

Native women make their own decisions

Written by By Krystal Curley Executive Director Indigenous Lifeways Chichiltah, New Mexico
Friday, 06 November 2020 05:53



The voices and experiences of Native communities have been missing from federal, state and local conversations about reproductive health. That has never been more true than on Monday {Oct. 26} when another conservative anti-abortion justice was confirmed to the Supreme Court--even though ground-breaking research shows that Native Americans, like the majority of all Americans, support reproductive freedom.

Native Americans believe in the reproductive justice values of self-determination and body sovereignty, respect in healthcare decision making, and reproductive healthcare access for all people. We deserve a Supreme Court that's not in conflict with our values.

According to the recently released "*Road to Reproductive Justice: Indigenous Communities*," [research conducted by Bold Futures, Latino Decisions, and Forward Together with rural New Mexican communities], 89 percent of Native Americans agree that women and families deserve to make their own healthcare decisions without government interference.

Seventy-two percent say that they can hold their own moral views about abortion and still trust a woman and her family to make this decision for themselves.

But I didn't need research to know our communities' values. As a Navajo woman and the mother of three young daughters, I have always known that our families care for and respect one another—even when those outside our communities do not.

Myths about Native views on abortion and reproductive health care have been used by some politicians as arguments against access to abortion care. People outside our communities

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impose their disrespectful views on us. Enough is enough. While colonization, genocide and under-funded health care have allowed for forced contraception and forced sterilization in Native communities, families have not wavered from their belief in individual decision making.

We know the true power over our lives belongs to us.

Further, with Roe v. Wade, the legal case that nearly 50 years ago made safe abortion care legal in the United States, now expected to face dire challenges and potentially be reversed by the Supreme Court, Native American voices must be heard. We cannot let reproductive health care become illegal on our lands.

Indigenous people, other people of color and people struggling financially will bear the brunt of abortion restrictions. But our voices go unheard in the national conversation on abortion. New Mexico leaders and federal leaders need to know that Native people support the rights of people to make their own health care decisions—without government interference.

Our community faces health challenges that stem from the federal government's not listening to us and not keeping its promises. Our people know too well what happens when the federal government interferes in health care decisions.

We must use our voices—and the data of this groundbreaking new report—to protect our families. We are the ones—not politicians in Santa Fe or Washington, D.C.— who know what is best for our families. We insist on freedom and sovereignty both for our communities and our bodies.

Our Indigenous communities have been used as guinea pigs. We can flip that dynamic of being tested on without our knowledge or consent, and give decision-making power about reproductive choices back to our women and our communities where it belongs.

My grandma always said, 'Us women make the decisions for our families.'

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