

Dr. Santiago A.Canton  
Executive Secretary  
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights  
1889 F Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women  
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights  
1889 F Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dear Dr. Canton:

We are writing to express our deep concern about the epidemic of violence against American Indian and Alaska Native (“Indian”) women in the United States. Indian women experience a per capita rate of interracial violence that greatly exceeds that of the general population. According to U.S. Department of Justice statistics, one in three Indian women will be raped in her lifetime. Four out of five will experience a violent assault. This violence not only threatens the lives of Indian women, but it has much more far-reaching impacts. Because women form the backbone of our Indian communities, this violence disrupts the stability and productivity of our families, our communities, and our entire Indian nation.

Unlike all other communities in the United States, Indian tribes cannot prosecute felony violent offenses that occur in their local communities. Federal laws have stripped tribes of much of the ability to protect their own citizens. Instead, the United States has unilaterally assumed this responsibility. However, federal authorities charged with investigating and prosecuting violent crimes in Indian communities regularly fail to do so. **[Insert example(s) from your own community here]** Studies show that violent offenders are likely to commit further violence when they are not held responsible for their crimes.

We are deeply concerned about the lack of an adequate response to this epidemic of violence in our communities by the United States government. For example, in our tribal community . . . **[Insert information about violence in your community here. Relevant information could include:**

- **Stories of violent crimes perpetrated in your community and the response to it;**
- **Information on the resources, such as shelters, advocates, funding, law enforcement, etc. available or not available to women suffering from violence;**
- **Statistics of the number of women/children seen by your program regularly;**
- **Stories about particular problems that women in your community have faced, e.g., don’t know who to report to, report to the wrong jurisdiction so nothing is done, retaliation for reporting]**

We have enclosed newspaper articles that document the stories of the horrific crimes that continue to plague our communities.

Although the United States has taken some initial steps to address some of the systemic barriers to justice for Indian women, through the enactment of federal legislation addressing Safety for Indian Women, the government has failed to fully implement key provisions of this legislation. **[What has VAWA not done for your community? Include this information here]** Further, there are numerous other issues, such as the overall lack of tribal authority in Indian country and the long-standing underfunding of law enforcement and justice resources in Indian country that have not yet been adequately addressed by the federal government.

The epidemic of violence and sexual assault against Indian women in the United States violates the rights of Indian women to life, security, and effective judicial remedies under international law. We call on the Special Rapporteur and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to conduct site visits to Indian communities throughout the United States to further investigate the epidemic of violence against Indian women and its implications on the United States' international human rights obligations. **[If tribal leaders from your community would like to issue a specific invitation for the Rapporteur to conduct a site visit in your community, feel free to do so here.]** We further request the Commission issue a comprehensive report on how the United States, in consultation and collaboration with tribes, could better protect the human rights of Native women.

Thank you in advance for your commitment to the human rights of Indian peoples, and women in particular, in the United States.

Sincerely,