

HOW STALKING FUELS TRAFFICKING IN URBAN NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Purpose: To examine how stalking intersects with sex trafficking and highlight the unique experiences of American Indian and Alaska (AI/AN) survivors in urban areas.



SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex Trafficking refers to the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. It involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to make an adult engage in commercial sex acts. Any commercial sexual activity with a minor, even without force, fraud, or coercion, is considered trafficking.

Office for Victims of Crime Definition.

STALKING

A course of action directed at an individual that causes the victim to fear for their safety, and generally involves repeated visual or physical proximity, nonconsensual communication, and verbal, written, or implied threats.

Office for Victims of Crime Definition

MANIFESTATION OF STALKING IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES



1 in 2

AI/AN Women has experienced stalking during their lifetime

(Rosay, A. 2016. American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men).



70%
of American Indian and Alaska (AI/AN) people now live in urban areas.

(US Census Bureau).



1 in 3

AI/AN Men has experienced stalking during their lifetime

(Rosay, A. 2016. American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men).

Stalking disproportionately impacts Native survivors, particularly those residing in urban areas where they may experience weaker connections to culture and less extensive social support. In addition, for AI/AN survivors of sex trafficking, stalking may be only one of many tactics or forms of abuse they have endured. They may not identify or view it as a primary concern when compared to the complex layers of trauma they are carrying. Often times it is easier to hide these crimes in plain sight, because urban areas produce high traffic, high volume environments that offer buyers and traffickers more anonymity.

(Stalking Response Considerations when working in Native American Communities)

Stalking is often used as a tool to perpetuate fear and control over a sex trafficking victim-survivor. Within the sex trafficking ecosystem, it may be used by both *traffickers* and *buyers*. For AI/AN survivors, stalking often precedes or co-occurs with other types of violence, like sex trafficking. Traffickers intentionally exploit vulnerabilities and risk factors like homelessness, economic instability, substance use, prior history of victimization, and disconnection from culture and community – which are *extremely* prevalent and pervasive issues amongst AI/AN people living in urban areas.

(Source: STRONGHEARTS Native Helpline.)

TACTICS OF POWER AND CONTROL

Monitoring and unwanted access via phones, GPS, social media, mail, pictures, gifts, and more.

Relocating the victim off Tribal lands and away from family; isolating them from support systems.

Grooming through persistent contact and manipulation; creating false safety (housing, food, phone, drugs, etc.)

CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGIES

- ▶ Discuss and assess Tribal, state, federal codes/laws/policies. Many are vague and limited in addressing stalking, specifically in urban areas.
- ▶ Work collaboratively with partners and stakeholder to identify strategies to amplifying public awareness and outreach efforts. Most stalking victims are unaware of the tools and resources that may be available in the area, and/or the specific agencies where they can access support.
- ▶ Identify or strengthen partnerships to develop comprehensive, coordinated community responses. This includes consideration for referrals, robust cultural supports, and identifying gaps in service delivery.
- ▶ Develop strategies to consistently gather and review data on stalking for urban Native sex trafficking survivors. Data often omits AI/AN and does not reflect accurate numbers.
- ▶ Connect victims and survivors to cultural based supports. Urban settings may impact access to these types of services, due to isolation or distance from Tribal areas.