

Family Violence Prevention & Services Program

FYSB's Tribal Peer-to-Peer Meeting: Building Connections to End Domestic Violence



In August, the Division of [Family Violence Prevention and Services](#) (FVPSA Program) along with the [National Indigenous Women's Resource Center](#) (NIWRC) hosted the Tribal Peer-to-Peer Meeting in Denver. The event brought together advocates representing Tribal domestic violence programs from [Regions 2, 5, 7, and 8](#) to discuss and address barriers and challenges to serving victims of domestic violence in their communities, as well as to create a feeling of connectedness between the grantees, federal staff, and NIWRC.

Gwendolyn Packard, program specialist for NIWRC, remarked, "The Tribal Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Meeting provided an outstanding opportunity for Tribal domestic violence programs, shelters and advocates in some of the FVPSA Regions to come together, connect, and learn from each other and support one another as we journey onward in addressing the violence in our communities."

The Tribal Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Meetings began in Philadelphia in 2011 in an effort to strengthen the FVPSA Program's technical assistance and training activities. The FVPSA program supports 137 Tribal domestic violence programs serving 235 federally-recognized Tribes. The majority of these Tribes are small in population and do not receive large federal grants to address domestic violence in their communities. The Tribal Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Meetings are a unique opportunity for Tribal grantees from regions around the country to come together in an intimate setting and learn from each other.

On the first day of this year's meeting, participants celebrated the life of Native advocate and domestic violence victim, Jolene, who was murdered by her abusive boyfriend in 2015. The Denver Singers paid tribute to Jolene with traditional songs and praise. Cassandra, Jolene's daughter, and Ruth, a close friend and colleague, shared memories, and Cassandra received a quilt symbolizing the collective group and her mother's embrace. Attendees also participated in a silent walk in memory and support of all victims of domestic violence. The walk ended in releasing rose petals in a local park.

The meeting's presentations and dialogues focused on issues such as safe housing options, the intersection of substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence, and supporting male victims of domestic violence. Participants discussed challenges such as mandatory reporting, shelter policies, and confidentiality in small communities. Representatives from each Tribe described the unique ways they use resources, policies, trainings, and partnerships to operate their programs.

Tribal Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Meetings are unique due to their intimate size, Tribal grantee involvement, and the similarities between participating grantee programs. They provide a nurturing and positive environment for attendees to share open-ended discussions and take part in self-care, team building, and cultural activities. Participating grantees discover the similarities in promising practices, barriers to providing services, and realization that they are not alone in the work that they do. Given the success of these Tribal Peer-to-Peer meetings, the FVPSA Program looks forward to reaching more of its grantees through meetings of this format.



[See photographs from the Tribal Peer-to-Peer Meeting.](#)