

Empowering Indigenous Women & Communities Through Self-Defense

July 30, 2020

About the Collaboration

- **IMPACT:** Nationally recognized self-defense and violence prevention program
- **Collaboration:** IMPACT Boston is supporting and training Turtle Mountain Empowerment Self Defense
- **Toward:** Culturally-specific IMPACT program led by indigenous women

Our Beginning

- A gym credit that changed lives
- Bringing other women from the University
- The need to bring IMPACT to Turtle Mountain



Participants in the Turtle Mountain Empowerment Self-Defense class from 2018. Front row: Dawn Allard, Janelle Malaterre, Alexis Davis, and Madyson Wilkie. Back row: Eva Azure, Amber DeLong, Shontel Davis, and Jessica DeCoteau.

Empowering Women

Self-defense for women, teenage girls, available

By James C. Falcon
Freelance Journalist

BELCOURT — When thinking about self-defense, what do you think of? Punching. Kicking. The physicality of it? Granted, they are totally necessary when it comes to defending

oneself, but there is more to self-defense than just that. There is also empowerment, says Shanda Poitra, co-founder, co-director, and lead instructor with the Turtle Mountain Empowerment Self Defense program. "We teach women how to pay attention to their sur-

roundings and trust their instincts, and we teach them how to set firm boundaries by using their voices and de-escalation skills when they're feeling threatened or disrespected."

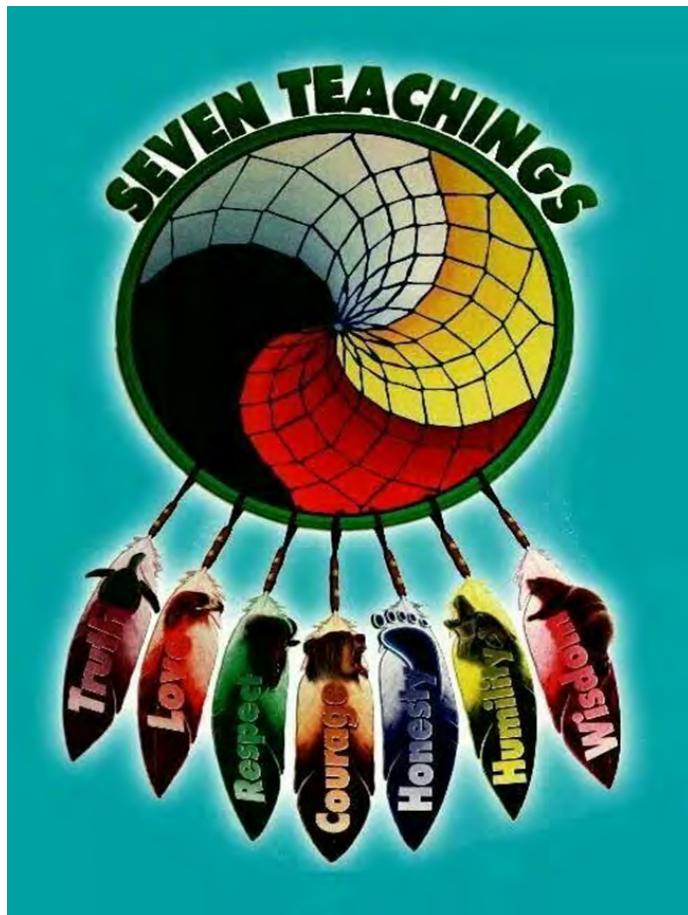
see: **WOMEN**
on pg. 4A

Turtle Mountain Reservation



- Native American Tribe of Ojibwa and Métis peoples
- Over 32,000 enrolled Tribal members
- Near the geographical center on North America in North Central North Dakota, ten miles south of the Canadian Border
- The Reservation is 6x12 miles, with many of our people spread across surrounding rural communities

The Seven Grandfathers of the Anishinaabe

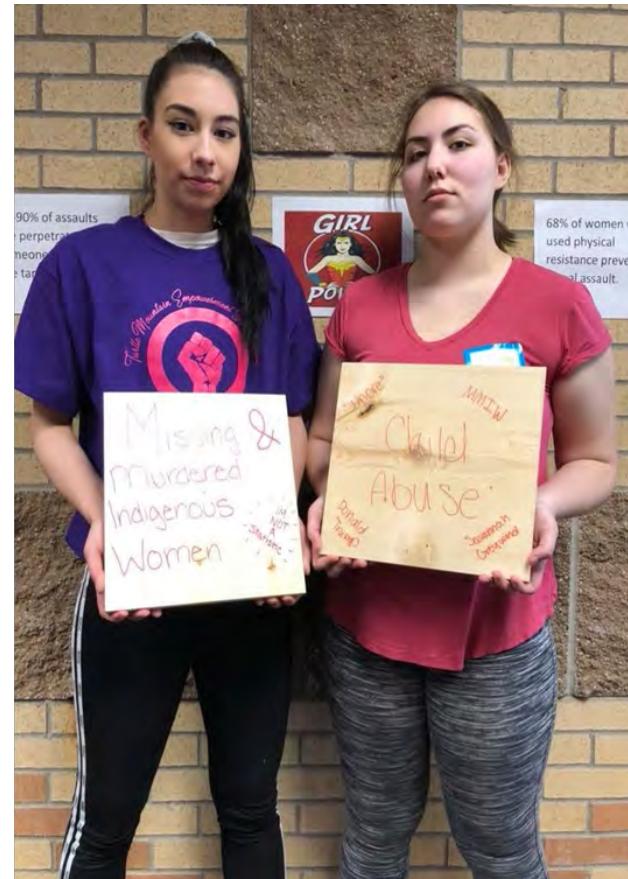


- **To cherish knowledge is to know WISDOM**
- **To know LOVE is to know peace**
- **To honor Creation is to have RESPECT**
- **BRAVERY is to face the foe with integrity**
- **HONESTY in facing a situation is to be honorable**
- **HUMILITY is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation**
- **and TRUTH is to know all of these things.**

The Need for Healing & Safety Practices



- Colonization
- Racism
- Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women
- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Assault
- Crime
- Drug Epidemic
- Poverty



Generational Trauma & Genocide

I suppose it's difficult for the leaders of this "free world" to really acknowledge Indigenous pain because that would bring up the whole cultural and historical legacy of the violence that was perpetrated against our people.



Colonization

- Genocide – Eradicated 98% of population
- Indian Removal Act 1830 – Trail of Tears
- Boarding School – Assimilation, “Kill the Indian- Save the man”
- Indian Health Service – Sterilization of Native women
- Historical & Generational Trauma



Historical Trauma

Historical trauma is entirely different than consciously holding onto the past when it resides in your ancestral memory and DNA. It results in numerous defense mechanisms, developmental malfunctions, and behavioral issues. This is scientific and is supported in studies.

~Tony Ten Fingers/Wanbli Nata'u, Oglala Lakota



facebook.com/TheGreatSpiritGod

Racism & Stereotyping



- Fighting Sioux Logo
- University has changed the team name to Fighting Hawks
- Hockey fans come to games in their “Sioux” jerseys and chant racial slurs



This is what ND racism looks like



#NODAPL



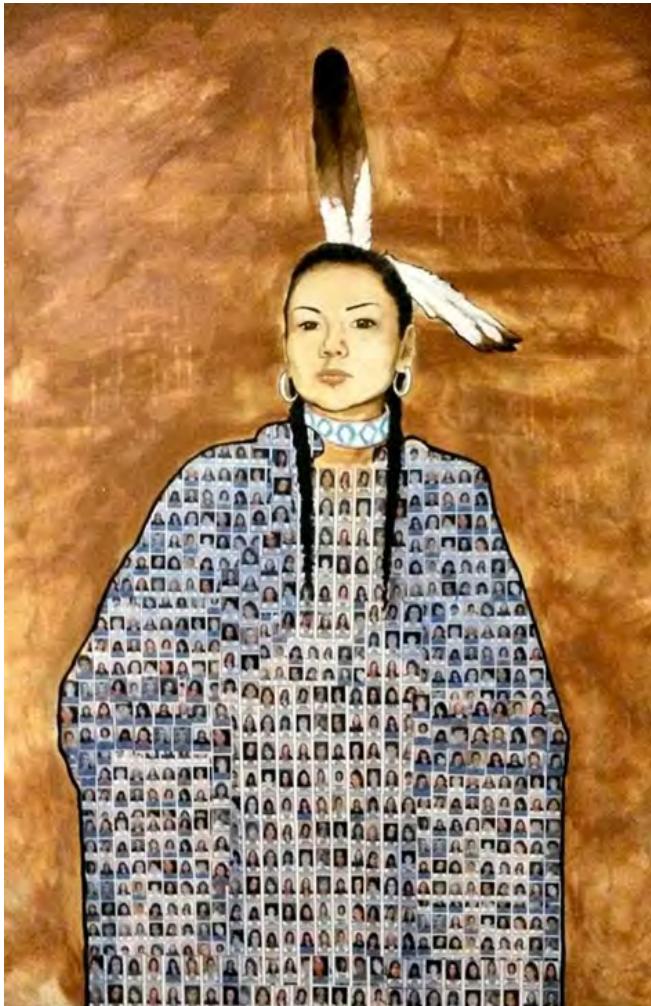
The Dakota Access Pipeline protests, also known by the hashtag #NODAPL began in early 2016 in reaction to the approved construction of Energy Transfer Partners' Dakota Access Pipeline.

#NODAPL



- The pipeline was projected to run from the Bakken oil fields in western North Dakota to southern Illinois, crossing beneath the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, as well as under part of Lake Oahe near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation
- Indigenous people come from all over the united states and Canada to peacefully protest and protect sacred land
- The construction continued despite the protests and workers knowingly damaged sacred burial grounds
- There was never any justice for the police brutality; rubber bullets, attack dogs, tear gas, freezing water, etc...

Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women



- Indigenous women are murdered at more than TEN TIMES the national average
- The #MeToo Movement not reaching indigenous community
- Oil boom brought trafficking of Indigenous women and girls
- May 5th is the national day of awareness for MMIWG

The ReDress Project

Commemorating missing and murdered Indigenous women. Red is the only color the spirits can see.



Missing & Murdered in North Dakota

- Savanna Greywind, 22 year-old Tribe Member
- Was pregnant at the time she was abducted.
- Her baby was found with her killers
- Savanna's Act

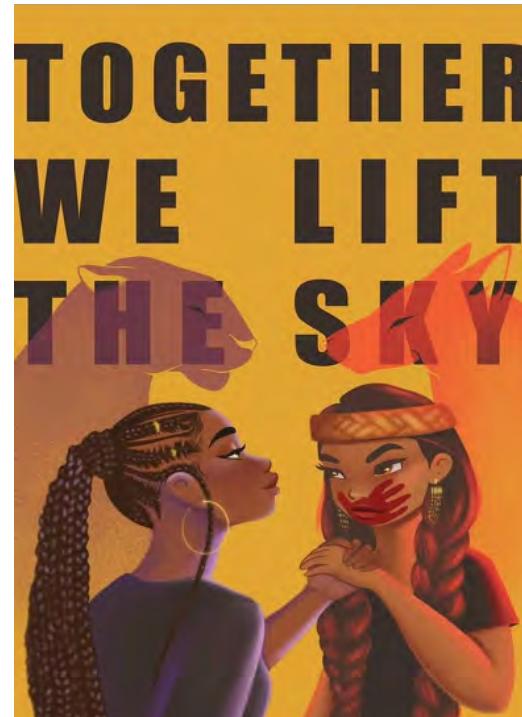


Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

- According to the 2016 National Institute of Justice Report, 56% of Native women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime
- “Man Camps” bringing violence & crime
- Domestic Violence Shelter in Williston, ND: 300 percent increase in victims between 2009 and 2011
- In the Turtle Mountains, there have been numerous cases of husbands/boyfriends beating and raping their partners and leaving them for dead in the ditches

Why Self-Defense?

- Personal & Generational Trauma
- IMPACT
- Women's Empowerment
- Verbal & Physical Techniques
- Safe & Supportive Atmosphere
- Solidarity



Feminist Empowerment Self-Defense

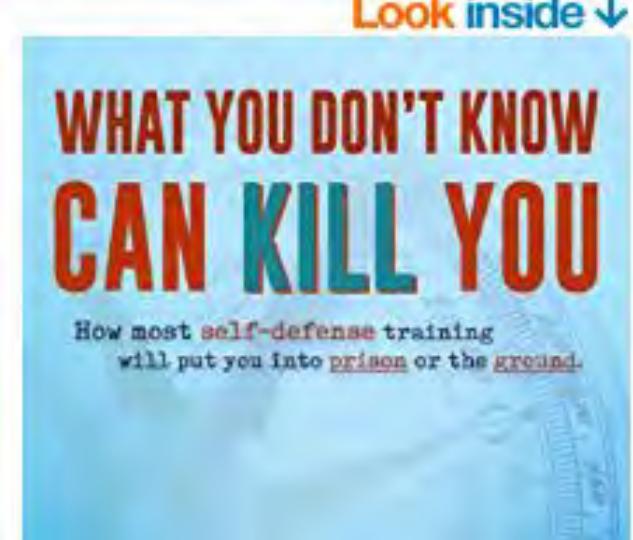
“Part of the abuse was living in my body
and it had to be physically released.”

-- IMPACT Program Participant

Some Reasons Survivors Take Self-Defense

- Feeling unsafe in everyday situations because of abuse and trauma
- Need for a body-based intervention
- Fear of abusers' retaliation
- Fear of running into abuser
- Preparation for interactions with abuser
- To regain a sense of competence or control

Sometimes when people think about self-defense...



Feminist Empowerment Self-Defense

- Addresses realities of
- gender-based violence
- Emphasizes choice
- Accessible to all bodies
- Individual Resistance
→ Collective resistance



Growth Edges

- Addressing intersections of race-based violence and gender-based violence
- Transforming mostly white leadership
- Addressing violence perpetrated by law enforcement
- Accessibility to rural and tribal communities

What makes Self-Defense Trauma-Informed?

- Confidentiality & Physical Safety
- Opening & Closing Circles, periodic check-ins
- Gradual progressions from less challenging to more challenging skills
- Coaching during scenarios
- Clear boundaries between instructor roles
- Choice about techniques, opportunities for modifications
- Somatic grounding techniques

IMPACT Methodology

- Realistic scenarios
- Finding voice & power while feeling adrenaline
- Trained instructors portray aggressors



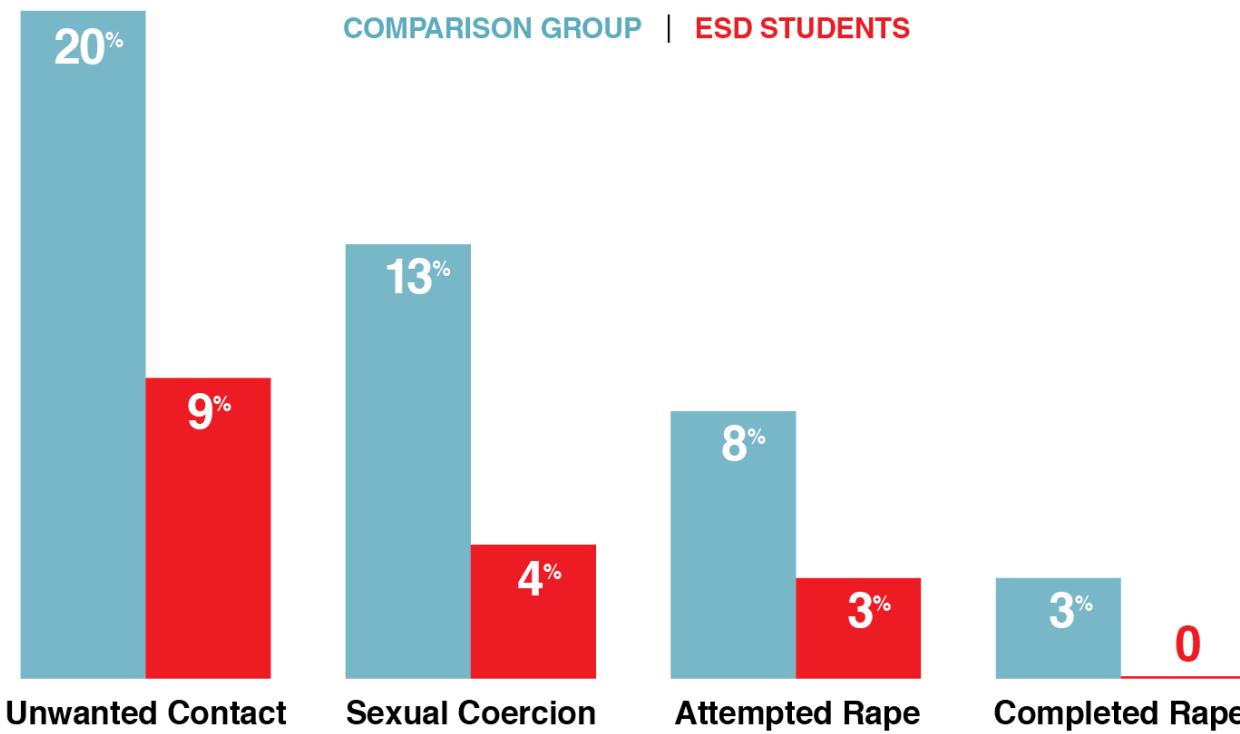
IMPACT As a Healing Experience

- Connection: people experience their bodies as powerful
- Voice: Practicing assertive communication under stress
- An experience of being powerful when feeling fear

Research: Sexual Assault Prevention

- Graphic: Mona MacDonald

**College women in the United States,
one year after completing a 30-hour ESD course¹**



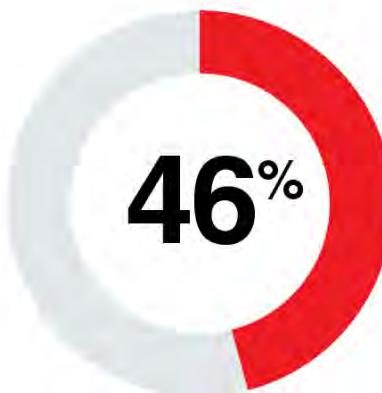
Research: Sexual Assault Prevention (2)

- Graphic: Mona MacDonald

**University women in Canada,
one year after completing a 12-hour ESD program²**



Reduced risk of
Attempted Rape



Reduced risk of
Completed Rape

Research: Trauma Healing

- Reduction of PTSD symptoms and shame in a therapy population

(Rosenbaum & Traska 2008)

- Mastery of motor responses that were blocked during traumatic events
- Integrated body experience

(Rosenbaum & Traska 2014)

Creating a Culturally-Specific IMPACT Program

For the Turtle Mountain Community

Making IMPACT Culturally Specific

- Scenarios & skills address the most common forms of violence
- Resistance strategies fit the culture & community
- Local community members are leaders



Culturally-Specific Scenarios

- Hate speech
- Doctor's Office
- Familiar sexual assault & partner violence

IMPACT and the Sweat Lodge Tradition

The Anishnabe sweat lodge tradition began before European colonization. The people were afflicted by a sickness, and all the afflicted people died. This occurred until one day an afflicted man received a message that he could heal people through a ceremony that involved hot stones and water to sweat out the illness.



IMPACT and the Sweat Lodge Tradition (2)

Today most people who seek these ceremonies do so to heal from abuse and trauma. **As we continue IMPACT programs on the reservation, we observe that IMPACT creates a similar healing journey.** When program participants experience how it feels to protect their bodies and use their voices makes them feel lighter and less burdened.

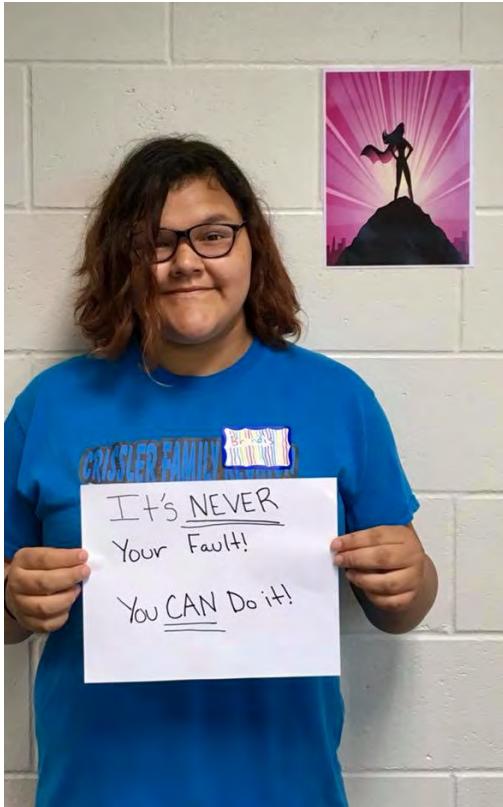


Bringing Tradition to the Circles

- Song that memorializes the lives of all missing, murdered Indigenous women
- **“We will always remember you warrior women and leader women. You are in our hearts and minds.”**



IMPACT on our Community



A domestic violence survivor used the skills to stay calm and focused during a court hearing.

A woman used the skills to stop a sexual advance from an abusive family member.

A woman used the skills to stop a sexual assault at work.

Next Steps

- Continue and complete training for program for women and teen girls
- Engage community in identifying needs and priorities
- Programs for people with disabilities, children, LGBTQ+ People
- Culturally-specific healthy masculinity & Healthy Relationships programs

Questions & Conversation

More Information

Turtle Mountain Empowerment Self-defense

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