



*American Indian and Alaska Native peoples have a belief that honors the multifaceted role of women within tribal societies and have historically protected the right of women to live free of violence or the threat of violence, as a result of colonization and harmful federal law and policy, the honored status, respect, and safety of Native women has been diminished.*

### **WomenSpirit Coalition Background**

Through associations with Native advocates and Tribal advocacy programs, in 2002, organizing began for the development of a domestic violence and sexual assault Coalition developed for and by Native women in the State of Washington. The organizing purpose:

- 1) Seek opportunities of collaboration to increase direct service effectiveness.
- 2) Develop mentoring and networking capacity for further development of Native Women's leadership proficiency.
- 3) Promote discussion, policy setting, and resource building that are relevant to Tribal communities.
- 4) Improve services and systems response, for Native victims living on reservation and off reservation by federal, state, tribal, and local authorities.

**Tribal** Coalitions are at the forefront of

**Washington State Native American Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault- WomenSpirit Coalition serves 29 Federally-recognized Tribes in Washington State, promoting the safety and rights of Native women who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.**

managing, leading, and developing strategies to meet the needs of Tribes and Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault programs. WomenSpirit Coalition (WSC) is active in forming and supporting Federal policy as it relates to violence against Native women. As an Inter-Tribal Coalition, WSC, contributed to increasing funding opportunities to Tribes for improving advocacy, law enforcement, and court response to crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence such as VAWA 2005 and the Tribal Law and Oder Act 2009.

It is estimated by the DOJ that more than *one of every three American Indian and Alaska Native women will be raped in their lifetime, that more than six of ten will be physically assaulted, and that Indian women are stalked at more than twice the rate of any other population of women; the U.S. has felony jurisdiction over crimes against Indians, including homicide, rape, and aggravated assault; however,*

**perpetrators of such violent crimes against Native women are rarely, if ever, prosecuted.**

#### THE SUMMITS

WSC hosted/sponsored three Summits in 2005, 2008, and 2010 with the WA State (OAC) Gender and Justice Commission, WA State Attorney General's Office, and Grant # 2006-IW-AX-0004 from the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

All Summits are designed to elicit the top five areas of need from Tribal representatives as they strive to deliver services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The responses were very similar.

#### TOP AREAS OF NEED

1. **Adequate Resources and Funding for Tribal DV and SA Advocacy Programs.**
2. **Systems Training: Courts, Law Enforcement, Prosecutors.**
3. **Programs and Services for Children Who Witness.**
4. **Treatment Options for Native Batterers.**
5. **Informed Leadership: Tribal Councils, Program Supervisors, And All Sectors.**

**The Summits highlighted significant disparities between Tribal programs and their abilities to plan and develop effective**

**services for victims and their families. Rural tribal communities are disadvantaged in their ability to provide responsive services due to isolation and long travel times to local resource such as sexual assault exams and rape kits or hospitals that can treat injuries from violent assaults.**

WSC is committed to providing technical assistance, consultation, and training to those communities who do not have domestic or sexual violence programs or are in the process of developing their programs and responses.

#### **Mission:**

Eliminating violence against Native women and promoting the well-being of native families and communities.

#### **Vision:**

We envision a nation where Native women live safely and where WomenSpirit Coalition is the leader in ending domestic violence and sexual assault.

#### **Governance and Membership**

As an Inter-tribal Coalition, WSC seeks support from Tribal Councils, tribal communities, tribal service providers, tribal advocates, and criminal justice representatives.

Members are encouraged to serve on all committees, workgroups, task forces including the Executive Business Committee (our Board). Committees are Membership, Events, Finance and Fundraising.

**Executive Business Committee**

**Rebecca George-Kaldor, EBC President  
(Port Gamble Klallam)**  
**Nikki Finkbonner, Secretary-Treasurer  
(Lummi Nation)**  
**Dawn Boley, Vice- President, (Chehalis  
Tribe)**

**Dee Koester, Executive Director (Lower  
Elwha Klallam, Quileute, Makah).**

Join us in elimination violence against  
Native women- call or email for **Member  
Packet**. [Dee@womenspiritcoalition.org](mailto:Dee@womenspiritcoalition.org) or  
visit us at [www.womenspiritcoalition.org](http://www.womenspiritcoalition.org).

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