

# Safety for Our Sisters: Ending Violence Against Native Women



March 21 • 2:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN  
RASMUSON THEATER • WASHINGTON, DC

**M**arking **Women's History Month**, this symposium draws attention to the pervasive issue of violence against Native women, who suffer disproportionately high levels of rape, domestic violence, and attacks. By shining a broad light on a grim and painful issue, *Safety for Our Sisters* aims to educate all about the social and legal issues involved as well as how to end this epidemic of violence. Representative Deb Haaland (Laguna Pueblo) of New Mexico, one of the first Native women elected to the U.S. Congress, has stated, "Right now, the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women across this country is great. We need to find solutions."

Live webcast: [AmericanIndian.si.edu/multimedia/webcasts](http://AmericanIndian.si.edu/multimedia/webcasts)



Loxie Loring helps lead a march to remember her daughter, Ashley Loring, who vanished from Montana's Blackfeet Reservation in June 2017.  
NATE HEGY/MOUNTAIN WEST NEWS BUREAU



Native women rallied at the U.S. Supreme Court on December 7, 2015, to call attention to high rates of victimization in Indian Country.  
PHOTO BY INDIANZ.COM

## PROGRAM

- 2:00 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks**  
Sari Horwitz, *The Washington Post*  
The Honorable Deb Haaland,  
Member of Congress (video welcome)
- 2:15 p.m. Historical Resilience: The Story of Violence Against Native Women**  
Sarah Deer, University of Kansas
- 2:45 p.m. Sovereignty: Of Our Nations, in the Law, and Over Our Bodies**  
Mary Kathryn Nagle, Pipestem Law, P.C.
- 3:15 p.m. Dancing Myself Home**  
Jaime Black, Artist
- 3:45 p.m. Break**
- 4:00 p.m. More than Seven Times for the Next Seven Generations**  
Cherrah Giles, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center
- 4:30 p.m. Save Our Sisters, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**  
Marita Growing Thunder, Student,  
University of Montana
- 5:00 p.m. Discussion with Our Speakers**  
Moderator: Sari Horwitz,  
*The Washington Post*
- 5:30 p.m. Symposium Concludes**



## SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

**Jaime Black**, a Métis multidisciplinary artist based in Winnipeg, Canada, is the creator of The REDress Project, which focuses on the issue of missing or murdered Indigenous women. The powerful art installation piece, on view at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, through March 31, serves as a visual reminder of the staggering number of women who are no longer with us, evoking a presence through the marking of absence. In her artwork, Black attempts to create a dialogue around social and political events and issues, through provocation or creating space for reflection. She is particularly interested in feminism and Indigenous social justice, and the possibilities for articulating linkages between and around these movements.

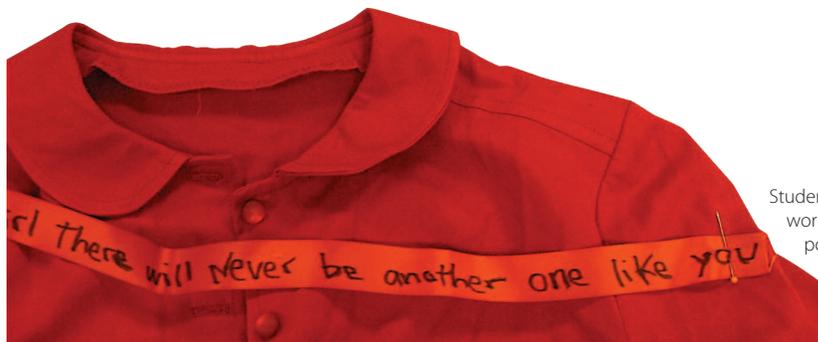
**Sarah Deer**, a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, is a lawyer, scholar, and author. Deer is a professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Kansas. She is also the chief justice for the Prairie Island Indian Community Court of Appeals. She has worked to end violence against women for more than 25 years and was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2014. Deer has documented the historical and ideological underpinnings of the failure to adequately protect victims of physical and sexual abuse in Indian Country and has developed policies and legislation that empower tribal nations to protect Native women from this pervasive abuse. Her latest book is *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (2015).

**Cherrah Giles**, a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and of Cherokee descent, is board chairwoman of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, an organization to address domestic violence and enhance safety of American Indian women and children. A trained social worker, Giles's professional experience has ranged from child welfare investigator, to tribal college instructor, to director of operations for a Native-woman owned civil engineering firm. She served over ten years as a legislator on the Muscogee (Creek) National Council. Giles currently works at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation in Florida. Giles sees her responsibilities to Indigenous people and her community as an extension of her role as a mother and career woman.

**Marita Growing Thunder**, an enrolled member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of eastern Montana, is an activist, leader, and clothing designer. Now a sophomore at the University of Montana–Missoula studying political science and psychology with a minor in visual art, she was raised on the Flathead Indian Reservation by her mother Shannon Ahhaitty. In high school, Growing Thunder designed, sewed, and wore a traditional dress every school day to honor a missing or murdered Indigenous woman or girl. Growing Thunder's work with the Save Our Sisters, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women awareness project continues, and she currently hosts an annual 80-mile walk across the Flathead Indian Reservation during March to advocate for Native women.

**Sari Horwitz** (symposium moderator) is a three-time Pulitzer prize-winning *Washington Post* reporter and author of the *Post*'s award-winning 2014 series "Justice in Indian Country." Horwitz traveled to an Indian reservation in Minnesota to interview a Native American woman who had been sexually assaulted, as had her mother and daughter. In each case, the assailants, who were not Native American, were not prosecuted due to loopholes in the laws on jurisdiction of criminal prosecution on Indian reservations. Horwitz set off on a year-long investigation across the country, into remote villages and tribal lands where she uncovered how the legal system in Indian country fails some of America's most vulnerable citizens—and what is being done to rectify an ongoing tragedy.

**Mary Kathryn Nagle** (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma) is a playwright and a partner at Pipestem Law, a firm specializing in federal Indian law and appellate litigation. She studied theater at Georgetown University, and went on to study law at Tulane Law School, where she graduated *summa cum laude*. Nagle has drafted and filed numerous briefs in the United States Supreme Court articulating the connection between preserving tribal sovereignty and ensuring safety for Native women and children. As a playwright, she has written about issues such as tribal sovereignty, the environment, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Two of Nagle's plays have recently had world premieres at major American regional theaters: *Sovereignty* at the Arena Stage in Washington, DC, and *Manahatta* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.



Students attending a high school art workshop in Winnipeg, Canada, wrote this poignant message on a ribbon to missing and murdered Indigenous women.

PHOTO BY JAIME BLACK

The symposium received support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.