



Garden of Truth:

The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota

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Why

- Membership Discussion
- Anecdotal Information
- High Rates of Sexual Violence Against Native Women and Girls



Goals

- To assess the life circumstances of Native women in prostitution in Minnesota
- Learn more about their needs for recovery



How

- Funding
- Location
- Research Team
- Access to Survivors



Method

- 105 Native women in MN
- 4 Questionnaires
- 1.5 - 3 hours per interview
- Quantitative and Qualitative



Pre-Contact...

Many Indigenous languages have no words for rape, prostitution, and many oral histories and historical documents indicate that violence against women was a capital offense.



“My culture doesn’t put you around drugs or alcohol. It teaches you different values. It gives you belonging and faith.”



Cycles of Victimization

- Research has shown that a history of sexual assault is a common precursor to prostitution
- Native Women are victims of sexual violence at the highest rate of any segment of the United States population
 - One in three Native American women will be raped in their lifetime
- Native women are disproportionately impacted by prostitution
 - A study in Anchorage found that despite being only 8% of the general population, Native women were 33% of all prostituted and trafficked women in that area

BLACK EYED SUSAN - VIOLET - ROSE - HONEYSUCKLE - YELLOW DAISY
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INDIAN PAIN BRUSH - FORGET ME NOT - MAYFLOWER - ORCHID - CARN

DEMOGRAPHICS



- 39% of the women we interviewed were under the age of 18 when they entered prostitution.
- Mean Age: 35
- Age Range 18 – 60
- Years in Prostitution: 14
- 57% had family members used in prostitution

Locations Where Native Women Were Prostituted

Location	Women Interviewed	Others Known to Interviewees
Street	85%	77%
Private Home/Apartment	83%	77%
Private Parties/Hotels/Nightclu	69%	73%
Bar	68%	67%
Outcall/Escort	36%	59%
Internet or Live Video Chat	32%	64%
Phone Sex Line	26%	43%
Reservation	21%	36%
Strip Club	20%	60%
Casino	19%	35%
Sauna	16%	37%
Massage Parlor	14%	35%
Pornography	10%	29%
Peep Show	8%	28%
Brothel	8%	31%
Farm	8%	13%
Church	2%	1%
Cult	1%	1%
Ship in Duluth Harbor	1%	0



Ethnicity of Men Who Buy Native Women for Use in Prostitution

White European-American	78%
African American	65%
Latino	44%
Native American	24%
Asian	9%

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ANTECEDENTS



Child Sexual Abuse

- 79% of the women we interviewed had been sexually abuse as children, by an average of 4 perpetrators.

“My dad sold us to his friends when I was younger.”

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Boarding Schools



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*“The nuns tried to beat my culture out of
me.”*



Foster Care

- 48% of the women had been placed in foster care. They had been in an average of 5 foster homes.
- 46% of the women in foster care had been abused.



Adoption

- 5 interviewees were adopted, and all of them reported being abused spiritually or culturally in the adoptive family.



Arrests

- 52% of the women were arrested as minors an average of 8 times.
- Several had been arrested for prostitution as children.
- Most common offenses: assault, underage drinking, truancy, and theft.

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FINDINGS



Homelessness

- 98% of Native women interviewed, were currently or previously homeless.



Trauma

- Half of the women interviewed met the legal definition for sex trafficking
 - Third party control over prostituting by pimps or traffickers
- 86% reported deception and trickery at the outset
- 92% wanted to escape

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“My dad was very abusive to my mother, and I ended up running away to Chicago. When I was 17, I was stranded in Chicago and had to get home to Wisconsin. I went to a party, there were lots of drugs. I got left there, and I was roaming around. A pimp was nice to me, he gave me this, gave me that. Then he took me to someone’s place and he said this guy – age 40 – he’s interested in you. Then he started hitting me after I said no. I was so scared I just did it. After that, I kept doing it because I was afraid to get hit.”



Trauma

- 48% had been used by more than 200 sex buyers
- 16% had been used by at least 900 sex buyers
- 49% reported giving most of their money from prostitution to pimps
 - 42% of the pimps were gang-affiliated

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“I wouldn’t say there are pimps
anymore. Now they’re all
boyfriends.”



Trauma

- 84% were physically assaulted
 - 44% by johns
 - 15% by pimps
- 78% had been threatened with a gun, knife or other weapon within the past month



Racism

- 42% of women reported racial verbal abuse by pimps and buyers
- As with other types of sexual violence towards Native women, a majority of perpetrators were non-Native.
- Native women were fetishized as exotic.

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“A john said to me, ‘I thought we
killed all of you’ .”



Violence

- 92% had been raped
- 84% had been physically assaulted in prostitution.
- 72% suffered traumatic brain injuries in prostitution.



Violence in Prostitution of Native American Women and in a Study of Prostitution in 9 Countries

	Minnesota Native Women in Prostitution (n=105)	9 Country Summary (n=854)
Threatened with a weapon in prostitution	78% (73)	64% (503)
Physically assaulted in prostitution	84% (85)	73% (595)
Raped in prostitution	92% (92)	57% (483)
(Of those raped) raped more than five times in prostitution	68% (50)	59% (286)
Current or past homelessness	98% (97)	75% (571)
As a child, was hit or beaten by caregiver until injured or bruised	56% (55)	59% (448)
Sexual abuse as a child	79% (78)	63% (508)
Mean number of childhood sexual abuse perpetrators	4	4
Median number of childhood sexual abuse perpetrators	2	1
Current or Past Homelessness	98% (99)	75% (571)



Dissociation

Symptoms:

- Flashbacks 65%
- Spacing Out 71%
- Dizziness 28%
- Memory Problems 68%
- Derealization 59%
- Not in Your Body 50%

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“When the johns were sexually assaulting me, I could be in England or somewhere else until they were done.”

“There’s times I’d walk around in a space out, because when I stop and think about reality – I break down and can’t handle it.”



Chronic Health Problems

- Muscle aches and pains 72%
- Memory problems 69%
- Trouble concentrating 69%
- Headaches or migraines 57%
- Joint pain 52%
- Stomach ache or upset stomach 48%
- Neck pain 44%



Mental Health Diagnoses

- Depression 78%
- Anxiety Disorders 71%
- Bi-Polar Disorder 33%

- 56% of the women were taking medications at the time of their interviews.



Needs

Table 10. Needs of 105 Prostituted Native American Women

Need	Native Minnesota Need Women (n=105)	Prostituted Women in 9 Countries (n=854)
Individual Counseling	75% (79)	56%(431)
Peer Support	73% (77)	51%(393)
Vocational Training	68% (72)	76% (600)
Home or Safe Place	67% (71)	75%(618)
Substance Abuse Treatment	58% (62)	47%(356)
Self-Defense Training	50% (53)	45%(340)
Health Care	48% (51)	61%(480)
Legal Assistance	34% (36)	51%(366)
Physical Protection From a Pimp	26% (28)	23%(157)
Childcare	26% (28)	44%(335)
Legalized Prostitution	10% (11)	34%(251)



Recovery

- 80% had used outpatient substance abuse programs
- 77% had used homeless shelters
- 33% had used sexual assault programs
- 65% had used domestic violence services



Recovery

- The women stated a need for different or expanded services such as:
 - More culturally specific in-patient substance abuse treatment
 - Housing and vocational counseling
 - Access to services that incorporate Native healing practices

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Working with Victims/Survivors



Warning Signs for those used in Prostitution

- Hanging out with older people, have little in common with
 - new set of friends or people outside of the norm (this primarily applies to youth)
- Having unexplained money, drugs, new clothes, cars
 - Getting gifts, jewelry, or other items
- Living in a house with frequent traffic, lot of coming and going day and night
 - Moving frequently (weekly-monthly) from one neighborhood, city, or state in a patterned method
- Suspicious business fronts
 - Massage/beauty parlors, nail shops, medical supplies etc.



Warning Signs for those used in Prostitution (continued)

- Gang Affiliation
- Suddenly withdrawn or changes in daily activities.
- Changes in sexual activity, more or less promiscuous, or fearful of sex
- Inappropriate knowledge of sex that you wouldn't expect someone of that age to have.
- Working in a strip club, or a sex shop.
- Suspicious on-line activities
 - Posting on-line, or community papers such as City Pages
- Child sexual abuse survivors begin posing inappropriately (pornographic posing)

Compiled by Beth Jacobs, Guadalupe Lopez, and Christine Stark



Providing Outreach

- Connect with local homeless shelters , shelters for run-away youth or other local agencies
- Collaborate with other social services departments/ agencies
- Include welcoming language and information in program publicity



Advocacy

Educate entire staff on prostitution and trafficking so the women do not need to educate you

- Be patient
- Allow time and trust building
- Recognize fears
 - fear of prosecution
 - having children taken from them
 - family finding out
 - having the community find out
- Focus on action, not on the person

Do not judge

It's important to check your own biases before working with a woman used in prostitution or those who are trafficked



Advocacy continued

- Language is powerful
 - Use “Prostituted women” or “Women/Woman used in prostitution” rather than “prostitute”, “ho” or “hooker”
- Many women do not view themselves as victims
 - Society views them as criminals or as getting over on men
 - Women might internalized these beliefs
- Women/youth may not identify what they are engaged in as prostitution or trafficking
 - Connect, provide education, let them identify for themselves
- The women may carry a lot of shame and may feel disconnected from their culture
 - Help them to reconnect, reassure them they are welcome



Advocacy to Meet Basic Needs

- Housing
- Healing
- Mentorship programs
- Chemical dependency treatment
- Work skills
- Safety from pimps
- Relocation
- Civil and criminal legal assistance
- Help with children
- Health needs

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“We need someone to understand where we came from and how we lived, and that half of us were raped, beat, and made to sell our bodies. We need people with hearts...”



For More Information:

“Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota”

www.miwsac.org

www.prostitutionresearch.com

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