SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG NATIVE WOMEN:
A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women are 2.5 times more likely to be raped or be victims of sexual assault compared to the rest of the country. This public health emergency encompasses verbal, domestic, physical, and sexual violence that has lifelong effects on women and their extended community. A report released by the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI), a division of Seattle Indian Health Board, titled Our Bodies, Our Stories: Sexual Violence Among Native Women in Seattle, WA, details results from a survey of 148 predominantly homeless or low-income urban AI/AN women in Seattle, WA and revealed much higher rates of sexual violence than was previously known.

THE DATA
- 94% had been raped or coerced into sex in their lifetime.
- 42% of victims of rape or coercion attempted suicide in their lifetime.
- 53% lacked permanent housing.
- 34% binge drank on a weekly or daily basis after they were initially attacked.
- 8% of cases of a rape victim’s first attack ended in a conviction.
- 86% reported being affected by historical trauma.
- 49% misused alcohol on a monthly, weekly, or daily basis in the year prior to the survey.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
- There is a dire need for sustainable investments in research uncovering the depth of sexual violence experienced by AI/AN communities.
- Findings from this report offer data that can be used when considering legislation that addresses violence against AI/AN women, including:
  - H.R. 6545: The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2018 (VAWA);
  - H.R. 4485 and S.1942: Savanna’s Act;
  - S. 1986: Justice for Native Survivors of Sexual Violence Act;
  - S. 1953: Tribal Law and Order Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2017; and

RECOMMENDATIONS
- Support Senator Jon Tester’s (D-MT) call for Senate hearing on missing and murdered Native American women, many of whom were victims of sexual violence.
- Increase investments in the 12 Indian Health Service (IHS) Tribal Epidemiology Centers to collect, analyze, and report on sexual violence throughout AI/AN communities.
- Preserve and increase investments in the IHS Direct, Tribal 638, and Urban Indian Health Program (I/T/U) system of care, including in:
  - Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative to provide direct services, outreach and education services on intimate partner violence and sexual assault in AI/AN communities.
  - Direct health care and behavioral health services for AI/AN patients impacted by intimate partner violence and sexual assault.

1 Amnesty International (2006). Maze of Injustice: The failure to protect Indigenous women from sexual violence in the USA. Amnesty International