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**Avon Foundation for Women  
Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series  
2015 Proposal**

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*“For a long time, I was ashamed to even admit to myself what my boyfriend had done to me. Through storytelling, I began to put together the pieces and find strength in sharing with others. I now tell my story publicly as a way to generate awareness and support for other victims and their families. The power of my voice was within me all along; but, D2V provided a safe space to learn how to use it.”*

-Nattie D., D2V Storytelling for Survivors Series Alumni & Survivor Co-Facilitator-

### Abstract

On behalf of domestic violence survivors across the country, the Domestic Violence Victors Society (D2V) respectfully requests your consideration of a \$100,000 grant to establish the Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series. In an effort to generate awareness of domestic violence and to increase access to alternative and community-centric forms of victim recovery, D2V will collaborate with local stakeholders on the Meskwaki Reservation in Tama, Iowa to develop and implement a storytelling-based program for recovery services and bystander training. The two-year program will focus on bridging the domestic violence response gap between mainstream communities and tribally controlled lands, including implementation of therapeutic storytelling services for survivors and their families, administration of victim sensitivity training for bystanders, and dissemination of best adaptive practices. A grant from the Avon Foundation for Women will offer rural American Indians the resources necessary to create new community narratives around domestic violence, helping to break the current culture of silence that inhibits victims from speaking up and seeking services.

### Organization Background

The Domestic Violence Victors Society was founded in July 2010 by a collective of domestic violence survivors, business leaders, community health professionals, and social activists concerned about the culture of denial that currently permeates our society’s awareness of and response to domestic violence. The use of “victors” in reference to survivors of domestic violence was chosen by the founders of D2V as a creative play on the standard terminology of “victims” and is reflective of the personal and collective power that can be realized through the recovery and healing process. An assessment of the domestic violence recovery services field showed a pronounced disparity in the response for victims and families in rural areas. It was also found that domestic violence was compounded through various socioeconomic circumstances prevalent in rural populations. D2V’s mission is to provide alternative and community-centric recovery services and bystander training for rural communities as a means of bridging the response gap and generating a societal shift toward increased awareness of domestic violence and support for victims and their families.

In September 2011, D2V launched the society’s initial programming under a fiscal sponsorship from The Drake Foundation in Madrid, Iowa, a leading organization in the field of rural assistance. Under this sponsorship, D2V partnered with rural communities across Iowa to develop, implement, and evaluate alternative and community-centric domestic violence

programming for survivors and their families. D2V's core program, the Storytellers for Survivors Series, works with victims and their families to utilize storytelling as a therapy for healing and a method for generating awareness. Survivors and their families participate in a community-led storytelling series that promotes healing through an enhanced awareness of personal narrative and the connection of shared story. Therapists facilitate sessions alongside local survivors who have completed a specialized training. Storytelling is accomplished in a way that is reflective of the community's customs, traditions, and heritage, in addition to remaining cognizant of the unique social structure of tight-knit and mostly conservative rural communities. A second program track was recently added that offers victim sensitivity training to community bystanders of domestic violence as an accompaniment to the Storytelling for Survivors Series. Initial results demonstrate that bystander training helps to enhance the safety and power of the storytelling forums by working to create new and community-wide narratives regarding domestic violence.

Since 2010, more than 2,000 survivors, family members, and bystanders have participated in D2V's programming. D2V recently received full nonprofit status and is celebrating this achievement by establishing new partnerships with tribal communities in our states of service. The Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series will serve as a pilot program for bridging the gap in services between mainstream U.S. society and Indian Country. In addition to D2V's dedication to providing critical recovery services and training for rural communities in the field of domestic violence, an equally strong commitment is maintained to donor accountability and transparency. D2V is a fiscally responsible organization and meets all qualifications as a member of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, in addition to holding a four-star rating on Charity Navigator. As a result of support from donors like the Avon Foundation for Women, D2V is able to provide critical and life-changing programming, while helping to rewrite the narrative of domestic violence in the United States.

### **Statement of Need**

In spite of increased attention surrounding domestic violence due to recent high profile events, survivors and their families still face a culture of denial in the United States that inhibits healing and recovery while perpetuating the cycle of violence for future generations. Implicit acceptance of domestic violence and an unwillingness to get involved are deeply engrained characteristics of our society. Nearly one in four women and one in seven men will experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime; yet, victims still face difficulties accessing basic recovery services and pursuing justice through the legal system. Only one quarter of all domestic violence incidents are reported to authorities, and victims who do file charges often face undue scrutiny, personal and professional ramifications, and ostracizing from their family, friends, and general community. This silence allows nearly 5,000,000 women per year in the United States alone to be victimized by domestic violence. Add to this total the countless men who are violently assaulted each year along with an additional 10,000,000 children exposed to the violence, and it becomes obvious that a public health epidemic is silently killing our people and trapping still more in an ongoing web of nightmares.

This culture of silence is even more pronounced in rural areas and, in particular, on American Indian reservations. Rural areas and reservations both face a dearth of first responders, service

providers, and advocates due to social and physical isolation coupled with socioeconomic challenges such as high poverty, lack of health insurance, little education, less political autonomy, and increased rates of alcoholism and substance abuse. Survivors and their families are lucky to locate and access even the most basic of services, let alone alternative forms of therapy and training such as those offered by D2V. The largest gap in rural domestic violence services is faced by those who are located on Indian reservations across the country. At best measure, American Indian women are assaulted at rates exceeding 50 percent of the remaining U.S. population. (It is difficult to even offer a complete picture of domestic violence in Indian Country, as no agency has been charged with collecting this data.) Further complicating this reality is the fact that American Indians are most often victimized by members of a race other than their own, and prosecution of non-tribal members for crimes committed on reservation land is just beginning to be taken seriously by government officials. Given the multiple socioeconomic risk factors that are often present in American Indian communities, the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder is also substantially higher than in the general population.

In response to these disparities, D2V seeks to expand our programming by partnering with reservation stakeholders in our service area states to implement culturally relevant versions of the Storytelling for Survivors Series. Storytelling is becoming increasingly popular as a therapy for trauma. When survivors are allowed the space and support to give voice to their stories, these experiences become shared rather than theirs to hold alone. Storytelling is a traditional form of communication in many Native cultures and has been used as a methodology by tribes across the country to encourage economic, social, and cultural revitalization. In partnership with the Meskwaki Nation in Iowa, the Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series will work to bridge the gap in response services and training for rural reservation communities. In line with D2V’s engagement philosophy, program development and implementation will be guided by members of the local community with advocacy and grant management assistance provided by D2V. Together with the Avon Foundation for Women, D2V seeks to change the narrative of domestic violence in the United States one community at a time.

**Budget and Budget Description**

**The Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series**

<b>Budget Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Storytelling Program Sessions</b> <b>10 sessions per year x 2 years</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>
Meeting Space Rental ( <i>Honorarium to tribe for meeting space</i> )	\$1,000
Cultural Entertainment & Catering ( <i>2 events x \$1,250 per event x 2 years</i> )	\$5,000
Curriculum Planning & Development ( <i>Consultant Fee</i> )	\$10,000
Session Materials ( <i>\$1,000 per year x 2 years</i> )	\$2,000
Therapy Services ( <i>\$7,500 retainer for 10 yearly sessions x 2 Years x 2 therapists</i> )	\$30,000
Client Child Care Providers ( <i>10 sessions per year x \$50 per session x 2 years</i> )	\$1,000
Survivor Co-Facilitators Honorarium ( <i>2 Co-Facilitators x \$250 per year x 2 years</i> )	\$1,000

<b>Victim Sensitivity Training 2 trainings per year x 2 years</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>
Meeting Space Rental ( <i>Honorarium to tribe for meeting space</i> )	\$1,000
Cultural Entertainment & Catering ( <i>2 events x \$500 per event x 2 years</i> )	\$2,000
Curriculum Planning & Development ( <i>Consultant Fee</i> )	\$5,000
Session Materials ( <i>\$500 per year x 2 years</i> )	\$1,000
Therapy Services ( <i>2 trainings x \$3,500 per training x 2 years</i> )	\$14,000
Client Child Care Providers ( <i>2 trainings x \$500 per training x 2 years</i> )	\$2,000
<b>Evaluation &amp; Assessment Consultant Fee</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>
<b>Administrative Fees (10%) \$5,000 per year x 2 years</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>GRANT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>

If approved for multi-year funding from the Avon Foundation for Women, a total of \$90,000 will be dedicated to storytelling-based domestic violence survivor recovery services and bystander victim sensitivity training for American Indians on rural reservations. This grant will directly benefit the Meskwaki Nation in Tama, Iowa and will be administered in collaboration with tribal community members and local service providers. Of the total grant, \$50,000 will fund ten community-led storytelling sessions per year, \$25,000 will fund four victim sensitivity trainings for community bystanders, and \$15,000 will fund evaluation and dissemination of best practices. The remaining \$10,000 will be used to cover expenses inherent in administering the Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series, including but not limited to D2V staff time, travel, postage, telephone, and more. By providing funding for administrative fees, the Avon Foundation for Women will help ensure that D2V is able to continue offering efficient and effective services to survivors of domestic violence and their families.

**Goals & Objectives**

The objectives for the Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series will consist of measurable indicators linked to the three overarching goals identified below:

**Goal #1:** Develop and deliver a series of culturally relevant storytelling therapy sessions designed to offer a cathartic environment and safe space for American Indian survivors of domestic violence and their families to heal and break the silence regarding the truth of their experiences.

**Objective A:** Within 24 months, in partnership with the Meskwaki Nation and local domestic violence service providers, create and offer twenty storytelling therapy sessions for a cohort of American Indian survivors of domestic violence and their families that will foster the use of storytelling as an alternative therapy for healing and an advocacy tool for generating increased awareness.

**Goal #2:** Host community-wide training sessions for bystanders of domestic violence that focus on developing victim sensitivity knowledge and awareness through storytelling-based

methodologies in order to build a public support network for domestic violence survivors and their families.

**Objective B:** Within 24 months, in partnership with the Meskwaki Nation and local domestic violence service providers, create and offer four victim sensitivity trainings for bystanders of domestic violence that will increase the number of community members with victim sensitivity certifications and develop a public support network for survivors of domestic violence and their families to give voice to their stories.

**Goal #3:** Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of storytelling-based recovery and bystander training services in reservation communities as a means of bridging the response gap for domestic violence survivors and their families in mainstream society and Indian Country.

**Objective C:** Prior to the end of the grant, in partnership with the Meskwaki Nation, program participants, and an evaluation consultant, complete an assessment of the Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series and disseminate any best practices through publication of a research report that will encourage adoption of services in rural areas across Indian Country.

### Evaluation and Reporting

D2V will evaluate the success of the Avon Foundation Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series based on the program goals and objectives outlined above. D2V will work with community members and consultants to implement a cohort tracking system and evaluation framework that will deliver meaningful metrics designed to increase access to domestic violence recovery services and promote general awareness of the public health epidemic that is sweeping our country and devastating rural and reservation communities. Proposed evaluation measures include the percentage of survivors and family members who actively utilize storytelling as a recovery therapy, number of community members with victim sensitivity training, and increased general awareness and support of domestic violence survivors. D2V will provide a progress report regarding the Avon Foundation for Women Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series at the end of the grant's first year, as well as a final report following completion of the two-year program.

### Conclusion

Storytelling helps us to understand our experiences and create new meaning in our own lives and for those around us. By incorporating storytelling into domestic violence recovery services and bystander training, the Domestic Violence Victors Society offers survivors and their families the ability to help rewrite public narratives and break the culture of silence that permeates this deadly public health epidemic. The Avon Foundation for Women will make its own mark on this new narrative by establishing the Cultural Storytelling for Survivors Series to develop and implement culturally relevant storytelling-based recovery services and bystander training for rural American Indians on the Meskwaki Reservation in Tama, Iowa. This groundbreaking collaboration between D2V and the Meskwaki Nation will help bridge the domestic violence response gap between mainstream society and Indian Country while generating new and empowering stories that work to give voice to the truth of domestic violence in the United States rather than silencing it.