

Family Enhancement and Child Intervention Services



WHEN CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED TO
FAMILY VIOLENCE



In Aboriginal Communities:



Family violence is a consequence to colonization, forced assimilation and cultural genocide; the learned negative, cumulative, multi-generational actions, values, beliefs, attitudes and behavioural patterns practiced by one or more people that weaken or destroy the harmony and well-being of an Aboriginal individual, family, extended family, community or nationhood.

Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee, Ontario, 1993

Family Violence Statistics: Canada



- 25% of all violent crime reported is family-related.
- 85% victims are women.
- Aboriginal women 15 years and older are 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Aboriginal women.
- 24% of Aboriginal women report experiencing spousal assault, compared to 8% of all Canadians.
- 57% of Aboriginal women who experienced abuse reported their children witnessed the abuse versus 40% in the general population.

3 Leading Factors

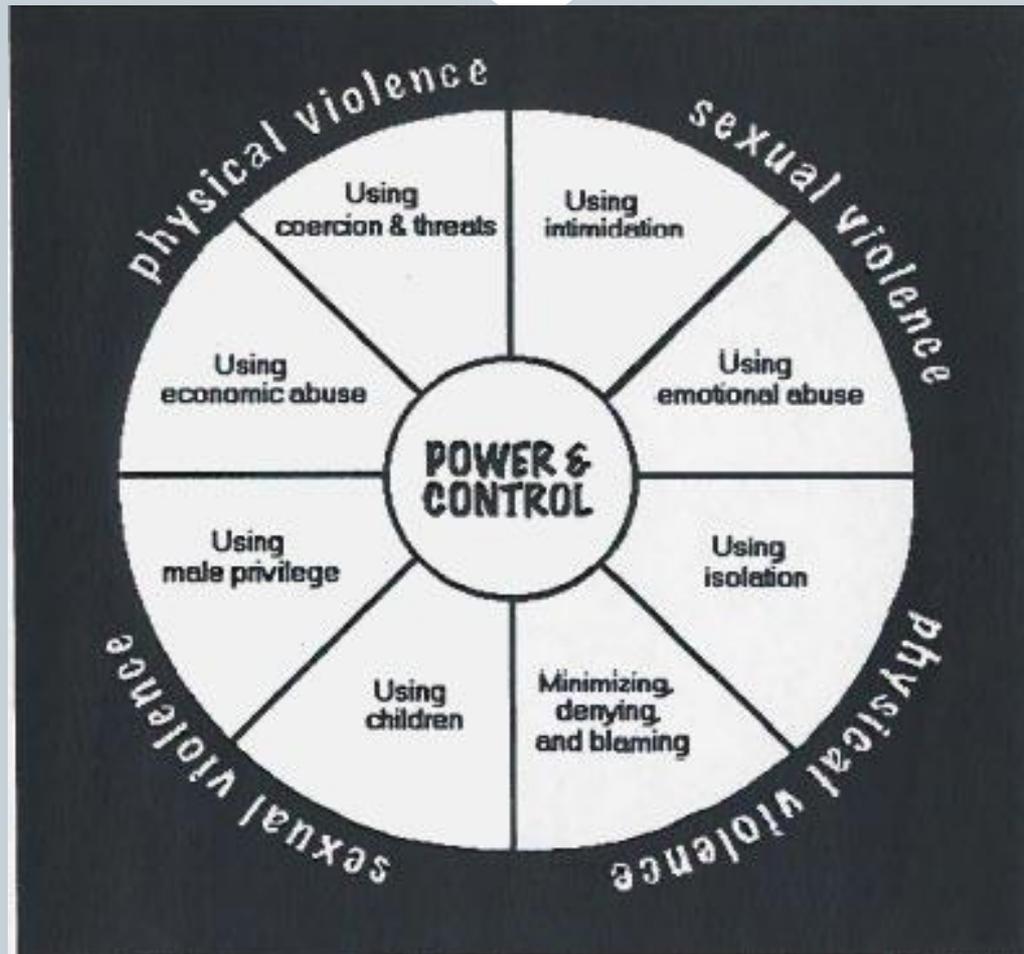


The 3 leading factors which sustain Family Violence in Aboriginal communities:

- Substance Abuse
- Economic Problems
- Intergenerational Abuse

Family Violence is *NOT* a part of Aboriginal culture.

Power and Control Wheel



Cycle of Violence

HONEYMOON

Victims Response:

- sets up counseling for him
- drops legal proceedings
- agrees to return, stay or take him back
- forgives
- hopeful
- relieved
- happy

Abuser:

- apologizes
- promises won't happen again • tries to justify his behavior
- blames drugs or alcohol
- declares love • wants to be intimate • buys gifts • promises to get help • promises to go to church
- enlists family support • cries

Abuser:

- sensitive
- nitpicks • yelling
- withholds affection
- putdowns • threatens
- crazy making behavior
- destroys property
- accusations of unfaithfulness
- isolates her
- engaging her to argue

DENIAL

Abuser: verbally abuses

- & humiliates • slap • punch • kick
- choke • grab • forces sex • beats
- prevents her from calling police or leaving • harasses & abuses children • restrains • spits • stalks • use of weapons • objects thrown

TENSION BUILDING

Victims Response:

- attempts to calm
- tries to reason
- tries to satisfy with food
- agrees with
- avoidance
- withdraws
- compliant
- nurtures

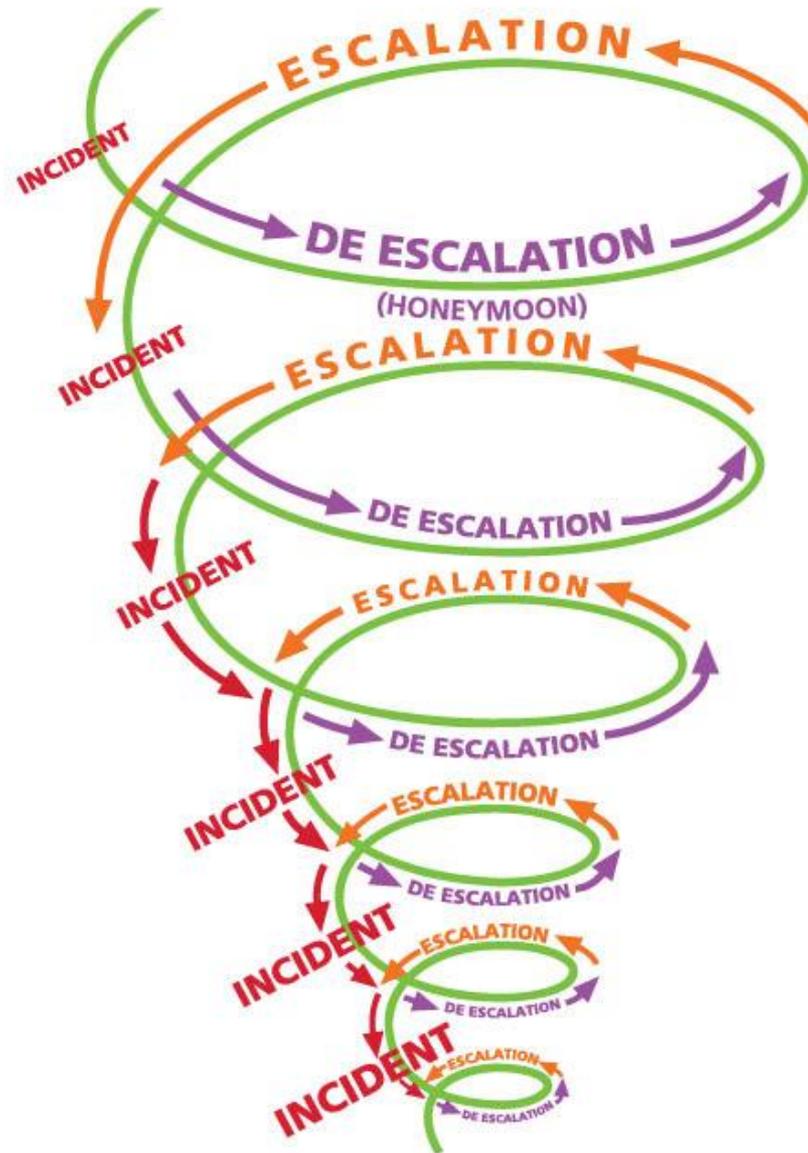
ACUTE EXPLOSION

Victims Response:

- protects self any way • tries to reason & calm
- may or may not call police • leaves • fights back

Adapted from Lenore Walker
The Battered Woman, 1979

The Cycle of Violence



Why Can't Women Leave?



- Love
- Hope
- Children
- Lack of financial resources/no job
- Low self-esteem
- Guilt and self blame
- Denial
- No support
- Lack of privacy on reserve
- Fear or stigma
- No place to go/have to leave reserve
- No car /transportation
- Complexity of relationships

What is a healthy relationship?



Victims and perpetrators often lack a basic understanding of what a healthy, loving relationship looks like, or feels like. Violence may be all they have ever known.

Child Youth and Family Enhancement Act



Any person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is need of intervention shall forthwith report a child to a director.

CYFE Act: Section 4(1)

What happens with a report?



- Assessing risk
- Does it meet our threshold?
- Follow up when necessary
- Role of the shelter

Indicators of Abuse – Neglect

Section 1(2)(c) “The child is neglected by the guardian.”



Signs of neglect could include:

- the child being continually hungry,
- unsuitably dressed for the weather,
- presenting as always dirty, unwashed, has poor hygiene
- the child is often left alone
- the family is homeless or the home is in an unfit condition or without necessary services such as heat, water, power.

Indicators of Abuse – Physical

Section 1(2)(d)(e) “The child has been or there is substantial risk that the child will be physically injured by the guardian or the guardian is unable or unwilling to protect the child from physical injury.”



- The child having unexplained bruises or injuries (e.g. fractures, lacerations, bite marks, dislocations, hemorrhaging, rupture of the viscus, frostbite), especially in places of the body that children do not normally injure during regular play or movement
- Burns that leave a pattern outlining the object which was used to make the burn, such as a cigarette, an iron, or an electric stove burner; burns on the hands, feet, buttocks caused by scalding water; and rope burns caused by being tied

Indicators of Abuse – Sexual

Section 1(2)(d)(e) “The child has been or there is substantial risk that the child will be sexually abused by the guardian or the guardian is unable or unwilling to protect the child from sexual abuse.”



- A child who shows unusual knowledge of sexual matters beyond their age of development, who exhibits sexualized behavior around adults or other children
- A child who hints or talks out rightly about sexual abuse (discloses)
- A child who demonstrates withdrawn behaviour, who refuses to participate or dress appropriately for physical activities or presents with torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- A child or adolescent who repeatedly runs away from home or who is extremely withdrawn or aggressive
- Has swollen genitals, a venereal disease, or is pregnant

Indicators of Abuse – Emotional

Section 1(2)(f)(g) “The child has been emotionally injured by the guardian of the child or the guardian of the child is unable or unwilling to protect the child from emotional injury.”



- In Alberta, the Child Youth and Family Enhancement Act considers exposure to domestic violence or severe domestic harmony a form of emotional injury.
- Signs of emotional injury could be minimal or could include the following: aggressive, angry, and hostile behavior (e.g. bullying), withdrawn, fearful, jumpy or hypersensitivity or low self-esteem.

What to do when a child discloses abuse



- Believe the child
- Acknowledge the child's disclosure but do not get into a discussion where you find yourself asking questions
- Document the child's statement in the child's own words and ask if they want to "say anything more"
- Give the five responses to disclosure:
 - ✦ I believe you
 - ✦ I'm glad you told me
 - ✦ I'm sorry this happened
 - ✦ It's not your fault
 - ✦ We will get you some help
- Report without delay to the nearest Children's Services or Delegated First Nations office

Your Role in Supporting Children Affected by Family Violence



- Child may have feelings of extreme loss and anxiety.
- Children need to move from unpredictable danger to reliable safety; reassure the child that the shelter is “safe”.
- Relationships may be too close for the child’s comfort level; they may fear being disloyal to parent, give time & space.
- Predictability, structure & clear expectations: create simple rules, explain and enforce rules & expectations, have consistent routines (bedtimes, mealtimes etc.).

Your Role in Supporting Children Affected by Family Violence



- Pay attention to non verbal cues: respond in a way to allow space (shies from physical affection; get permission to hug).
- Avoid power struggles: validate the child's feelings & restate rules/expectations.
- Give choices when possible: allow the child to make choices when possible & when appropriate.

Your Role in Supporting Children Affected by Family Violence



- Role model respectful & caring behaviors.
- There is no quick & easy fix; anticipate there will be times of significant improvements and little progress.
- Tender loving care may not be enough; adapt your style and approach to the needs of the individual child.

For more information about
resources in your area:



Family Violence Information Line:

310-1818

Toll free information line available

24 hours a day

7 days a week

This is not a crisis line, but they can provide
information regarding crisis services in your area.