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Garden of Truth:

The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota

Nicole Matthews

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Research by:

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Why

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

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Goals

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

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How

- Funding
- Location
- Research Team
- Access to Survivors

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Method

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

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Many Indigenous languages have no words for rape, prostitution, and many oral histories and historical documents indicate that violence against women was a capital offense.

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

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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

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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

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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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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.

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Adoption

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

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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

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Homelessness

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

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Trauma

- Half of the women interviewed met a conservative 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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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.”

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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

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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.

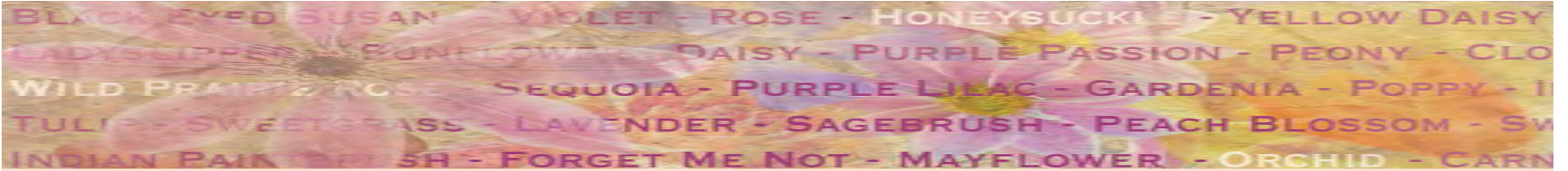
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“A john said to me, ‘I thought we
killed all of you’.”

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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)

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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.”

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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%

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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)

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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

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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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RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Increase state and federal funding to necessary services
 - Transitional and long term housing
 - Advocacy programs for victims of trafficking
 - Physical and mental health care
 - Job training and placement
 - Legal services

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- Research on effective services for Native women and girls used in prostitution.
- Reducing arrests for victims of prostitution
 - Focus on arresting traffickers and sex buyers

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- All service providers, should educate their staff members to recognize, and support women and girls used in prostitution and trafficking.
- Congress should hold field hearings to listen directly to the voices of Native women.
- Educational institutions should include the voices of Native women in their curricula.

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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...”

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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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