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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Native American Community Group Releases Illustrated ABC Handbook Detailing Steps for Young Native Women to Take When Raped**

*A Community Generated Response to a Systemic Sexual Assault Problem Facing Native Women*

Lake Andes SD, February 22, 2016 – Today, The Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center (NAWHERC) published What To Do When You Are Raped, An ABC Handbook For Native Girls. This book is a resource aimed at answering the questions women face following a sexual assault, from thinking through buying emergency contraception, to getting tested for STDS, to who to turn to for support.

Native Americans are raped at a rate nearly double that any other race annually – 34.1 percent. More than 1 in 3 Native American women will be raped in their lifetime, and three-fourths have experienced some type of sexual assault in their lives. In an effort to help communities better respond, NAWHERC created this illustrated handbook with the assistance of Lucy Bonner, a graduate student at the design research center PETLab at Parsons School of Design, and funded by the Ms. Foundation for Women.

Charon Asetoyer (Comanche), CEO of NAWHERC explained “Due to complicated issues related to jurisdiction most often there is not an arrest made of the perpetrator. Therefore, Native American women are denied protection and due process of the law. On federal lands it is the responsibility of the federal government to handle these crimes. We can no longer wait for the government to decide if and when they are going to live up to their responsibility. As a community response, one of the things we can do is assist our relatives who have been harmed and to help them with the healing process. It is important for a person that has been sexually assaulted to know that they are not alone and that there is always somewhere to turn to for help. The sooner you tell someone what has happened to you the sooner you will begin to realize that you are not alone and that you have support in dealing with the assault.”

The NAWHERC team will provide technical support and training on how to use this book to begin conversations about rape in communities across Indian Country. NAWHERC plans to disseminate this book to women's shelters, Native community centers, schools, and youth groups in an effort to share information in both urban and reservation based communities.

Upon reading the handbook Bonnie Clairmont, Victim Advocacy Program Specialist at the Tribal Law and Policy Center, said “[This book] is a powerful tool designed to assist young Native girls who've been raped, who may be isolated, confused about their options and who may be struggling to make good choices about their health and wellbeing. This tool is about communities taking back their power to inform, empower and support young Native women and girls who are often caught up in the distressing aftermath of experiencing one of the most horrific crimes that anyone can experience. In contemporary

