

Moving Upstream: Building Capacity for Sexual Violence Prevention Work



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Rape Prevention & Education Grant
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

June 2024



MIWSAC

Minnesota Indian Women's
Sexual Assault Coalition



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TO ALL OUR RELATIVES



The Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition staff and Circle Keepers want to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of you who helped us to assess our organizational capacity to engage in the primary prevention of sexual violence. Some of you participated in listening sessions or an interview with staff and our evaluator. Many of you took the time to respond to a survey. You shared your hopes and dreams for this work we do together. You shared your frustrations and concerns over how far we have yet to go to reach a violence free world. You shared your stories of surviving sexual violence. You shared your strength and resilience.

MIWSAC is honored to serve as the sexual violence coalition for the 11 Tribal communities in Minnesota, as well as the urban base in the Twin Cities. It's important that we share our findings in the assessment you helped us complete over the past twelve months. Too often, as Native people, we have been asked to provide information and stories without ever knowing what happened to what we generously shared. And so, we want to return what we have learned back to you and complete the circle of knowledge. And most importantly, we want to say again...



All images in report are from the MIWSAC Facebook page or provided by staff

Thank you – Miigwech – Pidamaya

Warmest regards from the MIWSAC Staff and Circle Keepers



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) completed a one-year initiative titled "Rape Prevention and Education: Assessing Coalition Capacity to Address Primary Prevention." This project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2023-2024, aimed to assess MIWSAC's capacity to advance primary prevention of sexual violence within Native communities. The project's overarching goal was to build a foundation for the coalition to strengthen primary prevention efforts, address health inequities, utilize data in programmatic decisions, and foster engagement with state health departments, sexual assault coalitions, culturally specific organizations, and Tribal communities.

The project was centered around two primary strategies: conducting a Primary Prevention Capacity Assessment and developing a culturally meaningful action plan with equity-focused strategies. The assessment revealed that MIWSAC is a well-respected and trusted organization, perceived as having the capacity to lead in the prevention of sexual violence. The staff demonstrates readiness to engage in this work at a high capacity, and the communities served by MIWSAC expressed eagerness to participate in prevention efforts, particularly those rooted in an Indigenous worldview. The assessment concluded that the timing is critical for advancing sexual violence prevention in Native communities.



A copy of the full evaluation report can be found at: <https://bit.ly/Report2024MIWSAC>.



PROJECT OVERVIEW



Background

MIWSAC is a statewide Tribal Coalition and national Tribal technical assistance provider established in 2001. The organization is dedicated to ending gender-based violence and enhancing Tribal, state, and federal responses to sexual violence and trafficking.

MIWSAC provides culturally based training, technical assistance, and resources to support survivors, advocates, service providers, community-based organizations, and allies across Minnesota's 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations, urban Native bases, and Tribal communities nationwide. MIWSAC's mission is centered on eliminating sexual violence by strengthening Native voices, and building resources to create awareness. The organization's work is guided by Traditional values that honor the sovereignty of Native people and a commitment to influencing social change.

Objectives

The primary objective of the CDC-funded project was to assess MIWSAC's capacity to advance the primary prevention of sexual assault. This involved conducting a comprehensive assessment to identify the organization's strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. The project also aimed to develop recommendations that would promote health equity and guide future primary prevention efforts within Native communities. The recommendations were reflected in the round two grant submitted to CDC for ongoing work in prevention.

Scope

The scope of the project was broad, encompassing two key components:

1. Primary Prevention Capacity Assessment: This involved documenting the current range of resources available to MIWSAC, identifying gaps, and assessing the coalition's data management and usage capabilities. The assessment also focused on expanding collaborative partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders.
2. Development of a Culturally Meaningful Action Plan: Based on the findings of the capacity assessment, MIWSAC aimed to create an action plan with equity-focused strategies that promote health equity and advance primary prevention efforts. These strategies were included in the new grant proposal, and were informed by the needs and perspectives of the communities served by MIWSAC.





METHODOLOGY



Data Collection

The evaluation utilized a combination of Goal-Based, Process, and Outcome Evaluation methodologies to assess the project's effectiveness. Data collection methods included:

Surveys: An online Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention was administered to MIWSAC staff, modeled after Veto Violence's General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention. Surveys were also conducted with partners and stakeholders at MIWSAC's annual spring conference and membership meeting, with 70 responses from individuals.

Listening Sessions: Multiple listening sessions were held with MIWSAC staff, Circle Keepers, partners, stakeholders, and MIWSAC membership. These sessions were designed to gather qualitative data on perceptions, experiences, and recommendations related to sexual violence prevention.

Individual Interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including leaders from organizations who work on sexual violence intervention and prevention. These interviews provided insights into the challenges and opportunities for advancing sexual violence prevention within Native communities.

Review of Program Materials: The assessment included a review of existing prevention resources, staff resumes, organizational charts, and cultural guidelines used by MIWSAC.

Analysis

The collected data was analyzed to assess MIWSAC's capacity in five key areas:

1. **Leadership:** The commitment, knowledge, and effectiveness of MIWSAC's leadership in advancing sexual violence prevention.
2. **Staffing & Resources:** The adequacy of staffing levels, resources, and organizational support for violence prevention efforts.
3. **Skills & Expertise:** The knowledge, experience, and training of MIWSAC staff related to violence prevention.
4. **Collaboration & Partnerships:** The strength and effectiveness of MIWSAC's partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and community stakeholders.
5. **Data & Evaluation:** The organization's capacity to collect, manage, and utilize data for decision-making and program evaluation.



KEY FINDINGS



Organizational Capacity

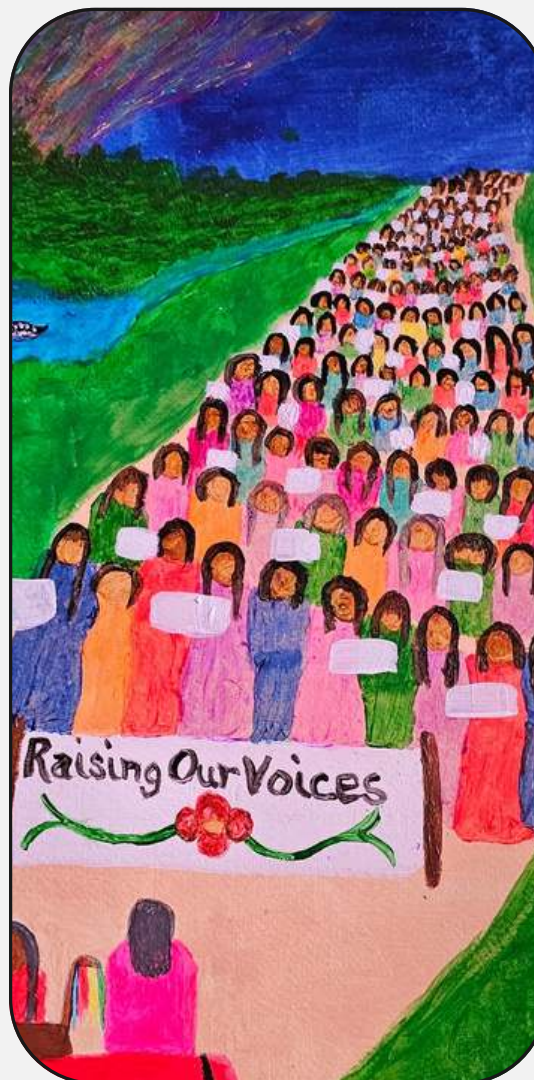
The assessment showed that MIWSAC has a strong organizational capacity, with a dedicated and knowledgeable staff and governing board. The organization's leadership is highly committed to preventing sexual violence, and there is a clear understanding among staff of the critical areas necessary for effective violence prevention. MIWSAC is well-respected and trusted by its member programs and the broader communities it serves. The organization's reputation for providing timely and relevant support to its members is a significant asset in advancing primary prevention efforts.

Community Engagement

MIWSAC's approach to prevention is deeply rooted in an Indigenous worldview, which emphasizes a holistic and interconnected perspective. This cultural grounding is seen as essential for effectively engaging Native communities in sexual violence prevention efforts. MIWSAC partners, members, Circle Keepers, and staff highlighted the importance of integrating cultural teachings, practices, language, and ceremonies into prevention strategies to ensure that they are relevant and impactful to the communities served.

Readiness for Prevention Work

The assessment demonstrated a strong sense of urgency among MIWSAC staff, partners, and stakeholders to engage in sexual violence prevention. MIWSAC is positioned to lead these efforts, leveraging its experience, community trust, and cultural expertise.



Cover art for MIWSAC's 2024 Annual Conference "Raising Our Voices to End Sexual Violence"





KEY FINDINGS



Leveraging Collaborative Partnerships and Stakeholder Relationships

Building collaborative partnerships and nurturing stakeholder relationships is a huge strength of MIWSAC staff and Circle Keepers. Relationships are an important value of the organization, and this is demonstrated at every level. This is something to not only acknowledge, but truly celebrate. MIWSAC has achieved a high level of trust from other organizations, Tribal and federal governmental entities, member programs, and the wider community. The organization is positioned to leverage its existing partnerships and stakeholder relationships to advance prevention work in Minnesota and beyond.

Growth Opportunity in Data Management

The assessment identified strengths in leadership and community engagement, along with a growth opportunity in the organization's data management and evaluation capacity. Staff indicated a need for improved processes to monitor and evaluate violence prevention activities effectively in order to become fully equipped to support the comprehensive data collection and analysis needed for effective prevention work.



CHALLENGES



1. **Data and Evaluation Capacity:** The assessment highlighted an opportunity for growth in MIWSAC's capacity for data management and evaluation. The organization will be working on development of robust systems for collecting, sharing, and analyzing data, in order to track the effectiveness of its prevention efforts and make data-driven decisions. Indigenous ways of knowing will be the driver for information gathering.
2. **Staffing and Resources:** While MIWSAC has a dedicated team, there are challenges related to staffing levels and resource allocation. The assessment revealed mixed responses from staff regarding the adequacy of resources and the sustainability of current violence prevention strategies. Staff turnover and limited funding sources were identified as challenges to be addressed.
3. **Community Leader Support:** Although MIWSAC's organizational leadership is strong, there are mixed perceptions about the level of support from community leaders. Staff expressed concerns about community leaders' understanding of the cultural and systemic factors that contribute to violence and their ability to effectively advocate for violence prevention.



NEXT STEPS



1. Enhance Assessment and Evaluation:

Implementation: Invest in robust data management systems that support the collection, sharing, and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. Train staff on best practices in data management and the use of the CDC recommended Indigenous Evaluation Toolkit. The toolkit is rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and emphasizes the importance of community involvement, cultural relevance, and the integration of traditional knowledge with contemporary evaluation practices. It aims to provide a holistic and community-informed approach to program evaluation, highlighting the concept of "two-eyed seeing," which balances Indigenous knowledge with Western methodologies for the benefit of all.

Example: Implement regular data collection activities, such as community surveys and focus groups, using culturally appropriate methods outlined in the Indigenous Evaluation Toolkit. Ensure that data is used to inform decision-making and continuously improve program effectiveness.



NEXT STEPS



2. Strengthen Communication and Community Engagement:

Implementation: Develop a comprehensive communication plan for sexual violence prevention, ensuring that materials are culturally relevant and accessible to diverse community members. Focus prevention efforts on children, youth, and the adults in their lives, including parents, grandparents, relatives, and teachers.

Example: Launch a multi-platform social media campaign featuring Indigenous leaders and community members sharing stories and information about sexual violence prevention. Develop informational brochures, posters, and videos for distribution at community events, health centers, and schools. Participants in listening sessions identified what seem like possible keys to crafting messages around sexual violence prevention work in tribal communities, along with questions that will help MIWSAC dive more deeply into this work:

Key #1 – Story

What stories need to be told that help people understand the importance of sexual violence prevention?

Key #2 – Images

What images might help people more deeply grasp the prevention concept?

Key #3 – Indigenous Wisdom

What are the values and vision that guide Indigenous people that prevention work might build upon?



NEXT STEPS



3. Build Organizational Capacity:

Implementation: Continue investing in staff training and professional development to enhance skills and expertise in sexual violence prevention. Explore opportunities to formalize partnerships through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to sustain collaborative efforts.

Example: Utilize existing staff meeting times to provide regular training on sexual violence prevention. Organize annual training sessions on the latest prevention education, particularly those that demonstrate cultural competency for Native communities.

4. Develop a Culturally Meaningful Action Plan:

Implementation: Based on the data collected, finalize and implement a culturally meaningful action plan that addresses health equity and advances primary prevention efforts. This plan will be informed by community input and aligned with MIWSAC's mission and values.

Example: Establish an advisory committee composed of community members, Elders, and program staff to oversee the development and implementation of the action plan. Use the Indigenous Evaluation Toolkit's resources to ensure that the action plan is culturally grounded and responsive to the needs of the community.



CONCLUSION



By addressing these challenges and implementing the strategies described in this paper, MIWSAC will enhance its capacity to lead effective, equity-focused primary prevention efforts in Native communities. The assessment data underscores both the urgency and the potential for MIWSAC to make a significant impact in the prevention of sexual violence.

The data for this report, from the surveys to the listening sessions has been depth-filled, rich, nuanced, and inspiring. Participants have expressed both their sorrow at the horrific impact of sexual violence on Tribal communities, as well as a deep and abiding hope for the future of sexual violence prevention work. There is a recognition that prevention, until now, has felt like a luxury that no one could afford, because of the cascade of human pain and suffering that needs to be urgently addressed, but there is gratitude that now, under the leadership of MIWSAC, and with the support and guidance from key partners and funders, perhaps some of the work can finally move further upstream.

Again, a heartfelt thank you to all who participated in any way to help MIWSAC better understand its capacity to advance sexual violence prevention work!

