



National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative

Respect, Honor and Dignity: The Keys to Addressing Elder Abuse in Native Communities

Jacque Gray, PhD, LPC, NCC

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Greetings / Halito

Jacque Gray, PhD

Mother, Grandmother, Great-Grandmother
Choctaw/Cherokee Decendent

Professor Emerita, University of North Dakota
Co-Director, Native Center for Behavioral Health,
University of Iowa

Partner for National State & Tribal Elder Justice
Coalition

Technical Assistance National MDT Resource Center
Consultant, National Center on Elder Abuse



Land Acknowledgement

I would like to take this time to acknowledge the land and pay respect to the Indigenous Nations whose homelands were forcibly taken over and inhabited. Past and present, I want to honor the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.

This calls us to commit to forever learn how to be better stewards of these lands through action, advocacy, support, and education.

I acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of Native American territories, and we respect the many diverse Indigenous people connected to this land on which we gather from time immemorial.

While injustices are still being committed against Indigenous people on Turtle Island, today I say thank you to those that stand with Indigenous peoples and acknowledge that land reparations must be made to allow healing for our Indigenous peoples and to mother earth, herself.

Dekibaota, Elleh Driscoll, Meskwaki and Winnebago Nations

Ttakimaweakwe, Keely Driscoll, Meskwaki and Winnebago Nations

Ki-o-kuk, Sean A. Bear, 1st. Meskwaki

Cultural Sensitivity

- Key Information
- Cultural Issues
- Interview Approaches
- Questions on Developing Tribal APS
- Questions on Impact of Boarding Schools and other Traumas

Key Information

- 9.7 million AI/AN (Census, 2025)
- 78% live outside reservations areas
- 574 Federally Recognized Tribes
- 618 Legal and Statistical Areas for AI/AN
- Only about 100 have Tribal Elder Abuse Codes

Key Information

➤ Definitions

- **Elderly** – An older adult with the age determined by the tribe may be 55, 60, or older depending upon life expectancy of tribe
- **Elder** -- AI/AN elders are revered individuals who provide wisdom & leadership for their Tribes by exuding grace, wisdom, & gentleness in their daily words & actions & are usually are above the age of 60 to 65, although it varies from Tribe to Tribe

What is Elder Abuse?

❖ “Any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult.”

NCEA, 2013

Types of Elderly Abuse



Physical



Emotional/
Psychological



Neglect, Self-
Neglect,
Abandonment



Sexual



Financial
Exploitation



Spiritual

Self-Neglect

- Self-neglect is characterized as the behavior of an elderly person that threatens his/her personal health or safety. Self-neglect may manifest in an elder as a refusal or failure to provide him/herself with adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, personal hygiene, medication, and safety precautions (NCEA, 2013)
- The definition of self-neglect excludes a situation in which a mentally competent elder, who understands the consequences of his/herself decisions, makes a conscious and voluntary choice to engage in acts that threaten his/her health or safety
- Examples include:
 - Lacking food or basic utilities
 - Refusing medications or hoarding
 - Continued, excessive alcoholism

Spiritual Abuse

- Spiritual abuse is defined as harmful interference with spiritual growth including the corruption of another person's value system. (Gray et al., 2018).
- Examples include:
 - Preventing an elder from attending spiritual activities or ceremonies
 - Theft of an elder's ceremonial items to sell or use without permission
 - Comments or activities which are damaging to the elder's spirit or sexual abuse as a spiritual activity
 - Sexualized touching, molesting, or rape as a part of spiritual healing or ceremonies

Native Elder Abuse: The Basics

- ❖ Many times Native elders do not consider themselves abused
- ❖ The terms more often used are
 - Disrespect
 - Mistreated
- ❖ A “Native Elder” is...
 - Varies from tribe to tribe, but usually
 - Over 55 years of age
 - Knowledgeable of the culture
 - Wisdom from life or education
- ❖ “Elderly” only addresses the person’s age

Interview Approaches

- NOT Abuse – Disrespect
- NOT Sexual Abuse – Bothering
- Offer something to drink/eat
- Listen to the stories.
 - “Are you being disrespected?”
 - “Would you tell me who is disrespecting you and how.”
 - “Has anyone bothered you? Would you tell me how.”

What Are the Numbers?

❖ Unexplained falls:

- 39% of elders have fallen in the past year

❖ Malnourished/Inadequate Food:

- 1 in 6 Native elders report eating less than 2 meals/day

❖ Unable/no help to shop/cook/feed self

- 1 in 9 Native elders report they are unable to shop, cook or feed themselves
- 1 in 8 Native elders report they do not have the money to buy food

Who Are the Victims?

- ❖ Any older adult (generally 60+ but depends upon tribal definition)
- ❖ Disproportionately affected:
 - Persons who are isolated, living in poverty or who have cognitive impairments (e.g., dementia)
 - Women (2/3)
 - Residents of long-term care facilities

Who Commits Elder Abuse?

- ❖ Intimate partners
- ❖ Adult children and other family members
- ❖ Caregivers
- ❖ Fiduciaries
- ❖ Others who are or put themselves in positions of trust or authority
- ❖ Strangers

Why Does Elder Abuse Occur?

Persons motivated by:

- ❖ Greed
- ❖ Benefits of predatory behavior (sexual/ financial)
- ❖ Power & Control dynamics (similar to domestic violence)
- ❖ Good intentions (caregivers who cause harm even if trying to provide care)
- ❖ Physical/mental health conditions (cannot control behavior)

Why Are Native Elderly At-Risk?

❖ Native Values such as...

- Generosity
- Take care of today.
- Family Role or position
- Respect for Elders

Vulnerability of Native Elderly

- ❖ Dependence upon others for assistance
- ❖ Don't want caregivers to go to jail
- ❖ Forgiving of family members
- ❖ Spent their lives taking care of family so vulnerable to family needs/expectations holding greater importance
- ❖ IHS – seeing different providers every time they go in for health care

Jurisdiction

OFFENDER

VICTIM

STATUTES

AI/AN

AI/AN

- Federal jurisdiction for felonies listed in the Major Crimes Act 18 U.S.C. 1153; All remaining crimes contained in Tribal code are subject to Tribal jurisdiction.

AI/AN

Non-AI/AN

- Federal jurisdiction felonies listed in 1153; felonies and misdemeanors not listed in 1153 unless the tribe has already punished the defendant; Tribal jurisdiction for misdemeanors are felonies under the Tribal Law and Order Act.

Non-AI/AN

AI/AN

- Federal jurisdiction for felonies and misdemeanors, including as- similative crimes. Concurrent Federal & Tribal jurisdiction for Violence Against Women Prosecutions.

Non-AI/AN

Non-AI/AN

- State jurisdiction applies for both felonies & misdemeanors.

AI/AN

Victimless
Crime

- Tribal jurisdiction applies in most cases; Federal jurisdiction applies in some cases where the Tribe has not prosecuted.

Non/AI/AN

Victimless
Crime

- State jurisdiction applies in most cases; Federal jurisdiction applies in some cases where State has not prosecuted or State interest not strong under Petite policy.

Tribal Codes

❖ Choctaw Nation Tribal Code

- Elder Abuse Code
- Choctaw Penal Codes
- Section 841
- [choctaw-nation-criminal-code.pdf](#)

❖ Other Tribal Codes by State

- [Elder Abuse Codes | Native American Elder Justice Initiative](#)
- Oklahoma 9 tribes have elder abuse codes

OKLAHOMA ELDER ABUSE CODES

Cherokee Nation →

Choctaw Nation →

Citizen Potawatomi Nation →

Comanche Nation →

Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma →

Osage Nation →

Muscogee (Creek) Nation →



Projects

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The Web

The National Center for State and Tribal Elder Justice Coalitions from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Grant Number 15POVC-22-GK-01494-NONF

Project Name: The Web

PI: Wendelin Hume

Co-PI: Kathy Smart

We are creating a new Tribal Coalition known as *The Web*. Our initial founding members included the Standing Rock Sioux, Pyramid Lake Paiute, and Shoshone -Bannock Tribes. Recently the Spirit Lake Tribe and Cherokee Nation have joined us as well. The goal is weaving together leadership in our fields and supporting each other in efforts at promoting racial equity and seeking justice and healing for Indigenous elderly crime victims. To strengthen *The Web*, we will continue to invite other Tribes to join us as collectively we will gain momentum and we will advance the professional field of **Indigenous Elder Justice**. Through interconnections, *The Web*, will have the capacity to educate and train about Indigenous elder justice issues so we can learn about the status of elder mistreatment, examine tribal codes and related legislation. Additionally, the coalition will identify service needs, share examples of best practices, enhance the skills and knowledge among caregivers, and allied professionals, and determine priority areas based on measurable indicators and outcomes.

Advisory & Tribal Coalition Partners

Training Modules

- Interactive
- Engaging
- Accessible
- Training for Professionals
 - Elder Abuse
 - Legal
 - Financial Exploitation
 - Caregivers
 - Policy
 - Healthcare Providers
 - Social Services
 - Medication Issues
 - Behavioral Health
- <https://www.nijii.org/training>



Trainings

These training sessions are designed for Indigenous Elders, individuals working with Indigenous Elders, and other Indigenous individuals with the goal of providing them with the necessary skills to identify and respond to elder abuse within Indian Country.

[Home](#)


National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (NIEJI) Online Interactive Educational Modules

The *NIEJI materials presented in the elder justice curriculum are designed to help those working with Native American elderly to understand the various types of elder abuse and become more knowledgeable about elder abuse issues. The training content is structured for delivery either through a series of workshops or as standalone sessions. The materials will assist staff in responding appropriately to Indigenous victims of crimes and their families and enhance the provision of culturally sensitive services.



Elder Abuse in Indian Country

This module describes types of abuse, elder protection teams, elder vulnerability, and prevention is provided. Elder abuse generally refers to many types of mistreatment by someone whom the Elder has a special relationship with. Information about the types of abuse, elder protection teams, elder vulnerability, and prevention is provided.

Duration: Approximately 40 minutes

Publication Date: June 2016, updated June 2020

Trainings



Policy and Legislation

This module provides an introduction to policies and legislation impacting Elder programs in Indian Country. Professionals who may find this module informative may include: tribal leaders, tribal attorneys, personnel, and tribal program officers.

Training Duration: Approximately 1 hour 30 minutes
Publication Date: January 2018



Financial Abuse & Exploitation of Elders in Indian Country

This module describes elder financial abuse and exploitation in Indian Country. Professionals who may find this module relevant include: bankers, credit union employees, merchants, casino employees, medical business office employees, and those who work in tribal elder programs and Crime Victim Services and Advocates.

Training Duration: Approximately 40 minutes
Publication Date: June 2016, updated June 2021



Legal Issues in Indian Country

This module provides information for criminal justice and legal professionals to recognize, investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate cases of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation in Indian Country. Individuals who may find this module informative include: law enforcement, attorneys, tribal judges, other court personnel, social workers, mental health counselors, and employees of victim services.

Duration: Approximately 1 hour 15 minutes
Publication Date: September 2018



Elder Medication Issues in Indian Country

This module describes medication issues for the elderly and how those issues may relate to elder abuse. This information may be of use to pharmacists, pharmacy aides, healthcare providers, community health representatives, home health aides, emergency medical technicians, senior services providers, family members, and the elderly.

Training Duration: Approximately 2 hours

Trainings



Healthcare

This module describes factors for recognizing, identifying, and reporting suspected elder abuse and neglect by healthcare providers working with Native elders. Professionals who may find this module relevant include: physicians, nurses, certified nursing assistants (CNA), community health representatives (CHR), home health aides, psychologists, behavioral health consultants, physical therapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, emergency medical technicians, and other medical personnel.

Training Duration: Approximately 1 hour 30 minutes

Publication Date: September 2018



Social Services

This module describes the best practices in the social service disciplines regarding elder abuse and neglect in Indian Country. Professionals who may find this module informative may include: social workers, Title VI directors, case managers, and community health representatives.

Training Duration: Approximately 20 minutes

Publication Date: June 2016



Caregiving

This module describes ways to recognize, prevent, and intervene in elder abuse and neglect cases. Caregivers who may find this module informative may include: family caregiver, community health representatives, Title VI employees, and home health aides such as certified nursing assistants or visiting homemakers.

Training Duration: Approximately 35 minutes

Publication Date: June 2016, ver. 2.0 June 2019



Behavioral Health

This module describes cultural factors related to psychological/emotional abuse, learn about culturally relevant aspects of behavioral health, Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias and transient ischemic attack/syndrome (TIA/TIS), understand the aspects of capacity assessment, advanced care plans for Native Americans, and good mental health for older adults.

Training Duration: Approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes

Publication Date: July 2022

Resources



National Indigenous Justice Information Inclusion

Respect-Honor-Dignity-Inclusion

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Module Fact Sheets

Policies & Legislation

Impacting Elder Programs in Indian Country

THE AIM OF THIS RESOURCE IS TO PROVIDE AN INTRODUCTION TO POLICIES AND LEGISLATION IMPACTING ELDER PROGRAMS IN INDIAN COUNTRY.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- Congress passed the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1965 to address the lack of community services for elderly persons through state grants.
- The OAA authorizes an array of service programs through a network of 56 state agencies, 623 area agencies, nearly 30,000 service providers, 244 tribal organizations, and 2 Native Hawaiian organizations representing over 400 tribes in total.
- 1978 Amendments to establish relative grant services.
- 1982 Amendments to carry out the Aged, Blind, and Handicapped Assistance Act.
- 1990 Amendments to carry out the Aged, Blind, and Handicapped Assistance Act.
- 2000 Amendments to carry out the Aged, Blind, and Handicapped Assistance Act.
- 2010 Amendments to carry out the Aged, Blind, and Handicapped Assistance Act.
- 2015 Amendments to carry out the Aged, Blind, and Handicapped Assistance Act.
- 2020 Amendments to carry out the Aged, Blind, and Handicapped Assistance Act.

WHY ESTABLISHING ELDER ABUSE CODE:

- Having an elder abuse code can protect and aid in the process of prosecution of an offender.
- To establish tribal law that protects elderly persons within the jurisdiction of tribal/Indian from abuse, exploitation, and neglect as defined in the codes.

ADOPTING AND EXECUTING ELDER PROTECTION CODES:

SOCIAL SERVICES

for Elders in Indian Country

THE GENERAL POPULATION AND TRIBAL-SPECIFIC SOCIAL SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS, NON-PROFIT OR NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

- The goal of social services is to prevent and alleviate elder abuse and neglect.
- Indigenous communities have developed tribally operated elder services and programs to meet the needs of their elders.
- In 1980, the United States Congress passed a federal law, the Older Americans Act (OAA), to address the lack of community services for elderly persons.
- The OAA provides funding for a variety of services, including:
 - Congregate meals
 - Home care
 - Transportation
 - Outreach
 - Adult day care
 - Elder abuse counseling
 - Counseling
 - Support groups
 - Respite care

CONSENT AND CAPACITY IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Elder Abuse and the Connection to Consent, Capacity, and Undue Influence

An elder adult's ability to make their own decisions, consent, capacity, and undue influence are related factors to consider in elder abuse cases and guardianship. Some elder adults may experience challenges with being unable to create and maintain relationships, make or communicate decisions, or perform activities of daily living (ADLs). The following information will help understand capacity assessment and guardianship proceedings of common Indian/Indigenous Native (American) adults.

SIX PILLARS OF CAPACITY OF ELDER ADULTS

1. **MENTAL CAPACITY:** The ability to understand the nature and consequences of one's decisions.
2. **EMOTIONAL CAPACITY:** The ability to manage one's emotions and make decisions based on them.
3. **COGNITIVE CAPACITY:** The ability to remember information and use it to make decisions.
4. **PHYSICAL CAPACITY:** The ability to perform the tasks necessary to make decisions.
5. **SOCIAL CAPACITY:** The ability to interact with others and make decisions based on social norms.
6. **FINANCIAL CAPACITY:** The ability to manage one's finances and make decisions based on them.

ELDER ABUSE IN INDIAN COUNTRY

OVERVIEW

According to the National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA), elder abuse refers to any of the following types of mistreatment that are considered to be crimes when the offender is a person in a position of trust, authority, or influence over the victim.

TYPES OF ABUSE

- **Physical Abuse:** The use of force or coercion to cause physical harm or injury to the victim.
- **Sexual Abuse:** The use of force or coercion to engage in sexual activity with the victim.
- **Financial Abuse:** The use of force or coercion to take or threaten to take the victim's money or property.
- **Emotional Abuse:** The use of force or coercion to cause emotional distress or harm to the victim.
- **Neglect:** The failure to provide the victim with the care and services they need.

ELDER VULNERABILITY

Elder abuse is a complex issue that is often overlooked. It is a crime that is often committed by someone the victim trusts, such as a family member or caregiver. This makes it even more difficult for the victim to seek help.

NUMBERS & STATISTICS

In 2018, there were an estimated 1.6 million victims of elder abuse in the United States. This is a significant increase from the 1.1 million victims in 2010.

CALL THE POLICE OR 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY IF SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN IMMEDIATE, LIFE-THREATENING DANGER.

If the danger is not immediate, but you suspect that abuse has occurred or is occurring, please call your local law enforcement agency.

For more detailed information on elder abuse, visit the online educational module at: <https://www.ncea.org/training/elder-abuse/>

ELDER CAREGIVING IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Recognizing Warnings

This resource is to provide information for caregivers in Indian Country to recognize, prevent, and intervene in elder abuse and neglect cases.

Types of elder abuse and neglect include:

- Physical
- Emotional or psychological
- Sexual
- Financial or material exploitation
- Neglect
- Self-neglect
- Abandonment
- Spiritual Abuse

Warning signs for caregivers:

- Pain that is "different"
- Sudden changes in function or mobility
- Unusual weight loss
- Unexplained or hidden bruising or injuries
- Abandonment of any kind
- Changes in mental mood or demeanor
- Bills not paid or utilities turned off
- Significant changes in elder's finances

Why elders are at a greater risk?

- The projected increase of elder population.
- Limited caregiving services, and
- Increased isolation of many elders.

It is estimated that by 2030, persons age 65 and older will make up 19% of the population.

There is a growing need for long-term services and supports in Indian Country.

Supporting Elders in "Day-to-Day" Activities

- Caregivers make it possible for elders to age in place and are the eyes, ears, and voice for helping elders (NCHADS, 2015).
- Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) are skills that elders have to do things like eat, walk, dress, work, toilet, go out to bed, etc.
- Instrumental ADLs are tasks elders need to live in a community such as preparing or shopping, cooking, shopping, etc.
- If anyone affects pain upon an elder while performing any of these activities or purposely denies access to these activities, this is elder abuse.

Financial Abuse & Exploitation OF ELDERS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

RISK FACTORS

Researchers have identified risk factors for elder financial exploitation:

- Poor health, mental decline, physical illness or disability
- Need assistance with daily living activities such as shopping, preparing meals,

HEALTH CARE & ELDER ABUSE IN INDIAN COUNTRY

NOTE: Becoming an Elder in many Indian communities is not typically at a set age, but is a distinct status earned from wisdom, knowledge, and responsibility to others, to name a few traits and qualities. Being an Elder is different than being elderly. The elderly is associated with age and the ability to care for one's self. Elder and elderly status varies from tribe to tribe. Out of respect, the term Elder will be used.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- It is important to recognize that within the broad range of traditional Indian Medicine (TIM), each tribe has unique belief systems, beliefs, and practices.
- It is essential to be aware of cultural beliefs and practices that differ from Western medicine.

ELDER ABUSE IN INDIAN COUNTRY

- The extent of elder abuse in Indian Country is unknown due to underreporting.
- Elder abuse is common. National rates estimate that 1 in 10 American over the age of 60 have experienced abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Some tribes have adopted an elder abuse code or ordinance to protect elders from abuse and neglect.
- Tribal Elder abuse programs are limited, and little evidence data exists.
- Elders may not view themselves as victims or want to perceive themselves as victims.
- Some elders may be unable to report due to diminished mental capacity, isolation, or physical limitations.
- Fear of retaliation in the form of physical harm, intimidation, or abandonment for discussing abuse.

IS ELDER ABUSE A CRIME?

- All states and tribes criminalize acts that violate particular laws (e.g., sexual assault, battery, theft, or fraud) related to Elder abuse incidents.
- Many states and tribes have laws, codes, or resolutions that criminalize elder abuse.
- Every criminal offense is comprised of elements that must be proven by prosecutors beyond a reasonable doubt.
- These elements vary depending on the state or tribal laws and whether the charge is a misdemeanor offense or a felony offense.

RISK FACTORS FOR ELDERS INCLUDE:

- Living in poverty
- Suffering from chronic health problems
- Being alone with primary caregivers
- Lack of social support or live in isolation
- Live in an area where services are limited or unavailable
- Receive substantial income from allotted lands or mineral rights

LEGAL ISSUES IN INDIAN COUNTRY

ELDER ABUSE AND NEGLECT:

- Elder abuse and neglect refer to any of the following types of mistreatment committed by someone with whom the Elder has a special relationship, such as a spouse, sibling, child, friend, or caregiver.
- Types of elder abuse:
 - Physical
 - Emotional or psychological
 - Sexual
 - Financial or material exploitation
 - Neglect
 - Self-neglect
 - Abandonment
 - Spiritual/religious or spiritual abuse

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT ELDER ABUSE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE?

- Indigenous Elders are held in high regard, guardians of history, culture, and traditions and are to be honored and respected.
- Becoming an Elder in many indigenous communities is not a set age but a distinct status earned from wisdom, knowledge, and responsibility.
- Being an Elder is different than being elderly. Elderly is associated with age and ability.
- Out of respect, we will use the term Elder.
- An elder experiencing abuse may not report it because of shame, fear of retaliation, increased vulnerability, or fear of getting a loved one in trouble.

ELDER ABUSE, IS IT AS COMMON, OR MORE FREQUENT?

Elder abuse is a complex issue that is often overlooked. It is a crime that is often committed by someone the victim trusts, such as a family member or caregiver. This makes it even more difficult for the victim to seek help.

Other Fact Sheets





Intimate Partner Violence and Elder Abuse

Among Older Native Americans during COVID-19

BACKGROUND ON INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV) AMONG NATIVE AMERICAN ADULTS

In comparison to other races/ethnicities, American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) have higher rates of interpersonal violence. Child abuse, violence against women, and elder abuse are important contributors to the increased risk of morbidity and mortality among AI/AN.¹

THERE ARE VERY FEW STUDIES ON ELDER ABUSE IN INDIAN COUNTRY. FINDINGS ON ABUSE FROM TWO STUDIES INDICATE THAT ELDER ABUSE DOES HAPPEN IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.

- 9% of men reported experiencing physical violence, intimate partner violence at 1%, emotional abuse at 12% in the past year.
- 5% of women reported physical violence in the past year, 3% reported intimate partner violence, and 18% reported emotional abuse.²
- Abuse tended to be associated with sudden dependency, having mental problems, family crises due to having abrupt caregiving responsibilities for which they were unprepared, and personal problems of primary caregivers.³

OVERVIEW OF STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS

- Stay-at-home orders limit the circumstances under which people can leave their houses.
- Under a stay-at-home order, all non-essential workers must stay home.
- People can leave their homes only for essential needs like grocery stores, medicine, or for individual outdoor exercise.
- Only businesses that have been deemed essential can continue to operate.⁴

STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS IN INDIAN COUNTRY

- Many tribal communities have strict stay-at-home orders to slow the spread of the disease.
- Tribal elders, revered for their knowledge and cultural guidance, are the biggest concern during COVID-19.
- Tribal communities do not want to lose them, as older adults are disproportionately affected by the disease with health complications and death.⁵

SLOWING THE SPREAD

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- Two Spirit is a contemporary term that many American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), and First Nations people identify with to bring together their sexual orientation, and gender identity with their spirituality, traditions, and culture.¹
- This term was adopted at the 1990 Native American and First Nations Gay and Lesbian conference in Winnipeg. It comes from the Ojibwa words *niizh manitoag* (Two Spirit).²
- Not all AI/ANs consider themselves Two Spirit and identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or third, fourth, or fifth gender.
- Many AI/AN tribes had more flexibility in sexuality and greater gender diversity with four or five gender

- roles or identifications that were honored and respected.¹
- 574 federally recognized tribes speak over 200 languages, with most having terms/names for gender identity, social, and spiritual roles.^{3,4}
- The term Two Spirit is not accepted by all AI/AN Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ). For some tribes, when Two Spirit is translated into traditional language, it can mean something inappropriate or dangerous.
- In the Navajo and Apache languages, the term Two Spirit, means that a person possesses both a living and dead spirit, and this is in direct conflict with traditional ways of life.¹

COLONIZATION

- Colonization negatively impacted tribal traditions, language, culture, and the social and spiritual roles of individuals in tribal communities. As a result, some tribes took this knowledge underground to prevent further desecration of their way of life.
- By the mid-1800s, tens of thousands of AI/ANs were forcefully removed from their traditional homelands, and systematic assimilation policies were put in place.
- Between 1880 and 1930, a significant number of AI/AN children were placed in off-reservation boarding schools.
- By 1930, nearly half of all AI/AN children attending boarding schools that were often hundreds of miles away from their homes. The students were forbidden

- to engage in cultural practices or speak their languages, suffering harsh punishment if they disobeyed.
- Christian standards of conduct were strictly enforced with the prohibition of cultural practices and conformity to rigid gender roles. The historical trauma increased contemporary Two Spirits' to struggle with identity and mental health.
- Historical trauma is defined as an unresolved trauma resulting in grief that continues to impact the lives of survivors and subsequent generations, often referred to as intergenerational trauma.⁶
- Historical trauma profoundly affects health disparities and health outcomes of all AI/ANs, but even more so among Two Spirit people.



****There is very little research or data on LGBTQ Two Spirit Elders. The information presented may refer to AI/ANs in general.****



PHYSICAL DISTANCING IS BEING A GOOD RELATIVE

- Follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation to limit face-to-face contact with others to slow the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). It is important to follow the guidelines of your community, because they are trying to keep you safe and healthy.
- For more information on COVID-19, visit the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Get up-to-date information from public health officials.
- Physically distancing is being a good relative.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO HELP YOU KEEP YOUR DAYS FULL AND TO REMAIN SOCIALLY ENGAGED

TH FAMILY USING APPS SUCH AS OR ZOOM others using vice a day. It helps l, lets you check in , and you can laugh

IES SUCH AS ROSSWORD

n be found at <http://category/volunteer?CFYWB%04568NDp&C e-Bing-GAMES-ASGA 23caQAA8A17rGdL-202>

S AT

e.com/user/PowWow

YOUR FAMILY

EN TO MUSIC

r Fox

e.com/watch?v=jm1lq

BEAD AND SEW REGALIA

- How to Bead Peyote Stitch with Donald Porta
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRIG8q64mXSY>
- Beaded Medallion with Kristen Dosela
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGdETHp1QQ>
- Beading for beginners, two-needle flat stitch technique with Mona C.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qxg2yaz7d>
- Making Regalia with Joaquin Lonelodge
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7XbA7OHb-Q>
- Sew cloth masks for loved ones
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnYk12sF8kY>

VISIT MUSEUMS DOING VIRTUAL TOURS

- Smithsonian Natural History Museum
<https://naturalhistory.si.edu/virtual-tour>
- Museum of the American Indian
https://americanindian.si.edu/exhibitions/all_roads_are_good/
- <https://videos.ogm.org/detail/video/394874386001/video-chatting-basics>

VISIT ANIMALS AT THE ZOO. SOME SITES HAVE LIVE CAMERAS, INCLUDING:

- San Diego Zoo
<https://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams>
- Monterey Bay Aquarium
<https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams>
- National Zoo
<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/webcams>

LEARN MORE ABOUT AMERICAN INDIAN HISTORY

- Museum of the American Indian, digital history lessons
<https://americanindian.si.edu/m360/>

EXERCISE

- Go for walks
- Work on strength, flexibility, and balance - 15-minute sample workout for older adults from Go4Life
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev6yE55AYGw>

YOGA FOR SENIORS

- Slow and Gentle Yoga with Adriene
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHhG-ZdNN4&list=PLenloKCoNs83f4_Ahr7S3CE6x0P&index=42&list=0s

IT A REMINDER, SCAMMERS ARE STILL AT IT!



texts, emails, or checks from the details are still

rs for vaccinations s. There are no to treat or prevent it.

- Hang up on robocalls. Scammers are using illegal robocalls to pitch every thing from low-priced health insurance to work-at-home schemes.
- Do your homework when it comes to donations. Never donate in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money.

- Watch for emails claiming to be from the CDC or World Health Organization (WHO). Use sites such as [coronavirus.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) and www.who.int/coronavirus to get the latest information. And don't click on links from sources you don't know.

nal Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative • Center for Rural Health • University of North Dakota • School of Medicine & Health Sciences North Columbia Road Suite E221 • Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037 • Phone: (701) 777-6084 • Fax: (701) 777-6779 • Email: info@nej.org

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Jacqueline S. Gray, PhD, 2025

Data

There have been several projects developed through the National Indigenous Elder Justice Initiative (NIEJI) which will result/have resulted in valuable information and data.



Tribal Elder Abuse Services Survey

The Tribal Elder Abuse Services Survey is a research study focusing on perceptions and availability of community Elder services, such as:

- Case management
- Elder abuse coalition
- Elder abuse codes
- Judicial system response
- Legal assistance, including guardianship, power of attorney, advanced directives, living will, and do not resuscitate orders
- Reporting systems
- Traditional justice practices

Information gathered during the Spring of 2021 will help inform planning for tribal Elder justice programs, develop a tribal Elder justice services online directory and interactive map, and develop training and resources to meet the needs of American Indian Tribes, Alaskan Villages, and Hawaiian Homesteads. The survey is sponsored by [AARP](#).

Thank you for your interest in completing this survey!

If you would like to participate in the Tribal Elders Abuse Services Survey it will take approximately 15-30 minutes, depending on your responses. When you complete the survey, you may choose to enter a drawing for one of ten \$100 gift cards.

Your information will help inform planning for tribal Elder justice programs, develop a tribal Elder justice services



Native Elder Maltreatment Survey

The Native Elder Maltreatment Survey (NEMS) helps Native American Tribes, Alaskan Villages, and Hawaiian Homesteads to understand the prevalence of Elder mistreatment, neglect, and financial exploitation in their respective communities.

What does the survey assess?

This survey uses the Hwalek-Sengstock Elder Abuse Screening Test (HS-EAST) to assess if Elders are at high risk for mistreatment. The survey also uses the Native Elder Life Scale (NELS), which assesses neglect and financial exploitation. The NELS provides insight on financial abuse, self-neglect, family neglect, and physical and emotional harm by others.

How does NIEJI assist with the survey?

NIEJI provides training and technical assistance to communities to implement NEMS. We will supply paper copies of the survey for your community. And we will assist in data analysis and producing meaningful and culturally informed reports and fact sheets.

What is NIEJI's research approach?

NIEJI's approach is consistent with the Tribal Participatory Research model giving the community decision making and oversight of the research process. NIEJI respects community research practices and data sovereignty. It is your right to determine data collection, ownership, and application of data. NIEJI maintains, with community approval, a de-identified aggregate data set to better understand elder mistreatment, abuse, guide our program services, and scholarly publications. Your community will never be identified in our use of the aggregate dataset.

How can our community use the survey data?

Your community can use the survey data for grant applications to support the need for funding to protect Elders. The survey data provides support for the adoption of Elder abuse codes, education programs, Elder abuse prevention programs and campaigns, Elder Protection Teams/Multidisciplinary Teams, or Elder coalitions. The data can be used to inform the community about the prevalence of Elder abuse.

If you are interested in conducting NEMS you may review the documents or contact our office for more information.

Research Findings from the NEMS Pilot Survey



NEMS: Elder American Indian Women's Experiences



Spiritual Abuse Among American Indian Elderly



Maltreatment of American Indian Elderly

NEMS Materials

- [How to Get Started](#)
- [Step-by-Step Guide](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Tribal Council Resolution](#)
- [Verbal Consent Form](#)
- [Interviewer's Guide](#)

<https://www.nijii.org/data>

Jacqueline S. Gray, PhD, 2025

A decorative geometric pattern in shades of purple and dark blue, located in the bottom-left corner of the slide. It features a complex arrangement of triangles and diamonds, with a prominent star-like shape in the center-left.

Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice

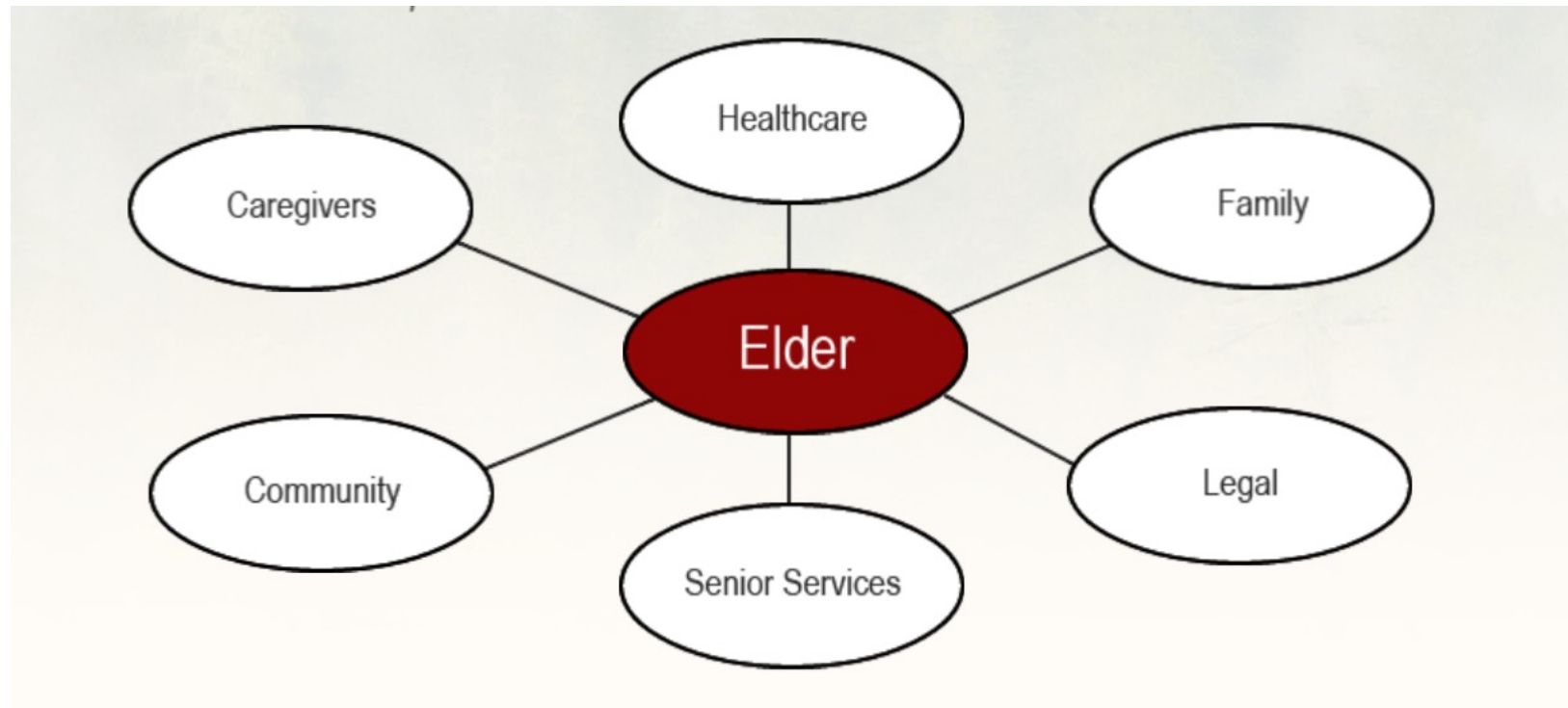
- Elder Protection Teams
- Family Circles
- Family Restoration Programs
- Elders' Councils
- Community Policing
- Deferred Prosecution
- Sentencing Circles

Elder Protection Team

- The Elder Protection Team addresses the issues of elder abuse and is dependent upon the resources of each specific tribe. Possible responsibilities of an Elder Protection Team may include:
 - Educating the community and conducting prevention activities
 - Building collaboration and trust among professionals, elders and families
 - Providing empathetic listening
 - Implementing an effective method for responding to elder abuse while maintaining confidentiality
 - Reporting suspected abuse and intervening when necessary
 - Restoring respect of elders

Members of an Elder Protection Team

- The Elder Protection Team always includes the elder. Due to the complexity of elder abuse, the makeup of the team is individualized, will vary and may include:



Family Circles/Restoration

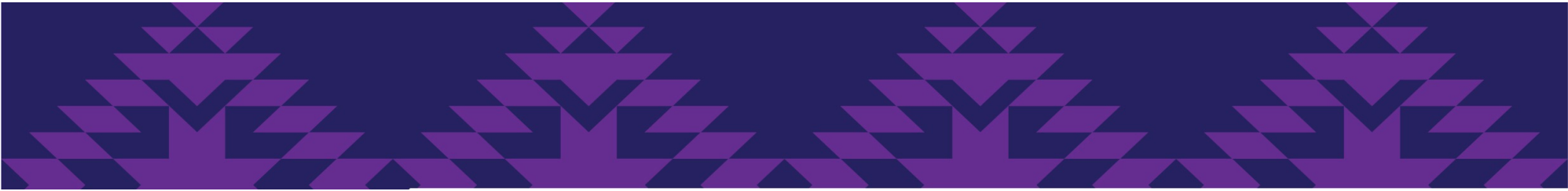
- Social Worker/Mediator
- Family members
- Includes Caregiver, if applicable
- Used as part of diversion programs
- Treatment Plan
 - Regular benchmarks to be met
 - If not met, decision is not Elder's to refer to legal
 - Weekly, Bi-weekly, or Monthly meetings as needed

Elders' Council

- Traditional methods
- Elder & Offender come to the Council
- Council addresses offender
 - Teaches the offender from culture
 - Address how Elders are to be treated
 - Determines what offender is to do to restore the relationship
 - Community will be watching behavior going forward
 - Continued violation results in traditional consequences

Sentencing Circles

- Similar to EPT/MDT
 - Include Elder, offender, family, and Justice system
- Looks for more positive outcomes for all
- Identify ways other than incarceration to change the relationship
- Recognize the disrespect (abuse) of the elderly



Operation Golden Shield

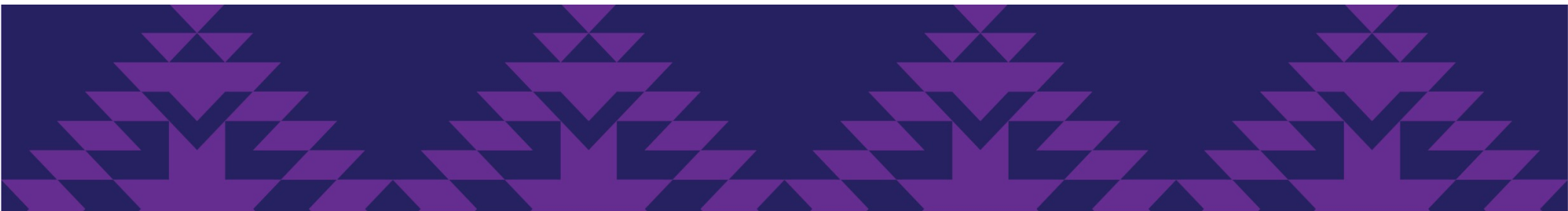
A joint effort between the Office of Justice
Services District II Law Enforcement and the
Anadarko Agency Branch of Social Services





*In an effort to combat elder abuse and neglect and to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults in our Native community, the Anadarko Agency Office of Justice Services Law Enforcement and Social Services have implemented **Operation Golden Shield.***

- *The Anadarko Agency Former Chief of Police, Rick Decora, proposed that his officers make random “friendly” visits with vulnerable adults whether they are within or outside of territorial jurisdiction of the Anadarko Agency.*



A list of 27 vulnerable adults was then compiled through a meeting sponsored by the Office of Justice Services, Social Services with local Tribal social services, Community Health Representatives, Southern Plains Regional Office of Social Services and Office of Special Trustee.





The list of individuals is maintained by the Anadarko Agency Branch of Social Services and the dispatch center for the Office of Justice Services Law Enforcement. This list is updated at a monthly agency APS (adult protective service) meeting or as needed.



- 
- *The “friendly” visitation by Office of Justice Services Officers was implemented in August 2012 and is in full operation at this time. The Officers take 3 to 4 names from the list of vulnerable adults and visit them during their shift. The officers report success with the project and enjoy visiting with the elders.*
- 



If criminal activity such as physical, emotional, psychological abuse or financial exploitation is suspected, the activity is reported to the agency with criminal jurisdiction and the appropriate Social Services for assessment. The BIA will take whatever steps deemed appropriate to ensure the health, safety and financial well-being of the vulnerable adults.

One example of a reported incident interdicted an individual's efforts to exploit an at risk adult and very likely saved \$45,000 of that subject's money. It should be noted that this incident did not occur on Indian land but through the collaborative efforts of the team and the sharing of vital information with other departments, this potential exploitation was successfully prevented.



Information Magnet

Officer Brandon Mikkanen saw a need for the development of a tool that would aid in receiving information from elders when reporting criminal activity. Officer Mikkanen designed the magnet and the branch of Social Services paid for the magnets. This magnet has helped in locating the homes of rural residents and also in gaining better information from the caller. The magnet is handed out to elders at local tribal AOA programs, safety meetings, during welfare checks and other events.

 **BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF JUSTICE SERVICES**
BRAVERY - INTEGRITY - ACCOUNTABILITY
Having this information ready for Dispatchers will speed the response to calls for assistance.

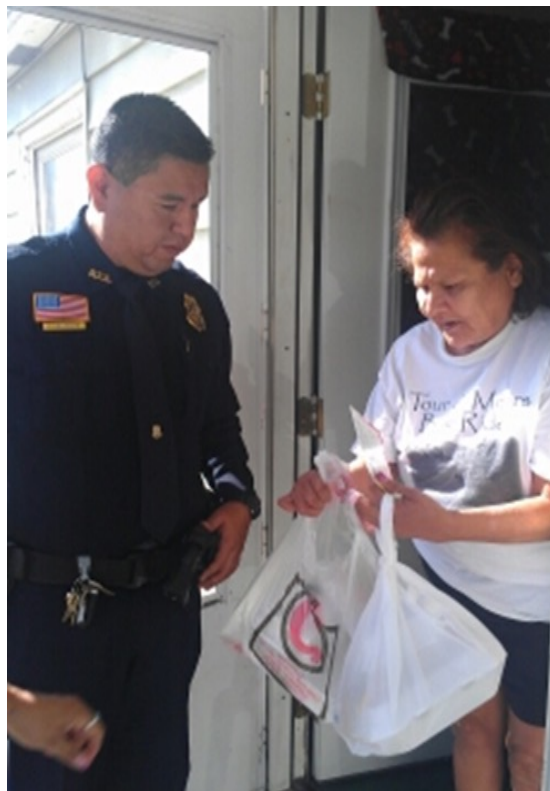
1) Phone # I am calling from: _____
2) Address: _____
3) Distance/Direction from nearest Intersection: _____
4) What is happening? _____

**IN CASE OF
EMERGENCY**
**DIAL 911 & tell
them you live on
trust property**

For Non-Emergencies:
(405) 247-6712
For Social Services:
(405) 247-8514

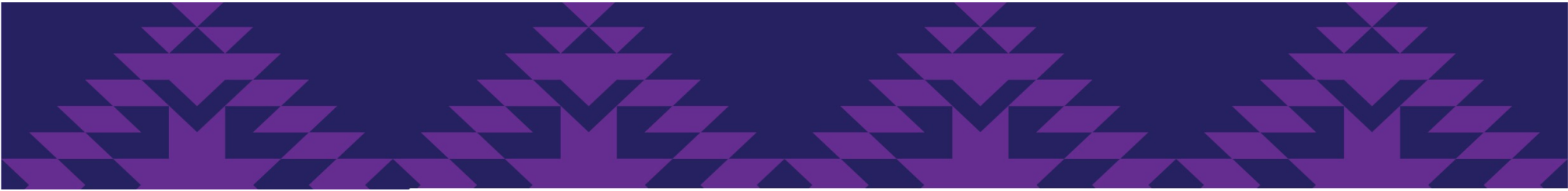












Neither the Bureau of Indian Affairs nor the Office of Justice Services has allocated funds to finance these community policing projects. All projects are funded through generous donations from Anadarko Agency and Southern Plains Regional Bureau of Indian Affairs Employees, local attorneys, Tribal Social Service Programs, Oklahoma Indian Bar Association, Tribal Gaming Commissions, CFR-CIO Court Judges and attorneys, and private citizens. None of the projects could have been completed without these contributions and the hard work and dedication of the Anadarko Agency Social Services Staff and the Office of Justice Services Officers, Telecommunication Equipment Operators, and Special Agents.

THANK YOU!!
A-HO, KAWT-SAY LAH
EEY-HEH-HEH
UUH-DAH-KAWK, MESSA-NAH
NAH-THICK-THES, NEE-AH
WAH-NEE-CHEE
SUUT-TEES
HAW-WIH

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Yakoke

Email:

DrJacquesGray@gmail.com

[HTTPS://NIJII.ORG](https://NIJII.ORG)