

ROUNDTABLE 2 — IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

**JOINT STATEMENT ON
COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL**

This joint statement is offered on behalf of 41 supporting indigenous nations and 18 organizations in the United States.*

Violence against women and girls is a pervasive violation of human rights and a form of discrimination that persists in every country. Even more dire is the situation of indigenous women who are being subjected to disproportionately high, multiple forms of discrimination, violence, and murder not only because they are women, but also because they are indigenous and members of indigenous communities.¹

For example, despite recent positive reforms in the United States, discriminatory laws continue to perpetuate a cycle of violence that affects American Indian and particularly Alaska Native women more than others, just because they are indigenous and are assaulted in Indian country and on Alaska Native lands. American Indian and Alaska Native women are two-and-a-half times more likely to be assaulted as other women. Many find it unimaginable that, in the United States, one in three American Indian and Alaska Native women will be raped in her lifetime, and six in ten will be physically assaulted. On some reservations, their murder rate is ten times the national average. Because U.S. reforms have been so limited thus far, Alaska Native women in particular continue to endure some of the highest and most disproportionate rates of domestic and sexual violence in the entire United States.

Elsewhere in the world, indigenous women face a common crisis: sky high rates of violence and sexual assault, and a national legal system that fails to protect them.

Many human rights treaties and declarations set out crucial protections for women. Significantly, Article 22 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples calls on states, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to take measures to protect indigenous women against all forms of violence and discrimination.

¹ *Study on the extent of violence against indigenous women and girls in terms of article 22 (2) of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, E/C.19/2013/9 (Feb. 2013).

Firm, concrete actions by the UN, coupled with implementation by states at the national and local level in conjunction with indigenous peoples, are absolutely critical if safety and freedom from discrimination are ever to be restored to indigenous women worldwide. Toward that end, at least 136 indigenous nations and 23 organizations have joined us in urging the UN to support strong actions at this World Conference — actions intended to recognize the UN as lead in this urgent effort to end the epidemic of violence against indigenous women. Consistent with the rights of indigenous women affirmed in the Declaration, we have recommended actions such as: (i) convening a high-level conference to examine challenges to the safety of indigenous women and children; (ii) requiring that a UN body for implementing the Declaration give this issue particular attention; and (iii) appointing a Special Rapporteur to focus on the human rights issues of indigenous women and children.

We commend the efforts of states and indigenous peoples in working to negotiate a strong, action-oriented outcome document for this World Conference. While we greatly appreciate these efforts, we strongly believe that much more must be done. Violence against indigenous women is a complex, global crisis. It will take dedicated, expert attention within the UN and serious legal reforms at the national and local level to craft lasting solutions that will restore safety to indigenous women.

* The supporting indigenous nations and organizations include:

Akiak Native Community; Alliance of Tribal Coalitions to End Violence; California Association of Tribal Governments (Big Lagoon Rancheria; Big Pine Reservation; Big Sandy Rancheria; Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians of the Cahuilla Reservation; California Valley Miwok Tribe; Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria; Cloverdale Rancheria; Enterprise Rancheria of Maidu Indians of California; Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians; Greenville Rancheria of Maidu Indians of California; Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake; Hoopa Valley Tribe; Hopland Band of Pomo Indians of the Hopland Rancheria; Ione Band of Miwok Indians of California; Jamul Indian Village; Karuk Tribe of California; Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria; Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeño Indians; Mesa Grande Band of Kumeyaay Indians; Morongo Band of Mission Indians; Northfork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California; Pit River Tribe; Ramona Band of Cahuilla Indians; Resighini Rancheria; Scotts Valley Rancheria Band of Pomo Indians of California; Smith River Rancheria; Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians; Susanville Indian Rancheria; Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation, Central District; Wiyot Tribe; Yurok Tribe of the Yurok Reservation, Southern District); Cherokee Nation; Citizen Potawatomi Nation; Clan Star, Inc.; Emmonak Women's Shelter; Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians; First Nations Women's Alliance; Hopi Tewa Women's Coalition to End Abuse; Indian Law Resource Center; Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe; Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe; Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition; Montana Native Women's Coalition; National Congress of American Indians; National Indigenous Women's Resource Center; Native Alliance Against Violence; Native Women's Society of the Great Plains; Quapaw Nation; Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition; Strong Hearted Native Women's Coalition; Uniting Three Fires Against Violence; Village of Anvik; Village of Emmonak; Village of Tetlin; Washington State Native American Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault – WomenSpirit Coalition; Yupit Naton; and the Yup'ik Women's Coalition.