedient way to ensure her cooperation in securing adequate evidence for prosecuting her pimp.³⁴⁸ A study of prostituted women in Hennepin County using SIP (Subject in Process) numbers from the Hennepin County Court system confirmed that each woman convicted of prostitution had an average of eight arrests for prostitution.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ See pp. 56, 80-82, 89.

³⁴⁶ MacKinnon C, (2007). Prostitution and civil rights, in *Women's Lives, Men's Laws*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, p. 152.

³⁴⁷ See pp. 89-90.

³⁴⁸ Meeting in Minneapolis, May 13, 2009.

³⁴⁹ Hope L and Martin L, (2006). *Prostitution Project*. Cited in Martin and Rud (2007). *Prostitution research report: Data sharing to establish best practices for women in prostitution*. Minneapolis: Prostitution Project, Hennepin County Corrections and the Folwell Center.



Federal definitions of “deserving” victims

The advocates’ stories of Native adult women who had been trafficked into prostitution as children described the impact of federal guidelines for “deserving” victims. As adults trying to exit prostitution, many had been refused access to emergency shelters, victim services, and federally-funded housing due to prior prostitution convictions.³⁵⁰ As noted earlier, under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, to qualify as a victim of sex trafficking entitled to protection and federally-funded services, a sexually exploited woman must provide evidence of force, fraud, or coercion.³⁵¹ Though the Trafficking Victims Protection Act provides for a grant program for local and state authorities to provide services to mostly U.S. citizen victims, those funds were never requested by the Department of Justice, and subsequently no programs were ever funded.³⁵²

Even though most were victims of child sex trafficking under the federal law at the time they entered prostitution, eligibility requirements for federally-funded victim services make it difficult for prostituted American Indian women to receive assistance. Victims of domestic violence and physical or sexual assault are eligible for reparations through Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding, but not if they were “committing a crime or any misconduct that is connected with the incident—which automatically excludes prostituted women beaten or sexually assaulted by a pimp or a john.”³⁵³ Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) monies can be used for services to women in prostitution, but cannot be used for services to victims of sex trafficking, which includes domestically-trafficked victims—and organizations wishing to provide such services must compete for funding in the “general” category.^{354,355} Some advocates have suggested that a pool of VAWA funds should be earmarked for services to prostituted women, similar to earlier earmarks for women with disabilities, women on campuses, rural women, and tribal programs.^{356,357} Child victims of sex trafficking do not cease to be victims simply because they turned 18. Their victimization in childhood continues to impact their lives as adults, skewing their view of what is possible and attainable.

³⁵⁰ See pp. 54-55, 87-88.

³⁵¹ See 18 U.S.C. § 1591 (a).

³⁵² Hughes D, (July 30, 2007). Enslaved in the U.S.A.: American victims need our help, *National Review Online*. Retrieved June 14, 2009 from <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ZDU0OGNIMDcwM2JmYjk0N2M0OTU4NGVIMTBIMmEyMjl>

³⁵³ Minnesota Senate, (April 22, 2009). *Public Safety Budget Division update*. Retrieved May 30, 2009 from http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us/committees/2009-2010/finance_public_safety/update.htm

³⁵⁴ Hughes D, (July 30, 2007). Enslaved in the U.S.A.: American victims need our help, *National Review Online*. Retrieved June 14, 2009 from <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ZDU0OGNIMDcwM2JmYjk0N2M0OTU4NGVIMTBIMmEyMjl>

³⁵⁵ Minnesota Office of Justice Programs, (2007). *Violence Against Women Act FFY 2007-2009: Minnesota Office of Justice Programs State implementation plan*, p.6. Retrieved July 24, 2009 from http://www.ojp.state.mn.us/publications/VAWA_FFY07-09_Implementation_Plan.pdf

³⁵⁶ Williamson C, (2005). Violence against women in street level prostitution: Women centered community responses, *Advancing Women in Leadership Online Journal* 18. Retrieved August 22, 2009 from http://www.advancingwomen.com/awl/social_justice1/williamson.html

³⁵⁷ See pp. 24-26, 92.



Influence of neighborhood and community environments

Gang activity and community normalization of violence

The discussions of advocates at the two round tables and the research literature from Canada and the U.S. described the considerable influence of gangs in Native communities, gangs' use of violence to coerce Native girls into prostitution, and Native girls' efforts to be as safe as they can in an unsafe environment through sexual relationships with gang members. Native girls' responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey also indicated significant levels of gang presence at Native girls' schools.³⁵⁸

Native girls' responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey and the responses of Aboriginal community members and prostituted youth in Canadian research described in this report also show violence to be a common feature of urban Indian neighborhoods and reservation life, and girls' own participation in that violence to be a form of self-defense.³⁵⁹

A visible and active sex trade

Advocates also repeatedly described young Native girls being approached on the street and offered money for sex, and in Canadian studies, Aboriginal youth reported the same experience. In the data collected by MIWRC, a significant number of Native women and girls reported knowing someone in prostitution, and many reported knowing a trafficker. The discussions at the advocates' round tables and the Canadian literature on Aboriginal youth involvement in prostitution both described Native youth exposure to a visible and active neighborhood sex trade as a key influence in normalizing involvement in prostitution.³⁶⁰

Social isolation and the “don't talk” rule

Research in poor neighborhoods has found that high levels of neighborhood violence and crime contribute to social isolation, where safety concerns limit the degree to which people become involved with or interact with their neighbors. The long-term success of children in these neighborhoods has been found to be strongly related to community members' willingness to support parents' efforts to keep their children safe.³⁶¹

Minneapolis and Duluth both have large urban concentrations of American Indians in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods where short-term residence in rental housing is the norm. The advocates' stories at the round tables and the responses of Aboriginal community members in studies of prostituted youth in Canada described a similar reluctance among Native community members to get involved when a woman or child reports sexual assault, sometimes to the extent

³⁵⁸ See pp. 44-50.

³⁵⁹ See pp. 66-67, 70-71.

³⁶⁰ See pp. 39-40, 68-69, 71.

³⁶¹ Furstenberg F, Jr., (1993). How families manage risk and opportunity in dangerous neighborhoods, in Wilson WJ (Ed.), *Sociology and the public agenda*, pp. 231-258. Newbury Park: Sage.



of blaming the victim. Both advocates and prostituted Native youth in Canada also emphasized the potentially dangerous consequences of calling the police.³⁶²

The advocates' accounts and the literature on the impact of abuse at boarding schools show community members' reluctance to get involved and the "don't talk" rule to be rooted in the experiences of Native children at boarding schools. Teachers and administrators perpetrating sexual and physical abuse forced Native children to accept responsibility for their own abuse, telling the children that they had caused or invited it. Native children learned to be ashamed of their own sexuality, and that telling anyone about the abuse only led to increased violence and more shame.³⁶³ Passed down to consecutive generations, the end result of these efforts to avoid harm to self or others is a lack of safety for sexually exploited children and an absence of accountability for perpetrators in Native communities. One of the community leaders and elders at the listening session commented:

Some of us in this room have addressed this on several occasions, but it was always hard to get the community to jump on board. I mean, it was -- you know, you always had the choir; you always had the people that worked in the field that were interested in helping the victims that were in front of them at their desk, but there was not any cry from the community to deal with it on a community basis, at a community level, and so there are those pockets of safety for people that are committing these heinous crimes on a regular basis. [Native community elder and leader at the listening session]

A crime-based underground economy

Though community participation in an underground economy was not included in our description of factors contributing to Native girls' and women's vulnerability to entering the sex trade, some of the community leaders and elders attending the listening session pointed out that Native girls' and women's involvement with "boosters" selling stolen clothing, shoes, and accessories normalizes illegal activity. This is one of their comments:


We need to also remember that this sub rosa economy is working all the time. The sale of illegal goods, all of that happens in our community, and the inability of young women to understand what they're doing in exchanging a sexual favor for money to buy diapers is part of that. [Native community elder and leader at the listening session]

In addition to the advocates' lengthy discussion of Native women's and girls' trading of sex for shelter and other basic needs at both round tables,³⁶⁴ this is how one of them described Native women's and girls' frequent use of boosters to get the things they want:

³⁶² See pp. 96-97.

³⁶³ See pp. 9, 95-96.

³⁶⁴ See pp. 43, 54-56, 71.



There are some really good boosters out there. [Second speaker] The guy where you get stuff hot? [First speaker] What I'm saying is it is so commonplace, because boosters are so prevalent. I mean, in other advocacy and other outreach, I was in people's homes and we were talking about healthy housing and education and their booster shows up and is trying to sell me clothes that they just got from the plus size clothing store, and he had an entire trunk of all this beautiful stuff. [Twin Cities advocate]

Limited jobs, few options for education and career planning

In the neighborhoods where American Indians are concentrated in Minneapolis and Duluth, unemployment rates are high and opportunities for legal, living-wage employment are extremely limited, as are options for a quality education. The America's Promise Alliance recently reported that only about half (53%) of youth in the nation's largest cities graduate on time, with an 18 percent gap in graduation rates between youth attending city schools and youth attending suburban schools.³⁶⁵ Inner-city schools consistently receive lower ratings for quality of education and student achievement than suburban schools, reflecting the broader patterns of inequality elsewhere in American society.³⁶⁶ Students in these schools have been described as a "captured market," because their socioeconomic status makes them completely dependent upon the public school system.³⁶⁷ In 2000, less than 75 percent of American Indian adults in Minnesota had completed at least a high school degree.³⁶⁸ The high dropout rates of American Indian youth cited in this report suggest that unrewarding school experiences contribute to a belief that educational attainment and career planning are neither useful nor realistic life goals.³⁶⁹

Influence of families and friends

Poverty

The advocates' discussions at the round tables, the research literature from Canadian studies of prostituted Aboriginal women and youth, and the comments from community leaders and elders all emphasized the importance of family poverty in Native women's and girls' vulnerability to homelessness and to sexual exploitation of Native women and their children by landlords threatening eviction. The Hennepin County data showed over 40 percent of American Indian woman-headed households living in poverty, which suggests a high level of vulnerability to sexual exploitation for these families.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ America's Promise Alliance, (2009). *Cities in crisis 2009*. Retrieved May 8, 2009 from <http://www.americaspromise.org>

³⁶⁶ Noguera, P and Akom A, (2000). Disparities Demystified: Causes of the racial achievement gap all derive from unequal treatment, *The Nation* 5(2): 29-35.

³⁶⁷ Noguera P, (2002). Racial isolation, poverty and the limits of local control as a means for holding public schools accountable, *UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access*. Los Angeles: University of California. Retrieved May 4, 2009 from <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=idea>

³⁶⁸ Minnesota State Demographic Center, (March 2003). *Educational attainment in Minnesota*. Retrieved May 4, 2009 from <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/PopNotes/EducationalAttainment.pdf>

³⁶⁹ See pp. 39, 80-82, 101-102.

³⁷⁰ See pp. 54-55, 57-60.



Physical and sexual abuse

The prevalence of physical and sexual abuse in the histories of prostituted Aboriginal women and youth in Canadian research and in prostituted Aboriginal youth's reasons for running away from home show that child abuse in the home is a major factor in vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation. Native girls' reports in the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey of physical and sexual abuse at home and of having run away from home, combined with state and local data on American Indian child maltreatment rates, suggest that many of Minnesota's Native girls are at very high risk of being trafficked into the sex trade due to abuse.³⁷¹

Native girls' responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey also showed high rates of physical and sexual assault by boyfriends. The Wilder Research study of homelessness also found that Native women and girls frequently reported physical or sexual violence at home as the reason for their current homelessness. Other studies' findings of high rates of partner violence among low-income Native women suggest that many Native women and girls are forced to leave home to avoid violence, resulting in homeless that further increases their vulnerability to sex trafficking.³⁷²

Prostitution and survival sex

The involvement of female relatives and friends in survival sex and/or prostitution is clearly a factor that facilitates Native girls' own involvement. At both round tables, advocates described Native families involved in prostitution and bringing young daughters into the sex trade over several generations. The Canadian studies of Aboriginal youth involvement in prostitution reported similar findings. The advocates' stories at round tables and the Canadian research literature on Aboriginal youth in prostitution also identified friends (and pimps' recruiters posing as friends) as significant influences on young Native girls' recruitment into stripping and prostitution. The data collected from clients entering MIWRC programs confirmed that many have friends in prostitution, and also showed that clients reporting involvement in prostitution were most often recruited by a friend.³⁷³

The community leaders and elders attending the listening session to discuss the findings of this report also commented on Native families' involvement in prostituting their women and girls. This is one of those comments:

We all knew which houses were doing what in our community. And historically, because of who they were or who they were related to, or they're on the board, they were able to get away with it. Right? Everybody looked the other way on it. [Native community leader at the listening session]

³⁷¹ See pp. 60-65.

³⁷² See pp. 65-67.

³⁷³ See pp. 50-52, 68-69.



Substance abuse

Several of the advocates at the two round tables described Native mothers trafficking their daughters into prostitution to feed an addiction. Studies of prostituted youth in the U.S. and Canada also identified parental substance abuse as a facilitating factor for Native youth running away from home and entering the sex trade. In the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey, American Indian girls' rates of reporting drug and alcohol use by a family member were much higher than those of girls in the general population, and the responses of homeless American Indian women and girls in the 2006 Wilder Research study of homelessness indicate that family substance abuse is also a factor in forcing Native women and girls to leave home without any other place to stay.³⁷⁴ The advocates, research in Canada and studies in the U.S. also noted the indirect affect of parental substance abuse on girls' vulnerability to sexual exploitation, being impacted by FASD.³⁷⁵

Parents affected by generational trauma, FASD, and/or mental illness

At the advocates' round tables and in findings from Canadian studies with prostituted Native women and youth, unresolved generational trauma was identified as a root cause of community violence, domestic violence, child abuse, and substance abuse that pervades Native communities in the U.S. and -Canada.³⁷⁶ The research literature shows high rates of depression and PTSD among sexually assaulted Native women, which impact their ability to parent their children effectively. Advocates also described FASD-affected mothers trafficking their children, and research described in this report reflects the prevalence of FASD in Native communities. The research that we cited regarding adults with FASD and PTSD highlights the ways that a mentally ill or cognitively-impaired parent can increase Native children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation.³⁷⁷

The cumulative effect on Native girls

Lack of preparation for the legal workforce, viewing the sex trade as a glamorous option


Native girls' responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey show high levels of disengagement from school and truancy, and data on American Indian school dropout shows that many leave school without the education level necessary to succeed at most living-wage jobs. The absence of employment opportunities in their neighborhoods and the lack of social networks for securing jobs leave them with no employment history or job skills. Without those resources, many Native girls have no hope of self-sufficiency through the legal job market. The glamorization of sexual exploitation in the popular media, a highly visible sex trade, and girls'

³⁷⁴ See pp. 55, 72-73.

³⁷⁵ See pp. 77-78.

³⁷⁶ See pp. 53-54.

³⁷⁷ See pp. 78, 83-84.



awareness that sex can be a resource for meeting basic needs combine to normalize the sex trade, encouraging Native girls to view it as a reasonable way to make money.³⁷⁸

Absence of safety and emotional vulnerability

The frequency of Native girls' 2007 Minnesota Student Survey reports of physical and sexual abuse at home, gang presence and threat of violence in their schools, and physical and sexual violence by dates shows an alarming lack of safety in their lives. Advocates' stories at the round tables and Canadian research with runaway and prostituted Native youth described the tremendous emotional vulnerability of Native girls in these situations, especially to pimps and recruiters that promise to take care of and protect them.³⁷⁹ The reluctance of community members to intervene and community antagonism to anyone who calls the police makes Native girls even more vulnerable to sexual exploitation by pimps and gang members that use violence to force young girls into prostitution. The very limited options for emergency shelter and crisis services leave Native girls few alternatives.³⁸⁰

Native girls' trauma responses

Native girls' responses to the 2007 Minnesota Student Survey show that many use alcohol before the age of 12, show signs of alcohol dependency, and participate in violence against others. Research showing the prevalence of sexual assault and the link between sexual assault trauma and substance abuse by American Indian women suggests that a significant number are at extremely high risk of commercial sexual exploitation. Advocates' reports of prostituted Native women's reluctance to trust police or advocates and their dependency on pimps are reflections of the lack of safety in their lives. All of these trauma responses expose Native girls and women to new violence and make them even more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.³⁸¹

Last words

In the listening session with Native community leaders and elders held on July 22, 2009, all of the participants confirmed the seriousness of the problem and inspired us with their commitment to working together on a community response to end the commercial sexual exploitation of Native women and children. These are just a few of their comments:


I'm really happy that this report came out. I'm really happy that finally we can sit in a group like this and talk about it, because we can't hide it any more. We can't tell our girls it's okay, because it's not okay...I really want to continue to be a part of this dialogue because I think it's long overdue.

³⁷⁸ See pp. 42-46, 54-58, 60-65, 82-86.

³⁷⁹ See pp. 42-43, 54-58, 60-65, 82-86.

³⁸⁰ See pp. 87-88, 95-97.

³⁸¹ See pp. 74-76, 89, 94-95.



The report shines a light on this—it's a stake in the ground. It says 'Look at this.' This is something that needs attention, and we're not going to solve this now or in the next little while, but if we don't start, we'll never solve it.

One of our spiritual leaders said to us some years ago, those of us who are older, who have been victimized by racism in this country and also those of us who are women who have victimized in whatever ways simply because we are women—what he said to us was, 'That pain is yours. That is your pain, and you need to deal with it, but don't pass it on to your children. They will experience their own difficulties and they will have to deal with that, but do not talk to them about what you have dealt with.' I think [that] until we do deal with our own pain, it's impossible not to pass it on.

Based on the information presented in this report, we conclude that commercial sexual exploitation is neither harmless nor victimless. The widespread notion that prostitution is a voluntary career choice made by a fully informed adult has no basis in reality for the vast majority of prostituted Native women and girls. We find it unreasonable and cruel to assume that any Native person in prostitution has made an informed choice to endure extreme violence and subjugation at the hands of pimps and purchasers of sexual services, or to accept this maltreatment as a normal occupational hazard.

While stripping and pornography are often framed as relatively harmless, we have identified these as gateways to prostitution for Native women and girls. The information that we presented here shows that some Native women and girls may enter the sex trade to pursue the illusion of a glamorous and lucrative career, but continued involvement in prostitution is almost always due to an absence of other options. Most are trafficked into the sex trade as children and never identified or protected as trafficking victims. Unable to find the support to needed to leave prostitution at the point they reach the age of 18, they are immediately considered criminals and are often refused access to shelters and other services for trafficking, sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking victims.


Because our focus for this report was the commercial sexual exploitation of Native women and girls, we did not address the prostitution of Native boys or Two-Spirit (gay, lesbian, and bisexual) youth. However, a number of Canadian studies reported that though girls made up 75-80 percent of Aboriginal youth in the sex trade, the remaining 20-25 percent were boys, Two-Spirit, and transsexual individuals.^{382,383,384,385} In a 2008 Canadian study of street youth, 23 percent of Aboriginal boys and 54 percent of Aboriginal girls described themselves as not entirely heterosexual, bisexual, or gay/lesbian. These youth were much more likely than

³⁸² Calgary Police Commission, (1997). *Children involved in prostitution: Report by The Task Force on Children in Prostitution*. Calgary: Calgary Police Commission.

³⁸³ City of Burnaby, (1998). *Report of the City of Burnaby Task Force on the Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution of Children and Youth*. Burnaby: City of Burnaby.

³⁸⁴ Jiwani Y and Brown S, (1999). *Trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls and young women: A review of select literature and initiatives*. Vancouver: FREDA.

³⁸⁵ Manitoba Youth and Child Secretariat, (1996). *Report of the Working Group on Juvenile Prostitution*. Winnipeg: Manitoba Child and Youth Secretariat.



heterosexual-identifying youth to report having been kicked out of their homes or having run away, which makes them even more vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.³⁸⁶

Community priorities for moving forward

The community leaders and elders that attended the listening session agreed on three main points regarding next steps toward addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of Native people:

- Any approach to addressing the problem must prioritize the healing and empowerment of Native communities, and ensure that they are not re-victimized as a result of the information brought forth in this report.
- To ensure community engagement and an emphasis on healing and empowerment, the next stage of strategic planning must be led by a committed and knowledgeable group of Native people.
- This is not solely a women's issue—it is a community issue that also harms Native boys and Two-Spirit youth and adults.

³⁸⁶ Saewyc E, Bingham B, Bruananski D, Smith A, Hunt S, Northcott M, and the McCreary Centre Society, (2008). *Moving upstream: Aboriginal marginalized youth and street-involved youth in B.C.* Vancouver B.C.: McCreary Centre Society.



VIII. Recommendations for action

The recommendations we provide here are an aggregate of those we gathered from:

- Advocates attending the two regional round tables
- American Indian community leaders and elders that attended the listening session
- Prostituted Aboriginal women and youth and Aboriginal community members participating in Canadian studies of commercial sexual exploitation
- Patterns of risk identified in data and literature gathered for this report.

Increase awareness of the problem

Provide education to a cross section of leadership on:

- The relationship between disproportionate poverty and other risk factors, and Native youth's disproportionate involvement in the sex trade.
- The extreme violence and trauma experienced by Native women and youth in prostitution.
- Traffickers' recruitment strategies and the significance of strip clubs, pornography, online and phone sex, and escort services as gateways to prostitution for Native youth.

Reframe the conversation and change the language

- Increase awareness that prostitution is not a life style choice, is not a victimless crime, and that the vast majority of prostituted people were trafficked into the sex trade as children. Clearly identify prostitution as a form of sexual violence.
- Highlight the proven relationships between men's belief that sex is a commodity that they have the right to purchase and the likelihood that they will commit violence against women.
- Eliminate terms that place the onus of responsibility on the exploited person; rather than "prostitute", promote "person in prostitution" or "prostituted person."

Hold sexual exploiters accountable

- Prosecute all cases of juvenile sex trafficking to the fullest extent of the law.
- Reduce demand by increasing penalties for the purchase of sexual services (particularly sex with minors), and prohibit plea bargain agreements that allow purchasers to reduce their penalties through community service and/or restorative justice.
- Support efforts by American Indian communities to hold families involved in multi-generational trafficking of their children accountable.
- Identify, arrest, and prosecute anyone attempting to recruit vulnerable Native adults and youth for prostitution at drop-in programs, homeless shelters, battered women's shelters, and other places providing emergency services.
- Address gangs' use of violence to force Native youth into prostitution.



Begin outreach

- Recruit Native survivors of prostitution for employment as outreach workers and community educators.
- Use harm reduction strategies, including providing condoms/promoting consistent condom use and partnering street nurses with outreach workers to provide Hepatitis B vaccinations.
- Distribute information about domestic sex trafficking, sexual assault programs, and other programs/services through community agencies, hospital emergency rooms, health clinics, and food shelves so that sexually exploited Native women and youth are more aware of places they can find help.
- Establish protocols to identify and interrupt recruitment at crisis support, outreach and drop-in programs, and ensure that programs are safe.

Improve access to emergency shelter and transitional housing

All of the information we gathered on what types of housing prostituted Native women and girls need to successfully exit the sex trade emphasized three key points that should inform any plan to improve emergency shelter and housing options.

- The sex trade reinforces dependency on a pimp, so victims of commercial sexual exploitation often take a very long time to make the final decision to complete separate themselves.
- These victims have known nothing but exploitation most of their lives, so are very reluctant to trust any program or organization that applies limits or makes demands.
- The most useful and effective services have the fewest requirements, and focus on “meeting victims where they are.”

For these reasons, the following are the characteristic of emergency shelter and transitional housing needed to provide effective support to prostituted Native women and youth to avoid or leave the sex trade:

- 24-hour, 7 days a week “safe houses” statewide, where sexually exploited Native women and youth can access emergency shelter, showers, clothing, food, referrals for health care, and other basic needs.
- Transitional and supportive housing facilities statewide, specifically designed for prostituted women and youth who are moved from place to place. Staff should be culturally competent.
- Shelters, transitional housing and outreach services that link prostituted and at-risk Native women and youth to an array of holistic services to meet basic needs, receive health care, and access permanent safe housing.
- Funding for transitional housing that is long-term and covers operating expenses. Permitted length of stay must be adequate to ensure that prostituted Native girls and women have enough time to build the skills and stability they need to secure gainful employment.



To ensure access, existing emergency and transitional housing facilities should:

- To the extent possible, revise public housing policies blocking access to anyone with a felony conviction, to allow access for victims of sex trafficking whose convictions were due to having been trafficked.
- Work with child protection systems in the best interest of the families.
- Give prostituted people attempting to exit the sex trade the same priority as people with a mental health diagnosis, rather than requiring them to get a mental health diagnosis for priority access.

Increase options for self-sufficiency to reduce vulnerability

Poverty is one of the major factors in vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation. The following are recommendations for services and programs that can help Native women and youth stay in school and/or gain the skills and resources they need to become self-sufficient.

- Provide opportunities to finish high school that include mentoring, flexible hours, and access to high quality childcare so that those with children can participate.
- Tailor employment services, academic, and career counseling to match prostituted Native women's and youth skills and interests, and accommodate learning styles.
- Build relationships with employers willing to provide internship and apprenticeship programs where prostituted Native women and youth can develop skills and build confidence in their abilities.

Promote healing

- Hold community forums and workshops in American Indian communities to raise awareness of sex trafficking, the vulnerability of Native women, youth, and Two-Spirit people, and available resources for victims and families.
- Build community support for believing Native people who report sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, valuing and protecting them rather than stereotyping and isolating them.
- Engage Native communities in recognizing and addressing the role of silence and denial in generational abuse and sexual exploitation, and in working as a community to hold all traffickers of Native children and youth accountable.
- Engage Native communities in holding producers and sellers of media and products that sexualize Native women and children accountable.
- Encourage culturally based agencies to incorporate programming to meet the unique needs of sexually exploited women and youth, and provide opportunities for collaboration and networking to streamline services.
- Create healing centers where victims and families can re-engage in traditional healing and build strong cultural identities to holistically address chemical dependency, mental illness, and sexual trauma.



Improve systems and increase collaboration between systems

Engage child protection, law enforcement, schools, and Native community-based housing and social service agencies in collaborative efforts to:

- Standardize intake procedures that can accurately identify victims of sex trafficking and provide them with immediate access to appropriate resources.
- Develop training protocols in partnership with other stakeholders to raise awareness and install effective response mechanisms.
- Support coordinated efforts by local law enforcement, Tribal law enforcement, the FBI, and the Coast Guard and other agencies to identify, investigate, and prosecute sex traffickers.
- Investigate possible sex trafficking when youth report sexual abuse in the home, and ensure that a trained child protection worker works closely with police and Native programs to meet the unique needs of prostituted Native children.
- Target gangs in schools, housing complexes, and neighborhoods by developing zero tolerance strategies to prevent and interrupt criminal activities with youth.
- Develop coordinated responses to truant and runaway Native youth that divert them from the juvenile justice system to Native programs that serve sexually exploited Native youth.

When the court case has begun against a Native sex trafficking victim's trafficker:


- Provide victims with a specific advocate who has the skills and knowledge to deal with her/him respectfully and for the length of time necessary.
- Provide Pro Bono legal services to the victim and a safe space where she/he and the attorney can meet.
- Do not require victims to be in the same room as the accused trafficker.
- Develop alternatives to corrections placement in foster care and group homes for prostituted Native youth so they are not isolated from their culture and community.
- Improve protections for victims who have outstanding warrants for their arrest, if those arrests are related to being trafficked, and consider that probation violations may be related to being trafficked.

Provide extensive training to all professionals that come into contact with prostituted Native women and youth

In addition to basic training on the dynamics and impacts of the sex trade, various professionals should receive more in-depth training. These are some of the main topics we suggest:

For police officers, prosecutors, courts, and guardians *ad litem*:

- The importance of screening runaway and truant Native youth for involvement in the sex trade, and making social services arrangements on site rather than releasing them back to the community.
- Establishing guidelines for recognizing when a prostituted Native person may be affected by FASD and or PTSD.

- 
- Networking with referral agencies for culturally-appropriate intervention and support services.

For medical and emergency room personnel:

- The importance of treating prostituted victims of sexual or physical assault as assault victims, even when their injuries were perpetrated by a purchaser of sexual services.
- Information about trafficking laws, how to contact law enforcement, and how to keep a trafficking victim safe until the police arrive.

For teachers and school administrators, 5th through 12th grade:

- Sex trade culture and terminology, common recruitment strategies, trafficker profiles, and indicators that a student is being trafficked.
- Information about trafficking laws, how to contact law enforcement, and how to keep a trafficking victim safe until the police arrive.
- Referral agencies for culturally-appropriate intervention and support services.

For workers in child protection, child welfare, and family social services:

- Sex trade culture and terminology, and the importance of early intervention.
- Culturally-specific screening tools for sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.
- Follow-up strategies for protecting and monitoring sexually exploited Native adolescents and teens to provide a safety net for those that continue living with their families, including information on suitable referral services.

For mental health professionals:

- The guilt and shame experienced by prostituted and trafficked Native adults and youth, and the need to respond immediately and skillfully.
- The importance of a nonjudgmental approach that does not include a timeline for progress.
- A careful diagnosis that takes potential FASD and PTSD into account as possible aggravating factors.
- Prostituted Native women's/youth's experiences with unnecessary or inappropriate medications.

Future research

Methodologically, our decision to convene round table discussions with advocates working with American Indian women and girls in crisis situations and use the information gathered there as a framework turned out to be a very useful approach. Our assumption that these advocates were likely to come into contact with trafficked and prostituted Native women and girls was correct. In the absence of any prior source of systematically collected data on Native women and girls in prostitution or other areas of the sex trade in either Minnesota or the U.S., triangulating advocates' experiences and observations with findings from published research, local data, and



MIWRC client screening data allowed us to develop a basic understanding of a little-understood and complex problem within relatively short period of time.

The data collected by MIWRC via client screening and the two advocates' round table discussions represented a very small number of participants in very limited geographic areas. Though these findings were helpful in creating a general picture of the problem, there is an urgent need for a regional study involving a systematic and coordinated data collection process, to develop findings that can be generalized to the larger population. MIWRC is currently revising and expanding its screening tool and process to improve our ability to identify trafficking victims and provide them with appropriate services and supports. We expect to implement the new tool and process in October 2009.

However, we cannot prioritize research over the needs of Native women and children still in the sex trade. At both round tables and at the listening session with Native community leaders and elders in Minneapolis, Native participants emphasized the great need for more in-depth information to build upon what was found in producing this report, but they also voiced a significant concern that research could not take priority over adequate funding for direct services to prostituted Native people. With that qualifier in place, regarding future research, we recommend:

- Funding for coordinated and appropriate support services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation is the community's highest priority—additional research will require a separate funding pool.
- Any future research should involve identification, experiences, and needs of all American Indian victims, regardless of gender.
- Data collection should involve multiple agencies and programs providing culturally-specific crisis services to Native people for emergency shelter and housing, domestic violence, sexual assault, substance abuse, crisis intervention, and the needs of at-risk youth
- Because this exploratory study found indications of trafficking between cities in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota, we recommend a regional study that includes two large urban Indian communities in each of those four states: Minneapolis, Duluth, Grand Forks, Fargo, Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Milwaukee, and Green Bay.



Appendix



Round table facilitator's guide

Introduction: Introduce self and co-facilitator, introduce main concepts:

- Definitions of trafficking
- Reasons for emphasizing “commercial sexual exploitation” over “trafficking” and “prostitution”
- Goals for the round table: discuss who, what, why, how, where, and when
- Before lunch plan: Get through who, why, how, when and where
- After lunch plan: Talk about what keeps Indian women who are being sexually exploited from getting out of the sex trade, and what services are really needed for the victims and for the advocates who help them

BEFORE LUNCH:

Who and why?

1. Who is being exploited, and why are they vulnerable?
 - a. Age
 - b. Financial circumstances
 1. Ability to find legal employment
 2. Supporting children/ MFIP 5-year limit
 3. Housing stability
 4. Addiction—need to support the habit
 - c. Mental health, FAS/FAE
 - d. History of abuse/physical and sexual violence
 - e. Other reasons
2. What kinds of commercial sexual exploitation are the Indian women and girls that you see involved in?
 - a. Prostitution
 - b. Pornography
 - c. Stripping/nude dancing
 - d. Survival sex? Trading sex for housing, rides, etc.?
 - e. Other?

How?

3. How are they being recruited or forced into the different types of commercial sexual exploitation?
 - a. Who is pimping them?
 1. Friends/family, boyfriends/pimps?
 2. Gangs? Landlords?
 - b. How are they approached? What do the recruiters say to them?
 - c. How are they “groomed” for prostitution and other kinds of commercial sexual exploitation?
 1. “Helping out” temporarily
 2. Gifts, being told they are “special”
 3. Giving and taking away affection, gifts, special treatment
 4. Violence, shaming
 5. Getting them addicted—what drugs?
 - d. Do they start out being involved in one kind of sexual exploitation and progress to others?



When and where?

4. Where is the recruitment of Indian women into commercial sexual exploitation happening?
 - a. Urban, reservation, suburbs?
 - b. Pow-wows, 49s?
 - c. Certain neighborhoods or housing types, certain parts of the state?
 - d. Are they moved around to prevent them from getting help to leave?
 1. Where to where?
 2. Who moves them , and how?
5. Where have they been exchanging sexual activity for money or other resources at the time they start talking to you about it?
 - a. Private homes
 - b. Motel rooms
 - c. Hotels/conference centers/casinos?
6. Are there specific “seasons” or times that you see more Indian women and girls involved in prostitution, nude dancing, or other types of commercial sexual exploitation?
 - a. Are there specific seasons or times of the year that you see more Indian girls or women trying to get out of prostitution?

AFTER LUNCH:

Barriers to addressing the problem?

7. What prevents Indian girls and women from escaping a lifestyle where they exchange sexual behavior for money or resources?
 - a. Do they view exchanging sexual activity for money or other resources as a “choice”?
 - b. What brings them to you?
 1. What needs do they “present” with?
 2. How long does it take before you know that they are being prostituted or trying to escape sex work?
 3. As an advocate, what sends up the “red flag” for you? What tells you that an Indian woman’s or girl’s “friend,” “boyfriend,” or “protector” is a pimp, or that she is trying to leave prostitution?
8. What kinds of assistance do these women and girls need the most?
 - a. Types of services, length of time needed
 - b. What are some of the challenges to getting them those services?
 1. Funders’ requirements
 - a. For defining “victims” (arrest for prostitution makes them a criminal, not a victim)
 - b. Length of time services are allowed/pressure to show results
 2. Lack of legal protection
 - a. Police disinterest/lack of cooperation between different law enforcement agencies
 1. Who and why?
 2. No prosecution of pimps—reasons?
 3. Lack of cooperation between different law enforcement agencies
 4. Ways/reasons that American Indian women suffer greater impact, compared to other prostituted women
9. What about your needs, as advocates?
 - a. What kinds of training and support would help you do this very difficult work?

Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center

Client Screening & Tracking Form

Client ID: _____

Screening date: _____

Pre-screening: Prostitution and trafficking

<p>1. Have you ever exchanged sexual activity for:</p> <p>Yes, for: (check all that apply)</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Shelter (living space, rent or reduced rent)</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Food</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Money</p> <p>d. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Drugs or alcohol</p> <p>e. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ A ride or use of a car</p> <p>f. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Any other kind of assistance (describe): _____</p> <p>g. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ No, never have</p>	<p>2. Has anyone ever pressured you, forced you, or paid you to pose for nude photos or videos?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>⁰ No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>¹ Yes</p> <p>2a. IF YES: How many times has this happened in the past 6 months?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ # of times</p>
<p>3. Has anyone ever asked you to recruit other women or girls to sell sex, or to manage a group of women or girls who sell sex?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>⁰ No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>¹ Yes</p> <p>3a. IF YES: How many times has this happened in the past 6 months?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ # of times</p>	<p>4. Has anyone ever threatened, tricked, or talked you into providing sexual activities to another person so the person pressuring you would get some benefit?</p> <p>Yes, so they could get:</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Shelter (living space, rent, or reduced rent)</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Food</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Money</p> <p>d. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Drugs or alcohol</p> <p>e. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ A ride or use of a car</p> <p>f. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Any other kind of assistance or benefit (describe): _____</p> <p>g. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ No, never have</p>

Do you know anyone else who has been involved in prostitution and/or sexual exploitation? (check all that apply)

<p>5. As someone who sold or traded sex</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Family (relationship): _____</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Friend</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Other: _____</p> <p>d. <input type="checkbox"/>⁰ No, don't know anyone</p>	<p>6. As someone who made others sell or trade sex</p> <p>a. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Family (relationship): _____</p> <p>b. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Boyfriend/husband/partner</p> <p>c. <input type="checkbox"/>¹ Other: _____</p> <p>d. <input type="checkbox"/>⁰ No, don't know anyone</p>
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Pre-screening: Mental health and brain injury

<p>7. Have you ever been assaulted in a way that caused a head injury—either by being hit, or caused to hit your head?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>⁰ No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>¹ Yes 7a. IF YES: How many times?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ # of times</p>	<p>8. Have you ever fallen due to intoxication or drug use and hit your head?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>⁰ No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/>¹ Yes 8a. IF YES: How many times?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ # of times</p>
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9. Have you ever received a mental health diagnosis by a doctor or mental health professional?

⁰ No


¹ Yes IF YES: What diagnosis/diagnoses, where received: _____



Screening questions for identified victims of trafficking

1. Age at which you entered prostitution: _____ 2. Current age: _____
3. Do you have children under the age of 18?
 - ⁰ No, no children under age 18
 - ¹ Yes, at least one child living with you
 - ² Yes, but none live with you
4. How were you recruited into prostitution?
 - a. People/relationships involved: _____
 - b. Area of the state where this occurred: _____
 - c. Situation/coercion/pressure that made you do it: _____

5. After recruitment, where were you trafficked?
 - a. ¹ Domestically : What locations? _____
 - a1. Across state lines? ¹ Yes ⁰ No
 - b. ¹ Internationally: From where, to where? _____
 - b1. How were you transported? _____
6. Have you ever been arrested for prostitution or prostitution-related charges?
 - ⁰ No
 - ¹ Yes IF YES: How many times? _____
7. Are you currently at risk of sexual exploitation?
 - ⁰ No
 - ¹ Yes, due to (check all that apply):
 - a. ¹ Emotional dependency on trafficker
 - b. ¹ Homelessness
 - c. ¹ Addiction
 - d. ¹ Fear of violence against self or others
 - e. ¹ Inability to financially provide for your child(ren)
 - f. ¹ Other reasons: _____
8. Have you sought assistance at other sexual assault or victim of trafficking programs? We are only asking because we're working with these other organizations to estimate how many Indian women are in this situation (check all that apply)
 - a. ¹ Phoenix/DIW
 - b. ¹ MIWSAC
 - c. ¹ Women of Nations
 - d. ¹ Breaking Free
 - e. ¹ Indigenous Women's LifeNet (MAIC)
 - f. ¹ Ain Dah Yung
 - g. ¹ Sexual Offense Services (SOS in St. Paul)
 - h. ¹ Other program(s) in the metro area: _____
 - i. ¹ Other program(s) outside the metro area: _____



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