

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Rerighting Herstory:

A Case Study of the South Dakota Coalition Against

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in American Indian Studies

by

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2008

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INTRODUCTION

“You must be able to see where you have been before you can possibly know where you want to go.” – Muscogee Creek saying

“I come from a long line of madwomen and of this, I am proud.” – MariJo Moore (Cherokee)

There is a story about three sisters who leave camp one morning to fetch water from a stream. On their way, they visit with one another and enjoy the warm weather. However, when they near the deep and fast-flowing stream, they begin to hear the cries and screams of babies. The sisters drop their buckets and run to the water's edge. They are horrified to see dozens of babies caught in the current. Many of the babies are drowning. The first sister jumps into the water and begins to throw as many of them as she can onto the bank of the stream. The second sister yells, "You're not saving enough of them!" She, too, jumps into the water. However, she begins to teach the babies to swim so that they can save themselves. The third sister starts running upstream. When the other two notice her action, they holler at her to help them. She turns and hollers back, "I am! I'm going upstream to figure out how the babies are getting in the water in the first place."¹

Sacred Circle, the National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women recounts this story in their domestic violence resource booklet in order to inspire critical thinking around the issue of violence against Native women and to illustrate the

¹ Traditional story retold in the *Domestic Violence* Resource Booklet (Item #101) available on the Sacred Circle website (www.sacred-circle.com), 9.

multi-pronged approach crucial to combating this violence. As the three sisters teach us, there are multiple responses to crisis situations, each of them has their benefits, and they are most successful when utilized together. Yet, it is the response the third sister teaches us that we must pay particular attention to at the current historical moment:

To end violence against Native women, we must *jump in*, like the first sister, and provide shelter, food and care. We must also *jump in*, like the second sister and help each other deal with individual experiences. However, unless we come to an accurate understanding of the root causes of violence against Native women and reclaim our roots as Native people, the social transformation necessary to end violence will not occur.²

With this master's thesis, I set out on the path forged by the three sisters and my other aunts in advocating for the changes necessary to eliminate personal and societal violence against all women and their children, and Native women in particular.

My own experiences and the histories I emerge from as a mixed-blood, Muscogee/White woman do not defy the staggering statistics I document in the next portion of this project and, thus, I have always in some ways been intimate with the research I undertake with this thesis. I officially came to this project though in 2007 when I attended my first *Advocacy for Native Women Who Have Been Raped* training in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The training was facilitated by Elena Giacci and produced by Sacred Circle. After that training, I began conversations with Elena about how I might be able to craft a thesis that both explored questions regarding violence against Native women and also served the community as a tool in the struggle to eradicate the violence. Throughout my next several trainings and a series of discussions with Elena,

² Ibid.

Karen Artichoker (director of Sacred Circle and co-management team member of Cangleska³), and Brenda Hill (education coordinator of Sacred Circle), the following collaborative project was conceived.

Background

Violence against American Indian women is a problem of epic proportions that not only endangers the lives of individual Native women but also erodes the sovereignty of Native Nations and destroys Native communities both on and off reservation. Only recently, and after the creation of a national grassroots Indian movement to educate Congress and eradicate this violence, has the federal government recognized the severity of this problem as well as its particular trust responsibility to assist tribal governments in protecting the lives of Native women.⁴

In 2005, Congress reauthorized the national Violence Against Women Act which included the enactment of Title IX, the Safety for Indian Women Title.⁵ The following is among the wealth of disturbing information that Congress found in its research leading up to the enactment of Title IX: violent crime victimization for Native women is higher

³ A domestic violence and sexual assault advocacy program serving the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

⁴ Throughout this thesis, I use the terms Native, American Indian, Native American, and indigenous interchangeably. Although I recognize that there are debates about the appropriateness of these terms as well as their exact meanings, I choose to utilize them in this manner because this interdisciplinary project draws from a wide variety of discourses that employ all of these terms. For example, the legal literature I draw from uses the term American Indian while the grassroots literature I utilize employs the term Native.

⁵ *Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005* (H.R. 3402).

than for all other populations in the United States; one out of every three Indian women will be raped in their lifetimes; three out of every four Indian women will be physically assaulted; Indian women are stalked at a rate more than double that of any other population; and during the period 1979 through 1992, homicide was the third leading cause of death of Indian females aged 15 to 34.⁶ Advocates working in this field believe that even these staggering statistics only *begin* to sketch the scene of violence against Native women as these crimes are both underreported and underestimated.

For decades before Title IX was passed by the federal government though, Native women's advocates (primarily themselves Native and survivors of violence) had been doing a substantial amount of work at a variety of community, state, national, and international levels on behalf of the Indian women who suffer domestic abuse and sexual violence. It was precisely this labor coupled with the above findings that pressed Congress to recognize "the longstanding policy of a government-to-government relationship between Indian tribes and the United States."⁷ With scarce resources, over the last 30 or so years Indian women across the country have initiated advocacy

⁶ Lawrence A. Greenfield and Steven K. Smith, *American Indians and Crime* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, USDOJ, February 1999); Steven W. Perry, *American Indians and Crime* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, USDOJ, December 2004); Ronet Bachman, *National Crime Victimization Survey Compilation* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, USDOJ, 2004); Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, *Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey* (Washington DC: National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USDOJ, November 2000).

⁷ *Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005* (H.R. 3402).

programs, tribal codes, protection order processes, and even the establishment of Native shelters in an effort to address these issues. Unfortunately, however, most of this mobilization has been marginalized or altogether ignored by mainstream or "outsider" communities and this work has gone unnoticed, unmentioned, and often undocumented.

Statement of Problem

My objective with this master's thesis, then, is to both *rewrite* and *reright*⁸ the position of Native women in history by broadening narratives of mobilization against sexual and domestic violence with the inclusion of Native women's voices. In other words, this project intends to record the activism and organizational strategies that Native women have employed to combat these realities in their communities in order to update and edit the historical record. Thus, this thesis documents three pivotal moments in the birth and development of the South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.⁹ I do so primarily from the perspective of the Native women instrumental in its existence in order to *center* the concerns and voices of Native women and *decenter* the mainstream, colonialist narrative that typically frames and tells the history of such events and historical moments.

⁸ I emphasize these terms as Linda Tuhiwai Smith does in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1999), 28.

⁹ Throughout most of the text, I will use the term "Coalition" in place of "South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault."

I have chosen the state of South Dakota as the focused site I will explore both because the Native advocates collaborating on this project are located there, but also because South Dakota is a hub from which a great deal of the national Native women's activism against violence originates: South Dakota is home of the first shelter for Native women, White Buffalo Calf Woman Society, which is located on the Rosebud Reservation; Lakota activist Tillie Black Bear helped found the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence from her home at Rosebud; and it was their work in South Dakota that some of the women critical to the development of Title IX credit.

I'd also like to note that in completing this project, I do so in tribute and honor of former advocate, ally, South Dakota State Senator, and *maske*¹⁰, Carol Maicke. Described as a leader, mentor, and friend to Indian and non-Indian women alike, Carol played a key role in the battle to end violence against Native women across South Dakota and beyond its borders. When imagining this thesis, the women I worked with explained to me that before her passing in 2004, Carol had begun the project of documenting the herstory of the Coalition. Unfortunately, she was unable to complete her efforts but, as she asserts in an unpublished draft of the Coalition's herstory, she was passionately committed to telling the story that "occurred when Native women and white women allies fought to change the status quo" in South Dakota from 1978 to the early 1990s.¹¹ In a letter she wrote to the "founding mothers" regarding their experiences with the Coalition she asserts, "You are all an important part of enormous social change and we cannot let

¹⁰ "*Maske*" can be translated as "friend" in the Lakota language.

¹¹ Carol Maicki, *From the Beginning: Herstory of the SD Coalition* [draft], 2.

all of this get lost."¹² This project aims to more fully recount the story Carol and the other women involved in the Coalition wanted to share.

Literature Review

Before I begin this narrative, it is necessary to briefly review the literature from which this thesis both arises and departs. In the foreword to *Domestic Violence at the Margins: Readings on Race, Class, Gender, and Culture*, anti-violence activist and scholar Beth Richie briefly describes the development of anti-violence against women organizing within the United States. In this process, she credits the work of feminist activists that began in the 1970s for taking a problem that had previously been "hidden deeply within the private sphere" and transforming it into an issue "worthy of social, intellectual, clinical, and political attention."¹³ Yet, Richie also notes that an overwhelming amount of the *mainstream* and *visible* analysis that was being crafted during the '70s, and that continued to dominate narratives of anti-violence organizing for the next couple of decades, was primarily concerned with and based upon the experiences of white, middle-class, U.S. born, heterosexual women. Thus, she introduces the anthology *Domestic Violence at the Margins* as an attempt to counter the prevailing and simplistic narrative of violence against women as a monolithic and universal problem which affects all women the same. Rather, she argues, the collection takes into account

¹² Carol Maicki to Founding Mothers, 1988.

¹³ Beth Richie, forward to *Domestic Violence at the Margins: Readings on Race, Class, Gender, and Culture*, ed. Natalie Sokoloff and Christina Pratt (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), xv.

that "the very nature of violence against women is different for different women" and "multiple forms of oppression complicate battering, rape, harassment, incest, and other forms of gender violence."¹⁴

The position Richie and contributors to *Domestic Violence at the Margins* develops is illustrative of a woman of color response to violence against women that builds upon and gives credit to the work done by mainstream feminist organizers. Significantly, though, this position also departs from mainstream anti-violence organizing in critical ways. Like women of color feminist approaches to knowledge production which "refuse the hierarchy of class, racial, national, sexual, and gender-based struggles,"¹⁵ this approach to anti-violence organizing challenges the notion that gender oppression is the primary cause of violence against women. Here, we see an emphasis on the need to examine the *intersection* of forms of inequality and oppression in the occurrences of violence.¹⁶ Additionally, this approach too *rewrites* and *rerights* the

¹⁴ Ibid., xvii.

¹⁵ Ella Shohat, ed., *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), 1.

¹⁶ For other examples of this work and the theoretical and methodological thrust behind it, see Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping at the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" in *The Public Nature of Private Violence: The Discovery of Domestic Abuse*, eds. M.A. Fineman and R. Mykitiuk (New York: Routledge, 1994), 93-118; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2006); Kanuha Valli, "Domestic Violence, Racism, and the Battered Women's Movement in the United States" in *Future Interventions with Battered Women and Their Families*, eds. J.L. Edleson and Z.C. Eisikovits (London: Sage, 1996), 34-50;

historical record by intervening in the very historiography of anti-violence organizing in the U.S. For example, a significant contribution of a woman of color analysis of the movement itself moves beyond simply locating the beginnings of the anti-violence movement in the early 1970s with the rise of the mainstream "women's liberation movement." Rather, various scholars and activists of color have documented the ways in which we actually see anti-violence organizing happening on multiple fronts throughout history if we look at "alternative" examples of resistance such as Black women's confrontation of rape during Slavery.

Although Native American responses to anti-violence organizing sometimes parallel the responses made by other women of color, they also differ in significant ways. For example, in the recently published and pioneering textbook *Sharing Our Stories of Survival: Native Women Surviving Violence*, Native activists and advocates compile years of critical interventions into the discourse and practice of anti-violence mobilization from Native communities across the United States. This text aids in illuminating the unique nature of the relationship Indian women have to domestic abuse and sexual violence in the face of ongoing colonization and United States imperialism.¹⁷ In the preface, Jerry Gardner locates the text alongside the contributions to anti-violence literature made by other marginalized women but also notes that the very existence of the

Maria Ochoa and Barbara Ige, eds., *Shout Out: Women of Color Respond to Violence* (California: Seal Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Sarah Deer, Bonnie Clairmont, Carrie Martell, and Maureen White Eagle, eds. *Sharing Our Stories of Survival: Native Women Surviving Violence* (New York: Altamira Press, 2008).

book itself arises from a political, legal, and social reality that mark Native women as distinctive from the other women whose work I have briefly reviewed above.

A momentary overview of the contributions Native activists, scholars, and advocates have made to the field of anti-violence theory and praxis demonstrates this point. Among other things, they establish the connection between Native women's sovereignty and the sovereignty of Native Nations, the link between sexual violence and genocide, and the relationship between violence against Native women and Federal Indian Law. Additionally, they speak candidly about the absence of a sustained critique of colonialism and imperialism in feminist and anti-violence discourses, even many of those launched by other women of color.

Throughout these efforts, we see a decidedly Native approach to feminism and discussions of gender which prioritize restoring the respect and social positions of women in many pre-contact Native communities through the reclamation of culture and sovereignty.¹⁸ For example, the crucial concept "Sovereign Women Strengthen Sovereign Nations" is asserted in a brochure produced by Sacred Circle. This brochure develops the notion that as Native Nations have an inherent right to sovereignty and self-determination that is honored by other nations, Native women have an inherent right to a

¹⁸ For a more nuanced look at discussions of indigenous women and feminism, see examples such as Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); Joyce Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2007); Renya Ramirez, "Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender: A Native Feminist Approach to Belonging," *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 7, no. 2 (2007): 22-40.

body and path in life that is honored by others.¹⁹ Similarly, legal scholar and activist Sarah Deer outlines the notion that the sovereignty of Native Nations is directly tied to regaining control of sexual assault jurisprudence in Indian communities.²⁰ She argues that as long as Native Nations continue to exist as they do today, without the ability to adequately prosecute sex offenders, they are unable to practice self-determination and participate in the processes of decolonization. In order to substantiate her claims, she traces the use of sexual violence through the history of Indian-white relations in the United States.

Deer's work corresponds to scholarship initiated by other Native scholars and activists who trace the roots of the current rates of violence against American Indian women back to contact with Europeans and the erosion of safety for Native women. In particular, Andrea Smith's groundbreaking text *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* establishes the theoretical premise that "colonial relationships are themselves gendered and sexualized."²¹ Additionally, she argues that sexual violence has been utilized as a tool of both patriarchy and colonialism in Native communities in both historical and contemporary moments.

¹⁹ *Sovereignty: An Inherent Right to Self-Determination* Brochure (Item #205) available on the Sacred Circle website (www.sacred-circle.com).

²⁰ Sarah Deer, "Sovereignty of the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Rape Law Reform and Federal Indian Law," *Suffolk University Law Review* 38 (2005) 455-466.

²¹ Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), 1.

It is with these sorts of interventions lodged by Native women, into both mainstream anti-violence organizing and more nuanced women of color approaches, that I am situating the project at hand.

Methodology and Method

In designing and undertaking this project, I take seriously Linda Tuhiwai Smith's assertion that,

The methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ, all become significant acts which need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied. In other words, they need to be 'decolonized'.²²

Thus, I situate my master's thesis as a decidedly *indigenous* research project that privileges indigenous concerns and practices and positions indigenous peoples as *both* researchers and the researched. I do so to disrupt mainstream and historical research tendencies to view Native peoples as *objects of study* rather than producers of knowledge, culture, and worldviews. This project is also directly engaged with processes of decolonization such as the following: understanding the ways in which Western histories have been embedded in colonial and imperial practices; "researching back"²³ in ways that disrupt the regulation and domination of Native Nations and Native women; disseminating knowledge back to the communities from which it emerges; telling the previously marginalized and undocumented stories of Native peoples as a form of

²² Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 39.

²³ Smith discusses the significance of "researching back" in the same manner that much post-colonial and anti-colonial literature "talks back" to the colonizer, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 7.

resistance; and, lastly, strengthening the sovereignty and self-determination of Native peoples by contributing to the body of knowledge that Native communities are creating in an attempt to collaborate with one another in the project of national liberation.

More pointedly, this herstory of the Coalition documents its origins and growth from the perspective of Native women in order to *center* their concerns and voices and *decenter* the mainstream, colonialist narrative.²⁴ Thus, throughout my work on this project, I have tried to be consciously aware of the ways in which traditional ethnographies and ethnohistories have often ignored, masked, or misrepresented the Native voices they attempted to capture.²⁵ For this reason, I have attempted to foreground the stories and experiences the women from the Coalition related to me. I do my best not to editorialize their memories and utilize their own words whenever possible. In this way, the Native women involved in the Coalition themselves frame and analyze the herstory that this thesis documents.

The primary method I employ in constructing this story is oral history because, as indigenous writers such as Paula Gunn Allen, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Linda Hogan have long ago established, the tradition of telling stories as a tool for teaching,

²⁴ I did interview anyone affiliated with the Coalition who wished to speak with me when completing this project. Thus, both non-Indians and Indians were interviewed. However, I do tell this story, primarily, from an "Indian" perspective, even as I recognize the problematic nature of essentializing an "Indian" identity.

²⁵ Devon A. Mihesuah, "Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History" in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing About American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 37.

community building, and the making of history is central to the lives of Native peoples.²⁶ Like Old Man Badger in Silko's poem "Skeleton Fixer," I listened to the stories of the women involved with the Coalition and then "started laying out the bones" in an attempt to reconstruct the herstory as they desired it to be told until "the last spine bone was arranged at the base of the tail."²⁷ I do also utilize additional sources such as Coalition records (newsletters, meeting minutes, newspaper articles, reports to the general body, letters, membership documents, etc.) when appropriate.

Furthermore, I'd like to note that this thesis is not a project that solely serves an academic purpose. As I mentioned earlier, in its conception I was extremely committed to the notion that it both fulfill my degree requirements and also be a final product that would be useful to the women I worked with. Per their desires, then, the completion of this thesis is an attempt to provide the Coalition and the Native women involved with an archival record of their experiences. Not only is this useful for purposes of history-making, but it also allows Native advocates to share their history, their struggles, and their accomplishments with younger women just entering the movement to combat violence against Native women. In this way, my thesis gives back to the community

²⁶ Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*; Paula Gunn Allen, ed., *Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1989); Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Touchstone, 1996); Leslie Marmon Silko, *Storyteller* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1981); Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

²⁷ Silko, *Storyteller*, 242-245.

from which it emerges and contributes to the larger body of knowledge that Native women are currently building as a resource in their struggle to end violence against Native women. Throughout the writing process, I shared my drafts with the women interviewed and incorporated their feedback into the project. The final version is one that we all approve.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BEGINNINGS

"I always used to say that the White Buffalo Calf Woman Society gave birth to the South Dakota Coalition and NCADV [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence]." – Tillie Black Bear

In 1977, a non-profit organization was founded by women on the Rosebud reservation in South Dakota to work with women, men, and children in an effort to restore the sacredness of women. This organization, the White Buffalo Calf Woman Society, is based in traditional Lakota teachings that assert, "even in thought – women are to be respected."²⁸ Accordingly, the Society combats violence against Native women with traditional Lakota life ways and teachings. Only one year after the creation of the Society (which would later establish the first shelter for Native women on an Indian reservation), president Faith Spotted Eagle was invited to testify at the United States Commission on Civil Rights hearings on battered women in Washington DC. Because she was unable to attend the event, Faith asked Tillie Black Bear who was a student in graduate school at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion and a member of the Society to take her place. With approximately 300 other women from across the United States, Tillie attended the hearings in DC and testified about the needs of women on the Rosebud reservation.

The women present at the hearings began to see that they had similar concerns about violence against women. During breaks in meetings, a group began to gather in the

²⁸ From a brochure for White Buffalo Calf Woman Society.

men's bathroom²⁹ and discussed the importance of having a national voice and a national movement against domestic violence. By the end of the hearings, Tillie (the only Native woman in attendance) and the others had decided to form a National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. All of the women present were asked to organize state coalitions when they returned home and about 20 women agreed to be on the steering committee for the National Coalition.

Despite her doubts that a Native woman would be able to play such a leading role in South Dakota during the late '70s, when Tillie arrived home she spoke with Paula Long, a member of both the White Buffalo Calf Women's Society and the South Dakota Commission on the Status of Women. They discussed potential organizing efforts and Paula suggested Tillie contact Joyce Quarnstrom who was the staff person for the commission. Additionally, Tillie attended a quarterly meeting of the South Dakota Commission and convinced them to help her set up a state coalition organizing meeting. They also agreed to pay for the costs of printing the announcement materials and to send the mailing out to their list of contacts.

Tillie then returned to the White Buffalo Calf Woman Society and began looking for a space to host the meeting. Because there wasn't a location on the Rosebud reservation that could accommodate the potential attendees, Tillie asked the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the use of their dorms. The BIA agreed and in June 1978, about 77

²⁹ Tillie recalls that the women had to use the men's restroom because there was not a women's restroom in the entire building.

women responded to the invitation and attended the first organizing meeting of the South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Prior to 1978 there were only three programs in the state providing shelter to battered women and advocacy for rape victims: Brookings Women's Center located in Brookings, Children's Inn located in Sioux Falls, and White Buffalo Calf Woman Society. Although all three of the programs served Native women, the staff members and board of Brookings Women's Center and Children's Inn were made up of almost entirely white women. This division in women utilizing services and women running the programs proved to become a spot of tension in later Coalition organizing. However, because only three programs existed through the state, most of the women who attended the initial meeting were individuals interested in the issue of violence against women and did not yet represent programs. Of the 77 women who attended, only a handful was Native and most of them were from Rosebud.

“From Eagle Butte to Rapid City to Aberdeen to Martin....violence against women doesn't stop anywhere. That is why the Coalition was formed.” – Tillie Black Bear

The first meeting of the Coalition included 8 workshops to discuss the needs of women in South Dakota and to suggest strategies for addressing these needs. A sampling of the topics included funding sources, medical services, networking, education, counseling and advocate services, as well as the creation of shelters. At the end of the gathering, a decision was made to meet again during the next month in order to begin drafting the articles of incorporation that would permit the organization to have a formal presence within South Dakota. During this time period, Tillie was still

facilitating/organizing the Coalition. She had yet to face any real resistance to the fact that she was a Native woman leading a statewide and primarily Anglo-American organization in South Dakota. The second meeting was held a month later in July 1978 at St. Joseph's Indian School in Chamberlain and the steering committee began drafting the articles of incorporation. These members were: Lanette Cooper from Eagle Butte; Ina Anderberg from Vermillion; Faith Spotted Eagle from Mission; Charlotte Schwab and Joyce Abraham from Sioux Falls; Sherry Neumann from Colman; and Tillie. Faith and Tillie were the only Indian women on the steering committee.

In 1978 six more programs dealing with violence against women were established: (1) Citizens Against Rape and Domestic Violence in Sioux Falls, (2) Women in Crisis Coalition in Spearfish, (3) Women Against Violence in Rapid City, (4) Women's Resource Center in Watertown, (5) Women's Center/Shelter in Yankton, and (6) Sacred Shawl Women's Society on the Pine Ridge reservation. Again, although Native women utilized the programs throughout the state, the boards and staff of these organizations were fairly unintegrated with only Sacred Shawl Women's Society being run by Indian women.

The steering committee proposed that a board of 15 members with direct representation of programs direct the Coalition as follows:

- 5 East Missouri River Board Members
- 5 West Missouri River Board Members
- 5 Indian Board Members
 - 1 Urban
 - 2 East Missouri River Reservation
 - 2 West Missouri River Reservation

Despite this attempt at parallel development and participation from both Indian and non-Indian communities within the Coalition, because there were only two tribal programs in the state at the time, the goals of the steering committee were simply that – goals. In the early years of the Coalition, there were not enough Native women involved to fill the spots reserved for them. Karen Artchoker helps to explain this reality: "Being outnumbered and not having other Native women participate really did influence other Indian women not getting involved in those early years." She then describes a conversation she had with Lakota woman Bernice Stone and recalls, "It's always stayed with me and made me feel bad at the moment and still makes me feel bad. The statement she made was that she felt inferior being in a room full of white people. She said, 'I don't know if I just haven't gotten over some boarding school stuff or my life or whatever...but I always just think that white people are going to look at me and think I'm not smart or whatever.'"³⁰ Thus, despite Tillie's foundational role within the birth of the Coalition, it didn't take long for Native women to realize that the makeup of the Coalition represented primarily Anglo women and their interests.

By the end of the second meeting, the decision was made to incorporate under the name of the South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc. By-laws and articles of incorporation were drawn up by Lanette Cooper and reviewed first by the steering committee and then by all members. Copies of the by-laws and articles of

³⁰ South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (SDCADVSA), interview by author, tape recording, Rapid City, South Dakota, 25 March 2008.

incorporation were mailed to all Coalition members for comments and voting. The steering committee met again on July 30, 1978 at Sioux Falls College. At that time they finalized all proposals for organizational structure, by-laws and articles of incorporation. In September 1978, Tillie Black Bear, Joyce Abraham and Charlotte Schwab incorporated the South Dakota Coalition.

Simultaneously, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence was emerging and although Native women were extremely underrepresented in the make-up of that Coalition, they were crucial in its development. In August of 1978, sleeping in borrowed National Guard tents, 28 women from all over the country camped out on the Rosebud reservation at Tillie's invitation for another organizing meeting. Some of the motivation for this work comes across in a comment made by Tillie: "In the mid '70s, I owned my own home, had 2 young daughters, a master's degree in counseling and a good job at a local university. I had it all, but I still got involved in a battering relationship."³¹

***"We are all working together to end violence against women!" – Connie Elston
(Director of Women Against Violence)***

Over the next couple of years, members of the Coalition worked feverishly to network and make changes on the local, national, and international level. In March of 1979, the interim Board of Directors of the Coalition met in Pierre at a meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women where Tillie Black Bear was invited to testify. After her appearance, Commission director Joyce Quarnstrom wrote to Tillie:

³¹ Maicki, *From the Beginning*, 6.

“...Sometimes the things you feel deepest about are the hardest things to talk about....I guess I’m still having trouble talking about my feelings. You’ve given me much. Thank you.”³² During that same year, Jane Thompson (one of the founders of Women Against Violence in Rapid City) brought Erin Pizzey to Rapid City as a speaker for the South Dakota community. Pizzey is considered the founder of the modern women's shelter movement in England and is the author of *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear*. At the time of her presentation in Rapid City, her book was the only resource available on the topic of battered women and her visit was widely attended by members of the Coalition.

In December of 1979, the Coalition met again and discussed the need to change the by-laws to non-sexist language. They also decided to lobby the legislature for the first time. The two issues they focused on were funding for the local programs and a reporting bill to gather concrete data to determine the incidence of battering in the state. The total Coalition budget for lobbying costs was only \$100 though so they decided to reimburse lobbyists at the rate of ten cents per mile. Even this lack of resources and the severe South Dakota weather that occurs during the January-March legislative session didn't deter the women from lobbying, however, and Cindy Howard, Lora Hawkins and Margaret Denton took their turns as lobbyists. Margaret recalls driving through unbelievable snowstorms: “What crazy commitment.”³³

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 8.

The difficulties of working through the South Dakota legislature became clear in March of 1980 when the legislative session ended. The Coalition's reporting bill passed both the House and the Senate but was vetoed by Governor Janklow. The Governor stated he vetoed the bill because he thought the language protected the rights of unmarried people and homosexuals. He said he felt sure the legislature did not intend to protect the rights of these groups. The Coalition's funding bill totaling \$25,000 passed in the House but was killed in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill needed 5 votes to get out of committee and it only had 4. Mary McClure, one of a few women legislators at the time, cast one of the dissenting votes. Thus, even the overwhelmingly Anglo Coalition had difficulties finding legislative support to combat violence against women.

When the coalition met in April of 1980, the main topic of discussion was the need to build a broader base of economic and societal support. They recognized they had to have more political clout and that increased awareness might help them achieve this. It was announced that the Technical Assistance Center in Denver had awarded the Coalition \$1,000 to print brochures. They also named the federal government's new Victims of Crime Act and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act as possible funding sources. It was decided that groups within the coalition must avoid competition for funds, power and personal glory.

Meanwhile, the Resource Center for Women was established in Aberdeen. They were successful in receiving a \$45,000 grant from the Bush Foundation and hosted a workshop with Lenore Walker as facilitator. Dr. Walker was the first researcher to address battered women and she developed the concept of the "battered woman

syndrome” which became accepted and utilized by the courts to explain the behavior of battered women as victims or as perpetrators of violence.

The Coalition met in Pierre in June of 1980 and again focused on legislation as a key area of development. They conducted a panel of legislators who gave them tips on lobbying techniques and decided to introduce two more bills to the January 1981 session. One was for a restraining order for batterers and the other was to increase the marriage license fee as a resource for the programs. Karen Artichoker remembers discussion of the marriage license legislation and talks about the utter irrelevancy this had to Native women on reservations in unincorporated counties and rural counties where the fees never amount to a significant amount of money: "I remember raising that issue, how is that going to benefit development in Indian communities?"³⁴ She comments that because of this irrelevancy, the few Native women involved in the Coalition at the time "didn't feel invested or engaged."³⁵ The Coalition decided to move forward with the bills regardless. The restraining order bill passed both the Senate and House but was vetoed by Governor Janklow. The Marriage License bill failed.

Additional bad news came when the Coalition learned in September of 1981 that the Technical Assistance Center in Denver had gone out of business. The Coalition had depended on their resources and support. After this news and two unsuccessful tries to pass legislation, there seemed to be a down period for the group.

³⁴ SDCADVSA, interview.

³⁵ Ibid.

Things began to improve slightly in 1983. The Coalition intended to lobby again for a marriage license fee increase and also for protection orders to protect battered women. In February, of 1983 the marriage license fee increase to fund local battered women programs finally passed the legislature and was signed by the Governor. The Domestic Violence Protection Order bill failed that year but became law in March of 1984. Notably, though, the new law did not protect unmarried people. In order to apply for a protection order, a victim of abuse had to be legally married to the perpetrator.

During these years in the growth of the Coalition, other than a few key players, Native women were still marginal. Karen Artichoker recollects: "Tillie gets things started, they laid some foundation, but there aren't any number of Indian women involved to really begin building something."³⁶ In September of 1984, Charlene Lapointe, who was director at White Buffalo Calf Woman Society at the time, presented a workshop to the coalition on the special needs of Indian women who are battered but this didn't really seem to improve the dynamics within the Coalition. Karen remembers begging Indian women to attend the meetings with her but receiving negative responses: "Every Indian woman I talked to would say almost the same thing. I don't wanna go to that! I know what it's gonna be. I'll have to sit there with those white women."³⁷

Over the next two years, funding became a bit more accessible to the Coalition. Family Violence Prevention and Services Act monies finally became available in South Dakota. The total amount of \$50,000 was subcontracted by the state to the Coalition for

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

disbursal to the programs for general operating and to provide training workshops and a newsletter. Victims of Crime Act funds in the amount of \$206,000 also became available in South Dakota. The money was designated (by the federal government) to fund programs that assist victims of sexual assault, spousal abuse or child abuse. In August, the Coalition wrote a letter to Governor Janklow requesting that \$152,475 of the VOCA funds be available for their programs. In September, the Governor denied their request. His decision was to use all VOCA funds to pay for a domestic violence position in the Department of Social Services and to start a statewide hot line.

Coalition members wrote letters in protest and the letters appeared in local newspapers. One of the letter writers received a late night call from the Governor. The Coalition appealed to the Governor again. In November, he changed his mind and released \$63,000 of the VOCA funds to the programs. Then a new Governor was elected. Coalition Chair, Connie Byre-Olson wrote a letter to Governor-Elect, George Mickelson stating "Congratulations on your recent victory! We are looking forward to working with you and your administration."³⁸ In February 1987, Governor Mickelson made all of the VOCA money available for grants to local programs, reversed the former Governor's decision to fund a state position on domestic violence and a statewide hotline, and stated in a press release: "I am committed to local control."³⁹

"I remember [my first Coalition meeting] was at the YWCA and around the table sat about 30 white women. In the corner, apart from the table sat 6 Native women one of

³⁸ Maicki, *From the Beginning*, 11.

³⁹ Ibid.

whom was Tillie Black Bear. It looked strange to me so I asked why they sat apart. The answer I was given by one of the white women was that was the way the Native women 'liked it.' She said they liked to be by themselves. This picture stayed in my mind because it was upsetting and I didn't understand it." – Carol Maicki

In 1985, advocate Carol Maicki moved to South Dakota from Wyoming where she had been the state program manager for family violence and sexual assault within the Wyoming Department of Health and Social Services. She was also one of the founders of the first rape crisis center in Wyoming. During 1986, she commuted to Cheyenne, WY from Black Hawk, SD weekly while under contract to the Governor of Wyoming to start up the new Victim's Compensation Program that the Wyoming Coalition had lobbied for. In 1987, she joined the Board of Directors of Women Against Violence in Rapid City where Karen Artichoker had just finished her term. She became Interim Director of the program and, thus, attended her first Coalition meeting in Sioux Falls. As early as her first meeting, she experienced a taste of the divisions that existed between Native and non-Native women involved in the work when she observed even the spatial divisions of women within the room – white women sitting at the table, Native women sitting in the corner.

At the Coalition meeting in February of 1987, the decision was made to change the Coalitions name and it became the South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence *and Sexual Assault*. A major overhaul of the by-laws was proposed to change the structure of the organization and the National Coalition's principles of unity⁴⁰ and

⁴⁰ See Appendix A for complete text of SDCADVSA Principles of Unity.

mission statement⁴¹ were adopted. This process took several months, though, because there was not complete agreement on whether or not these changes should be made. For example, in her recollection of adopting the principles of unity and mission statement, Pearl Gulbranson (current Outreach Specialist for the coalition) tells us, "The root cause of violence was identified as oppression, including racism, sexism, classism, all of the 'isms and there were people that, members of the coalition that, really did think that it was still about alcoholism and some kind of innate individual characteristic about ourselves that causes violence."⁴² Tillie inserts that some of the Anglo members "were like, we just want to provide services to battered women. We don't want to deal with racism or any of these other issues."⁴³ Pearl adds, "It was getting scary because they [the non-Indian women] were losing their power."⁴⁴

In January of 1988 the Coalition contracted with Carol Maicki to become their first statewide coordinator. Her contract was to work ¾ time for \$12,500. Then, in June, the Coalition celebrated their tenth anniversary in Rapid City. Twenty-six programs were represented as were state and national legislators, judges, prosecutors, men against violence and community people. Five of the founders were honored. They were: Tillie Black Bear, Cindy Howard, Margaret Denton, Mary Helen Hopponen and Joyce Quarnstrom.

⁴¹ See Appendix B for complete text of SDCADVSA Mission Statement.

⁴² SDCADVSA, interview.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Carol began writing grant applications to The Chicago Resource Center and the Bush Foundation for general operating funds for the Coalition. The applications were approved. In addition, Carol requested a few thousand dollars from the Department of Justice to fund a gathering for advocates regionally. Although that request was denied, the U.S. Justice Department responded by granting \$95,000 to the Coalition to conduct a national conference for Native people. The conference was entitled, "Indian Nations: Justice for Victims of Crime." Karen Artichoker was contracted to assist Carol in planning and implementing this huge project. They worked out of Carol's home. Many attended and the workshops included topics such as innovation and funding. It was a success and this first conference became an annual event for the Department of Justice.

During this time, Carol and others continued to work relentlessly on legislative and funding issues. In 1989, funding was received from the Bush foundation and the Coalition decided to hire another coordinator. Karen Artichoker was selected with the stipulation that she move to the east side of the state. She and Carol were each paid \$18,000 and each was to work $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

When the 1990 legislature session started, the Coalition became determined to eradicate the marital exemption in the South Dakota rape statutes. In addition to the Coalition members operating a phone tree and attending committee hearings, Carol had the assistance of her daughter Mary as a volunteer and Ro Ann Redlin from Vermillion who was interested in lobbying. Carol had heard the objections to removing the marital exemption in the rape statutes the year before and the same ones were raised this second year. One legislator announced on the floor, "If you can't rape your wife, who can you

rape?”⁴⁵ In a committee hearing another male legislator offered the following scenario: “Let’s just say the wife wants a mink coat and the husband refuses. Then she goes to the Prosecutor and says the husband raped her because she’s so mad. Husbands need protection too!”⁴⁶

This legislative response to violence against women, as well as Carol's observation that the Senator from her district often had trouble staying awake during session, motivated Carol to run for office. Carol was elected in November of 1990 to the South Dakota Senate and began her term in January of 1991.

⁴⁵ Maicki, *From the Beginning*, 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER TWO: TENSION BUILDS

"Yeah, that was bad times wasn't it?" – Karen Artichoker

In 1988, Tillie Black Bear was the first woman of color to be elected Chair of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. It was during this time that she brought back to South Dakota some elements of the National Coalition's way of conducting meetings. For example, in order to become more inclusive and to give all women skills, it was decided that new or inexperienced members would share the facilitator's job with "older" members. Additionally, a modified consensus model, which the National Coalition had been using since its inception, was adopted by the South Dakota Coalition. Prior to this moment, the South Dakota Coalition had been using Robert's Rules of Order where the majority vote conducts business. Tillie recalls: "You have to keep in mind where we were at....the state of South Dakota, it was isolated and the women doing the work were pretty isolated and this is what we knew....I served on boards at home and it was all Robert's. I wasn't always comfortable with it, but that was the way decisions were made, until we saw a different way to do it."⁴⁷

The modified consensus model drastically changed the meeting procedures. Any member could offer a proposal to the group. A discussion then followed with clarifying questions. Then, the group would be asked to make a decision. The choices were: (1) "silence" meaning agreement with the proposal, (2) "stand aside" which meant the member was not in total agreement but would actively support the group's decision, or (3)

⁴⁷ SDCADVSA, interview.

"block" which meant that the member could not agree with the proposal in its present form. Any block could stop the process. If a member blocked, the only course of action was to offer a new proposal.

This new decision-making system allowed for all members to have a say but, more importantly, it guaranteed that a small majority could not impose their will on the rest of the group. There were problems in making this transition, though, because, for the first time, women had to be accountable for their votes as individuals. Additionally, modified consensus gave power to the Native women in the Coalition that they had not previously held. Karen explains this:

There were, at that time, 22 members. I said, 'Even if every reservation sent an Indian woman [as a representative member], that means 9.' I said, 'We cannot outvote you. Your voter bloc could stop any Indian woman from getting into any position of leadership if you so choose. If Indian women get into positions of leadership, it's because you're allowing it. You're being benefactors...you're being, whatever! But if we go to consensus we all have to agree.'⁴⁸

Karen also recalls calling a non-Indian member of the Coalition soon after the move to modified consensus was made: 'I'm on the phone saying, 'Just think Sherry, the whole executive committee could be Indian women.'....She was sort of okay with me and then she called Carol or who? And said, 'Oh my god! The Indians are taking over!'"⁴⁹ Thus, even though the white women in the Coalition agreed to the modified consensus model, it didn't take long for them to figure out that a shift in power could occur when the model was actually put into practice.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The women remember the resistance they were met with during one of the first meetings where consensus was used and an Indian woman was elected to a significant position in the Coalition. Again, the Indian women sat separate from the white women, visibly illustrating the tension in Coalition dynamics. Karen recounts the comments from one of the white women during the election process: "Well, I just don't understand how somebody new to the coalition could really do that job because when I think of the executive committee, I always think of the smartest people in the organization and they are the people who I am going to call if I need to know something and if you are just starting, I don't see how you could know anything."⁵⁰ As the participation of many Native women was relatively new to the Coalition, this comment was perceived as a racist attack by many of the Native women involved. No one addressed this issue to the whole group though and the meeting continued. Moments later, however, Lakota woman April Fallis leaned over to Karen and quietly articulated her anger, "We should just leave and start our own [coalition]!" This exclamation prompted Karen to interrupt the proceedings and, tactfully, attempt to explain the need for tolerance and racial equality to the non-Indians in the room. Laughing about it now, she recalls saying something along the lines of, "Some people like broccoli and other people don't."⁵¹ The assertion was far from funny at the moment, though, and silence pervaded the room.

As soon as Karen sat down, ally Carol Maicki rose and exclaimed: "Shame on me, shame on me, shame on me....here's my beautiful little friend Karen and she's

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

standing up there lips quivering...It should have been me standing up there and saying something and not her. I'm so sorry Karen."⁵² At that point, she turned to the white women in the room and began talking about racism and feminism. She asserted that racism was a white peoples problem and that whites should actually be the ones catching each other on their use of it. Karen remembers all of the Indian women in the room saying, "Wow, wow, wow,"⁵³ because their needs were finally being taken seriously by a non-Indian in the Coalition.

Unfortunately, Carol and Karen's attempt to interrupt the racism that was operating within the Coalition didn't seem to change things much. When Tillie brought another innovation from her experience with the National Coalition, the women of color task force⁵⁴, the white women again expressed resistance and hostility. The women of color task force could bring proposals to the Coalition as a group, and they were charged with making the decision for hiring one of the two co-coordinators. This was to assure

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ As the adoption of task forces (which had more recourse than committees) was intended to bring political equity to disenfranchised groups, the Coalition later went on to approve additional task forces such as the formerly battered women task force, rural women task force, sexual assault task force, and lesbian task force. Also notable is that the Coalition eventually changed the name of the women of color task force to the Native women of sovereign nations task force in order to highlight issues of colonialism as well as the unique government-to-government relationship Native Nations have with the United States. This change too reflects the feeling that Native women in South Dakota had regarding the irrelevancy the term "women of color" has for Native women.

that at least one co-coordinator would be a Native woman or if not, would have to be approved by the women of color task force. Additionally, the women of color task force had the authority to stop the proceedings of a meeting at any time to caucus.

Again, everyone was in agreement in patterning the South Dakota Coalition after the National Coalition in theory when Tillie first proposed it, but the first time the women of color task force exercised their right to stop the proceedings and caucus, there was discomfort and resentment. Carol recalls that when the Native women left the room to caucus, "there was silence and finally one non-Native woman remarked, "Well, they have their group, but where is mine?" As she looked around the room and found they were all white women, the humor of what she said was obvious to all."⁵⁵ Resistance to the concept of inclusiveness and to the new reality of having Native women "at the table" became a smoldering undercurrent and would emerge later to cause the split in the Coalition as a unified body of women.

Another task the Coalition took on around this time was to assess "underserved" women in South Dakota. They determined there were two areas in the state where women were at high risk because of lack of services and shelters: the Pine Ridge reservation (primarily rural Native women) and northern Meade County (primarily rural white women.) Co-coordinators, Karen and Carol began searching for foundations that would be willing to grant money for start-up activities in these areas. Under its health initiative, the Robert Wood Johnson foundation carved out monies for projects that involved Native Americans and health issues. Karen wrote a proposal and was successful

⁵⁵ Maicki, *From the Beginning*, 15.

in being approved for a three-year grant to start up a project on Pine Ridge. It was named Project Medicine Wheel and the Coalition was the fiscal agent for the grant.

Because Karen was an enrolled member of the Oglala Sioux Nation, the Coalition executive committee decided that she would oversee the project because it would not be appropriate or realistic for a non-Native to impose a program on a Native Nation. This duty was also in keeping with her job description that included providing technical assistance for all of the emerging programs on Indian reservations in the state. Karen designed Project Medicine Wheel so the focus was a total community response to violence against women. She hired staff and monitored them. The Robert Wood Johnson foundation monitored the project's progress and Maria Russell, the non-Native coalition treasurer, administered and monitored the funds. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the development of this project too increased racial tensions within the Coalition. Ally Ro Ann Redlin remembers the white women reacting to the management of the grant: "I don't know if we should let those Indian women handle all that money."⁵⁶ Pearl elaborates on this memory and talks about all of "the squirming and the ugliness" that occurred when the vote to administer the grant took place: "We couldn't say that vote out loud. We had to do it ballot. That's how uncomfortable people were."⁵⁷

"The Native American Culture as we know it now, not as it formerly existed, is a culture of hopelessness, godlessness, of joblessness and lawlessness."—Mike Whalen (Deputy State's Attorney)

⁵⁶ SDCADVSA, interview.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

The conflicted relations between Indians and non-Indians that were building inside the Coalition mirrored events that were occurring on the larger South Dakota landscape. In 1990, Comanche advocate and social justice activist Charon Asetoyer and others began looking for a spot in Lake Andes where The Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center⁵⁸ could open a shelter. In their attempts to find an appropriate location, a situation developed that would prove to add to the smoldering resistance within the Coalition of white members who were not comfortable with the emerging leadership of Native women.

The mayor of Lake Andes had previously asked Charon to contact him if the Resource Center ever decided to expand its organization. When the women found a spot for the shelter, Charon let him know they had purchased the house next door to the Resource Center. Shortly after this exchange, Charon was contacted by the City Council and informed that she needed a zoning variance for the location that was chosen. A little concerned, she asked other members from the Coalition and her staff to attend the zoning hearing with her. Coincidentally, a year prior to these events Charon had been featured in *Mother Jones* magazine. After this press, Joni, a woman from the east coast had contacted Charon and asked to collect video footage for a possible film. The night of the City Council meeting, this woman and her video camera too were in attendance.

When the women entered the meeting, the room was packed full of people and one of the zoning commissioners asked Joni not to videotape the proceedings. Joni turned her camera to the floor but left it turned on so that the audio could still be

⁵⁸ Founded in 1985 by Charon Asetoyer.

recorded. During that meeting, an explosion of racism occurred when Mike Whalen, the states attorney stood and announced:

Indian culture as I view it, is presently so mongrelized as to be a mix of dependency on the federal government and a primitive society wholly on the outside of the mainstream of Western civilization and thought. The Native American culture as we know it now, not as it formerly existed, is a culture of hopelessness, godlessness, of joblessness and lawlessness.⁵⁹

Needless to say, the Resource Center was denied the zoning permit. Charon recollects this moment:

We were in a state of shock. We couldn't believe the blatant racism – that the states attorney who was really supposed to be working with groups that are trying to protect victims of crime, and as we know [women] fleeing from domestic violence and sexual assault are victims of crime. Instead he was doing everything he could to prevent a facility from opening up in Lake Andes.⁶⁰

Because Joni had audio recorded the entire meeting, the Resource Center was able to transcribe Whalen's remarks verbatim. Charon contacted the Center for Constitutional Rights out of New York city and, eventually, initiated a civil rights case that would go to Federal court.⁶¹

After this event, the Yankton Sioux Tribe organized a march down Main Street in protest of the racist atmosphere in the city. To respond to a member program's distress and to show support, the executive committee of the Coalition, at the request of Tillie, decided to hold their quarterly meeting in Lake Andes. They also decided to include on

⁵⁹ From the original transcript of the zoning hearings from the audio recording Joni was able to capture.

⁶⁰ SDCADVSA, interview.

⁶¹ Although the Center lost the court case they did end up buying the son of the zoning commissioner's house and had a shelter up and operating within two weeks after the purchase.

the agenda an item to discuss the remarks made by Mike Whalen. Charon recalls that there was obvious resentment from some of the non-Indian women in the Coalition, and comments that racism seemed to trump the commitment to stop violence against women.⁶²

As the time to march in Lake Andes approached, a letter was written to the Coalition Chairperson, Shari Aaker-Gilchrist, by Bradley Olson (Chairperson of a local shelter program in Yankton). In his letter, he objected to the proposed agenda because, “Although we empathize with the stand of Native Americans against the statement made by States Attorney, Mike Whalen, we feel the focus of the current agenda would be centered around this issue and not be beneficial or productive toward the common goal of addressing domestic violence. Therefore, it is the decision of our Board that the Yankton Women’s Center/Shelter not be officially represented at the September meeting.”⁶³ This letter would prove to be a forerunner of rhetoric used by some of the white women who objected to the Coalition’s growing involvement with what they termed “Indian Issues.” They viewed this focus as being separate from their work of providing shelter and advocacy to victims of violence despite the fact that the women in Lake Andes were denied shelter accommodations *precisely* because they were Indian women.

The meeting was held in Lake Andes as scheduled and the Yankton program’s letter became an agenda topic. The executive committee tasked Karen to respond to Mr. Olson’s letter, which she did on October 5, 1990. She wrote:

⁶² SDCADVSA, interview.

⁶³ Bradley Olson to Shari Aaker-Gilchrist, 1990.

Mr. Whalen publicly stated that the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, a member organization of the South Dakota Coalition, 'promotes evil.' While this remark referenced Indian culture, it would be irresponsible of us to allow a public official to make such disparaging and racist comments about a member organization of the Coalition. It would also be disrespectful to ignore blatant racism especially when battered women and children of color are the vehicle being used to promote racism."⁶⁴

She went on to say, "Domestic violence is an issue of oppression in our society" and the mission of the Coalition is to confront it as such despite the fact that "many shelters/programs in our state have difficulty making the connection between providing direct services to battered women and the need for social change on a more global scale."⁶⁵ Karen ended the letter by saying, "In turn, the coalition is available to support the Yankton Women's Shelter/Center should you find yourselves facing a Mike Whalen who has power over you."⁶⁶

The letter from the Yankton program was just one example of the challenges local non-Indian boards and Directors around the state launched with the direction the Coalition was moving. Even though the South Dakota Coalition's goals and mission were in sync with those of the National Coalition, the new approach was upsetting for many white South Dakotans. Carol explains, "Some of the resistance by the white women came about because of the changes they were experiencing. For some, being on the 'side' of Native people was a new and frightening experience because it felt unsafe."⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Karen Artichoker to Bradley Olsen, October 5, 1990.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Maicki, *From the Beginning*, 18.

One of the non-Indian women who participated in the Lake Andes march was so traumatized she needed many hours of discussion to come to terms with how she felt. She said:

All my life, I've lived here in South Dakota and never did I have any contact with Native people until I came to the shelter escaping my batterer husband. Now that I'm free of that relationship and am actually working in a shelter, I was feeling proud of myself and what I had accomplished until that day in Lake Andes. I couldn't understand the pure hatred on the faces of white people like me as we walked past them. I couldn't believe that people like me could look at me like that. They saw me as one of them – as one of the Indians! It threw me into a crisis that lasted for weeks. That night, I desperately phoned people from my motel room to talk about it. I spent the night sleepless and crying.⁶⁸

Brenda recalls the reactions of the white women who participated in the march similarly:

I remember how surprised I was at how fearful many of the white women were. Some of them were talking about leaving and it occurred to me that as Native women, as women in general, we're used to having to listen for footsteps and all of that, but for Native women, we're used to the idea that we can be hurt because of our...being Indian anytime just as well.⁶⁹

Charon adds, "I do remember that there were women who were talking about leaving and I was kind of like in a state of shock because this was all over a group of women trying to open up a shelter...I just couldn't understand what their concern was...their fear."⁷⁰ To help address these issues, Penny Hauffe and Pearl initiated a white women working against racism committee at the Lake Andes meeting but this too was met with dread and

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ SDCADVSA, interview.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

resistance. Pearl remembers white women in the Coalition asking, "What do you mean white women working against racism? All of us?"⁷¹

At a board meeting of the member organization Women Against Violence in Rapid City, the Director, Frances Hitzel reported on her attendance at the quarterly meeting held in Lake Andes. She explained about the women of color task force and the white women working against racism working group. The board members were not only upset with her recap of the meeting, but most were furious. They simply could not understand why racism had to be an issue when all programs were doing the same thing – providing safety to battered women. It should be noted here that the Board of WAVI consisted of nine members, all of whom were non-Native. Their shelter was almost always filled to capacity and the majority of women sheltered were Native battered women.⁷² Frances asked for technical assistance to help educate her Board of Directors about the intersections of racism and sexism.

Carol remembers that the difference between individual acts of racism (like denying someone a job because she is Indian) and institutionalized racism (where every institution whether it be governmental, business, or charitable is operated for the benefit of the people in control and not for all of the people in the community) was very difficult for some of the white women to understand. She asserts, "A typical comment from a white person was that they, themselves, were good-hearted people without any evil

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Maicki, *From the Beginning*, 18.

intentions to do harm to minorities so why should they be accused of colluding with oppressors from the past?"⁷³

"We're all women. We've all been hurt in some way. Why can't we all just do our work? Why does it have to be so complicated? Why does it have to be so hard?" – Pearl Gulbranson

As training programs were developed and as members began to read and educate themselves about racism, new insights began to be discussed. For example, Carol recalls that one shelter director went to a workshop and the main thing she came away with was that even though she, herself, did not operate in a racist way, the very fact that she was born and raised in a community that had institutionalized racism meant she couldn't help but have racist thoughts and opinions. She embraced this concept because it explained a lot to her about the way she thought about herself in comparison to Native people. She remembered that when she was a resident in a shelter that had Native women as staff, she thought to herself, "what can that Indian woman possibly help me with?"⁷⁴

Other Coalition work also continued despite the rising racial tensions. When Carol was elected Senator in 1991, the attorney general informed her that she would have to resign her position with the Coalition before the second year of her term began. He determined it would be a conflict of interest to hold both positions since some of her salary came to the Coalition from the state legislature.⁷⁵ This meant the Coalition would

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁵ This was the funding for which she and the Coalition had successfully lobbied.

need to find someone to replace Carol. Shortly thereafter, Karen accepted a position as Executive Director with White Buffalo Calf Women's Society on the Rose Bud reservation. She was asked to continue oversight of Project Medicine Wheel on Pine Ridge on a contract basis with the Coalition. This meant the Coalition also needed to fill the position vacated by Karen. The coalition first hired Brenda Hill, a Blackfeet who was founder and Executive Director of the domestic violence program in Sisseton. After Brenda wrote a \$50,000 Bush Foundation program grant, Harlene Pesicka, a board member of the Aberdeen shelter program, joined her as co-coordinator.

On the Coalition agenda for the upcoming legislative session was to introduce a bill to create a Victim's Compensation Program. South Dakota was one of only three states without one. There was a committee in place to consider the possibility and Carol wrote a proposal to them based on her experience setting up a similar program in Wyoming. As a new legislator, she and Ro Ann Redlin, the Coalition liaison, met with Mark Barnett, the newly elected Attorney General and offered to work with him to get the legislation approved. They decided that the bill would have a better chance of success if it were offered by the Attorney General then if individual legislators sponsored it. The new Attorney General saw the benefits of this idea and the bill passed with little opposition.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Ibid., 20.

CHAPTER THREE: The Walkout

I remember the day in Sioux Falls. I can never drive by that church without remembering. I get a chill up my spine. Lots of tears, it was a big brouhaha. Some white women were caucusing in the parking lot. They wouldn't let me innocently join them because they suspected my pro-coalition sympathies. I remember Penny and I went to supper right after and the Network women waiting in line snubbed us. A real agenda was already set in place. I suspect the phone lines were burning up before this meeting. – Ro Ann Redlin

Despite the diversity trainings and efforts of some member organization to directly address and remedy the racism operating within the Coalition, unrest still permeated the air. For example, Indian women had begun making complaints regarding the services and attitudes at some of the non-Indian shelters they had utilized. Brenda recalls a story an Indian woman had told her regarding her experiences:

She said that one of the white women residents had said something to her like 'her dirty Indian kids' and she should just go back to the reservation...the Native woman told one of the advocates and the advocates said they needed to sit down and work it out, you know. And they weren't allowed to use sage and it just got worse and worse and worse 'til one woman told me, 'Well I had been there once and I'd rather sleep under a bush than stay in the Aberdeen shelter!'⁷⁷

It was right around this time that some of the non-Indian programs began to hold secret meetings apart from the quarterly meetings of the Coalition. On March 7, 1991, seven women, all Directors of non-Indian programs met in Sioux Falls to “discuss concerns in the direction of the Coalition.”⁷⁸ Those attending the meeting were: Teri McCracken from the Madison Area Helpline; Marlene Weires from Children’s Inn of Sioux Falls; Renae Turback from Citizens Against Rape and Domestic Violence of Sioux

⁷⁷ SDCADVSA, interview.

⁷⁸ Maicki, *From the Beginning*, 21.

Falls; Gladys Hall from Mitchell Area Safehouse; Suzanne Ecker from Missouri Shores Shelter of Pierre; Donna Houghton from Huron Family Violence Shelter; and Mary Gannon from Yankton Women's Center/Shelter.

This meeting resulted in a list of concerns that was sent to Shari Aaker-Gilchrist, Chair of the Coalition, on March 8, 1991. The participating member organizations listed eight major concerns with suggested “resolution ideas” to be considered by the executive committee and the membership. The following is an edited version of the eight items identified as concerns:⁷⁹

1. Need to meet individual organizational needs:

- a. Have coordinators do more technical assistance.
- b. Set up reimbursement to programs that provide technical assistance.
- c. Make time on agenda to share and network.
- d. Coordinator should supply a list of programs that can provide training.

2. Get back to the by-laws:

- a. Chair should send by-laws to members with this memo attached: "Our current by-laws make no provision to conduct business under a consensus format. All proposals decided on by the program membership thru the consensus format are null and void and will need to be re-proposed at the next coalition meeting.
- b. A list of these proposals should be presented by the executive committee to the Coalition membership to be voted in accordance to the by-laws.

3. Coordinator doesn't represent all the programs.

- a. We believe any coordinator or consultant will represent all programs fairly and equally.

4. We cannot endorse a system which supports the principle of apartheid. (i.e. Co-chair)

5. We believe each program is autonomous with the right to decide its own policy and procedure according to by-laws.

6. Project Medicine Wheel:

⁷⁹ Renae Turbak to Shari Aaker-Gilchrist, March 8, 1991.

- a. The executive committee should request a review of the project to determine that it is being conducted according to the grant.
- b. The policy manual written by Marlin Russow (sic) should be presented to the executive committee within 5 working days.
- c. A review of financial records should be made by the executive committee.

7. We request a full accounting of grant funds. For example, what specifically has the DASA funds been spent on?

8. We feel the time set for meetings should be adhered to.

On March 15, the executive committee met in Redfield to respond to the list of concerns. All shelter programs received the executive committee's response along with the original list of concerns. The following is an edited version of the document:⁸⁰

1. Individual organization needs:

- a. Technical assistance that was requested and not received should be documented and submitted to the Chair.
- b. There is a reimbursement system in place and programs can be reimbursed for the period between July 1990 and June 1991.
- c. Time to share and network will be included in agenda.
- d. Ro Ann will again ask programs what expertise they can offer and will include this information in the next newsletter along with a list of educational resources the Coalition has on hand.

2. Consensus Format:

- a. It is the feeling of the executive committee that the membership as a whole agreed to try the consensus format. If the membership doesn't want this format, a proposal needs to be presented. We are checking into the legalities regarding which procedure to use at the meeting. The by-law committee will meet in April. Contact Deidra Shaw or Maria Russell with any ideas for amendments.

3. Coordinator doesn't represent all programs:

- a. Karen Artichoker's contract specifically states that her major emphasis is to provide technical assistance to reservation programs. Off reservation programs are to provide each other with technical assistance until additional staff is hired. Reimbursement can be submitted through June 1991.

4. Co-Chair being apartheid:

- a. The Co-Chair proposal was an item accepted by the membership.

⁸⁰ SDCADVSA to Shelter Programs, March 18, 1991.

5. Each program is autonomous:

- a. No response necessary.

6. Project Medicine Wheel:

- a. Shari Aaker-Gilchrist, the Chair, oversees the project reporting requirements to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation who Maria Russell, the Treasurer, reports as having very strict requirements.
- b. Shari has asked for a copy of the manual for the Coalition.

7. DASA funds:

- a. These funds are under the review of the Chair, Coordinator and Treasurer.

8. Agenda time adhered to:

- a. Shari will send out agenda earlier and adhere closely to the preset schedule.

**** Training in the areas of communication, sensitivity and consensus decision-making is being discussed.**

Brenda Hill, the project director of The Women's Circle at Sisseton, took exception to the executive committee's acknowledgment of the list of concerns from anonymous "members of the coalition"⁸¹ and sent a response letter to all Coalition programs. In this document she states, "that the executive committee acknowledged and thereby condoned the clandestine meeting in Sioux Falls is an affront to all Native American programs and others who understand that racism is as lethal as sexism."⁸² She went on to make the connections between batterers' tactics and the "nameless, faceless people" at the Sioux Falls meeting:

Batterers rarely use their victim's name. Our coordinator's name is Karen Artichoker. The policy manual was written by Marlin Mousseau [not Marlin Russow]. As Native people we do have names and identities. We do have voices

⁸¹ The individual members programs who lodged the list of concerns were not known at the time.

⁸² Brenda Hill to All Coalition Programs, March 25, 1991.

and will not be discounted. But of course, it is easier to do violence, once the “enemy” has been dehumanized.⁸³

Additionally, she asserts, “The gross misinterpretation of sharing leadership is a great example of racism. Native women shouldn’t/can’t be leaders; we’re supposed to shut-up and sit in back of the bus; quit being so uppity and stay on the reservation. White women only as ‘leaders,’ is that what they want?”⁸⁴ Brenda ends the letter by exclaiming that the Native women of the Coalition will not be submissive: “We are standing up, voicing our rights in a direct, open and ethical way. We will not submit to racism. You can be sure that as Native women continue to assume our rightful role in Coalition leadership, we will treat everyone with the respect and dignity they have earned and deserve.”⁸⁵

The Coalition then received word that the Division of Human Rights within the Department of Commerce had contacted the Community Block Grant Program, a federal funding program, regarding the Coalition and its women of color task force. Beth Pay, the Director, had received a phone call complaining that committees within the Coalition were excluding people using sex or race as a basis. She had communicated this concern to Jeff Holden, who had already heard the same complaint from a Coalition member. It was specifically in response to this complaint that the women of color task force requested a special meeting to consider a statement they would distribute to the group.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

"They minimized the whole thing down to, 'Our work is about working with battered women/victims. This other stuff [racism] isn't even in our agenda.' So if your batterer sets you on fire, they'll put the fire out. If the KKK does, 'Oh, that's somebody else's job.'" – Brenda Hill

In April 1991, 24 member programs of the Coalition convened a special meeting at the Asbury United Methodist Church in Sioux Falls. The purpose of the meeting was to respond to the women of color task force statement of concern. The statement of concern included 5 issues to discuss and strategize. Also, the request was made that the Chair, Shari Aaker-Gilchrist, resign because of lack of leadership and an interim Chair be selected until the annual meeting.

The Coalition requested that Senator Carol Maicki return to facilitate the special meeting in Sioux Falls. The process would be that the women of color task force would present their statement of concern and then leave the meeting so the white women could discuss the statement. After this, the Native women would return so decisions could be made.

The night before the special meeting, Carol, the facilitator, was in her motel room when she had a visit from one of the white women. The purpose of the visit was to inform Carol that much had happened since she had left the Coalition and that the situation was now hopeless. She was also informed that some of the white programs were determined to leave the Coalition and form another group. Carol asked the visitor to come to the next day's meeting with an open mind and to put the needs of the entire

group above individual interests. The visitor said she would try but that she was not optimistic.⁸⁶

The next morning, the member programs assembled for the meeting. The women of color task force handed out their statement. To start the meeting, Tillie Black Bear, Chair of the task force, offered a prayer in her Lakota language and then the Native women left the building and said they would return in two hours. Carol suggested that everyone take the time to read the statement drawn up by the task force and then she would lead them through the issues one by one. Before this could happen, one of the women wanted to voice her objection to the prayer offered by Tillie. She said, “That’s rude. Why couldn’t she translate the prayer into English?”⁸⁷ Another woman wanted to know why there wasn’t a Christian prayer offered in addition to the one in Lakota.

The prayer was the catalyst that prompted the women to bring up every complaint they had about the Native women but had been silent about until that moment. There were some objections and the discussion became heated because not all of the white women were in agreement. One of the white women wanted to know why the prayer had been so disturbing. Another offered that maybe English wasn’t God’s first language. The discussion and complaints continued for the entire two hours. When the Native women returned, they were told the statement they left had not yet been considered, so they left for two more hours.

⁸⁶ Maicki, *From the Beginning*, 24.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Carol moved the discussion to consider the statement of concern. It consisted of 5 pages and addressed a number of issues. In its introduction, the statement names the recent activities within the Coalition as acts of racism. It presents an analysis of racism so there might be common ground to begin rebuilding the Coalition into a strong, multi-cultural organization that represents diversity and provides a voice for *all* battered women and their children. An explanation of institutionalized racism follows along with the analogy of racism being about power and control, linking the dynamics of racism to the dynamics that keep domestic violence operating.

The letter also calls for an examination of power and privilege within the Coalition and acknowledges the gestures that had been made to address these imbalances:

The privileged group must be willing to give up the privilege that comes with belonging to a certain group. You outnumber us. That is the reality of the Coalition. With parliamentary procedure, the voices of women of color were moot – lost. A majority vote decision making process renders women of color powerless within this organization. It would be your privilege and with your benevolence that the voices of women of color would be heard. Your willingness to move to a consensus model of decision making – thus giving up some of your privilege was heartening to us. It indicated that you truly did want us to feel that the Coalition was an organization that we could feel invested in and a part of. In a racially mixed organization, this is indeed a rare experience for us.⁸⁸

However, the statement continues, "You have now come face to face with you loss of privilege" and "We see individuals defending the status quo of their shelters/programs. It is obvious that the Coalition does not yet have a 'collective consciousness.'"⁸⁹

The statement then proceeds to enumerate the problems within the Coalition as the women of color task force perceive them. First and foremost, they believe that

⁸⁸ Women of Color Task Force to All Member Organizations of the Coalition, 1991.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

problems are surfacing because of a lack of leadership and they request that the Chair, Shari Aaker-Gilchrist, resign her position and that an interim Chair be appointed until the annual meeting. Then, there are five specific items the task force wants the membership to address. The following is an edited list of these concerns:⁹⁰

1. In reference to the person that contacted a funder about internal issues, “The person or persons who contacted Jeff Holden must be identified and held accountable for this subversive activity. They must either be censured or removed from this organization.”
2. They ask for clarification on relationships between the executive committee, staff/contract consultants, and committee members so that misuse of committee power does not occur. They suggest this can be addressed through by-laws and in-house policy.
3. It is suggested that an orientation packet be developed for all new members so that the philosophy that guides the Coalition is clear.
4. They recommend a retreat designed to provide information and time for extensive dialogue on the connections between racism, classism, homophobia, etc. and domestic violence in order to develop a common understanding and language.
5. They ask for a policy on ethical communication, asserting that it is not acceptable for white women to use the excuse of safety or female socialization as a reason for holding selective and exclusive meetings.

The statement ends with the desire that white women be strong and courageous and take risks – exactly as battered women are asked to have the courage to plunge into the unknown when they leave violent relationships. The task force also firmly states they will not withdraw from the organization and they anticipate a new and stronger future – as sisters.

Under the facilitation of Carol, the white women moved through the issues contained in the statement. Shari Aaker-Gilchrist refused to resign. The issue regarding a coalition member complaining about internal business was addressed by a phone call to

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Jeff Holden asking who had made the complaint. This was after no one in the room identified themselves as the person. The answer from Jeff Holden was that the complaint was made anonymously. Later, Beth Pay would reply by letter confirming that the complaint came to them anonymously and that she or her office were not going to investigate any wrong doings without having an official complaint, signed by someone.⁹¹ The body agreed to the other issues. Consensus was used, thus, not all issues were agreed to unanimously. Some chose to “stand aside” indicating they were not in total agreement but that they did agree not to block or complain about the end result. The women of color task force returned and were told about the decisions made. Unfortunately, though, little was truly resolved because what followed was a splintering of the Coalition as it existed at the time.

"To claim you are a social change organization means you must, at some point, personally confront your own demons, so to speak, individually and as a group." – Brenda Hill

On July 3, 1991 (less than three months after the Coalition meeting addressing the women of color task force's statement) a letter on behalf of the same seven non-Indian programs who had held secret meetings was sent to the Department of Commerce that disbursed state funds to the Coalition. In this letter, the seven organizations first thanked the state officials for having met with them. Second, they listed the reasons they decide to no longer participate in the Coalition. Some of the reasons cited are as follows: The Coalition no longer addresses domestic violence and sexual assault. There is no

⁹¹ Beth Pay to Diedra Shaw, April 8, 1991.

cohesiveness between programs. Meetings address issues such as Wounded Knee and White Buffalo Calf Woman Society, which are individual and community issues that have no bearing on the mission of the Coalition. The Coalition has reported training that never happened and was reimbursed from state funds. An audit is overdue and Coalition meeting minutes are not available.

Lastly, the letter ends with the seven organizations asserting they are "committed to providing safety and shelter from **any** form of battering" yet find themselves "in a unique position of being victims" in Coalition meetings and proceedings.⁹² They add, "Learned behavior is applicable throughout society it is no respecter of race, religion, color, ethnic background, age or social standing. We choose to not continue in a disruptive, embroiled environment."⁹³ A letter of response was sent from the Coalition to the resigning programs. The letter expresses regret at the resignation but also notes concern "that no grievances or formal discussion was brought forth beforehand."⁹⁴ "Nevertheless," the letter continues, "the door of the Coalition remains open should you decide to 'carefront' these issues or rejoin in the future."⁹⁵

After their resignation from the Coalition, the seven programs created the South Dakota Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault. The Network was immediately supported by the State of South Dakota and the Coalition's state funding was

⁹² Resigning Member Programs to Jeff Holden, July 3, 1991.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Deidra Shaw to Resigning Member Programs, July 10, 1991.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

essentially cut in half to accommodate the Network. The situation today remains the same. The Coalition still has a diverse membership that includes all programs located in Indian Country in addition to “white” programs located off-reservation. The Network is exclusive with no members located in Indian Country. The Network now challenges state and federal funding sources to fund their organization instead of the original Coalition. Despite the fact that the federal government recognizes the original Coalition as the designated Coalition in South Dakota, the state government continues to support and advocate for the Network in the interest of “fairness”. Charon articulates the sentiments of many Native women who witnessed the walkout when she says:

You know, what has always puzzled me to this day is that the split between the Coalition and the formation of the Network was based on race....Rather than the state saying, 'You all have to work this out and move forward together,' they went and rewarded the racists by funding them and subsidizing them! That is something we can't overlook!....I mean it was a contributing factor to the racism and it made them safe to be racist.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ SDCADVSA, interview.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling, oral histories, the perspectives of elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful. But the point about stories is not simply that they tell a story or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a place. – Linda Tuhiwai Smith

We are not so much "women," as American Indian women; our stories, like our lives, necessarily reflect that fundamental identity. – Paula Gunn Allen

The overarching goal of this project has been to document the herstory of the South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault as it is remembered primarily from the perspective of the Native women involved in its birth and development. Thus, the story I have told here, as closely as possible, recounts the one the Native women I interviewed recreated for me. In this way, the herstory of the Coalition documented here *rewrites* and *rerights* history to include the voices that are most frequently marginalized or altogether ignored. Although the story of the South Dakota Coalition is specific to that state, its violence against women programs, and the individual women involved in its creation, the story is not necessarily unique. As Linda Smith reminds us, this particular story contributes to a collective story – the story that describes Native women's efforts to combat violence against women across the country and over the past three decades.

Documenting the individual experiences that help to shape the movement to end violence against Native women is crucial in accomplishing this objective. As the story of the three sisters teaches us, understanding the root causes of a crisis is as essential as the

immediate service work needed to respond to the problem. Within the narrative I have recounted, a number of root factors in the ongoing colonization of Native women become apparent. For example, throughout their experiences, the Native women involved in the Coalition articulate that violence against Native women is compounded by a number of intersecting factors such as racism, classism, and sexism. They establish that violence against Native women is not solely a product of gender discrimination or patriarchal structures. This fact was painfully clear when the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center was denied shelter space in Lake Andes. The Resource Center was not discredited and denounced because it intended to serve women who had experienced violence but because it intended to serve *Native* women.

Furthermore, the Native women I spoke with also made connections linking the state to violence against Indian women. In her recollection of the walkout and creation of the Network, Charon asserts, "The network is rewarded. The state funds the network and rewards them for their racism. It's such a hard pill to swallow. It's so big I'm not gonna swallow it."⁹⁷ Thus, she recognizes the ways in which state procedures, funding, and support play a key role in maintaining violence against Native women. When the state coalition was forced to split its monies with a network of all Anglo programs who refused to work in a multi-cultural environment, the state illustrates its privileging of certain ideologies and practices over others.

Another crucial finding that comes from this herstory is a recognition of the myriad forms of colonization "from 'rapacious bandit kings' intent on exploitation to

⁹⁷ Ibid.

well-meaning middle class liberals intent on salvation."⁹⁸ Although the Coalition seemed to be committed to Indian concerns and equal participation between Indians and non-Indians, it became clear that this was not the case. Some of the "well-meaning" white women in the Coalition demonstrated their role in colonizing Indian women throughout the Coalition's herstory. From denying Native women a seat at the table to finally "taking their dollies home," the white organizations that left the Coalition demonstrated their inability to give up privilege. A renouncement of power and control existed in theory with the move to modified consensus and the adoption of the National Coalition's mission statement and principles of unity, but it did not exist in practice. The women of color task force speaks candidly about this concern in their letter to the entire membership.

As difficult as the atmosphere within the Coalition was, it is critical to emphasize that the Native women and organizations never left the Coalition or gave up in their fight to end violence against Native women. Brenda asserts, "We need to recognize and celebrate the fact that we not only survived a time that could have destroyed us, we came through it with not only our dignity intact, but wiser and stronger. We clarified, by test of fire, what our mission is about."⁹⁹ Again and again, they exclaimed, "No more," to racist attitudes and practices. Their perseverance in the onslaught of racist and discriminatory acts is a testament to the resistance Native women have illustrated throughout colonization and U.S. imperialism.

⁹⁸ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 44.

⁹⁹ Brenda Hill to author, May 22, 2008.

Additionally, some of the Native women credit their work in the Coalition as that which enabled them to have such a strong presence in the national anti-violence scene today. For example, Karen Artichoker notes that had she not participated in the Coalition and been Co-Chair when the Violence Against Women Act was being created, Native women might not have had any role in the development of that legislation, which later carved out a specific space especially for Native women. The creation of Sacred Circle: the National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women as well as Title IX of the Violence Against Women Act entirely relied on the work Native women initiated in South Dakota. Arguably, the South Dakota Coalition was the only state coalition that had the consciousness and mechanisms in place to support Native women in this process. Other women attribute their understanding of violence against women as a phenomenon that can only be eradicated by societal change to the Coalition.

I would also like to note that while I believe this research project has much to contribute to the discussion of violence against women and the literature documenting Native women's histories, I also recognize the limitations of my thesis. For example, the landscape of South Dakota is primarily one made up of Indians and whites. Thus, this project does not adequately address the dynamics that occur when other women of color are brought into coalition organizing. Accordingly, the opportunity to think critically about the complex questions surrounding Native women's acceptance or refusal to identify as women of color is restricted. Additionally, as this project focuses primarily on South Dakota, it lacks a more nuanced understanding of the role South Dakota played, and continues to play, in the national picture of anti-violence organizing. Similarly, a

comparison of the dynamics that occur when organizing on tribal lands and close to one particular Native Nation versus organizing in an urban space where a number of tribes are represented could be rich with insights. Gathering a variety of the stories that document Native women's organizing from across the United States could enrich the picture I have painted here.

Because of these limitations, among others, I imagine this project as a small but crucial story in the larger narrative of the movement to end violence against Native women. In the larger narrative, which I intend to construct with the completion of my dissertation, I imagine a much more complex puzzle wherein which South Dakota is only one of the pieces.

APPENDIX A

South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Principles of Unity

The SDCADVSA comprise people dealing with concerns of battered women and their children. We represent both rural and urban areas. Our programs support and involve battered women of all racial, ethnic, religious and economic groups, ages and lifestyles. We oppose the use of violence as a means of control over others, and support equality in relationships and the concept of helping women assume power over their own lives. We strive towards becoming independent community-based groups in which women make major policy and program decisions.

In recognizing that hierarchy is the root cause of violence against women, we are committed to maintaining and nurturing grassroots programs, organizations and communities. We must never lose sight that this movement was born through grassroots women who have been victimized by violence. We strive to ensure grassroots leadership and involvement in all matters, especially, policy-making and governance.

APPENDIX B

South Dakota Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Mission Statement

SDCADVSA believes violence against women and their children results from the use of force or threat to achieve and maintain control over others in intimate relationships and societal abuses of power and domination in the forms of sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, anti-semitism, ablebodyism, ageism, and other oppressions. SDCADVSA recognizes the abuse of power in society fosters battering by perpetuating conditions that condone violence against women and children. Therefore, it is the mission of SDCADVSA to work for the major societal changes necessary to eliminate both personal and societal violence against all women and their children.

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