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Institutional Analysis Technical Assistance

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Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit: *Making a Commitment to Survivors*

Guests: Susan Marks & Elizabeth Montoya, Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence; Katie Olvera, PhD, Western Washington University

Hosts: Bree Adams Bill and Denise Eng, Praxis Senior Advisors

March 26, 2019

Please stand by for realtime captions. Thank you for joining. We are at the top of the hour and ready to get started.

>> Hello everybody and good afternoon and welcome to this webinar presented by Praxis International in partnership with the Office on Violence Against Women. My name is Bree Adamsville. I am a senior advisor and I'm joined today by my colleague Denise, also a senior advisor who will join our guests during our webinar. But before we dive into our topic, I would like to first introduce another one of my coworkers who will help us with the technical aspects of today's webinar.

>> I am just going to go over some of the technical details for the webinar. The audio for this webinar should come from your computer speakers. However, if you're having issues with that you can call in using the phone number on the slide followed by the room code. This webinar is also being closed-captioned. The closed captioning box is right below your screen at the bottom, and please know these captions are live, so there may be some errors. You can adjust the display settings of each box in the closed captioning by clicking on the top right corner of the box and adjusting the display settings they are. We also have the Q&A pod in the middle of your screen. If you have any questions or comments, go ahead and leave them

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there. And we will respond accordingly. And the download pod, the materials box, you can download the PowerPoint slides. There is a large print version and regular size version. If there are any connectivity issues, you can troubleshoot by clicking on the top right-hand corner of the help button, and it will take you through some steps on testing your connection and downloading the right add-ons for Adobe Connect. That is about it for me.

>> Again, thank you all for joining today on this exciting webinar. For all you listeners here, it is going to be a great one. What we are doing is showcasing the sexual assault national demonstration audit, otherwise referred to as essay NDA. Between Praxis International and Bellingham Whatcom County Washington to apply accountability audit process and utilize tools to uncover how the criminal legal system is structured to produce negative outcomes for survivors of sexual assault. It's important for everyone to know that the practice safety and accountability audit is a tool originally intended for and historically has been used by interdisciplinary groups and community-based advocacy organizations to further common goals of enhancing safety ensuring accountability when intervening in domestic violence or battering cases. And now, in recent years, the safety and accountability audit process is increasingly being used to uncover gaps and how systems responded to sexual assault. We are making a concerted effort to ensure that within our institutional analysis toolkits we have an explicit focus on well-being and justice for survivors, and also making it clear to folks that this institutional analysis methodology you are going to hear about today may really be applied to any institution, not just the criminal legal system. Though of course that is our focus today. The SANDA findings come during a time of national awakening to the injustices of survivors who have experienced sexual violence, and the lack of accountability for offenders, and justice for survivors highlighted through the #MeToo movement, and many national highlights over the past year. And quite frankly without recognition of the need for change to institutional responses to sexual violence, the majority of survivors will continue to be silenced. Today we are fortunate to hear from three audit team members about their experiences applying institutional analysis methodology to examine responses to

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sexual assault and Bellingham Whatcom County Washington state. More importantly, however, is for us to learn from them, these pioneer women about how they not only ensured a survivor center process, but did so in a way that truly honors survivors of sexual assault to share their stories with them and inform the entire audit process. Our guests today are Susan Marx, director of the Bellingham walking County commission on sexual and domestic violence, and who conceived of the idea for doing the sexual assault audit. While she did actually coordinate the audit, she was the coordinator supervisor and a critical team member for the vision and leadership another guest is Elizabeth Montoya. She works with Susan as a project manager for the Bellingham Whatcom County commission as well, and she picked up the work for the original audit coordinator who started with, and who left shortly after the data was collected. We also welcome Elizabeth. Finally, we have Katie Olvera. She is a member of the Bellingham Whatcom County commission and is a licensed psychologist in private practice and an adjunct instructor for Western Washington University. So again, I want to say welcome to the three of you. We're grateful to have you here for being our guest today, and before we hear from you, about the specifics of the audit process and the findings, I'm going to turn to Denise, who will talk to me about, talked was about giving a practice overview if you well. Denise, as a member the national technical systems team, you are very involved with the audit, will you please provide a description about what the audit process is generally speaking so listeners have a general idea about what we will be talking about today?

>> Yes. Thanks Bree and thanks again our partners in Bellingham walking County for joining us today for this important webinar. If you're familiar with practice, you know we work with institutions to help examine to what extent and in what ways their response meets the identified needs of those who are most affected by institutional response. When a victim first comes into contact with an institution within our society like the criminal legal system, after an episode of violence, he or she is thrust into one or more systems that are enormously complex and not necessarily positioned to meet those needs. So in our case, we're talking about survivors of sexual assault, and so you can see on the PowerPoint in front of you a map with a

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number of steps and presumably potentially dozens of workers or practitioners who are going to interact with that victim. So that system or the way that institution operates can be confusing. It can be stressful. It can be very difficult for that survivor to navigate, especially when they have just experienced a terrible event like a sexual assault. So we want institution to ask themselves questions like, are we intervening in ways that have unintended harmful impacts? We intend to do well, but are we harming people without meaning to? Are we sending messages of help and accountability to -- help to victims and accountabilities to those who perpetrate harmful acts. Is every door an open door to someone seeking safety and justice. Does everyone who is intervening in these cases providing a pathway for that survivor to access help. Are we all on the same page and working together. Do we have the same set of assumptions and goals and understandings about how this works and what kind of intervention is effective. Who seeks help her to get drawn into these community systems for help? And who does not want to do that? Who avoids intervention and why? And finally, do actions actually make it better for survivors and victims or does it make it worse without intending to? These are some of the questions we always are asking institutions to address for themselves. Again, if you're familiar with practice institutional analysis, you may know about these various strategies that we develop here at practice. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this because we have a wealth of information already on our website that you can look at, but this chart shows various approaches the practice is taken to institutional reform. We are shifting our gaze in particular to sexual assaults in this case, in this webinar, which is not specifically addressed by these other methods. As Bree mentioned early, the practice safety and accountability audit was developed initially to look at the criminal legal system response to cases of domestic violence, and there have been probably 100 or so of those projects we know of that been done around the country. Practice assessment is an abbreviated form of that audit where we bring a specific gaze to certain points of the criminal legal system that are intervening in domestic violence cases like number one patrol investigation. You see the list here on the chart, so I won't belabor it. The blueprint for safety has resulted from the previous

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work in safety and accountability audits in the development of practice assessment and create a comprehensive response of the criminal legal system to cases of domestic violence. And then finally, there these distinctive applications that have been used in a number of different areas. We have done some work in the area of looking at racial disparity and child welfare. We have looked at the response to some domestic violence organizations, looked at their own response, supervise visitation agencies look at their response. And increasingly, communities are applying this analysis to sexual assault. This chart may be again familiar to those of you who are familiar with the work of praxis. If you're not familiar, I would certainly encourage you to go I'll read site. We have a library webinars, reports from communities that have done this were, manuals and toolkits I can help you. So I will not describe this in detail. Suffice it to say, and institutional analysis is a systematic interagency method to analyze how specific features are or are not incorporated into the daily work routines of those intervening in these cases. We are not looking at the responses of individuals, individual workers. We're not evaluating work performance. We're looking at how the work is structured, and by that, I'm referring to the eight or nine puzzle pieces you see around this graphic. We think of those as the methods that organize workers, and we are emphasizing by using that structure that the problems are not created by individual problematic workers, but rather by the structure that has been given, provided to workers that you see in the chart here. Again, if you want more information about this you can check our website or email us. This chart includes a list of activities that again will be familiar to those of you who are familiar with practice institutional analysis. It is a summary of the key activities that communities get involved with when they are doing this kind of analysis. All of these contribute to our understanding of how the work is organized. We begin by mapping out the details of how the institution or agency works. We figure out the steps, the substeps, how workers link up to each other, how they transfer information, where and how advocacy is incorporated into the work routines of those intervening. We talk with workers about their work with people, people like to talk about their work and so we want to interview people and learn as much as we can about their daily work routines. We really want

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to approach this as though we really are asking that person to teach us about the details of their job. We talk with survivors of violence to and about how they experienced the system intervention. And then we watched people at work. We often will go to a 911 call center, go on a police ride along, or go to court to do some observation in court. And then we review a lot of documents. We look at case files, reports, various texts. We get all of these in Bellingham walking County, and you will hear more about the details from those folks when they talk here. And of course, the whole point of this process is to identify problematic practices and understand how they occur. We are seeking to learn what victims need from the institutional response and how that compares with what the institution actually does. Those methods that you saw in the puzzle piece graphic, they tell us where the problem is located and how it is produced, which in turn tells us how and where we can solve it and how we can close the gap between what survivors need and what they experience. The institutional response.

>> Thank you Denise. Will you say just a little bit about why Praxis wish to co-learned with SANDA on this order audit project specific to how it's applied to sexual assault?

>> Yes. Thank you. As you mentioned already Bree about the -- initially this work was developed to look at the criminal legal system response to domestic violence, but more and more communities were coming to us are asking how it can be applied to the area of sexual assault. As I think everyone on the call today is aware, there are a lot of similarities as well as differences in the response to sexual assault and domestic violence. Increasingly, communities are coming to us and asking questions about how they could apply the institutional analysis that is referred to as a safety and accountability audit with domestic violence and how that can be applied to sexual assault. One of the early cases was in Duluth Minnesota 10 or 12 years ago where they started looking at the institutional response of the criminal legal system to native women who were being sexually assaulted in the city of Duluth. When they started this work, they couldn't find any example of a case involving a Native American woman victim

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that had ever even been prosecuted, and so, and yet they knew the level and scope of violence was high. So they did some very really beautiful work in the city of Duluth, and they reported on the Praxis website. We encourage people to take a look at it. Is a very good example of how this process works, and of one communities work in this area. Since then, other communities like La Crosse Wisconsin, Missoula Montana, Lincoln Nebraska, and Grand Rapids Minnesota have also developed a response to sexual assault using the institutional analysis work. Some of those reports, not all, are available on the Praxis website. And as you mentioned already Bree, because people have been coming to us and asking because of the obvious connection between sexual assault and domestic violence, Praxis has had an interest in trying to strengthen our resources and abilities that we have to give guidance and provide support to communities who are doing that's. So we started looking around for a community interested in partnering with us to demonstrate in specific ways how this methodology could be adapted for use in sexual assault that we can then used to aid future communities that want to do this work. And Bellingham walking County was a perfect match for this because they have done some previous safety and accountability audits and also had an interest in exploring this on their own. So we decided to do this in a pretty, in a bigger way. We had a national team and you will hear more about that from the Washington state folks. But we brought a national team with expertise in various aspects of the work. For example, we had someone from the battered women justice project, I think they are on the webinar today, he was one of the people we brought with us. A long time Praxis technical assistance provider former 911 dispatcher and prosecutor. We brought someone from the Minnesota Indian women's resource sexual assault center and a sexual violence justice institute. We all converged on Bellingham-Whatcom County and did some work with them to really uncover how this was working in their community, and it's been really fruitful. As I know you will hear from her other presenters.

>> Thank you Denise. Use provided great descriptions of the other communities, especially Duluth, and as Denise said, I really encourage you to go to our website to look at those other

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audits as well. So we are going to turn now here to our guests. I just want to say that what Denise described is something that was written verbatim within the SANDA report I want to repeat. That an audit is not a generic examination of an issue, but rather, an exploration of the complexities that exist within the lives of survivors. And in their experience seeking justice within the community back let's now focus on why we are all here together. I'm going to start with Susan. Welcome Susan. We are so excited, as I said earlier, to have you with us today to describe your experience conducting this audit. Before we go into the details of that, we would love to hear more about your previous experience with the Praxis institutional analysis process and how maybe that kind of late due to doing the SANDA project.

>> Thank you. So yes, in Whatcom County we like to do safety and accountability audits. We previously completed four audit specific to domestic violence. We audited multiple agencies in the criminal legal system, basically through the entire system, including 91 one, several law enforcement agencies, several prosecutors offices, probation, basically all the criminal legal systems connected to domestic violence that we did one audit of the civil domestic violence protection order process. Echo great.

>> Great. And that was focus on domestic violence. So then, what specifically drove you to apply to do the institutional analysis through sexual assault response?

>> Our commission, our mission, since we were formed in 1998 was to provide a role in connecting institutions and practitioners and transforming the way systems respond to intimate partner violence, and we were considering expanding that mission to include sexual assault and having it seen with coordination, connection and transformation role with systems related to sexual assault. And so because of our past experiences with audits, we decided that using an audit on sexual assault would serve two purposes, it would provide us with the data to make that decision if we wanted to expand our mission to show if there is a need to do this work with systems related to sexual assault, the same as we're doing with domestic violence, and we were pretty sure that the answer to that would be yes. And so, then we also thought

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the data would provide us with a place to start in doing this work. So it would provide us with ideas of where we really have to work on how systems were responded to survivors of sexual assault.

>> That makes a lot of sense. And I just curious about how you prepared your audit team to take on this type a specific project.

>> It certainly helped a lot that we have done so many audits. And also our commission itself is made up of members from all of these criminal agencies, legal system agencies we wanted to have on the audit team and to be auditing their agencies. We also have multidisciplinary teams in our community where people are used to sitting together and talking about cases and talk about how to do better in the work we are doing on domestic violence. And so, it was fairly easy to recruit people and get them to agree to the audits. I think most agencies know that is time-consuming but feel there practices have improved based on their audits. And then we bought a new agencies, like we wanted to bring in a local college and university. When approaching them, the Sheriff's office a police department and prosecutor's office say yes, it made the entry into the college and university a lot easier. Because we already had credibility by being able to say that the agencies we are looking at most closely had said yes. And with all that, that still means there was a lot of meetings with our partners. So we wrote a grant to fund this audit. When you funding that I met individually with the department heads of all the agencies who wanted to audit and who we wanted on the team together supported also to get input on how this would work best. And then again after receiving the grant, we went back around and met with everyone and just reminded them because it's a long process for when you write the grant to when you get it that what we were thinking about doing with the time commitment was. And that it was another period of time before we were putting the team together. So a third round of going back to people and reminding again, it was a specific person who is going to be on this team. And then, once we had her team recruited, we partnered with Praxis to do training. With the initial team orientation our audit coordinator at

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the beginning of the project facilitated, and we used that meeting to orient team members to our goal, to our audit question, and then also Melissa and Katie, he you will hear from later, had started connecting survivor focus groups, and so we shared initial input from survivors at that meeting. And then we had a full day training where Praxis and the national team with other technical system providers came out and did a full day training on audit process and data collection methodologies. And then we had initial intensive data collection. Praxis and other technical assistance members along with the local team members went out in that week and collected a massive amount of data doing interviews and survivor focus groups and reading case files. So through that week we met each morning with Praxis and practiced debriefing data collection and identifying initial gaps and themes from the data collection and practice through that process. By the end of the we, the last two days, our audit coordinator at the time was leading those meetings and we got feedback after them on how to make those go. So we through that week transition from having Praxis lead us to lead us ourselves. And after that we on her own without a collected data for the course of about another year.

>> You mentioned massive data collection activities, and I would just say, massive preparation. That's great because you also mentioned something Susan I think it's really important. The engagement that you had with the team members that you were trying to recruit. And kept engaging with them. And reminded them about what this is about, and probably reminding them about, you know, the investment they should, the commitment they had. And my understanding that is that of course you mentioned it is that this all led to an audit question. And that's the whole point of an institutional analysis. The beginning point, which is what is your question you're trying to answer. So please tell us, what was the audit questions?

>> The audit question was, how is the Bellingham-Whatcom County criminal legal system organized to meet the justice needs of sexual assault survivors? And a quick note on that, we were talking about survivors, we're talk about survivors of the age of consent, which in Washington state is 16.

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>> That's a very important distinction. Thank you. Now we're going to find out about some of the data sources that were used to help answer the specific question. I'm going to transition now to Elizabeth. I'm turning to you and want to say welcome. We're also thrilled to have you join us today. Considering we do not have the time necessary to here in detail about all the many activities the audit team conducted, the massive amount, will you please highlight just a few of them for us Elizabeth?

>> Thanks Bree. Can you hear me?

>> Absolutely. You sound great.

>> Altogether the audit team conducted more than 120 data collection activities. It was a pretty extensive data collection process. We did interviews and focus groups with survivors, we did mapping of sexual assault case processing across systems, we did law enforcement and prosecution case reviews, stakeholder interviews, practitioner interviews, data analysis and research and observations of meetings and court proceedings. So the audit is really centered on the real-life voices and experiences of survivors. So documenting the stories from survivors themselves with a really essential part of our data collection process. We conducted focus groups and interviews with a total of 37 survivors of sexual assault in our community. Hearing with survivors had to say really informed our work throughout the entire process of the audit. We also learned that in many cases survivors of sexual assault really prefer to do individual interviews rather than focus groups. So we conducted a lot of focus groups with domestic violence survivors in the past in other projects and audits, and this experience, speaking with sexual assault survivors, really demonstrated the unique you need for safety and confidentiality for sexual assault survivors. Sexual assault survivors experience the scrutiny and shame and blame in a really differently than survivors of other cries. I was an important point for us. Is also really important for us to intentionally engage with survivors of color. We know that racial oppression creates additional barriers to safety and justice for sexual assault survivors who are people of color. And we wanted to explicitly provide opportunities for

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survivors of color to share their stories. So we offer the option of individual interviews or anonymous surveys and received a lot of, a lot greater interest in those anonymous surveys. And we also conducted some focus groups with practitioners, including advocates, forensic nurses nurses and law enforcement patrol officers and deputies. We were also able to observe a sexual assault trial, which was a really rare opportunity because sexual assault cases rarely go to trial. The audit team was able to debrief the trial with input from the jury and prosecutor and judge, which gave us a lot of insight into answering our audit question.

>> That was a very thorough description. And really I feel the data collection activities you conduct a. I just have to say engaging with 37 survivors of sexual assault is quite a feat. Clearly, you all made it a very safe space to do so. Provided them a great deal of options too. And we know that it's a critical method to, and a persuasive tool, to inform changed so I want to talk about that a little bit more. Katie, I'm going to turn to you and for say welcome. We are also grateful you could join us today and are very eager to hear more about how you kept real-life experiences as an essential point during the audit. So Katie, if you would not mind taking over.

>> Thank you Bree. One of the most powerful tools in keeping our audit team focused, motivated, engaged in this long process was resenting quotes directly from survivors in our community. And we wanted to share some of those with you today. Because we think it is still important to keep the conversation framed on survivor needs and to create space for their voices. We will share just three right now. This is when we encouraged listeners to participate a little bit and type in any initial reactions as they hear these quotes, any takeaways, feel free to just write those in the chat box to share with others. So the first quote that I will share "-- we heard from a survivor who said "I was raped in college and I know so many other girls who have been raped. Know what I know has reported it. we support each other because we know the police aren't going to support us. "

>> Will you share the next one?

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>> The next one, "I just remember the officer questioning my decision to go out with someone who I just met. Basically saying that the decisions I was making were not protective enough for me. I just remember how he kept talking about his daughter and what he tells her to do to stay safe." I will sure third quote. "If nothing else were to change, it is that you need to tell the victim what is going on."

>> Thank you so very much the three of you. And these quotes from survivors really represent the driving force." Are, because it is representative of those real lived experiences of survivors lives that are a great way to inspire others and basically joined the table and conduct reform work. You all demonstrated for us just now how encouraging it is I think to hear what survivors have to say, how important it is for those voices to be threaded within throughout social change work. And that doing so may also be a strategy to working through challenges, which I know we're going to hear more about. Again, I just want to encourage our listeners to just chat, to type in the Q&A box , just to be as simple as one word about your reactions or takeaways from hearing those quotes because it would be interesting to hear how they in fact have affected you on the call, and then we can all think about the impact it very well must have had on this interagency audit team. So if you just use the Q&A. Okay. As I mentioned, I'm sure that these survivor quotes helped with challenges. And so, let's talk about some of those challenges because it is so critically important to name them. Katie, if you would take this over for us please and just talk about some of the things that came about that were challenging during the audit process, and then also if you would offer up some of the strategies that you used to work through them.

>> Sure. So our initial audit orientation meeting before we did any training came right after we did a focus group with survivors, and so, my contribution to the orientation was to share some of the main themes, some quotes, some takeaways from that focus group. Just to give our audit team some exposure to what we were already hearing from survivors in our community. So after sharing some of that feedback with the team, about survivor experiences, I was pretty

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surprised to have several audit team members respond with quite a bit of defensiveness. And what happened is that we sort of engaged in conversation where some audit team members were essentially minimizing and dismissing the experiences that we had just heard from survivors in this focus group. And I had expected some hesitation and maybe even some ambivalence from audit team members given that we were looking at their very agencies, but I didn't expect necessarily this outright denial of survivor experiences. So after that orientation, I met with Susan and the audit coordinator at the time, Melissa, and we debriefed. And we talked about strategies. How can we meet the audit team members where they are while gently moving them towards more openness to the audit process, moving them towards openness to survivor feedback and really listening with depth to their experiences. So there were a few ways in which we did this. The first step was to just simply name it. We named that defensiveness might come up for some of us. We normalized it with the team members, and we encouraged them to just acknowledge it when they were feeling it. to kind of label that experience within themselves so we can engage in some more productive conversation. We also continued to present survivor quotes. So time and time again we came back to the voices of survivors. This really grounded us in the needs of those in our community, and paired with that as we were gathering data, we started to use this data collection to provide evidence to support what survivors were saying. And we presented this to the team. So here's an example of that. One survivor said after the two-year anniversary of the incident I hadn't heard anything so I called law enforcement. She told me that a few months after I reported, they decided there was not enough evidence and no one ever told me that they closed the case. So that was a quote from a survivor that we followed up with some documentation from a case review that was done, and one case review we found that a survivor had reported to law enforcement in May 2016, and then in December of that same year the detective noted in a report that "due to caseload I have been unable to follow-up. "Then all the way in February 2017 that detective noted again in a report "due to caseload I didn't contact the suspect regarding this case since I was not hearing back from the survivor." The case was closed

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without any action. So again, we paired survivor quotes with additional data to help our audit team members really thoroughly engage in understanding this feedback and acknowledging these gaps. Another powerful strategy that was implemented was the way in which our audit coordinator created space for dialogue between the team members. We all have different perspectives, different backgrounds, we came from different agencies, and we had disagreements. And we had some strong opinions at times about things like consent, about things like survivor engagement, credibility, how we talk about this issue, how we assess these issues. So by creating space for dialogue, all of the audit team members were able to respectfully discuss their point of view. And in my opinion, this is really what inspired the most significant change within our audit team.

>> Katie, this is Denise. I'm so sorry to interrupt. But we have had a couple of people saying they are having trouble hearing you. So perhaps you can move your phone really close to your mouth or something so we can get a little better volume. I don't know what's happening. I can hear you okay. You are a little soft to me.

>> I am just switching phones. Is is better?

>> Sounds better to me.

>> Okay. Ray. So let's see, as we started to engage in discussion and share our points of view, we saw that audit team members were shifting the way that they started looking at the data, shifting the way and how they were listening to survivors and hearing these quotes, and we actually saw change happening already. So people were engaging in their own job duties outside of the audit team meetings differently. And this was very inspiring and really exciting because essentially we saw changes being made before we were even done with report, gathering data. So the process and the outcome was just as important as the audit report itself.

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>> Thank you. So much for such an eloquent ascription, especially because I think it paints for all of us that are listening that the audit is really a process that may transcend even beyond the actual report. That is a really important thing. And they are not the same thing. There's a process, and there is the report. So I thank you so very much. And I'm going to just ask my coworker here, Denise, if she would not mind advancing the slides for me. I do not have that capability at the moment. What I want to do now is just transition to Susan. Because what we just heard, of course, and what has been the thread of this entire process is a focused effort to work to address the needs of those who are most marginalized because in doing so we improve the conditions for the community at large. So the audit question we know initially references this desire to increase the visibility of an improved outcome for native survivors in particular, and I know actually this is the first time it has been stated, but I think it is really important we walk through this about centering not just voices of survivors but also the intent of doing so for native survivors. So Susan, will you walk us through how the audit team did that?

>> Yes. As you said, we recognized the importance of examining the way systems are responding to survivors who experienced the most oppression and barriers and most disparate outcomes in our society. And in Whatcom County we have two federally recognized tribes, and because of the history and present impact of colonization and racism, we decided we wanted to have a focus on either survivors. We felt if we didn't have a specific focus we would miss people who experienced maybe the worst outcomes from our legal system. So the initial audit question included the phrase particularly for native survivors and our team included the sacred hoop and Minnesota Indian women sexual assault coalition. We ritually included audit members from the tribe of victims of tribe crime program and a tribal college. And we did a significant number of interviews with stakeholders who worked for the tribes and also when we interviewed stakeholders in our county and city systems we asked him a lot of questions about their data and responses for native survivors.

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>> Susan, will you walk us through how exactly the audit team did all that?

>> Yes. A couple things that we did was, we wanted to include stakeholders who had a connection to native survivors and worked for tribes to be on our team. So we had recruited team members from victims of crime in North Indian college to be on our team, although I will say we did run into some barriers with collecting the data we wanted. One of the things that we wrote to the grants and first thought of this audit, we did not think of, I did not think of having this focus specifically on native survivors or any specific population. So there staff were on the team but I had not reached out to the tribal college of that time. In the budget, I did not really put in there anyway to compensate tribal partners for the amount of consultation and knowledge we would have needed from them if we were to really focus on either survivors. There was nothing that would have compensated them for the amount of work we would've asked and needed partners to do for us. Working with native survivors. So in the end we ended up not having those partners in our initial team orientation. Only scheduled ongoing meetings, there was difficulty when we had scheduled those. So by the end of the audit, we no longer had tribal representatives on her team, which was problematic for us to continue to center and talk about particularly native survivors. We also rented to barriers with interviews and focus groups. So again, this is a lot related to lack of planning from the beginning. We realized partway through that if we were going to advertise for focus groups on the reservations we had to go through an institutional review board and be approved by tribal Council. And that's a very lengthy process. Is required because there is a long history of primarily white identifying researchers electing and using data on native people to justify systems of oppression and misrepresent native people throughout history. So it's a process that is important, and it was not something that factored into our project and we did not have the time set aside to complete that project and get the voices of native survivors in time to inform our work in the way we wanted. So pretty quickly, we realize that we had weaker relationships with their partners from the tribes that we had with other agencies that were located within a county or city. We learned a lot from training we had received from the

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sacred hoop and sexual assault coalition and collected a lot of data from native survivors, so it did become clear to us that there is a high level of visibility of native survivors to our systems and interprofessional relationships, so I will just say that we got to this point several months into our audit process where we realized we could not include the particularly native survivors as part of a question anymore. And that visibility that made it so important with something that made it so that we did not have the relationships or had not put the work in that was needed to have a question. And that was pretty humbling for me because that was my responsibility, my idea to write this grant. And to do this project. So one thing I appreciated about having Praxis and all the other technical assistance providers is how gratefully they were able to challenge that oversight and help us think of ways to not lose what we had and to allow the oversight to allow us to just erase what we have been hearing and learned. And perhaps her biggest barrier, all of those were barriers, lack of relationships in planning, but when we started sharing the data that we had with our team, we realize pretty quickly it was similar to when we started sharing survivor stories, that we had to find this constant balance between being brave and really clearly stating the root causes of what we were seeing antiracism connected to it, and that we had to be strategic in a way so that systems and practitioners could really understand and hear these findings. That we had about how native survivors were experiencing our system responses. And even within our team, this was the hardest thing for us to agree on and name.

>> I need to acknowledge and recognize that, first and foremost, if we are not learning, we are not really keeping with the integrity of quite frankly institutional analysis, including what we learned ourselves as those on the audit team and coordinators about the work we are intended to do. So I just want to say that I think it's very brave, and you all just practice what you preach. You name it. you name what you wish you would've done. You named where there was maybe not as much forethought as there should've been at one point in time. So I just need to say that you all. And despite those barriers Susan that you just spoke so eloquently about, you still remained committed to centralizing native survivor voices and were

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able to gather information during the audit process specific to that. Will you -- how were you able to do that exactly?

>> So we set in the audit report big themes that we felt were part of every gap we identified later. As one of the themes we had the implicit bias and historical oppression leading to inequitable outcomes in the ways our community institutions serve and partner with marginalized communities, particularly native communities. And we backed it up with evidence we had. For example, we heard that in stakeholder interviews multiple native women told us that every native woman I know has been sexually assaulted, but despite that fact, many practitioners could not recall any examples working on cases that involved native survivors. We also cited that due to federal limits in tribal jurisdiction over non-native offenders and our county has not crossed deputized tribal law enforcement officers, that tribal law enforcement officers are not able to arrest a non-native suspect on a reservation, nor are they able to pursue a fleeing non-native the suspect who leaves tribal land. Then tribal law does detain a suspect who is non-native, they have to wait for the sheriff's officers the patrol to make an arrest, and there is often a delayed response before those agencies can arrive or they might decline to arrest. And we have multiple stakeholders tell us that native survivors often don't feel safe going to the hospital for sexual assault exams because of other negative experiences they have had. For example, one stakeholder whose native told us about having a baby at the hospital, and she was there with her husband and the nurse commented, it's so nice to see one of you in an intact relationship. So we backed that up and shared more evidence we had there and developed a number of recommendations for all practitioners and agencies related to this theme, and one of those recommendations is that we are focusing are doing our own work with our commission members and our staff so that we can hopefully overcome the blind spots and the oversights we had that led us not to be able to center on native survivors as fully as will wanted to on the report.

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>> Again, I need to say I appreciate your transparency with these challenges Susan. Far too often, such challenges are just completely ignored or hidden. And I sure hope that you are all proud you refused to do that. I want to pause for a moment and check in with Denise to see if there are things to share from the Q&A regarding the response to the survivor quotes that were shared.

>> We have had some folks who are chatting in that, Dore says the quotes make her sad to realize survivors don't necessarily feel like survivors. That underscores the importance of this work. Veronica says that some colleagues have this issue very much on their minds because of sexual assault that occurred in their college campus just last night. So really timely right now. And then, Laura says that in the past eight months they have had two survivors with similar experiences been told by law enforcement there is not enough evidence, even though they go to the hospital by ambulance. So we can see the importance of the work that you all are doing there in Washington. And Samantha is grateful that you folks in Washington were really able to be willing to be open about the barriers and the lack of planning and resources you had initially allocated.

>> Thank you Denise. I encouraged all listeners to continue to use the Q&A box . It's so important that all of us share these, our thoughts with each other. So thank you. I think where we go now is to specific findings. Just going deeper into that even though some things have been mentioned. But let's start with the overarching themes. And I will turn to Elizabeth and ask you to take us through this.

>> We identified two overarching themes that showed up consistently throughout the entire data collection process. And really laid a foundation for the community responses tuber sports of sexual assault. The first theme is the ways our community institutions understand and respond to reports of sexual assault are influenced by widespread societal myths and misconceptions about sexual assault. For example, in interviews, stakeholder share that it survivor if they are not linear the first time they share it is discounted. And this is noted in

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reviews of law enforcement and prosecution case files. Also, sometimes practitioners use derogatory and victim blaming language to make negative portrayals or jokes about sexual history, partners and use of dating applications. That's another example. The second theme we identified is implicit bias and historical oppression lead to inequitable outcomes in the ways our community institutions serve and partner with marginalized communities, particularly native communities. So we know that Native American and Alaska native women are more than two and half times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted the non-native women in the U.S. , and nationally 86% of sexual assault against native women are committed by non-native men. According to local law enforcement, their local online message boards coach offenders on how easy it is to native women on reservations get away with it by taking advantage of the limits of tribal jurisdiction in sexual assault cases. Another example, in interview stakeholders in our community frequently used myths to describe native people. Interview sentiments included, those people have a beautiful culture, native courts are too focused on healing the community and services for the offender and they often lose support for the survivor. Or is important for native people to get off the reservation, get an education, be assimilated or talk like us. And native people see racism everywhere, even when it's not really there.

>> Thank you Elizabeth. After all these years, myself of doing this work and knowing the very things that you shared and the percentages about the native survivors, I still am struggling with the example he you shared about the local online message boards the coach offenders. To specifically rape native women on reservations but I thought since I am not sharing in the Q&A, I needed to say that. And now, let's transition again gaps. I think it is probably, I am sure we are all on this webinar today thinking about all the different gaps yourselves. You been hearing them for sure but I think it's important to continue to name them because as we know that is a part of a strategy used in the whole process and it's important for them to be named so I am going to turn out to Katie and Susan to take us through these gaps.

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>> We are just going to read the five gaps we found, and I did most of our listeners probably won't be too surprised about anything we found. The first gap is there are systemic delays in processing sexual assault cases. The second is sexual assault survivors experience a lack of follow-up, communication and engagement from responding systems. The third gap is the quality of institutional responses to reports of sexual assault are overly reliant on assessing survivor credibility more so than suspect behavior and credibility.

>> Kept number four, there's a lack of criminal accountability for reported sexual assault offenders in our community, which includes MA enable serial offenders. And finally, across systems, there is a lack of expertise in sexual assault dynamics, trauma informed care and effective survivor engagement.

>> Thank you for naming them. And I know just for the sake of time, we're not going to really talk that much specifically about these, however, we are going to talk about just a couple of the highlights. One of I know is the burden on survivors. Katie, would you just take a few moments please to talk to us about what you found regarding the burden on survivors and what that means?

>> Sure. This relates to that overall theme of the adoption of societal myths and misconceptions about sexual assault. And this influences how our society responds to survivors, it influences whether we believe them, disbelieve them, ultimately what this is doing is limiting access to safety and justice for survivors. And we found that this results in the survivors themselves feeling burdened throughout the process, essentially as if they have to prove their credibility. So one survivor shared, I was asked what I was wearing, if I was a virgin, how many partners I had, at one point in the interview a policeman told me that he knew I was lying. Another survivor said I went to the cops and they said oh we talked to him and he seems like a nice guy, and your like, this is a nice guy? So you shut up again. In interviews we also found that there was some interesting takeaways about juries and whether they convict or not. We found that a stakeholder share that juries tend to not believe the survivor if there

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are inconsistencies in the story or if they are not acting according to expectations. For example, one juror indicated they didn't want to convict because a survivor knew the suspect before the assault. Another juror shared they didn't convict because the survivor engaged in sexual activity even though she wasn't married. So we find that these misconceptions are alive and well, and again, it places a burden on the survivor to find ways to prove that they are credible, to prove they are telling the truth. So we asked survivors what would be helpful, what is a better way and what does justice really mean to them. And some of them struggled to answer what justice meant, but they did say that they just wanted to be taken seriously. And to be met with even just a little bit of empathy. This came up many times in our focus groups come out that had the survivors been treated with respect from the beginning and had they felt like the system really did all that it could do to respond to their report, sometimes even regardless of the outcome, this would have been powerful. This would've made a difference for them. So if they were truly heard throughout the process, they shared this would've helped in their process of healing. And inevitably, it would've helped them feel like the making the report was worth it. So to close this gap, we had many recommendations, but essentially what we wanted to do was put responsibility back on the system, take the burden off the survivor's shoulders. So we encouraged law enforcement to implement federal recommendations around responding to sexual assault cases, to get training around trauma informed responding, and interviewing. We suggested that prosecutors present their reasons and decisions about case files to the chief criminal deputy prosecutor whenever possible so before officially declining cases, closing them, dismissing them or saying there is no action, we encourage prosecutors to present reasons why. And of course, we encouraged the commission to offer training and consultation to the organizations involved with and related to the audit. One example of this is developing a multidisciplinary team called the sexual assault response team, which Elizabeth will talk a little bit more about. The point of this is to consult with agencies, to strengthen investigations and prosecutions and adult sexual assault cases.

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>> Thank you so much for highlighting the burden on survivors. I know that there is another, we want to highlight here. I'm going to ask Elizabeth to cover that for us as far as the offender accountability pieces. Will you share with us what you found there Elizabeth?

>> Thank you. Another significant theme that was discovered in the audit was this broad lack of accountability for sexual assault offenders. So across the nation we know that the conviction rates for sexual assault are extremely low, and that is also true of walking County. So in interviews, law enforcement and prosecutors spoke of limitations of time to spend on sexual assault cases given their high caseloads. What detective stated, if we had more time to investigate, we would do a better job for the community. The American Bar Association recommends a caseload of no more than 70 felony cases per prosecutor, the prosecutors in walking County may have up to 140 cases. Another example, in interview a forensic nurse stated she conducted more than 150 sexual assault forensic exams and have never been called to testify in a case. Yet we hear from jurors that a lack of physical injury or lack of physical findings have been cited as reasons not to convict, when she forensic nurse can easily dispel. Case reviews also indicated a lack of communication between prosecution and law enforcement, which may create missed opportunities to further strengthen cases. Prosecution may not receive sufficient evidence from law enforcement investigation to file charges. And yet, without feedback regarding what is needed, law enforcement does not have direction in strengthening investigations. And survivor credibility is also a constant theme and barrier to accountability for offenders. It criminal legal stakeholders stated in their interview that jurors have a hard time believing that sexual assault occurs in our community, and the prosecutors need to get jurors past their initial denial. However, curating to their observation, prosecutors often miss opportunities to educate jurors such as through jury selection are using expert witnesses. Another important theme that emerged around accountability was the prevalence of repeat offenders. Case reviews, observations of K staffing's and stakeholder interviews uncovered multiple cases in which a previously reported offender who was not initially prosecuted went on to sexually assault others. So one of her recommendations for the

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commission, like Katie stated, is to facilitate the development of the sexual assault response team and to lead the start to convict regular case peer reviews is an opportunity for learning to improve outcomes and sexual assault cases. And for law enforcement, we are recommending implementing best practice procedures for sexual assault investigations using tools from the international Association for Chiefs of police which include a variety of resources on improving and strengthening sexual assault investigations, developing trauma informed interviewing practices, and creative approaches to evidence, collection and corroboration. For prosecution, we recommended that the prosecutors office implement training on opportunities such as jury selection and using expert witnesses to increase jury education regarding issues like implicit bias, especially gender and racial bias, impacts of trauma, misconceptions about survivor credibility, suspect behavior and grooming and other sexual assault dynamics.

>> Thank you so much Elizabeth for sharing that highlight and Katie for you sharing that other highlight. And before we say, before he officially say goodbye to the three of you as far as roles on the webinar, I'm going to turn to Denise. I'm wondering if there are comments or any questions that were raised in the Q&A.

>> Yes. We have just a couple. A Native American survivor is really emphasizing the importance of an overlap of jurisdiction in protecting native survivors along with non-native survivors. I am not exactly sure by what is meant to overlap. We do know certainly based on this and other work we have done that it's really important for law enforcement to understand the jurisdictional issues and respond appropriately because we know a lot of native survivors in particular are falling through the cracks as a result. And Andrew is asking about whether our presenters, whether we dealt with any survivors who were undocumented immigrants and whether that was compared to a Native American survivor to see if there are parallels. I will respond to that first and then ask Susan or Elizabeth or Katie to respond. I don't recall specifically talking about or doing any specific work on that, although I think the question

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came up and certainly we know that undocumented survivors are particularly vulnerable because of their concerns about other legal actions that might transpire from them coming forward despite the fact that there are protections, they're not always implemented well. I will ask if, any of the folks in Washington have any comments about working with that particular population of survivors.

>> We did include some data under the theme we had around implicit bias and historical oppression in addition to all the data we had around it or survivors. We included data we had from a couple other projects, and one was related to work we have done about whether or not immigrant survivors and federal immigration policy is impacted reporting of sexual assault and domestic violence by undocumented survivors. And we had some recommendations related to that, especially related to the says and not collaborating with immigration enforcement in making our courthouses safe for survivors from immigration. And we also included some data on another project we had related to high risk domestic violence and survivors who identify LGBTQ. And then also input from survivors of color that Elizabeth reference. We made a concerted effort to get feedback from survivors of color. So under that theme, we did address some other ways that people with other overlapping oppressions have increased negative experiences when they come to our systems.

>> That's helpful. Thanks Susan and for Andrew and anybody else interested in thinking this through, certainly Praxis will be happy to talk with you about what you are thinking about, and I'm sure the folks in Washington would as well. That leads me to the last question that came up, the question about the availability of your report. And you address that really quickly Susan?

>> Sure. We completed the final draft of our report earlier this year, and is currently just pending final review by O BW. So we haven't officially released it yet, but as soon as it is final, as soon as it is approved, we will post it on our website. Praxis will have access as well to post

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on their website, and I believe we will be able to send it out to webinar participants as well. So it is just pending the public release.

>> Thank you. And that was Elizabeth not Susan for those who were listening. Thank you Elizabeth.

>> That is a great transition to say, it has been a great honor having you three, Susan, Elizabeth and Katie join us today. Thank you for taking the time out of your important daily work to share your audit experiences and as Elizabeth said, you will be able to read that audit when it is approved. So we will make sure that you all have access to it and know what it is approved. Finally, as I said before, I am going to say it again, a big acknowledgment for Susan, Elizabeth and Katie. Your integrity and dedication to ensure that the real-life experiences of survivors, are treated as sacred. That they will not be condoned as baseless nor held in a disparaging and dishonorable way. And from one advocate to others, thank you. And I am now going to just turn to Denise once again to just take us through what this audit has meant for Praxis briefly and just help paint the picture about the impact here that the audit processes had.

>> I just want to echo your comments transiting. It really was a wonderful experience to be able to go out to Bellingham and work with all of you folks out there. You have a fabulous community and a lot of dedicated, caring advocates and professionals who work in these systems. It was really a privilege to be able to learn from you about your response. It really helped to to inform us at Praxis about how to strengthen the materials that we have and make them much more applicable to cases involving sexual violence. Some of you may be interested in our toolkit which is currently called the Praxis safety and accountability audit toolkit designed specifically for domestic violence cases. We're in the process of revising that toolkit so that it will be more applicable to sexual assault. And we also have available on our website the audit coordinator logistics guide, which is a series of documents that really helped those who were coordinating these processes to account for the day-to-day work of organizing and implementing a project like this. So we are in the process of revising those documents

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so that they will have better applications to sexual assault. And then finally, we have this unrelated to this work, but just for folks on the webinar today, we will be releasing in the coming weeks three new domestic violence best practice assessment guides, and those guides will be on the victim witness response to domestic violence crimes. And another guide for bail evaluation and bail setting, conditional release. And then the third is on pretrial release of division and enforcement. All three of these categories will be available in the coming weeks.

>> Thank you Denise. I as well as many others here at Praxis are so excited on taking what was learned as well through the audit process. And making our own changes as we promote for communities to embark on applying this methodology. So thank you again. And thank you to our listeners today. We hope you have gained as much encouragement, energy, and maybe even a renewed focus if you haven't had it to engage or reengage or continue engagement to refuse to silence the survivors, their voices, and to always believe survivors. That said, in case you're interested, here is a slide in front of you on some of the different things we have coming up. I'm sorry the community assessment Institute is listed on their considering it is closed. But again, you all be informed when the SANDA audit report is public. Thank you everybody. Have a wonderful day. [Event concluded]