

Ending Violence Against Women in Aboriginal Communities



Workshop Handouts





Acknowledgements

Developed by:

Justice Education Society of BC.

Adapted from materials from the We Can End All Violence Against Women BC Campaign.



Project Team:

Joan Brett, Anastasia Gaisenok, Marylou Leung, Dave Nolette, Tamarah Prevost and Annette Russell

Advisory Committee:

Joan Brett, Cindy Charleyboy, Tracy Downey, Anastasia Gaisenok, Catherine Kendall, Marylou Leung, Shirley Morven, Glenn Patterson, Tamarah Prevost, Annette Russell, Edna Tait, Faith Tait, and Andrew Tom

Funded by:

Department of Justice Canada





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Relationship Abuse Case Study

Together for just under five years, a married couple was going through a rough time. Things were great at first, but over the past year the husband became very controlling and harsh. They began to fight a lot, and when they did he would put her down and humiliate her. He became very cruel, calling her names and even threatening to harm their dog to get back at her.

One evening, she arrived home after an evening out with her friends to find him waiting for her. He was very angry. While he did not physically hit her that night, he was very aggressive and his body language was extremely threatening. His behavior was scaring her more and more, but she didn't feel like she needed to tell anyone because he hadn't actually hit her. She was also ashamed of their fighting and felt uncomfortable telling anybody about it.

A few months after that night, he began to be physically violent with her. Their fights ended with him pushing and hitting her. Afterwards he would apologize with such genuine emotion that she felt she had no choice but to forgive him: he was her husband after all. She was feeling very vulnerable and was even afraid to be in her own home sometimes. She wanted to talk to someone about it but had no idea where to go.

Discussion Questions:

1. At what point do you think that this woman's experience with this man would count as abuse?
2. At what point do you think a crime has occurred, and she has grounds to take legal action against him?



Yesterday-A Historical Perspective

Some groups of women are affected more than others by violence due to a number of factors. Aboriginal women and girls in Canada are at higher risk of violence than other groups of women, and are more likely to experience higher incidence and severity of _____ both from strangers and at home. This can be explained by the history of colonialism that has left Aboriginal communities shattered spiritually, culturally, socially and economically.

Between 1840 and 1983 around 150,000 Aboriginal children went through Indian residential school system. The schools were designed to Christianize and educate Indian children in Western ways, for the purpose of making them more successful in _____ Canadian society. The ultimate goal was that of _____ and these schools were funded by the _____, but run by _____.

Children spent most of the year in an unfamiliar and often hostile environment characterized by rigid discipline and _____. They had very little to no contact with their parents and siblings, even if their brothers and sisters were in the same school. Children were forbidden to speak in their _____, and to engage in any traditional practices. In addition, many children experienced physical and _____ at the hands of the teachers in those schools.

The residential school experience traumatized whole generations of Aboriginal people robbing them of their culture, language, community ties, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being, parenting and other social skills. This trauma was passed down to future generations and became _____ within families and whole communities. It produced a number of devastating individual and social _____ that continue to affect Aboriginal communities today.

The trauma of residential schools could have been addressed through _____ and rituals. However, residential schools survivors were denied the opportunity of connecting to their cultural and spiritual roots, as this is what the school system was designed to erase in the first place. There is a healing movement that began in the 1960s and continues to this day focusing on promoting spiritual and physical _____ for Aboriginal people through a combination of traditional healing practices and Western medical models.

Key Words:

Use the words below to fill in the blanks in the handout above.

cultural assimilation
well-being
corporal punishment
mainstream

institutionalized
traditional healing practices
gender-based violence
government

native languages
consequences
churches
sexual abuse



Facilitator's Key Handout #2K

Yesterday-A Historical Perspective

Some groups of women are affected more than others by violence due to a number of factors. Aboriginal women and girls in Canada are at higher risk of violence than other groups of women, and are more likely to experience higher incidence and severity of gender-based violence both from strangers and at home. This can be explained by the history of colonialism that has left Aboriginal communities shattered spiritually, culturally, socially and economically.

Between 1840 and 1983 around 150,000 Aboriginal children went through Indian residential school system. The schools were designed to Christianize and educate Indian children in Western ways, for the purpose of making them more successful in mainstream Canadian society. The ultimate goal was that of cultural assimilation and these schools were funded by the government, but run by churches.

Children spent most of the year in an unfamiliar and often hostile environment characterized by rigid discipline and corporal punishment. They had very little to no contact with their parents and siblings, even if their brothers and sisters were in the same school. Children were forbidden to speak in their native languages, and to engage in any traditional practices. In addition, many children experienced physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the teachers in those schools.

The residential school experience traumatized whole generations of Aboriginal people robbing them of their culture, language, community ties, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being, parenting and other social skills. This trauma was passed down to future generations and became institutionalized within families and whole communities. It produced a number of devastating individual and social consequences that continue to affect Aboriginal communities today.

The trauma of residential schools could have been addressed through traditional healing practices and rituals. However, residential schools survivors were denied the opportunity of connecting to their cultural and spiritual roots, as this is what the school system was designed to erase in the first place. There is a healing movement that began in the 1960s and continues to this day focusing on promoting spiritual and physical well-being for Aboriginal people through a combination of traditional healing practices and Western medical models.

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Today in Our Community

The residential school experience traumatized whole _____ of Aboriginal people robbing them of their culture, language, community ties, physical, spiritual and emotional _____, parenting and other social skills. This trauma was passed down to future generations and become institutionalized within families and whole communities. It produced a number of devastating individual and social _____ that continue to affect Aboriginal communities today such as substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, gas), addiction (substances, gambling), violence, crime, domestic abuse, and family breakdown.

Unaddressed _____ of residential schools resulted in numerous behavioral problems among survivors rooted in low self-esteem and powerlessness. Multiple studies have found that children that were abused tend to become abusers themselves in their later life. The survivors _____ violence both as a norm and through personal trauma, and passed them down to new generations. It produced families that continue to struggle with achieving peace and wholeness again.

Although residential schools affected both men and women, Aboriginal women and girls bear the heaviest burdens of its impact due to unequal _____ within families and society as a whole. With the loss of traditional ways of life, identity and often the social status as the provider for the family, men take out their frustration and anger on those close to them - women and children.

Such attitudes stand in stark contrast to traditional Aboriginal beliefs where women are held in high esteem as life givers and preservers. As the result of violence, Aboriginal women experience multiple negative effects, including poor physical and mental health, inability to hold a job, and substance abuse, which in turn affects their children, extended families and entire communities.

These impacts result from a variety of factors connected to the residential school experience. One of which has to do with a loss of identity as students were encouraged to cut the ties with their heritage in order to be "saved" through religious and "mainstream" beliefs and values. This loss of identity meant that oftentimes to deal with the pain, survivors were drawn to things that allowed them to forget and suppress it, such as the abuse of substances. The attempt to reclaim power in their lives often took the form of _____ to those closest to them as this was a childhood learned behavior from the authorities and other children in the residential school system.

The solutions offered through the Western institutions, such as psychiatry, often proved to be ineffective as they did not treat this _____ problem in a holistic way, but rather focused entirely on individual experience. The healing movement began in the 1960's and focuses on the value in reconnecting with ones individual heritage and the use of _____ in order to deal with pain.

Key Words:

Use the words below to fill in the blanks in the handout above.

**generations
consequences
violence**

**internalized
trauma
complex**

**well-being
traditional healing methods
power relations**



Facilitator's Key Handout #3K

Today in Our Community

The residential school experience traumatized whole generations of Aboriginal people robbing them of their culture, language, community ties, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being, parenting and other social skills. This trauma was passed down to future generations and become institutionalized within families and whole communities. It produced a number of devastating individual and social consequences that continue to affect Aboriginal communities today such as substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, gas), addiction (substances, gambling), violence, crime, domestic abuse, and family breakdown.

Unaddressed trauma of residential schools resulted in numerous behavioral problems among survivors rooted in low self-esteem and powerlessness. Multiple studies have found that children that were abused tend to become abusers themselves in their later life. The survivors internalized violence both as a norm and through personal trauma, and passed them down to new generations. It produced families that continue to struggle with achieving peace and wholeness again.

Although residential schools affected both men and women, Aboriginal women and girls bear the heaviest burdens of its impact due to unequal power relations within families and society as a whole. With the loss of traditional ways of life, identity and often the social status as the provider for the family, men take out their frustration and anger on those close to them - women and children.

Such attitudes stand in stark contrast to traditional Aboriginal beliefs where women are held in high esteem as life givers and preservers. As the result of violence, Aboriginal women experience multiple negative effects, including poor physical and mental health, inability to hold a job, and substance abuse, which in turn affects their children, extended families and entire communities.

These impacts result from a variety of factors connected to the residential school experience. One of which has to do with a loss of identity as students were encouraged to cut the ties with their heritage in order to be "saved" through religious and "mainstream" beliefs and values. This loss of identity meant that oftentimes to deal with the pain, survivors were drawn to things that allowed them to forget and suppress it, such as the abuse of substances. The attempt to reclaim power in their lives often took the form of violence to those closest to them as this was a childhood learned behavior from the authorities and other children in the residential school system.

The solutions offered through the Western institutions, such as psychiatry, often proved to be ineffective as they did not treat this complex problem in a holistic way, but rather focused entirely on individual experience. The healing movement began in the 1960's and focuses on the value in reconnecting with ones individual heritage and the use of traditional healing methods in order to deal with pain.

Key Words:

Use the words below to fill in the blanks in the handout above.

generations
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Breaking the Cycle

Virginia is a 17 year old Aboriginal girl who is arguing with her boyfriend, Tyler. They are arguing over something that happened at a party last weekend. They both had a lot to drink, began discussing something relatively unimportant and the evening ended with him hitting her. This is the first time that he has made a move physically, but he has been increasingly angry in his reactions to her. This particular argument is taking place over the phone, Virginia is in her home and her mother ends up overhearing her conversation.

Her mother is very concerned, mostly because she recently ended a long standing abusive relationship between her and Virginia's father. She is afraid that her daughter may be finding herself in a similar situation and really wants to talk to her about this before it escalates any further. When she tries to bring it up after Virginia hangs up on Tyler, her daughter eventually admits to being hit by him, but refuses to talk about the topic any further, as she sees her mother as the last person in a position to "judge" her-based on her history of being abused by her father.

Virginia feels extremely confused, she loves Tyler and he keeps repeating that he loves her. She wants to believe him but with the voice of her mother in her head, the decision to forgive him does not come easy to her. Finally she sits down with her mother to ask her more about her relationship with her dad and what eventually brought her to leave him. When her mother described the first time she was hit, and how much her dad told her he loved her, it really struck a chord with her own relationship with Tyler and the argument they were currently having.

Virginia makes the decision to take a break with Tyler, but remain committed to the relationship because neither of them wish to repeat the mistakes that they have seen through their parents experiences. They decide that until they can be sure that Tyler will not hit her again, and until Virginia can feel the respect that is necessary to trust him, they will stay on a break.

Discuss the following questions.



Discussion Questions

1. What was the original argument between Virginia and Tyler about?

2. Why doesn't Virginia feel comfortable talking about her fight with Tyler? Why does she hesitate to tell her mom specifically?

4. Can you tell anything about Virginia's relationship with her dad? Is there any connection between this and her relationship with Tyler?

5. Why doesn't Virginia forgive Tyler more easily? What is she afraid of happening?

6. Tyler doesn't want to repeat past mistakes either but also tells Virginia that "it's all he knows". What do you think is meant by this? What do you think Virginia means when she says they will have to "re-learn" certain things?

7. How does the film end? What options does Tyler have to win Virginia's trust back?

8. Do you think Virginia made the right choice not to let the relationship keep on going as it was going? Why or why not?

9. Do you think the way that she grew up and the way she was treated by her parents has any impact on the choices she makes now with Tyler?

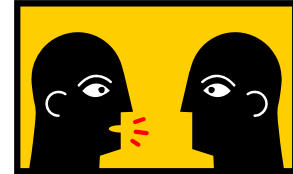
10. Are there places in your community that both of them might be able to go to get help with this situation?



Say Something. Men Talking to Men

CHALLENGE SEXIST JOKES AND SEXIST LANGUAGE

Sexist jokes and misogynistic language help to reinforce gender stereotypes and normalize violent behaviour against women. As difficult as it may be, by challenging that kind of language and those types of jokes, you are setting a positive example by helping raise awareness about violence against women.



Here is a common scenario.

Your buddy says, “I have a good joke for you.”

You get a little smile on your face waiting to have a good laugh but instead you hear a joke that degrades women. It describes women as incompetent, weak, constantly hysterical, or as mere sexualized body parts. Many jokes speak of horrible violence such as rape in a supposed “lighthearted” manner.

That frozen smile is still on your face but you feel very uncomfortable inside and you know that this just does not feel right. You want to say something but the rest of the guys seem to be enjoying it. They have smiles on their faces and you don’t want to be the downer of the party.

But maybe, just maybe some of them are thinking the same thing you are and that smile on their face is just as uncomfortable as yours.

What can you say?

Here are some suggestions:

- “Hey man that’s actually not very funny. Too many guys joke about rape when rape is a traumatic event and a violent crime. Joking about it kind of makes us forget what it really is, and how serious it is.”
- “Would that be funny if it was about your mother/sister/daughter/girl friend/wife?”
- There’s a good chance that someone in the room has known someone close to them who has been raped or sexually assaulted - conservative stats say 51% of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of physical/sexual violence since the age 16.2 You may be surprised at the positive support you get.
- If no one supports you and you are told to “lighten up” you can simply say “I still don’t find it funny. Would you be as comfortable telling a joke about people of colour or Jews?” This is especially effective if there are men from different cultures and backgrounds in the room.



Don't be surprised if you hear "you don't have a sense of humour." At least you've planted the seed letting them know where you stand. Challenging guys about this stuff may be a difficult thing to do but it's worth it, knowing you're doing your part to create a world where ending violence against women is taken seriously and sexism and violence are no longer a laughing matter.

Every time you do it, it gets a little easier!

CHALLENGE A MAN WHO IS ABUSING HIS PARTNER

If you knew your friend was abusing his girlfriend, what would you do? Many men want to say something but don't know where to start. Challenging someone about abuse is never easy and there is no one way to go about it. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Before confronting any man about his abusive behaviour, keep in mind that this may aggravate him to the point that he will take it out on his partner. The best thing to do is to talk to his partner about what you want to do. Make sure she has a safety plan in case he was to become abusive again. Help to inform her of options such as the availability of local women shelters and crisis lines. Does she have friends or family to stay with? Discuss your concerns with her and ask how you can support her. If you ever suspect that she may be in immediate danger, consider calling the police and/or helping her find a safe place to stay.
- Don't become hostile or aggressive since that will likely put that person on the defensive, and besides, you're trying to talk to him about non-violence so the last thing you want to do is follow his example. You can simply let him know that what he's doing isn't right and that it is really hurting someone he cares about.
- You may find that he will react in two different ways. He may deny the whole thing, make excuses (such as being drunk), try to blame her, or become angry at the insinuation that he was abusive. Or on the other hand, he may tell you that he feels ashamed of his behaviour. He may ask for help in ensuring that it does not happen again or he may just want to talk about it with you. When listening to him, it is important never to excuse his behaviour. Remind him that you are not judging him as a person but that you cannot allow his behaviour to continue unchecked.
- Let him know that he has control over his behaviour and what he does about it. If he is ready to make some changes, ask him to search for a local group for abusive men in his area.

She kept saying "no"

If your friend tells you how he "convinced" his date to sleep with him even though she kept saying "no", you have a perfect opportunity to say something.

Any unwanted touching or sexual act committed upon another is sexual assault.



After alerting him to this fact, he may not agree with you but it's still important that you say something. You may suggest to him that he seek professional help and to cooperate with the authorities if they become involved. Again, this is not an easy thing to do and not one to be taken lightly. Imagine that the girl or woman was your future wife, your daughter, sister, niece or mother. You would want someone to say something!

DON'T SUPPORT PROGRAMMING THAT PORTRAYS WOMEN IN A NEGATIVE LIGHT

Another way of saying something is to refuse to support programming that portrays women in a negative light or refuses to acknowledge the seriousness of violence against women. Write letters to the editor of a newspaper who seems to dismiss the importance of funding women's shelters. Write to TV network executives letting them know that you will not watch programming that portrays women in stereotypical roles such as unintelligent, sexual playthings, "bitchy" corporate go-getters, and submissive "mantrappers" only looking to snare a man. Write to advertising agencies and video games companies to let them know that sexually objectifying women to sell products is irresponsible and degrading.

ALWAYS DO IT FOR THE RIGHT REASON

Always remember that you are not speaking out because you are a hero, or because you're saving a woman with chivalry, or because you want to be patted on the back. You are speaking out because it is the right thing to do and it is a meaningful way to do your part in ending violence against women.

SAY SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF

- When thinking about putting an end to violence against women, remember the importance of taking a look at yourself and how you view and treat women.
- Do you share household duties? Do you share childcare responsibilities? Do you dominate conversations with women or are you a good listener as well? Do you believe there is ever a time where a woman "asked" for abuse? Do you use degrading language when referring to women? Do you view women as mere sex objects? Lead by example - be the change you want to see in the world.
- Take some time to talk to the women in your life. Ask them what their thoughts are on the issue of violence against women. Most of all, listen to them, truly listen.
- The best way to help influence other men about ending violence against women is to set an example and then spread the word.
- Be a good role model for younger men in your life (sons, brothers, and nephews) and teach them how men can be respectful towards women and not use sexist language, demeaning jokes, and violent behaviour towards others.



- Support and join other men who are working to make a difference and are standing up for what is right. Let them know that they are part of a larger community of caring men, since many men stay quiet simply because they think they will be alone in their stand. Direct them to the White Ribbon and We Can web sites and they'll realize they're not alone.

Material taken from the White Ribbon Campaign: Men Working to End Male Violence against Women www.whiteribbon.ca and The Violence Against Women Survey – Statistics Canada, 1993 and Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile – Statistics Canada, 2006.



Tell Us What You Think

1. Overall Rating of the Workshop

Excellent – 5 Very good – 4 Good – 3 Fair – 2 Poor – 1

Comments: _____

2. Did the workshop increase your awareness of issues surrounding violence against women?

Substantially Not at all
5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

3. Did the workshop increase your awareness of issues surrounding intergenerational violence in Aboriginal communities?

Substantially Not at all
5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

4. Do you think the 'We Can' campaign objectives and strategies were effectively explained? _____ Yes _____ No

Comments: _____

5. Did the workshop provide you with enough information on how to become involved with initiatives to end violence against women? _____ Yes _____ No

If not, how can this be improved?

6. Were you satisfied with the topics covered? _____ Yes _____ No

If not, how can this be improved?

7. Which of the following elements provided the most useful information?

_____ Lecture _____ Video _____ Group Discussion _____ Handouts

Comments: _____

8. Are you planning to talk to your colleagues about this workshop and share the information you learned? _____ Yes _____ No If not, please indicate why not.



**Together We Can
End All Violence against Women**

www.WeCanBC.ca