

THE WALZ-FLANAGAN BUDGET



**TO MOVE MINNESOTA FORWARD**

**Investing in What Works: Addressing Trauma and Supporting Healing  
to Improve Community Safety**

The Healing House model, conceptualized by individuals with lived expertise, is an intentional space for justice-systems involved Native American women to begin their journey towards healing and housing stability. Research has shown that trauma and abuse, particularly experienced by women, have strong links to involvement in the criminal justice system. Those impacts are felt generationally. Of the system-involved women who participated in developing this proposal, 90% have children of their own who have been impacted by their mother's incarceration – collectively there are 184 children among this group of mothers.

“I needed to get away from my ex and everything that was connected to him. [I needed] help with the domestic abuse.”

“My biggest challenge has been trying to find housing. I have been denied so many times, before they even talk to me.”<sup>i</sup>

Native Americans represent only 1.1% of Minnesota's population, yet Native women make up 20% of Minnesota's prison population, the largest disparity of Native women incarcerated anywhere in the United States. Approximately 70-80% of those women are transferred from Beltrami County, the likely location for the Healing House.

The goal of the Healing House is to create a space where women can address their trauma with a specific focus on sexual and domestic violence victimization. The focus is not securing housing and a job but rather on what women need to heal, to create long-term stability, support disconnection from cyclical involvement in the criminal justice system, and thrive. Everything from the design of the space to the programming offered and the policies that govern the house, will be created with direct input from women who have been incarcerated.

The catalyst for the Healing House was derived from engagement with incarcerated women through a federal grant administered by the DOC. But, once implemented, the Healing House will not be a DOC facility. Instead, it will be a housing resource tailored to the geographic community, responsive to the needs of the people it serves, and supported by resources within housing service system through partners such as the Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency, the Department of Human Services, and community organizations.

The Healing House model will:

- Provide a safe and effective intervention for housing stabilization;
- Create a housing resource in an area of the state where experiences of homelessness and housing instability disproportionately impact indigenous women;
- Create community-based services for women under the Healthy Start Program;
- Create an opportunity to invest in the development of restorative community-based services in a region of the state where institutional racism has long impacted the surrounding tribal nations and Native American community.

## Request: Healing House Project Manager



### **Invest in Temporary Coordinator for Planning, Building Partnerships, and Implementation of Next Steps**

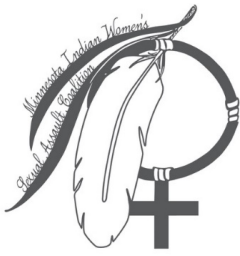
The Walz-Flanagan Budget invests \$150,000 in FY 2023, 2024, and 2025 to provide project management services in support of the Healing House model. The work of this temporary staff will be dedicated to building partnerships with the community, philanthropy, and connecting the project with resources within the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office at the Department of Public Safety. Upon project completion, the Healing House will serve justice-involved Native women and will not be directly regulated by the DOC. Instead, it will be led by the community, in partnership with the state.

“My cultural identity has absolutely helped me.

My culture is where I gain strength. I held my rock on my way over here and sang. I feel stronger because of my culture, and it has made my family stronger as well. I spend a lot of time with my elders and children now. It has kept me from being around the using population. I have had a lot of “Ah ha” moments. I realized on my way over here that I don’t remember my OID number, and that was huge. Now I am mom, auntie, grandma. I am no longer that number that defined me for so long.”

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<sup>i</sup> The Healing House is a product of conversations with incarcerated Native women through the administration of an Improving Criminal Justice Response Program (ICJR) grant from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women. The DOC, in partnership with Violence Free Minnesota, Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition, Sacred Hoop Coalition, and North West Indian Community Development Center (NWCDC), interviewed Native American women who are or were incarcerated at MCF-Shakopee to explore this population’s history of victimization and the context of their engagement with Minnesota’s criminal justice system.



March 16, 2022

Members of the House Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Committee  
*Via Electronic Delivery*

**Re: Letter of Support of H.F. 4224 / S.F. 3864**

Dear Members of the Committee:

Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN), the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC), Mending the Sacred Hoop, and the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) submit this letter to express our support for H.F. 4224. We are statewide coalitions who, together, consist of over 130 member programs working to end domestic and sexual violence. Member programs provide direct services and support to survivors of domestic and sexual violence in all 87 counties in Minnesota.

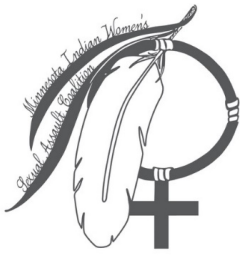
Since 2017, VFMN, MIWSAC, Sacred Hoop, and the Northwest Indian Community Development Center collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Corrections on a project designed to improve criminal justice system responses to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, focused on incarcerated Native women. Native Americans represent only 1.1% of Minnesota's population, yet Native women make up 20% of Minnesota's prison population - the largest disparity of Native women incarcerated anywhere in the United States.

Currently in Minnesota there are little-to-no programs and services dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of incarcerated women who are, or have been, the victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or stalking. For Native American women - who are overrepresented in Minnesota prisons and overrepresented as victims of abuse and violence across the United States - such programs and services may be critically important to breaking cycles of victimization and criminal justice system involvement. We believe that justice-involved Native American women in Minnesota have unique incarceration and re-entry needs related to their racial/ethnic identities and histories of victimization that can serve as a model for a culturally responsive and victim-centered approach to corrections and re-entry.

The Healing House model is an intentional space for justice-systems involved Native American women to begin their journey towards healing and housing stability - conceptualized by individuals with lived experience. The goal of the Healing House is to create a space where women can address their trauma with a specific focus on sexual and domestic violence victimization, and get the support they need to heal, create long-term stability, and reduce the likelihood of cyclical involvement in the criminal justice system, and thrive.

Once implemented, the Healing House will be a community-based housing resource supported by resources within the housing service system through partners such as the Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency and the Department of Human Services. The Healing House model will:

- Provide a safe and effective intervention for housing stabilization;
- Create a housing resource in an area of the state where experiences of homelessness and housing instability disproportionately impact Indigenous women;



- Create community-based services for women under the Healthy Start Program;
- Create an opportunity to invest in the development of restorative community-based services in a region of the state - Beltrami County - where institutional racism has long impacted the surrounding tribal nations and Native American community.

Due to the high rates of domestic and sexual violence experienced by Native American women, there is a need for comprehensive culturally specific support and services that involve community-based advocates and providers with expertise in domestic violence/sexual assault (DV/SA) victimization. H.F. 4224 would provide funding for 3 years to provide project management services in support of the Healing House model, and allow dedicated staff to develop partnerships with the community, with philanthropy, and with resources within the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office at the Department of Public Safety.

This is an opportunity to support the development of innovative housing through community-based organizations for Native women returning to community after incarceration, and allow women to heal from the trauma of domestic and sexual violence in a safe and supportive environment. We urge you to vote in support of H.F. 4224.

Sincerely,

Guadalupe Lopez  
Executive Director  
Violence Free Minnesota

Nicole Matthews  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition

Katy Eagle  
Executive Director  
Mending the Sacred Hoop Coalition

Artika Roller  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault