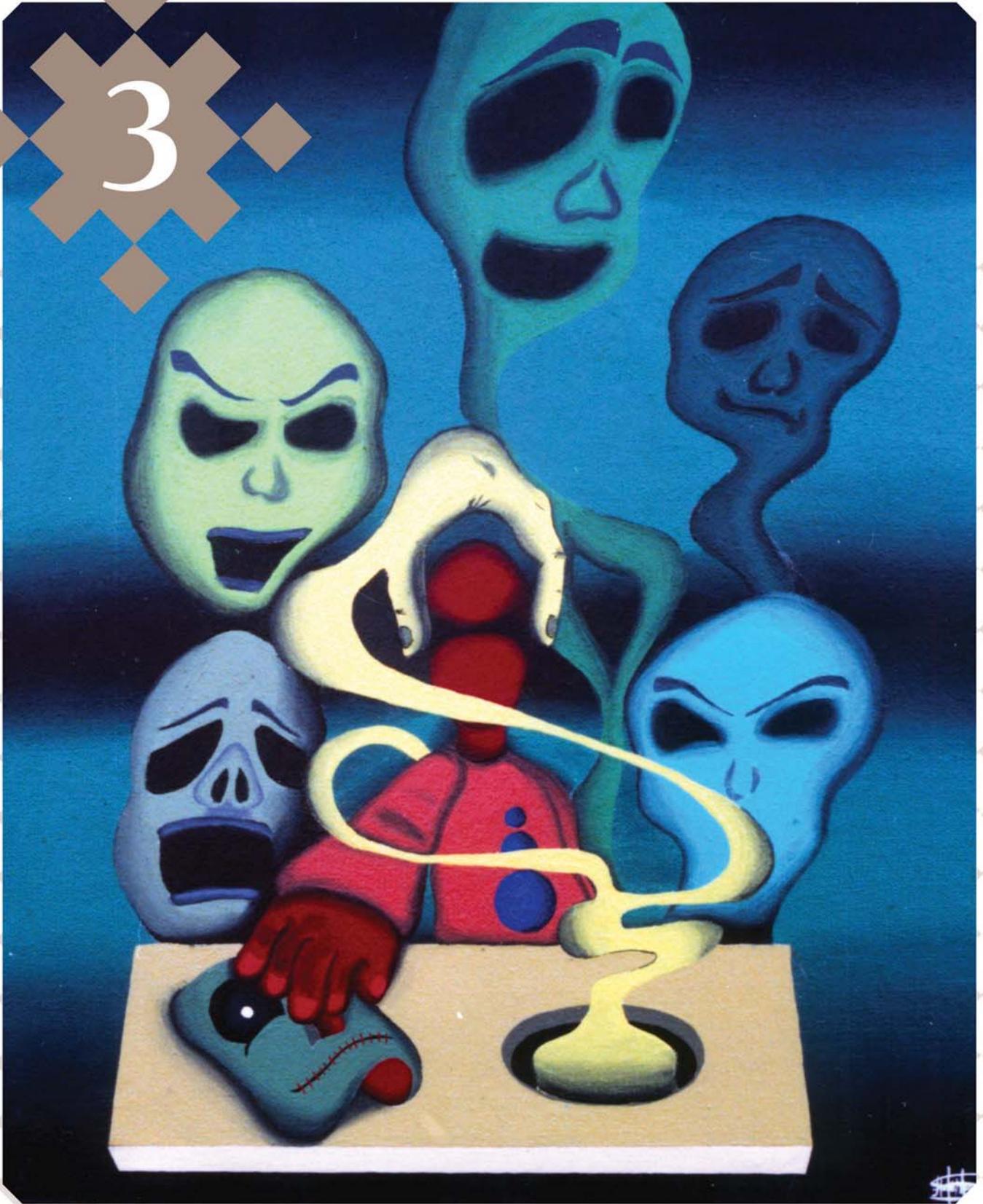


3



VIOLENCE & VICTIMIZATION

VIOLENCE & VICTIMIZATION

INTRODUCTION

Any attempt to impose your will on another is an act of violence.
(Mahatma Gandhi)

According to the broad definition of Mahatma Gandhi, the potential for violence and victimization exists everywhere. Violence and victimization can happen within families, communities, offices, schools, playing fields and playgrounds, in movies and on television. No person, regardless of sex or age, is immune.

When people think about violence, they often think about its most obvious form – physical violence upon a person resulting in pain or injury. It can range from a little push to a serious attack causing injury or death. Sexual assaults are also a form of physical violence.

Less evident forms of violence are psychological, emotional, spiritual or cultural. There are also threats, economic abuse and elder abuse. Since these acts are not as obvious as physical violence, they often are not recognized. However, the effect of these forms of violence cannot be underestimated. They can play an important role in the continuation of violence. To make them acceptable is to make the obvious violence less acceptable.

Violence and victimization affect both sexes and all ages, races, cultures and income levels. There can be multiple parties to violence. No particular part of society owns the issue of violence. Everyone is vulnerable to violence or its consequences. An understanding of it is key to making a positive difference.

At some point we have to change what's going on because violence begets violence, and the cycle just keeps continuing. (Speaker, Provincial Association of Transition Houses presentation)

The Commission's vision regarding violence is one where communities are as free as possible from the consequences of violence. In this vision children are safe, families live together peacefully and communities work to support themselves and others through many cultural, social, recreational, political and economic activities.

In such communities, prevention is generated by community activities. For example, artistic, cultural and recreational activities encourage youth to stand out and make a community proud. This gives the community a reason to celebrate youth, culture and accomplishments to strengthen community values and beliefs and provide a strong foundation for youth and their families.

When violence does occur, a response will come from community members familiar with individuals, families and issues. People will talk with one another with the intent to restore harmony in the community. An appropriate response



will go further than a criminal justice response. It will involve all parties affected by the incident as well as others such as victim services workers, school professionals, if students are involved, Elders, people trained to deal with violence and mental health workers, if needed. A response may include police to intervene sensitively in crises, but it will be a later option rather than an earlier one. Police and the courts will have the support of the community if a criminal justice response is still necessary.

In other words, the Commission envisions a comprehensive, coordinated, community-based response. It would take into account all factors. Abuse has to be seen as a violation of people and relationships, rather than simply a violation of law. There must be some way to create harmony for individuals, families and communities that have experienced violence.

BACKGROUND

Violent behaviour is rooted in people's life experience and situations. Many First Nations and Metis people live in poverty. This results in lower standards of living, increased family and social problems and increased risk of homelessness. Ghettos are being created. These ghettos are linked to social housing, lack of jobs and a large number of single parent households headed by women. Living in this environment makes it difficult to lead a life free from violence. (Hanselman, 2001)

When some parents feel their lives are spiraling out of control, that parent is more likely to direct a form of violence, verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, neglect or abandonment towards their child or children. This form of adult bullying can transfer down to sibling abuse and parental attacks. (Speaker, Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Council presentation)

Community members told the Commission of other contributing factors to violence. An important one was lack of housing, particularly in the North. Family members living together in crowded conditions, results in household stress. Combined with poverty and unemployment and drug and alcohol abuse, congested housing can lead to violence among family members.

Situations that bring about violence are not limited to living conditions or habits, such as alcohol use. These situations can exist in the general community as well. Contributing to violence in First Nations and Metis communities are racism and discrimination. Racism and discrimination have created economic, social and political barriers to First Nations and Metis people. These barriers can create the pressures that lead to violence within families and communities. Lateral violence affects whole communities.

I will tell you a bit about lateral violence for those of you that don't know what it is. It's an internalized feeling of anger and rage that develops in a person as a result of being constantly put down. It also manifests itself in our



community through family feuds, gossip and organizational infighting. It is responsible for dividing our communities into factions, thereby preventing us from becoming a more strong and unified people. (Speaker, Central Urban Metis Federation Inc. presentation)

Understanding contributing factors in what causes violent behaviour or victimization is necessary if they are to be dealt with successfully.

In First Nations and Metis communities the childhood trauma that continues to impact generation after generation to today is the atrocities that happened in residential schools, day schools, boarding schools, foster/adoptive homes. The oppressive violence of these children who are now our great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents is still unresolved. (Manual, 2002)

In Saskatchewan, fifteen residential schools were operated by the Government of Canada, and the Roman Catholic Churches, the United Church and the Anglican Church. Despite involving forced and sometimes forceful separation of children, the residential school experience was not recognized until recently as being related to violence and victimization. While some former students speak about it being a positive experience it is far overshadowed by the stories of violence. Indian Residential School Resolution Canada reports that “in addition to allegations of physical and sexual abuse, which are found in 90 per cent of the legal claims, allegations relating to such things as cultural loss, breach of Treaty, loss of education opportunity, forcible confinement and poor conditions are also alleged.”

The last federally-run residential school closed in 1996 although most ceased to operate in the mid-'70s. The impact of the abuse is not limited to the persons who suffered the abuse; the anger, lack of parenting skills, efforts to erase the abuse through alcohol and drugs, but have also affected subsequent generations. Many of these communities had to deal with other problems at the same time, such as racist legislation and policy (*The Indian Act*), racist behaviour, high unemployment, poverty and neglect.

In its publication *Aboriginal Domestic Violence in Canada*, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) writes about the community factor as it relates to family violence:

Family violence and abuse in Aboriginal communities is also a sociological characteristic of whole communities and not just of certain individuals and families. It is rooted in the complex web of Aboriginal community history and current dynamics. This is a very important distinction because it implies that the problem of domestic violence and abuse in Aboriginal communities cannot be understood

More information about Indian Residential School Resolution Canada can be found at www.insr-rqpa.gc.ca



and successfully approached based on the models and assumptions of most research and intervention programs in mainstream society that do not consider the community dimension. (Bopp, Bopp & Lane, 2003)

The AHF refers to this as the “culture of violence.” Violence, abuse and victimization have become normal in some First Nations and Metis communities because they are so widespread. Therefore, it is not sufficient or appropriate to deal with violence as individual cases. Rather, violence and victimization must be approached with a community view in mind.

The AHF was formed in 1998 with a ten-year mandate. It received \$350 million to fund healing projects related to the recovery and healing of communities affected by the legacy of residential schools. It is no longer giving out funds but, rather, slowly winding down. The last deadline for submission of projects was February 2003. The AHF’s annual report for 2003 indicated that the demands for funds outweighed the funding resources by a ratio of 4 to 1. The Commission heard concerns about this loss and is supportive of the requests that its mandate be extended.

I have a residential school claim in now for going on six years, and they take their time. They will do anything to avoid reality of what happened in the residential schools and the reality that they’re taking our land, our forest, by gunpoint. (Speaker, Beauval Community Dialogue)

In November 2003, the Government of Canada, through its Department of Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada (IRSRC), offered former residential school students an option, the ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) process, as well as litigation, for those who have a claim of sexual or physical abuse. Indian Residential School Resolution Canada is to be in place for seven years. The intent is to solve claims for those who choose the ADR option within a year of the time of establishing eligibility of the claim. The hearing is to be closely aligned with a restorative justice process. One of the criticisms of the new process is that the compensation claims, which are based on previous settlements (i.e. case law), are not uniform across the country. People who settle their claims through the ADR can choose litigation for loss of language and culture. On the other hand, the Government of Canada has set \$172.5 million aside for language and cultural loss. Consultation with former students on how to best use the fund is now in progress.

This Commission spoke with a representative from Indian and Northern Affairs, Social Services branch, regarding the exemption for individuals who settle a claim through IRSRC. The INAC regional office follows the regulations of the province. For Saskatchewan, the Minister of Social Services of the Province sets these regulations. That ministry has been renamed the Department of Community Resources and Employment.

IRSRC ADR Help Line
1-800-816-7293



If a person is on social assistance and receives any substantial amount of money, whether from a lottery or a settlement such as that from the residential schools, \$10,000 of that money will be considered exempt for "pain and suffering." Any amount above that will be divided by the amount the person would normally need per month and then he or she will be expected to be off social assistance for that length of time.

If the person who receives the settlement is on social assistance and decides to give the money to grandchildren the department considers the settlement money to be given "for future needs of the claimant" and therefore, Social Services can ask that the money be recaptured, including liquidating any purchases that might have been made with the money. Some of the claim above the \$10,000 can be used for counseling services. Each case is to be looked at on an individual basis.

Each time the government is in the position of giving compensation for past wrongs, a new decree must be made. In the case of the compensation to the Japanese, the amounts given out were smaller and the Japanese were allowed to keep all of their settlements.

Recommendation 3.1

This Commission recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan, specifically the Minister of Community Resources and Employment, review this regulation with a view to increasing the amount of exemption for those on social assistance who receive a settlement from the Government of Canada for abuse suffered during their residential school experience and that the Government of Canada also reconsiders their position to a cap on their settlement.

It is important to point out that the causes of violent behaviour are not excuses. To find those responsible and need treatment is not to forgive or excuse their behaviour. Instead it shows a need for them to face their own behaviour. This behaviour must be understood in relation to the community. For example, Dr. Eric Young, deputy chief medical health officer and director of communicable disease for Saskatchewan Health, wrote this about studies in Prince Albert and Regina:

I understand that an increasing number of individuals such as social workers, police officers, judges, public health and addiction workers, etc. are becoming aware that an individual and his or her crime related to a personal addiction needs to be understood in this broader context. If society's goal is to help persons, who have suffered severely in childhood and who now have an addiction, to become emotionally, psychologically and physically healthy and productive members of that same society, then one could question whether their criminalization for "possession for



personal use” of currently illicit drugs (or for non-violent crimes done as a consequence of their addiction) and consequent enforced suffering and degradation will accomplish this.

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, (2001c) reports:

- Rates of spousal homicide among Aboriginal women were more than eight times higher than for non-Aboriginal women. Aboriginal men had rates of spousal homicide 18 times higher than non-Aboriginal men.
- Experiencing severe, potentially life-threatening violence (beaten, choked, threatened with a gun or knife, or sexually assaulted) was more common among Aboriginal victims. Almost one half of Aboriginal victims of spousal violence (48 per cent) experienced potential life-threatening violence at the hands of a current or ex-partner compared with 31 per cent of non-Aboriginal victims.
- According to the 1999 General Social Survey, Aboriginal peoples were more likely than other Canadians to report being assaulted by a spouse in a five-year period.

A presentation by Karen Hay-Draude, a graduate student working on a study with Saskatchewan Health, gave startling results from Prince Albert. On the issue of family violence witnessed by injection drug users, 79.4 per cent of the participants reported witnessing violence at home while growing up. “Of the participants who witnessed violence in the home, 88.6 per cent witnessed violence between their parents or the adults who raised them, 67.7 per cent witnessed violence between their parents and their siblings, and 55.7 per cent witnessed violence between their parents and their parents’ friends.”

The problem of violence in a First Nations or Metis community, or any other community, must not be ignored. The consequences of violence are devastating.

Sometimes the victims of crime, if they do not receive the adequate help they need at the time, they can become tomorrow’s offenders. (Speaker, La Ronge Community Dialogue)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Commission heard many stories about the consequences of violence and abuse in First Nations and Metis communities. Many communities saw violence, domestic violence in particular, as one of the most serious problems in their communities. It is more often men who perpetrate violence against women and children.



The extent of domestic violence among First Nations and Metis families is widely known. The Departments of Justice and Corrections and Public Safety stated:

Some commentators have suggested that levels of family violence in Canadian Aboriginal communities have reached epidemic proportions. Aboriginal peoples are more likely than other Canadians to report violence by a spouse (20 per cent compared to 7 per cent). Moreover, Aboriginal women are victimized to a greater degree than all other populations – 25 per cent of Aboriginal women report being victimized, which is twice the rate of Aboriginal men and three times the rate of non-Aboriginal women and men.

Further, the Canada West Foundation (Hanselman, 2001) found that Aboriginal families are more likely to experience domestic violence than are non-Aboriginal families. In a general social survey in Saskatoon and Regina, 70 per cent of the single parents reported violence in a previous relationship.

RCMP statistics given to the Commission for 2002-2003 in Saskatchewan show the following:

- Reported spousal assault cases for 2002
Male offender – 1,111 reported
Female offender – 139 reported
- Reported Spousal Assault cases for 2003
Male offender – 940 reported
Female offender – 145 reported

It should be noted that these are estimates and do not include city or municipal police numbers.

People often remain in an abusive relationship or return to such a relationship in which there is violence out of love and in the hope that the abuser will change. Some return out of fear for themselves, fear for their children or fear of poverty. Some come back because they have no support from family or community to live elsewhere.

Bruce Wood, trainer and co-author of *Moving Towards the Light (2002)*, delivers family violence guidance for First Nations and Metis people in Saskatoon. He feels that training and treatment for women, as well as for men, on family violence is lacking. He also feels that women are not being listened to when requesting help. For example, when women say they love their partners and want to stay in the relationship, or when women claim to be violent themselves, they can be revictimized if they are made to feel stupid for wanting to remain with their partner or if they want to address their violent behaviour and no programming is available to address it. A change in attitude is needed in society to assist with changing the abusive behaviour of both men and women.

Contact Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan for its new free publication *A Guide to the Law for Saskatchewan Women*.
Tel: 306/653-1868
www.plea.org



A problem raised at the dialogues was delays in police responses to violence. In one northern community a woman said that if her husband, a non-Aboriginal, calls the police, the response is much quicker than when she, a Metis woman, calls. She saw this as discrimination. A woman in a rural area told about calling the police for help, being routed to the Regina call centre and waiting hours for police to arrive. Ongoing training in the seriousness of domestic violence needs to be delivered to all police. The high cause of death of police due to responding to domestic violence situations supports the need for more effort in this area.

Women and Violence

The violence against women and children continues to be at unacceptably high levels in some of our communities, and attitudes towards victims and offenders have been slow to change. The community and family members often blame the victim for the violent behaviour that is excused, and continued efforts to change attitudes and prevent violence, and ensure women's and children's safety, and to hold the offenders accountable while providing treatment to stop the cycle of violence is needed. (Speaker, Metis Women's Council Inc. presentation)

The systemic discrimination and prejudice that has existed, has existed against First Nations and Metis women since the first colonist landed. This is most aptly illustrated by the document where the Hudson Bay Company recorded the name of my great-great-aunt with a capital E for "squaw." [Squaw is the English mispronunciation of the Cree term for woman, Esqwew.] It doesn't seem to matter whether you are Cree or Blackfoot or Mi'kmaq, or whatever, you are still called a "squaw" or "a dirty Squaw" or "a lazy Squaw." (Speaker, Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women presentation)

From the teachings of oral tradition, it is known that First Nations women were the equals of men. They were respected for their wisdom and their role as mothers. With the destruction of language and spiritual and family practices through colonialization, legislation and racism, the respected role of women has declined. This has placed First Nations and Metis women in a vulnerable position.

Erica Beaudin of the First Nations Women's Council told the history of the First Nations woman to the Commission at the presentation from the Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Council:

There is a history when we talk about where family violence comes from and where the dysfunction in some of our families comes from, because precontact in society was deeply rooted in the structures.



First Nations people's ideas of family is different from the common nuclear family found in the mainstream European world. Indian families are made up of extended relatives, creating a base of knowledge and strength. They lived in hunting and gathering societies, structured on communalism.

The division of labour was based on gender. There was men's work and women's work. Both gender roles were equally important to the survival of the people, therefore there was no male domination.

Traditional Indian society began to fall apart with the arrival of the Europeans and their economic system of capitalism. This was characterized by inequality, especially male domination. The new family structure was the nuclear family, and society was based on individualism, which goes against our Treaty rights, which are always based on the collective.

The process of colonialism has far-reaching negative effects on all indigenous people, but it had a particularly negative effect on indigenous women. They were exploited because of their race and their gender. Women were exploited for their labour during the fur trade, as well as abused sexually, and oftentimes left to fend for themselves and their children.

When people are colonized, they often internalize the violence that is extended toward them. Self-hatred is just one expression of this violence. This self-hatred was systemically and consistently taught in residential schools to several generations of First Nations people.

Now Aboriginal women make up one of the lowest social and economic groups in Canada. This translates into a position of powerlessness.

A submission to the Commission by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations said although there is more information being circulated about the traditional position, First Nations women are still ignored by many who hold the power. The Federation recommended the following:

The way in which society views and treats women, and its perceptions of First Nations' worth and value need to be addressed. This change can be accomplished by raising awareness within mainstream society. Further, the First Nations community needs to place a higher value on women (no matter what lifestyle) and children. The awareness can occur in every level of mainstream society, including courts, media, in schools and homes.



When you deal with justice there are no doors to go to. You're all alone. You have to find the door yourself, you have to open the door yourself, you have to hold the door open for somebody else. It is too much to expect the people with the least resources, the least amount of self-confidence, the least amount of everything to have to go and do all of those things. (Speaker, Victims and Violence Roundtable)

Lack of respect for women erodes self-worth and power.

I was taught not to value myself as an Aboriginal woman, and that I was a second-class citizen. So how, without the self-esteem or the confidence, how do you stand up for your rights? Where do you get the courage from? Because you'll be knocked down again. Or maybe there is something in your past that you're ashamed of, and so you allow that to eat at you, you know, and you don't stand - chances are we don't stand up for our rights, right? We have to change the attitude towards ourselves and how we treat ourselves has to change. (Speaker, Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women presentation)

The Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women in its presentation recommended that Aboriginal women be appointed to positions of power. This was also the message of Chief Connie Big Eagle of Ocean Man First Nation:

I think in order to move forward you need to involve the women, the First Nations women, in development of some of these programs. You can't allow us to sit as advisory any more. We have to be part of that planning, part of that designing, and part of that implementation. So that's where the true success I think will come, is when you include us in all of those developments. (Spoken during presentation by Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Council)

The Metis community agreed with the idea of fully including women:

Women's experience is needed ... and needs must be included in designing new programs, and they must be supported in full, and have active participation in each stage of development and operation. (Speaker, Metis Women's Council Inc. presentation)

The obvious must not be ignored – the voice of women must be included and given weight in decisions that affect them. And most decisions do affect them!



Children and Violence

Children suffer from violence in two ways – either by witnessing it or by being direct victims of it in their homes, a place where they should be the safest. The Departments of Justice and Corrections and Public Safety reported that in households at the national level where domestic violence occurred, children witnessed violence in 47 per cent of First Nations, Metis and Inuit households compared to 37 per cent for non-Aboriginal households. In up to 10 per cent of these cases children were harmed or threatened.

No Place For Violence, Canadian Aboriginal Alternatives says, “The long term effects of childhood maltreatment have been reported to include depression, substance abuse, school problems and lowered self-esteem, as well as self-destructive and aggressive behaviours.” (Proulx & Perrault, 2000)

According to Statistics Canada, witnessing family violence is linked to negative behaviour in children. Children exposed to adults or teenagers fighting in the home are more likely to show physical aggression, indirect aggression, emotional disorders and hyperactivity. They are also more likely to commit delinquent acts against property. (Dauvergne & Johnson, 2001)

Children and youth with this type of bullying history are at greater risk to exhibit negative behaviours that actualize into anti-social, destructive behaviour that once again puts them into the criminal system. We’re talking about a breakdown of the family here, the breakdown of our traditional types of family systems. (Speaker, Saskatchewan First Nations Women’s Council presentation)

Violence in family lives of children is connected to violence in the schoolyard, among such children themselves and with their peers. Children who witness violence at home do not learn to deal with conflict through negotiation. Rather, they come to believe that problems are best solved through aggression. Wendy Craig, associate professor in psychology, Queen’s University, told a Violence and Aggression Conference in Saskatoon about the chain linking power and aggression.

Recommendation 3.2

This Commission recommends that education systems, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and Metis Nation – Saskatchewan, and others, support the introduction in kindergarten and Grade 1 of: non-violence alternatives, information about violence in its many forms, the effects of such violence and solutions thereto, including the responsibility shared by all to eliminate violence, and that it be reinforced in subsequent grades.

According to Statistics Canada, children are frequently the unintended observers of violence between spouses. Among those cases where violence occurred after separation, children witnessed at least one violent occurrence in 50 per cent of cases. (Hotton, 2001)



As of April 26, 2004

- 166 vehicles have been seized as part of the VISE program
 - 130 released on john school program
- (Saskatchewan Justice and Corrections & Public Safety, 2004)

Sexual exploitation of children is a growing problem in First Nations and Metis communities in Saskatchewan's cities, according to the Legislature's Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children through the Sex Trade. In June 2000 the committee presented its interim report to the Legislative Assembly. It found that there were 261 child prostitutes in Saskatoon and more than 300 in Regina. A high percentage of these children were First Nations or Metis. Sexual acts with these children are an abuse of power over children.

Having become aware of this problem, agencies and governments are working to eliminate it. One aspect of the provincial government's strategy to reduce sexual exploitation of children and youth has been the Vehicle Impoundment Against Sexual Exploitation (VISE) program. Police can seize a vehicle being driven in the course of committing a Criminal Code offense related to sexual exploitation. The introduction of a new section to the *Highway Traffic Act* also made it an offence to repeatedly drive or park a vehicle in a sex trade area.

It is necessary to note that not every child who witnesses violence will become an offender. There is enough research, however, to know that violence can harm a child's ability to succeed and to hope. "Trauma, chronic conditions and life challenges all assault hope. One way of eventually coping is to stop hoping," says Dr. Ronna Jevne in *Magnifying Hope: Shrinking Hopelessness*. Her paper talks of the importance of hope in our lives. She says, "I think of hope simply as a small voice in the heart of each of us that yearns to say 'yes' to life. If nurtured and strengthened it invites, encourages, pulls, pushes, cajoles, and seduces us to go forward ... Persons who have repetitively had trust violated appear to have more difficulty sustaining hope. The earlier the violation, the more severe the developmental delay of hope. Without the experience of hope, people do not feel safe in the context of uncertainty and will do what they need to do to feel some level of control over their own life."

Nutrition

Nutrition is something rarely discussed in relation to violence. Poor nutrition becomes a daily problem for children of families struggling with poverty, substance abuse and other issues. Meal times may be unpredictable. Food choices may be based on advertising or on cost. Meals may be obtained outside the home, if at all. All this can have consequences for the behaviour of children and adults. Several researchers have found that a change in diet can reduce anti-social behaviour.

You can tell the health of a nation by the number of members in jail. (Eric Shirt, founder of Poundmaker's Treatment Centre, Alberta)

In *Diet, ADHD & Behavior*, (Jacobson & Schardt, 1999) a recommendation was put forward about children and nutrition:



Government, private agencies, and health practitioners concerned about children with ADHD and other behavioral problems should acknowledge the potential for diet to affect behavior and should advise parents to consider modifying their child's diet as a first means of treatment.

"Child hunger increases the likelihood of poor school performance, of behavioural problems, of school drop out and of criminal activity ... Research has also shown that every dollar spent on children's welfare and education creates future savings in health care, criminal justice and welfare costs. Canada remains the only western industrialized country without a national school nutrition program." (Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation, 2003)

Recommendation 3.3

This Commission recommends that all schools, with a high number of children who are living in poverty, implement a school nutrition program.

Children and Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is usually used for disobedience or situations where there is a threat to a person or to property. Some believe that children will not learn obedience to authority unless it is instilled through punishment.

The authors of *Child Corporal Punishment*, Watkinson and McGillivray, say that research has shown a relationship between receiving corporal punishment and showing aggression towards siblings and parents. This was discovered by studying pre-schoolers, school-aged children and adolescents. Children who are physically punished are more than twice as likely to attack a brother or sister repeatedly than those not physically punished. In addition, their article says that youth physically punished as children are three times as likely to assault non-family members as those who were not. Adults frequently punished physically as children are far more likely to assault spouses and children than those who were not.

The United Nations in 1994 recognized a need to protect children when it passed the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Corporal punishment was deemed to be incompatible with the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Canada is one of 192 countries who approved it. The human rights of children and the standards to which governments must aspire to realize these rights are outlined in this Treaty. The Treaty reads:

The Convention provides a universal set of standards to be adhered to by all countries. It reflects a new vision of the child. Children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and are the subject of their own rights. The Convention offers a vision of the child as an individual and a member of a family and a community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development.



Recognizing children's rights in this way firmly sets a focus on the whole child. Previously seen as negotiable, the child's needs have become legally binding rights. No longer the passive recipient of benefits, the child has become the subject or holder of rights.

Nevertheless, the Supreme Court of Canada in January 2004 upheld the use of spanking children but held "... Corporal punishment of children under two years is harmful to them, and has no corrective value given the cognitive limitations of children under two years of age. Corporal punishment of teenagers is harmful, because it can induce aggressive or antisocial behaviour. Corporal punishment using objects, such as rulers or belts, is physically and emotionally harmful. Corporal punishment which involves slaps or blows to the head is harmful. These types of punishment, we may conclude, will not be reasonable..." (*Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law v. Canada (Attorney General)*, [2004] S.C.J. No. 6).

This Commission believes parents are responsible for their children and that there are many non-violent ways to encourage good behaviour from children.

Recommendation 3.4

This Commission recommends that all governments promote the use of non-violent alternatives to child correction. Steps must be taken to ensure laws, policy and practice comply with the direction provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Chapters 2 and 8 of this report have a strong focus on children and youth.

Men and Violence

I see our men suffering today. The men are being robbed of their dignity, their spirituality, their morals. Our prisons are overpopulated with men. Our streets are overpopulated with men, homeless. The men have suffered a long time, and their oppression, their violence, their actions, their attitude [are taken out] against their opposite partner, towards women, mothers, aunts, grandmothers. (Speaker, Treaty Four Governance Institute)

Meadow Lake Tribal Council developed the *Wounded Warrior* program for men to deal with family violence in the community. *Wounded Warrior* was designed for men who abuse their partners. It is a support and healing program to help men talk about family violence and their sense of frustration. Once the men felt comfortable in the group, they would talk about abuse, their identity as a male, their worth as an adult male in a community, their frustration with lack of employment opportunities and the little value given to what they had to offer. (Meadow Lake Community Dialogue)

A report on domestic violence reviews characteristics of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cases from the Winnipeg Family Court:

The majority of Aboriginal accused (66 per cent) were on social assistance and the majority of the non-Aboriginal accused (53 per cent) were employed. These statistics reflect the tremendously disadvantaged economic status of Aboriginal people in Canada today. It also reflects the reality, observed in most criminal justice studies, that the majority of people who come to the attention of the law are people of low socio-economic status. (Ursel, 2001)

In their book, *Moving Towards the Light*, B. Wood and J. Robson find that most men realize that to let go of violence and abuse means taking another look at their violence towards women. This can be threatening. If people feel there is little to their identity beyond their negative qualities they will fear giving them up. The authors say they have met men who have established their identities around their violence. It fills an empty place inside. Some men would rather witness fear in others' eyes than not be noticed at all. They suggest:

Men must be given information on violence that concerns them. The information must be easy to understand. They must figure out the causes of violence and look at their ideas about women and previous victimization. They must examine their personal history and what they think about power and self-esteem.

First Nations and Metis men who are charged are likely to find treatment for domestic violence a condition of sentence. The Domestic Violence Treatment Options Court in North Battleford makes men attend treatment if they have admitted to domestic violence. If successful, the men may receive a conditional discharge. This program needs to be looked at to see if it is effective in providing safety for women and treatment for men.

When the Commission held a dialogue with the inmates at the Regina Correctional Centre, some men said, "Domestic abuse is a family problem, not something that can be solved by throwing someone in jail." Men at the jail felt that family treatment is required, but not only for the man while he is away from his family.

... this is where the Aboriginal are very unique in our concept of life. There was no young people, there was no Elders, there was just a way of life that we lived. There was no women's prison, there was no young people's prison. We all dealt with a problem in our community together. So

Where is the government support resources? Where is all these places where a man can go when he needs help? (Speaker, Black Lake Community Dialogue)



when we look at programming for ... into the transition and reintegration into the community, we can't segregate the youth, we can't segregate the women, we can't segregate the men from each other. (Speaker, inmates dialogue at Regina Correctional Centre)

In the dialogues the Commission was told that there is a lack of domestic violence treatment for men in the community, especially in Northern Saskatchewan. (A program is offered in La Ronge.) Communities expressed a need to add First Nations and Metis cultural beliefs into treatment for men.

Our penal systems or institutions are not meeting the needs of our Aboriginal people and assisting them to function in a healthy way once they are released. More men's programming is needed in these institutions based on our traditional and cultural teachings. (Speaker, Central Urban Metis Federation Inc. presentation)

Recommendation 3.5

This Commission recommends that there be greater consideration given to delivering domestic violence programs that focus on dealing with partners and families.

Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults

Elder abuse is the mistreatment of an older adult by someone that they should be able to rely on: a spouse, a child, another family member, a friend, or a paid caregiver. (Waterloo Region Committee on Elder Abuse, 2000)

National Survey on Abuse of the Elderly in Canada (Podnicks et al, 1990) says that four per cent of elderly Canadians living in private dwellings experience abuse and neglect. In the dialogues with community, concerns on issues for older adults were not raised. There is, seemingly, still much shame for a senior to admit that a relative is being abusive. The Caregiver Network in Ontario says there is a psychological consequence to being abused. Feelings of betrayal are overwhelming. Seniors are reluctant to report abuse because they do not want to see any harm come to their relative.

In First Nations and Métis cultures it is common for grandparents to take part or full responsibility for the care of grandchildren. However, lack of parenting skills for grandparents and parents who attended residential schools can make this task particularly difficult. Young people, male and female, who do not use protection when engaging in sexual relations, must be prepared to take responsibility for the result of their carelessness. Older adults deserve to be given the respect of choice to raise a grandchild rather than having to do so because a family member has

Examples of treatment programs can be found by contacting your local health district:

- Saskatoon: An Accountable Advocacy Program for Men Who Are Violent to Their Partners, also known as "Alternatives"
- Regina: Alternatives to Violence

Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism
(306) 359-9956.

dismissed their responsibility. However, if assistance is necessary outside of the circle of family and community, children have the right to good care, and help must be readily available from governments.

There is a Grandmother's Circle in Regina being funded by Health Canada doing research on urban Aboriginal grandmothers. Students from the First Nations University of Canada are assisting the Grandmothers. While the research is not yet finished, grandmothers raising children is found as one of the main issues. Two findings so far are that grandmothers have no legal recourse if the parents of the children they are raising decide to take the children back, and grandparents are unable to get the status of foster parents and are pressed financially. There is also a concern that there is no support for the grandmothers, such as talking circles or a drop-in centre.

Older adults in the First Nations and Metis community respected for their wisdom, knowledge of traditional culture and spirituality are often termed Elders. They are in demand to pass on their knowledge to future generations and to educate those who want to include cultural content in programs. This knowledge is being seen more often as equally valuable as formal education but the service is often expected without the comparable remuneration. Elders of the First Nations and Metis community deserve the respect of similar compensation given to other experts when asked upon by non-Aboriginal organizations to offer knowledge and advice.

VICTIMIZATION, SUICIDE AND HOPELESSNESS

I see many suicide attempts. I see successful suicides. I've seen women beaten, and I have seen children beaten ... the potential solution, can be aided by people from outside, but it has to be started from the people within this community. (Speaker, Black Lake Community Dialogue)

According to Saskatchewan Health, a person thinking about suicide is often unsure about doing it and simply wants to escape from a difficult situation. A person may be more likely to think of suicide or to take risks when under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

A document by Saskatchewan Learning (2000) says suicide rates have increased in most age groups over the past several decades. The most dramatic increases have been for adolescents and young adults. In Saskatchewan, suicide is one of the leading causes of death among youth.

Suicide is a major concern in many First Nations and Metis communities. The Canadian Criminal Justice Association (2000) reported suicide to be two to three times more common among Aboriginal peoples and five to six times more prevalent among Aboriginal youth.

The number of deaths in Saskatchewan in 2002 by suicide was 108. Firearms were used in 33 of these deaths. This was 1.2 per cent of the deaths in Saskatchewan and a slight increase over 2001. It is, however, a decrease from 2000 when the numbers of deaths were 129, with firearms used in 39. (Sask. Health, 2002)



In her paper, *Magnifying Hope: Shrinking Hopelessness*, Dr. Ronna Jevne made the following observation:

First, without hope, you die. It is that simple. There are many ways to die, but without hope, minimally you die on the inside. Many are taking their own lives. In Alberta, if you are male, over the age of 23 and under 84, you are more likely to die by your own hand than in a car accident. Members of the First Nations are disproportionately represented among those taking their own lives.

Suicide is a community problem that needs a response from parents, health and education professionals, and other care providers. Over the past decade or so Saskatchewan Health has provided funding to child and youth mental health services in regional health authorities to deliver suicide prevention, intervention and postvention services with its community partners. One person speaking with the Commission suggested that some suicides are uninvestigated deaths due to drugs and asked that First Nations and Métis leaders make youth a priority.

CULTURAL CONTENT IN PROGRAMMING

The importance of respecting the cultures of First Nations and Metis people in programming was stressed in Commission dialogues. In Winnipeg, the Native Clan Organization began a sex offender treatment program in 1987. Before it began to include Aboriginal content, there was a high dropout rate by First Nations and Metis offenders. Lawrence Ellerby, a psychologist and facilitator for the program, says, "Attending to cultural issues and incorporating healing practices into sexual offender treatment has facilitated the process of change and supported men to work towards balance in their lives ... offenders cannot be viewed in isolation but need to be considered in the larger context of their connections with others, such as their family and community and with the land or Mother Earth." While this approach increased participation of First Nations and Metis offenders, their relapse rate was similar to that of non-Aboriginal offenders. (Proulx & Perrault, 2000)

The Commission toured the Healing Unit at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary. The unit, under the Pathways pilot program, is staffed with Elders, Aboriginal program officers, and Native liaison officers. Treatment is offered under: Ma Ma Wi, ASAP (Aboriginal Substance Abuse Program), FLIP (Family Living Improvement Program), Native studies, Aboriginal sex offender treatment Program and In Search of Your Warrior.

Elders have improved the lives of imprisoned men and women as well as those in the community. Indeed, federal programs, such as In Search of Your Warrior, have relied heavily on traditional teachings passed down from Elders.

The importance of having healthy Elders is significant as individuals in Elder positions at correctional institutions [and elsewhere] have a great deal of influence over the



people they work with, many of whom are quite vulnerable. Conversely, there are some incarcerated individuals who are quite controlling and manipulative who can easily take advantage of and exploit an individual in an Elder position who is not really a Spiritual Elder or who is an Elder struggling with personal issues and behaviours. Therefore, it is important that these individuals be credible, skilled and gifted. (Proulx & Perrault, 2000)

Certainly, the same can be said of any professionals treating violent behaviour.

Most violence treatment programs for men deal with anger management, safety planning, parenting and sexuality. They teach skills that can replace violent responses. In addition, the Commission was told of the importance of treatment for First Nations and Metis people which includes discussions on the effects of colonization, residential schools, parental abuse and racism. First Nations teachings, such as acknowledgement of a Higher Power, the traditional and spiritual roles of men and women, and ceremonies such as the Sweat Lodge, can also be part of the program. There can also be individual and group counselling. The Metis Nation – Saskatchewan wants to provide Metis-specific treatment. There is a strong feeling that treatment given to First Nations and Metis people be provided by First Nations and Metis people.

The Commission also listened to a presentation from the Assembly of First Nations Christian Ministers. They are committed to healing for First Nations people based on Christianity. They were concerned that First Nations youth and adults who are in the justice system are not being provided with the spiritual support from First Nations people with a Christian perspective who could also provide cultural content and community support. They expressed a willingness to do so.

Northern Saskatchewan

Women of the Dawn reported that First Nations and Metis communities in northern Saskatchewan complained that criminal justice solutions to family violence do not work for them. Usually the offender is flown out of the community to serve a sentence in the South. There the offender may or may not receive treatment. Removed from the community the offender loses many supports. Too, a Cree Elder in a southern prison may not be helpful to a Dene offender because the Dene language and culture are different. Upon release, an offender may return to the community, but may not be accepted. Family support will be lost and without it violence may resurface.

It just seems to me that we're dealing with the same people all over again. But I also see that eventually they get into a real, real major crime because putting them in jail doesn't help them. When they come out, they're more violent towards their partner, even if it's a different partner.
(Speaker, Victims and Violence Roundtable)



The submission from Metis Family & Community Justice Service Inc. recommended more funding and training for victim services in rural and northern communities, with a focus on hiring Metis people.

Recommendation 3.6

This Commission recommends that all levels of government ensure that family violence programming for men and women is supported and more available.

Recommendation 3.7

This Commission recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan develop public awareness materials related to violence specifically suited for the needs of northern residents. To ensure that material is suited for needs in the North, there must be consultation from northern residents, including young people.

RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AND VICTIMIZATION

In the ordinary response to violence and victimization, a victim and an offender are identified. The offender is charged and put through the criminal justice system. The offender may be sentenced and ordered to take drug and alcohol treatment or family violence counselling. The offender is confronted with the problem in a way that can cause defensive behaviour and possibly anger towards the victim.

[To focus on] safety issues for women and children when offenders remain in the community, with little or no supervision, and no police presence, and outdated ideas about women make judgments unfair. (Speaker, Metis Women's Council Inc. presentation)

If applicable, family violence treatment must be linked to substance abuse. The Urban Native Family Violence Project in Lethbridge found that when violence got worse, alcohol was the trigger, according to 56 per cent of the women. Alcohol was named as a factor in their victimization as children by 46 per cent of them. The Women of the Dawn in their presentation said there was immediate need for an urban, long-term, residential, family drug and alcohol treatment and research service. It should also deal with violence. Acceptance of individual responsibility that would encourage participation was also necessary. They felt programs must be targeted at younger adults, teens and children.

The dialogues pointed to a need for proper training of all people working with violence programming and victimization. They should consult Elders, police, victim service workers, teachers and others in the community.

a) Sentencing Circles

That's why I said when you put a person into a sentencing circle, he has to make some commitments in there with our Creator. (Speaker, Treaty Four Governance Institute Community Dialogue)

The Metis Women's Council was concerned about sentencing circles to deal with domestic violence. The council said women were troubled about participating. Safety was a primary issue. Speaking to the offender in public can be terrifying. The offender may threaten the victim before or during the meeting, or punish her afterwards. Some women find it difficult to tell their story because they receive little support from other group members who lack awareness of the consequences of family violence and sexual assault.

Another view was presented about victims and offenders attending sentencing circles together. Properly conducted, circles can be a helpful experience for the victim, the offender and their families. While the current justice system allows victims to read their victim impact statement in court, the victim seldom gets an opportunity to speak freely. This can delay recovery. In circles, victims have an opportunity and are even encouraged to tell their stories in the company of supporters. This can help the victim recover by removing shame and blame. In a circle, when an offender faces the victim, the usual result is an apology, which is valuable for the victim. Don Meikle, formerly with Restorative Circles Initiative in Saskatoon, says circles can fail when the victim is not supported before, during and right after this traumatic event. An aftercare program is needed, he says.

The Prairie Region of the National Parole Board has reached the same conclusion. The Board conducts some community-assisted parole hearings. They are led by an Elder using the circle concept. On a few occasions, these hearings have included the female victim of a male inmate. Healing between victim and offender was evident. It was more evident when a lot of work was done with both parties, separately and before the hearing, and there was support for them at the hearing. Rupert Ross in his book, *Dancing with a Ghost*, suggests another approach – two Elders, one for the victim and another for the offender, who provide private counselling, and convene a circle when they feel cleansing has occurred. This avoids public confrontation of the two parties. (Ross, 1992)

b) Mediation

Mediation is another way to address domestic violence. This involves one or two mediators as well as the victim and the offender. Mediators must be highly skilled. The purpose of the meeting(s) is to work out a solution suitable to both parties. Mediation gives the accused person the opportunity to responsibly discuss and resolve the incident. If the parties agree, the mediator can facilitate an agreement between victim and offender.

Mediation is not a new approach. Saskatoon Community Mediation Services, for example, has been operating since 1983. Their purpose is to work toward and

Restorative Circles
Initiative
206-119-4th Avenue South
Saskatoon, SK
S7K 5X2
Phone (306) 978-4646
Fax (306) 978-4647



advocate for means by which people can live in more respectful relationships, institutions can foster more supportive interactions and the community can be meaningfully involved in developing a peaceful and safe environment for all people. This is consistent with the vision of the Commission.

While their opinion is not shared by all, researchers Jo-Anne Wemmers and Marisa Canuto (2002), advise against mediation in the following cases:

- The victim has suffered injury.
- A gun was used to threaten the victim.
- The violent behaviour is repetitive.
- There is not equality of bargaining power between parties.

But it's controversial. I mean I've heard debates on both sides in terms of restorative justice with sexual abuse cases, you know, but I guess my feeling is, it depends on the person and it depends what the victim is wanting, and the supports that are there. (Speaker, Roundtable on Victims and Violence)

If choosing mediation or a sentencing circle, preparing victims for a meeting between victim and offender as well as follow-up counselling is essential.

c) *Victims of Domestic Violence Act*

The legislated response in Saskatchewan to violence is a pro-charge policy in cases of domestic violence. This is intended to stop violence at the time of crisis. When a violent act has taken place, charges are laid, even if the victim is opposed; it is always up to the police and Crown prosecutors to decide whether to lay charges, based on the evidence. This is a strong statement against violence. Many people working to eliminate violence praise this policy.

Another view of the policy is that simply removing and treating individuals does not solve a problem that belongs to the community. Many people in the dialogues asked to have justice returned to the community. The victim and offender, with help from the community, need to see their behaviour in a broader context. It removes people from the community and can cause isolation and possibly hostile feelings towards the victim. As well, the offender is not held responsible to the community.

The seriousness of domestic violence has resulted in the *Victims of Domestic Violence Act*. In its presentation, Justice and Corrections and Public Safety described options for victims as follows:



The police apply for an emergency intervention order to have an offender removed from the home or be present while either party removes property from the home. A special Justice of the Peace issues emergency intervention orders after looking at:

- The nature of the violence.
- The history of the violence by the offender against the victim.
- The immediate danger to persons or property.
- The best interests of the victim and any child present.

If the situation is not serious enough for an emergency intervention order, and it is believed the case can wait until a court hearing, a victim can apply to the Court of Queen's Bench for a victim's assistance order. This order contains all of the conditions of an emergency intervention order. In addition, a judge may order an offender to give money to the victim, give a victim temporary possession of personal property and forbid an offender from talking to the victim, the victim's family, co-workers or boss.

Another option for families under the Act is the warrant permitting entry. An offender may try to prevent people from contacting the victim. A Justice of the Peace can issue a warrant that allows a police officer to enter a building to check if this is happening. A warrant permitting entry can also be used to remove a victim in cases where medical attention may be necessary for the purpose of assisting or examining the victim.

These are temporary but immediate responses to victims' needs in times of crisis. There is a concern that First Nations and Metis women are not using the Act. There are also some difficulties with the application of the Act, particularly on reserves. It has been said that women on reserves have no access to the matrimonial home as the First Nations band owns the property. It is also not clear if the province has the right to enforce its orders on reserves, which fall under federal authority. Some bands have addressed this problem by passing bylaws stating that the *Victims of Violence Act* applies on-reserve. These issues need immediate attention.

Recommendation 3.8

This Commission recommends all levels of government immediately resolve the jurisdictional dispute around the *Victims of Domestic Violence Act* on Indian reserves.

d) Shelters

So for me, it's very important that people see that they have to be visible in our communities, and right now we have nobody — I don't have no victim services to go to, to say that this is where you can take your child if your child's



According to Statistics Canada during one year ending March 31, 2000, some 57,200 women and 39,200 children were admitted to 448 shelters across Canada. The majority were fleeing violence at home. Three-quarters of the children were under 10 years. (Dauvergne & Johnson, 2001)

being victimized, because you identify it but you still don't know how to help your child, because you still don't even know how to help yourself. (Speaker, Black Lake Community Dialogue)

In the North there is an acute lack of shelters for victims. There are shelters in Prince Albert, La Ronge and Meadow Lake, but isolated communities have no shelters. As a result, many victims remain in violent and unhealthy relationships.

[There is a need for] a shelter in this area, so that families are not broken up, so that we are not trying to send our women south. That is not successful for the family, for the area or for the woman, because the woman gets torn away from her family and her supports. There is no way of doing the healing that far apart. (Speaker, Black Lake Community Dialogue)

At the same time, a concern was expressed to the Commission over setting up a safe shelter in a small community. There would be no anonymity for the victim and the perpetrator would likely be living in the community.

Shelters are sometimes criticized as not solving the problem, or only partially addressing the problem. The reality is that many women and children both on and off-reserve require the protective services provided by women's shelters. Many owe their lives to shelters, and have brought about drastic changes in their lives with the support of shelters. The need for shelters will be eliminated only after family violence has been eliminated. (Kiyoshyk, 2001)

First Nations politics on reserves were raised. If a First Nations member needs to travel to a shelter outside the community, the First Nation must pay travel costs. The First Nation must also pay for the member's stay at the shelter. The YWCA told of the problem with payment:

So for a woman fleeing domestic violence to go into a transition house, she has to come into the city ... So to get authorization for a woman to stay in a transition house, we have to get the band to pay for it, and that completely breaches a woman's confidentiality because, I mean, realistically, I mean, I've got to call a band financial assistance worker and get her to authorize her stay ... And they don't get the assistance that they require and deserve because their stays are shorter, due to the funding problem that exists because of that. (Speaker, YWCA presentation)



Some women also complained about band politics being a problem when they request help. The Chief and council are often men who may not understand the seriousness of the issue. The request has to be made to a band office employee who may also be a family member. It was suggested at a dialogue that if First Nations governments were held accountable for funding accommodation at a shelter, domestic violence issues might be taken more seriously.

Recommendation 3.9

This Commission recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan or First Nation Councils or Metis Nation – Saskatchewan, whichever is appropriate, ensure that transportation is provided to women seeking shelter from violent situations and that adequate funding be provided for their stay.

Recommendation 3.10

This Commission recommends that:

- 3.10.1 There be funding from all governments to increase the number of beds available for women seeking safety from domestic violence situations;**
 - 3.10.2. Funders providing resources to shelters ensure sufficient funds for the agencies to provide more training to their staff and more outreach to communities.**
-

Maria Hendrika from the Regina Transition House said:

We are not making violence go away. We are giving the victims, or the survivors, if you prefer to use the term, some tools. Hopefully, tools that will help them make some decisions that will facilitate some change in their lives so down the road they aren't put in a place where they will be victimized again. (Board of directors from the Provincial Association of Transition Houses [PATH] presentation)

The YWCA in Saskatoon expressed concern to the Commission that its shelter staff is not given enough information when a woman is brought to the shelter.

But some of our concerns include City of Saskatoon police dropping off women to stay at the shelter and not providing adequate information to shelter staff, so that we can help the woman to the best of our ability. (Speaker, Saskatoon YWCA Crisis Shelter)

Infinity House in Saskatoon is another safe house for women. The staff said that more information would help to assess and assist a woman brought to the facility. It said there is little consultation before a housing requirement is placed in a court order.

For a listing of shelters see A Guide to the Law for Saskatchewan Women. To get it this free publication, contact PLEA, 300-201 21st Street East, Saskatoon, S7K 0B8, (306) 653-1868 or <http://www.plea.org>



Recommendation 3.11

This Commission recommends that agencies providing shelter services to women and police services meet to find a solution to the issue of sharing information within the parameters of the privacy legislation.

Unfortunately, these recommendations do not eliminate violence. Leaders and members of First Nations and Metis communities must take more responsibility to eliminate the problem. It is also necessary for lawyers, judges, prosecutors and police to receive sensitivity training on domestic and sexual violence issues.

e) Integrated Services

A report published by the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada and Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *Family Violence in First Nations and Metis Communities: A Review*, states:

There is an urgent need to establish multi-disciplinary teams in developing a community approach to facilitate a formal networking system among the health and social service providers working in First Nations and Metis communities. Forums need to be held to discuss these partnerships ... For example, in many communities the health centres provide space for conducting healing circles, men's therapy groups, women's groups, and other activities such as art therapy. However, adequate resources need to be in place. (Kiyoshyk, 2001)

Teams made up of several disciplines have been usually referred to as integrated services. Such services, experience has shown, reduce costs and improve benefits for the client.

Infinity House in Saskatoon told the Commission about its partnership of services. Trina LaRose, assistant director, Infinity House, spoke at the presentation by the Central Urban Metis Federation Inc. She said Infinity House holds inter-agency intervention meetings with a client, the client's counsellor and other agencies. A child protection worker, a family worker or a probation officer might represent these other agencies.

The Commission is aware of an effort within the Saskatchewan government and within the community to integrate services for violence. Two examples are:

- Saskatchewan Justice co-chairs the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence with the Department of Community Resources and Employment. This Committee supports an integrated approach to family violence and directs application of the Government Family Violence Policy Framework and Strategy. It also oversees Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnership Solutions to Violence (STOPS), a program also supported by Saskatchewan Health.

- Regina Police Service, in partnership with Family Service Regina, has a domestic violence unit which brings together agencies that share information on client and community needs.

WHAT WORKS – BUILDING ON SUCCESS

The Commission received a lot of information on programs for victims. A few of them are presented here because they may be helpful to readers and because good work should be celebrated. This does not discount the need for more services.

Families and Schools Together is a violence prevention program in which families gather at school and take part in research-based activities designed to strengthen families and increase parents' influence. Families participate in eight weekly, team-led sessions to advance social participation, improve academic success and enhance healthy lifestyles. This approach helps parents to become important supports for their child and full partners with the school. A two-year, monthly, parent-led program called Fastworks follows the eight-week series. Data on more than 1,000 families show improvement in children's behaviour, family functioning and family-school involvement. Family Service Saskatoon and Catholic Family Services of Saskatoon offer the program.

Catholic Family Services sponsors a program called *Children Exposed to Violence in Families*. It seeks to introduce children to non-violent problem solving and helps them to develop a safety plan. The group meets weekly for eight weeks. Funding comes from Victim Services, Saskatchewan Justice. Catholic Family Services also delivers a program to assist parents less than 22 years of age who are in full-time education.

HOPE, which stands for *Honouring Ourselves and People Everywhere*, is a program in Prince Albert. It works to create a more peaceful school environment. HOPE lessons are delivered weekly to the whole school. School lessons shut down for an hour and everyone – teachers, students, even the janitor – attends a HOPE lesson. The Parent Council has HOPE lessons as well.

The *Circle Project Association Inc.* runs in Regina. This program supports families and helps to strengthen at risk First Nations, Metis and non-Aboriginal families as they work through the consequences of family violence.

In Saskatoon, families dealing with domestic violence can access the *Family Healing Circle Lodge* for support. It offers a support group and counselling for men involved in family violence. In addition, this program offers support to victims through counselling and assistance in legal solutions.

In the Battlefords, victims, children, offenders and their families can get support from a family violence program run by *Kanaweyimik Child and Family Services Inc.*

The *Prince Albert Grand Council Women's Commission* provides healing from the consequences of family violence with a holistic approach. The program is available to families in the 12 First Nations communities of the Prince Albert Grand Council.



Aboriginal Resource Officers work in Regina, Saskatoon, North Battleford, Prince Albert, La Ronge and Yorkton.

Operation Help is a non-traditional, non-judgmental way of looking at the victimization of women in Saskatoon's sex trade. The support circle is set up the night police conduct their sweeps. However, instead of being arrested, the women are offered guidance from professionals – Elders, lawyers, court workers, police, outreach workers and social workers. Advice is given on issues such as addictions, abuse, housing, finance, and family and medical services.

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

The final report of the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group Reviewing Spousal Abuse Policies and Legislation (2001) found that spousal abuse victims were more likely to agree to be witnesses if they were supported throughout the case. Support was described as financial and childcare assistance and timely information from the justice system about the status of their case.

Through funding from the Victim's Fund, Saskatchewan victims get support in most centres from municipal police and RCMP victim services. (The Victim's Fund collects surcharge revenue from fines levied on offenders.) There are eight Aboriginal Resource Officers in six centres. Three centres have victim-witness coordinators. More than 350 victim services workers and volunteers work out of about 50 RCMP detachments to provide services to First Nations and Metis victims.

There were requests for more victim services, particularly in the North. The Aboriginal Resource Officer program helps First Nations and Metis victims and their families by providing information, support and referral in larger towns and cities. With the exception of La Ronge, there are no Aboriginal Resource Officers in the North.

Aboriginal Resource Officers are part of the victim services team. They are the liaison between the police and the First Nations and Metis community. They provide prevention and early intervention and help victims and their families get culturally sensitive information and support.

The federal government does not fund Aboriginal Resource Officers on reserves. Federal funding is, however, provided to four communities for caseworkers who assist victims of crime on-reserve as part of the First Nations Policing agreements.

Recommendation 3.12

This Commission recommends that the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan expand Victim Services in the province.

The Correctional Service of Canada and the National Parole Board both provide, at a victim's request, information about transfers, hearings, releases or revocations during the sentence of an inmate.

The Domestic Violence Emergency Response System in Regina provides a personal alarm system for protection from assault by a woman's partner. A

protection order must be in place to receive it. This is a co-operative measure from Transition House, Isabel Johnson Shelter, Wicihik Iskewak, Regina Women's Centre, Mobile Crisis, SaskTel, ADT Security Systems and Family Service Regina.

EVALUATION

The final report of the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group Reviewing Spousal Abuse Policies and Legislation identifies essentials of an effective domestic violence program:

- It deals with the impact of the abusive partner's violence on the children.
- It ties the program with services for victims and their children so victims can do something about their safety.
- It measures the offender's ability to succeed in the program and its suitability to the offender's character.
- It gets offenders into the program as soon as possible after arrest.
- It is closely tied to probation and court so offenders can be monitored regarding obedience and program participation.

The Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan (2004), in their submission to the Commission said:

In addition to minimal funding it is also granted on a short-term basis and we suffer the "pilot project" problems that many others face. Long term core funding provided to the Centres based on sound accounting principles must occur. This funding needs to be tied to evaluation schemes, which everyone knows about in advance.

Recommendation 3.13

This Commission recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan provide funding to study the effectiveness of domestic violence programming.

Dr. Ronna Jevne said in her submission that program evaluation should consider the element of hope. She feels that risk assessment used for prisoner rehabilitation might benefit from including the promise of hope. Without hope, the reason to change is minimal.

Hope can be intentionally learned, strengthened and repaired ... To date there has not been a study of what can be done to enhance hope in people in the justice system, offender or worker.



The misuse of power and its unequal distribution destroy hope. Those fortunate to have employment, good health and income above the poverty line must become responsible for building hope in those struggling to find it.

The seeds of hope are worth planting. Although it is satisfying to people who need the language of accountability to see indicators of hope early in the process, time is a factor in the growth of hope. Interventions aimed at outcomes that are evidence-based on the short term may be premature and may risk being short lived in their impact. Projects aimed at longer processes need funding and support. (Jevne, 2004)

Dr. Jevne's paper contains many helpful suggestions and is included in Volume 2 of the Commission's report. It is recommended reading for any "Champions for Change."

Recommendation 3.14

This Commission recommends to all governments that there be further study on the concept and impact of hope, with a view to including hope in programming and assessment.

FUNDING

Healing is a long-term process. Through their family and community, people gain a sense of identity. Victims and offenders are part of a series of circles, smaller within larger, that includes the global community and its responsibilities. Unity of mind, body and spirit with all things reduces violence. Not enough funding is a definite drawback to achieving important change. It was a concern, repeatedly, in the dialogues.

The Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan (2004) echoed the request of others organizations:

Due to the fact that we rely on minimal funding to function day-to-day and the fact that we are the family/community of people we serve, we too are in constant reactive mode. As a result of this we are only able to scratch the surface of the problems faced by various quadrants of the province's First Nations and Metis population. This impact is significant and it undermines our ability to truly keep an eye on all aspects of a person's life and to deal with the entire person. We are also reliant on volunteers in many of the centres, which have positive and negative aspects; we have dedicated people who truly know the issues and care about the outcomes, on the other hand, these people are expected to take on more and more as the needs increase and the result can be a crisis in their own lives. Volunteers are the

backbone to First Nations and Metis communities and many are doing the work that other, government employees are paid to do.

CONCLUSION

Much good has been accomplished but much more remains to be done to create a province free from violence. Although an overused expression, violence does affect all of us. It certainly is not limited to First Nations and Metis people. Most people have been victims of violence, but there are degrees of it. Some will have suffered less than others, but have been hurt all the same.

Violence can destroy hope. Violence can damage the body, mind, heart and spirit. There are issues of shame, humiliation, cynicism, isolation, normalization of violence, economics, fear of court, fear of police, lack of political will, lack of power, fear for children, lack of accountability. There may also be no awareness of community support. Unless these factors are brought into the open, violence will continue to occur and increase.

Dysfunction, especially those issues that are deeply rooted in a community, can cause service workers, such as the police and social workers who deal with these issues on a daily basis to become frustrated, stressed and jaded. They need systems in their own lives to keep their motivation and hope strong. Those who are not willing to offer support for change need to be challenged on their unwillingness to do so.

While it was disturbing to hear about the lack of services, the Commission was impressed by the services that are provided by the Saskatchewan government, community agencies and the partnerships that have come about. The Commission was impressed also by the willingness of people in communities to accept responsibility for healing and to offer support to those wanting to change. Their wish to be involved in the development and implementation of programming was also a good sign. All this can be described as a desire to return justice to the community. It takes the energy of everyone to support principles and hold faith strong enough to achieve non-violence and healing. We consider those who exert the energy to be "Champions for Change."

