



Peaceful Means:

What school personnel need to know

WHAT IS PEACEFUL MEANS?

Peaceful Means, translated as Wahwala Iyohlogya in Lakota, is an exciting movement

to end sexual violence in Indian country, starting with the Pine Ridge Reservation. With Tribal approval, our team aims to teach all Indigenous K–12 youth living on and near Pine Ridge an empowerment-based, culturally grounded, sexual violence prevention program known as **IMpower**. Participants will take short surveys to assess the impact of this work.



IMpower United

How can you help?

- Be knowledgeable about the project and prepared to answer questions from students and caregivers. (See FAQs below.)
- Share your positive and passionate thoughts about the project.
- Encourage youth to be active participants in the program and to answer surveys honestly.
- Communicate openly with our team and provide feedback.
- Stay in touch and follow Peaceful Means on social media.
- Be ready to respond in helpful and supportive ways to students' disclosures of abuse.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the project about?

- Peaceful Means focuses on teaching Indigenous K–12 youth skills to prevent sexual violence — helping them to live healthy and happy lives.
- Students gain skills to prevent sexual abuse now and for future generations.
- Students will complete the 12-hour IMpower program over six weeks and take surveys before and after the program to see how it is working.

What is IMpower?

- IMpower is a school-based program for K–12 youth developed to prevent sexual violence and promote positive youth development.
- IMpower classes will be led by Indigenous teachers and vary based on age and gender.
 - » K–5 classes are mixed gender; middle and high school classes are taught separately for boys and girls.
- IMpower aims to increase students' feelings of self-worth, empowerment and hope.



- Through interactive role-playing and skills practice, students are empowered with practical tools they can use for the rest of their lives.
 - » Middle and high school girls learn how to identify risk and gain mental, verbal and physical skills to stay safe.
 - » Middle and high school boys learn about healthy masculinity, bystander intervention and respecting boundaries.

How Is IMpower making a difference?

- IMpower has been taught in diverse global communities, including an Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where sexual assault rates dropped by 80% as a result. Sexual violence goes down dramatically no matter where IMpower is taught.

Why are surveys important?

- Survey research is needed to ensure the IMpower program is effective.
- Surveys provide data to help researchers create the best version the prevention programming based on student voices and give schools information to support students.
- Survey results support decision-making by other Indigenous communities considering whether to participate in IMpower and may help secure funding to sustain IMpower on Pine Ridge.

Please keep in mind:

- » All Peaceful Means surveys are **ANONYMOUS** and **CONFIDENTIAL**.
- » Only students in grades 3–12 will complete age-appropriate surveys that have been used in research across the U.S., including with Indigenous youth.
- » Youth will only take surveys with written guardian permission.
- » Surveys will be available to school personnel and caregivers to review on our website before they are offered to students.
- » Surveys are short and optional; youth may skip questions they do not want to answer.
- » Survey questions have been developed in collaboration with advisory board members.
- » Surveys are not upsetting for most youth. Youth who report being upset during or after taking surveys will be connected to the appropriate school and community resources.

- » Surveys do not cause youth to engage in risky behaviors.
- » The Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) owns the data.

Why should school personnel invest their time in this project?

- This is an opportunity to join the movement to end sexual violence on Pine Ridge and make a difference in the lives of children and teens.
- Participation will strengthen your ability to support youth if/when they disclose abuse to you.
 - » Be sure to follow mandated reporting policies and laws. See more below on responding to disclosures.

Who is involved?

- Partners include the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and IMpower United, and a number of Tribal nations, Indigenous leaders and Indigenous-led organizations, including many on Pine Ridge.
- More than 30 locally hired Lakota relatives are working on the project and over 50 active members serve on youth, adult and elder advisory boards.
- Several community supporters and partnering organizations are also engaged in this work.

Why Pine Ridge?

- Sexual violence is a crisis in Indian Country. Pine Ridge is no exception.
- The request to bring IMpower to Pine Ridge came from elders and OST tribal leaders who were familiar with the results from a recent pilot evaluation of the program on a reservation in South Dakota that found IMpower reduced rates of sexual violence by 80%.
- IMpower will combat the vast amount of sexual violence against children on Pine Ridge and support Pine Ridge as a leader for other tribal communities in ending sexual violence among Indigenous relatives.

How are we helping other tribal communities?

- Lakota instructors will go to other tribal communities after we are set up on Pine Ridge and work with community members to adapt, implement and evaluate IMpower.
- We want all Indigenous youth to have sexual violence prevention training via IMpower by 2050.

YOUTH DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

What resources are in place to manage youth disclosures of abuse?

- Peaceful Means has developed resource sheets with information about local and national organizations that can help.
- All instructors are mandatory reporters and will work closely with school personnel to assist youth who may disclose.
- We also work with other organizations who assist survivors both on and off the reservation.
- Survivors in Recovery Anonymous (SIRA) will be used to provide weekly support groups/talking circles for survivors.

How should school personnel respond when youth share experiences of abuse?

Follow your school/districts mandated reporting protocols. If you are not sure what these are, please immediately ask the school principal.

Important actions:

- First, thank the child for having the courage to tell you. Make sure the child knows that disclosing to you was the right thing to do.
 - » For example, you might say: “Thank you for telling me; telling me took a lot of courage; we will get you some help to deal with this; what happened is not your fault; you deserve to be taken care of and protected.”
- Show the child with your body language that you are listening and that you care.
 - » For example, you might nod your head and say “mmm-hmm” as you listen. Also, sit or kneel to the child’s level rather than stand over them.

- When using reflective listening — rephrasing and stating back to the child what you hear them saying — be sure to use the same words they are using.
 - » For example, if they use the phrase “hurt me,” use that phrase rather than other words (e.g., abuse, rape).
- After the child has shared, let them know you need to tell people whose job it is to keep other people safe what they have told you. Explain this is a rule/law, but also that you are doing this because you care about them and want them to be safe. If the child is confused or upset by this, validate how they feel and remind them that you are going to take a few steps to keep them safe. You may also tell the child that you are a mandated reporter.
 - » For example, you might say: “Thank you for telling me. I’m going to get in touch with someone whose job it is to keep kids safe.”

Do NOT do the following:

- Use shocked or disbelieving body language when a child discloses to you.
- Try to talk the child out of what he/she/they is telling you.
- Express doubts to the child.
- Hover over the child when he/she/they is disclosing. Remember you are in a position of power and may intimidate the child.
- Suggest or guess the child might have been abused. Use the words they use as you reflect on what they have told you.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT US:



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