Domestic violence must end.

Native women face one of the highest abuse rates in the nation - according to the U.S. Department of Justice, 34% of Native women are raped in their lifetime, and 39% are victims of domestic violence. Additionally, 86% of these crimes are perpetrated by non-Native men.

Without strong women, strong children, and strong families, the Blackfeet Nation is not whole. Our women, children and families must feel safe, protected, and empowered.

We all have a role to play in ending domestic violence.

This pamphlet can be used by tribal leaders, advocates and allies to help end domestic and sexual violence on the Blackfeet Reservation. It was produced to accompany a policy paper on the same topic that is available for free on the National Indian Health Board website: nihb.org

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April 2018
What laws exist?

**Family Violence Prevention and Services Act** (1984) was the first law to provide federal funding for family violence prevention and is the primary source of federal funding for emergency shelter and other services for domestic violence survivors.

**Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization** (2013) increased tribal jurisdiction in prosecuting non-Native offenders in cases of domestic violence, dating violence and some violations of a protection order. The Fort Peck Reservation is the only one in Montana who has currently expanded their jurisdictional abilities.

What more is needed?

- Expand tribal court **jurisdiction** over non-Native perpetrators
- Increase tribal access to federal **funding** to support victims of crimes and domestic violence programming
- Federal policy that is **locally adaptable** to allow for culturally relevant, tribally based solutions

What can tribes do to end domestic violence?

**Strengthen resilience**

Studies show that childhood trauma, such as physical abuse, witnessing the abuse of a family member, or neglect, impacts the current health status and behaviors of individuals, including increased risk of being a victim of intimate partner violence and increased risk of being a victim of sexual violence.

Teaching youth to build resilience, practice healthy coping skills, and develop positive relationships is essential for preventing further violence and victimization.

**Data from the 2017 Blackfeet Community Health Assessment Report**

Trauma continues to impact community members into adulthood. According to the 2017 Blackfeet Community Health Assessment, the eighth most common diagnosis in IHS for adults ages 18 to 45 is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; it is the ninth most common diagnosis for individuals 66 and older.

Tribal programming and policy should prioritize **prevention through addressing trauma** in a holistic way.

What can I do to end domestic violence?

**Confront stigma**

In 2017, 64% of women victims in Glacier County, Montana were intimate partners with their abusers. This, combined with the fact that the Blackfeet Reservation is small and many families know each other, means there is great social stigma in seeking help. We need to build communities and families in which asking for help is okay and we listen to and believe people when they say they are afraid or in danger.

**Reclaim Blackfeet Masculinity**

The Blackfeet traditionally viewed all genders as equal. Women were essential to Blackfeet culture, community and economy, and violence against women and children was rare prior to colonization. Talking to your sons, nephews, and friends about standing up when they see sexism, treating women with respect, and helping them develop healthy ways to deal with emotions like anger are all essential to ending violence.

**Strengthen our tribal legal system to protect victims**

On a scale of one to ten asking how safe the Reservation is as a place to live, Blackfeet community members ranked the reservation a “three” in a 2017 survey. Survey respondents suggested that improving law enforcement and increasing court system capacity would help improve community safety. High turnover rates and judge inexperience with domestic violence and sexual violence cases make prosecution difficult, even with tribal offenders. Establishing a Domestic Violence Docket or Domestic Violence Court, with trained judges and non-rotating personnel, can ensure victims are safe, increase collaboration across tribal departments and agencies, and allows the incorporation of culturally relevant strategies.