



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, November 26, 2023

### *No More Stolen Sisters and Broken Promises to Protect Native Children*

“In the heart of North America, a tragic reality persists that might be unfamiliar to many: **Indigenous women and girls face a peril ten times greater than other ethnicities, becoming victims to unspeakable acts of violence.** Every whisper of the wind, every rustle of leaves, echoes with stories of lost sisters, daughters, and friends.

The haunting legacy of *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* (1978) tied the hands of Tribal courts, leaving them powerless against non-native culprits, even on the reservation. [In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that Indian tribal courts do not have inherent criminal jurisdiction to try and to punish non-Indians, and hence may not assume such jurisdiction unless specifically authorized to do so by Congress.]

The Bureau of Justice reports that **when Indigenous women are victims of violent crime, distressingly, 88% of these crimes are committed by non-Indigenous individuals.** As a result, Fathers, Mothers, Elders, and siblings are left to mourn without closure, without justice.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirms our worst fear - murder is the third leading cause of death for Native American women. **Over 5,000 women and girls - our sisters, our daughters - vanish or are tragically taken from us annually.** Yet, these numbers only skim the surface. The real magnitude is concealed by flawed records and silenced voices.

The non-Indigenous American public and the U.S. government need to rectify these harms caused to Indigenous communities.” [Join Native Voters Alliance Nevada and sign the petition demanding legislation that would give Tribal courts the jurisdiction to convict violent non-native offenders who commit crimes on Tribal lands!](#) (*Progressive Reform Network & Native Voters Alliance Nevada*, 10/23/23)

**Native and Indigenous children on Tribal lands and in urban areas also deserve protection.**

The federal government has a responsibility to protect all children, including Native and Indigenous kids on Tribal lands and in urban areas. “**Throughout the 1800s and 1900s, the U.S. government [removed] Native children from their families and communities.** Students were renamed, forbidden from speaking their Native languages, forced to convert to Christianity, and pressured to give up cultural practices. Abuse and neglect were commonplace.

That history lives on today and the promise to protect Indigenous children remains broken — but that could change and soon. Just weeks ago, with a huge bipartisan vote (378 to 32), the House stepped toward a new vision by passing the **Native American Child Protection Act (NACPA).**

This bill would update and enhance programs that provide Tribes and Native communities with the resources necessary to address family violence, safeguard children from abuse and neglect, and uphold justice for Native families and their children.” (Faith Gay, *Win Without War*, 11/7/23)  
[Sign and send a direct message urging your senators to co-sponsor and pass the Native American Child Protection Act immediately.](#)

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at [socialjustice@holycrossphl.org](mailto:socialjustice@holycrossphl.org).