

Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center

The commercial sexual
exploitation of American Indian
girls and women



Overview of Project

How it started

Resources

Limitations



Federal and State Law

- TVPA & Wilberforce Reauthorization Act defines sex trafficking as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act is under 18 years of age”.





Historical context

- Colonial attitudes
- Boarding Schools
- Other assimilation policies – relocation, adoption, involuntary sterilization.



Methods and definitions

- Regional Roundtables
- MIWRC intake data
- Published material U.S. and Canada
- Other data – vulnerability factors


- Commercial Sexual Exploitation
- Prostitution
- Sex Trade
- Sex Trafficking
- Victim



Damage of Prostitution

- Women in prostitution experience rape and sexual violence at a rate of 70 – 90 %.
- Vast majority of prostituted women experience extreme physical and sexual violence at the hands of pimps/boyfriends.
- Extremely high rates of chemical addictions, PTSDs, dis-associative disorders, other mental illness.
- Homicide rate for prostituted women 40 times higher than general population.

Client screening at intake (n=95)



Reported exchanging sex for:	Number	Percent
Shelter or housing	24	25%
Food	14	15%
Money	32	34%
Drugs or alcohol	30	32%
Transportation/use of a car	10	11%
Some other type of assistance	5	5%
Had been:		
Asked to recruit or pimp other girls	21	22%
Made to pose for pornography	11	12%

*Some reported multiple types of sexual exploitation

Prevalence



Everybody I've come across has been young [at the time they entered prostitution]. Like, 12, 13, 14 sometimes 15. I met one woman who was maybe 19, she was really the exception. There's definitely that 12-15 range. They seem like babies!

I work in the housing program portion of a women's shelter. I see the women and we accept the women escaping from prostitution. I did my data collection for a report and I couldn't believe how many people that we had...it was pretty close to 30 women escaped from

Clients in the sex trade (n=33)

Age when first prostituted	Number	Percent
8-12	7	21%
13-15	7	21%
16-17	7	21%
18-23	5	15%
27-38	6	18%
39-55	1	6%

* No age of entry reported for five clients



Patterns of entry

- Stripping and Pornography – legal for adults but often used as a gateway into prostitution.
- Normalization – extremely high rates of overall sexual victimization, peer influence, multi-generational trauma.
- Internet/Sexting.
- The emotional connection with pimps/boyfriends.
- Guerilla pimping and finesse pimping.

Clients in the sex trade (n=38)



Recruited into prostitution by:	Number	Percent
Friend(s)	14	52%
Family member(s)	5	19%
Boyfriend	5	19%
Gang	1	3%
Pimp	1	3%
Landlord	1	3%



Vulnerability/Risk factors

- Violence in the home – runaway, throw away.
- Homelessness, staying in high risk relationships for lack of suitable housing.
- Substance abuse – parent/caregivers and early use of alcohol/drugs for girls
- FASD
- Poverty
- Dropping out of school
- Involvement with child protection system

Normalization

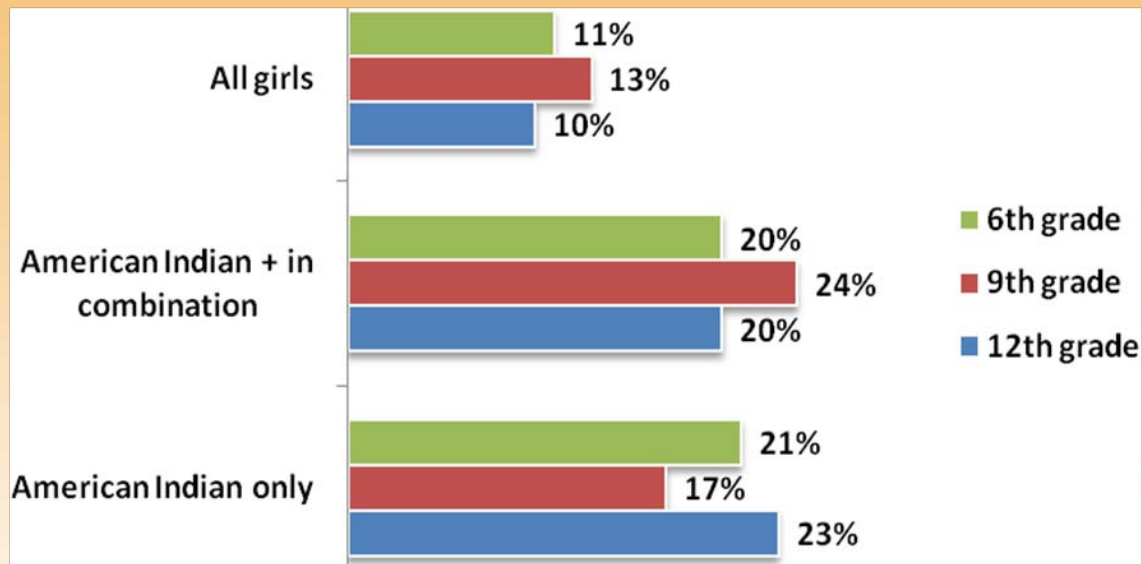


“I grew up with a bunch of women who did trade sex for money, clothing, food, shelter, housing, did whatever they had to do to keep me in a private education and a good home. I want to be able to move on from that so we’re not raising more kids who normalize that activity as part of everyday life”.

“The majority of them have been exposed to sexual abuse. So, its like, they’re making the decision now, they are in control of their bodies and they are going to do what they need to do to get what they want”.

Abuse at home

Girls that reported physical abuse at home, statewide (2007 Minnesota Student Survey)



Homeless Native women & girls



% reporting violent victimization	Age group		
	11-17	18-21	22+
Physically abusive relationship during past 12 months	20%	48%	25%
Staying in abusive situation because had nowhere else to go	5%	48%	50%
Physically/sexually attacked or beaten while homeless	10%	16%	31%

* Non-reservation, statewide survey (Wilder Research)

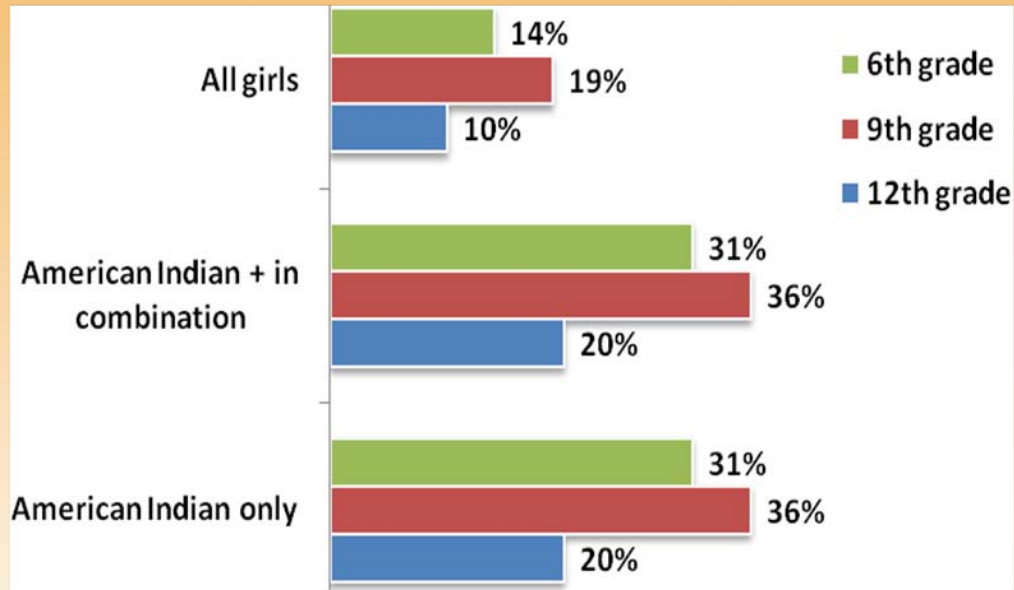
MIWRC clients (n=95)



Know someone in prostitution	Number	Percent
Know at least one person	45	47%
Personal friend	44	46%
Family member (all categories)	25	26%
Cousin(s)	10	11%
Aunt	8	8%
Sister	4	4%
Mother	2	2%
Two or more family members	7	7 %
Mother's friend	1	1%

Alcohol use

Girls reporting alcohol use at age 12 or younger (2007 Minnesota Student Survey)



Barriers to exit




- Inadequate support to ensure safety.
- Distrust of the system – law enforcement.
- Distrust of the system – advocates.
- Absence of real options for self sufficiency.
- Funder restrictions.
- Fear, shame, the “don’t talk” rule.

Recommendations



- Re-frame the issue, stop criminalizing the victims.
- Increase access to culturally appropriate housing and holistic care for victims.
- Build community support through honest dialogue.
- Hold perpetrators accountable.
- Systems change to increase penalties for perpetrators and bring resources into victims.
- Raise awareness across domains.



Next Steps as identified by community

Keep emphasis on healing and empowerment, strategic planning must be led by committed and knowledgeable group of Native people.

Prioritize the healing within our communities, ensure no re-victimization as a result of information in this report.

This is not solely a woman's issue – include men, boys, two spirit people in solutions.

What Next?



- Since the release of the report fall 2009 –

Indian Crime Reform Act Amendment by
Senator Franken,

S2925 and H5575,

AFNAP model in Atlanta,

Kellogg Foundation grant to MIWRC,

Safe Harbor Legislative efforts.



For additional information or a copy of the full report, please contact:

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