

COMMUNITY HEALING

SUGGESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Here are some suggestions for taking community action. Some were inspired by *A Resource Guide on Family Violence Issues for Aboriginal Communities* (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence—www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/resourceguide.pdf). There are many other ways of dealing with these issues, so add your own ideas to this list.

USE THE HEALING JOURNEY TOOLKIT TO HELP YOU GET STARTED

Your community might be a First Nation community, a workplace, a school, or even a “community of interest” such as a women’s organization, an elder’s group, or a youth program. Review the kit for ideas for addressing “family violence” in your community. Consider inviting staff from Gignoo Transition House to help.

CREATE A FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION GROUP OR COMMITTEE

Some communities already have a family violence prevention group who may wish to take advantage of this kit to complement a pre-existing program. Or, you might have existing groups or networks in your area that are already dealing with related issues. A group like this might be willing to take a lead role in the organization of a family violence prevention community action plan using this kit as a starting point. Make sure that your approach is inclusive. A first step might be to invite key individuals to come together to brainstorm how to start a violence prevention initiative in your community.

THE DIFFERENT FACES OF VIOLENCE ARE CLOSELY INTERWOVEN. ABUSERS IN ONE INSTANCE MAY BE THE VICTIMS IN THE NEXT. ALTHOUGH HEALING BEGINS FROM WITHIN, INDIVIDUALS OFTEN NEED THE SUPPORT OF THEIR COMMUNITY TO START THEIR JOURNEY. THEY MAY FEEL TRAPPED—HELPLESS AND HOPELESS—UNABLE TO TAKE ANY STEPS TO END THE VIOLENCE IN THEIR LIVES. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMUNITIES TO EMPOWER INDIVIDUALS TO START THE “HEALING JOURNEY”.



Nepisimkewey Pemkenikn

– Mi’Kmaq “the healing road”

Nuhshukmone Kikehewik Awt

– Maliseet “follow the healing road”

Make a list that includes the names of the following community people:

- Respected community volunteer _____
- Respected service provider _____
- Respected professional _____
- Respected political leader _____
- Respected elder _____
- Respected youth _____
- Respected person with a disability _____
- Respected mom _____
- Respected dad _____
- Others _____

Call the people on your list and invite them to meet with you to talk about community issues and family violence prevention ideas. If you are organizing a group on-reserve, it

is important to have the cooperation of the Chief and Band Council whenever possible.

- Set a date for a meeting.
- Be sure to review the Healing Journey Toolkit and feel familiar with the various components so that you can go over it with the others.
- Consider inviting someone from Gignoo Transition House, or a family violence prevention mentor from your area, to attend the meeting to promote the kit and suggest ways of using the kit to take action.
- Ask those who attend the meeting if they are willing to stay involved.
- Ask if they can think of others who should be asked to become involved from within and outside the community.
- Use the blank ‘Potential Resource People in My Community’ form, located on the back of this fact sheet, to generate ideas. It is helpful if you start the list.



DECIDE WHAT YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH

The Healing Journey Toolkit is not intended to be a single one-time program. If you wish, use the “Exercise for Creating a Family Violence Prevention Action Plan”, included in the kit as well as the other resources and information to foster a broad range of interconnected initiatives.

- Encourage the maximum number and kinds of community-generated responses to family violence as possible.
- If you are not ready or able to participate at the community level, you can start by planning a response at an agency level, such as incorporating ideas for violence prevention or crisis into your workplace.
- No matter how you use the resources in the kit, try to address the various forms and levels of support available to meet a variety of different needs and age groups within your community.
- Try to integrate the healing needs of individuals, families and communities.

IDENTIFY INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE “CRISIS INTERVENTION” (RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM AT THE TIME OF THE CRISIS)

You can use information in the kit to improve responses and interventions for people in crisis. Such interventions should help to lessen the severity of the immediate impact of a crisis situation, while assisting those affected to have safer, long-term outcomes. You could

- Be familiar with the legal remedies for abusive behaviour when it crosses the line and is criminal in nature, such as assaults, sexual assaults, threats, stalking, firearms violations and so on. In an emergency, call 911.
- Arrange a training session for front line community social service and health service staff on recognizing abuse, understanding its connection to other forms of violence, and creating safety plans for abused Aboriginal women and their children.
- Use the safety planning tools to help individual women and their children to develop their own plans. Offer to keep the safety plan at your agency so an abuser does not find it, which could put her at greater risk.
- Ensure that all the service providers in the area know about the role that transition houses play in providing safe haven for abused women. Be sure that they can talk about Gignoo Transition House and explain that it is a free shelter especially for Aboriginal women. Refer victims of abuse and their children to shelter services and help them to arrange for free transportation to safety.
- Offer training to local police, RCMP and band constables on the importance of maintaining a supportive, non-judgmental attitude during a crisis intervention because of the tendency of victims to blame themselves, engage in self-harming behaviours and feel hopeless and helpless. Contact PLEIS-NB (506-453-5369 or pleisnb@web.ca) for resources and assistance.
- Work with victims and survivors of abuse to explore together the ways that past history (i.e. loss of language, residential schools, racism, etc.) affect the challenges faced today and to better understand the importance of holistic healing approaches.



- Establish an “I believe” policy for all of the social service and health agencies in your community. Train staff to NEVER blame those who are victimized by family violence. Be sure to carefully examine your attitudes and behaviours and ask whether they contribute to the problem? Do you normalize abusive behaviour? Do you minimize the consequences of abusive behaviour?
- Talk to those who act abusively, or ask an elder to do so, and encourage them to seek help. Even at times of crisis, you can help them to accept responsibility.
- If you are a member of a First Nation, encourage your Band Council to pass a family violence prevention resolution aimed at eliminating family violence in your community.

IDENTIFY ACTIVITIES FOR “PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS” (TALKING PUBLICLY ABOUT THE PROBLEM)

- Display Healing Journey posters around the community and hold a public education session on family violence issues and solutions.
- Invite respected individuals in your community to hold a meeting to speak out about the affects of family violence and the value of respect, safety and healthy choices in our personal lives and in our community environment.
- Create messages about violence prevention and the need for community healing and ask your local radio station to record and play them.
- Have the youth in your community prepare and deliver the skit “An Aboriginal Youth’s Cry for Help” (The script for the skit is included in this kit, or you can access it on the website, www.thehealingjourney.ca).

- Offer information sessions to youth about the roots of violence in Aboriginal communities, the impact that historical and systemic factors have on everyone in society, and the possibilities for revising a future without violence.
- Ask a women’s group or Health Centre in your community to invite “survivors” of family violence (or other related forms of abuse) to write and/or draw about their journey to a non-violent life. The group could then prepare an inspirational ‘Book of Healing Journeys’. Ask the NB Advisory Council or Aboriginal Women’s Association to publish and share the book with other communities. (This book would not be a description of the abuse and the abuser, but a celebration of the strength of each woman and those who helped her to arrive at a healthier, safer place in her life.)
- Take the Healing Journey “decals” from the kit and post them on the back of women’s washroom doors throughout your community.





- Encourage people to reach out to help others - sisters, mothers, brothers, friends and neighbours - who appear to be struggling with violence in their lives. Use the **“Love Shouldn’t Hurt” post card** that is in the kit (also available on the website, www.thehealingjourney.ca). Hand it out to people who express concern that someone they know is being abused. It will give them some ideas for how to help.

IDENTIFY INITIATIVES FOR “PREVENTION” (DOING SOMETHING BEFORE THE PROBLEM HAPPENS)

Prevention is perhaps one of the most important, and one of the most difficult, parts of a family violence prevention campaign. If we knew exactly how to prevent violence, we would surely have done so. However, we do know that many programs and services aimed at helping individuals and communities revision their thoughts, feelings and behaviours related to family violence are the cornerstone for breaking the cycle of violence.

- Encourage people to focus on “wellness” at home, at work (school) and in the community.

- Consider ways to help yourself, your children, your family and your community to live their lives free of violence.
- Have a community picnic or BBQ to celebrate personal and community wellness. Have service providers set up booths and hand out information about their services.
- Bring women in the community together for a day of “pampering”, massage, facials, and haircuts. Be sure to offer free babysitting services and encourage networking and support.
- Offer self-esteem building workshops and positive parenting training. Actively work to get those parents who most need the training to attend.
- Invite an expert to speak on the effects on children who are exposed to adult violence.
- Help people who are vulnerable to develop life skills that promote independence and self-worth.
- Refer somebody who is living with abuse to counseling services or offer traditional healing remedies.
- Hold a brainstorming session to identify the preventive services and resources that your community needs to deal with the root causes of violence. You will likely have to develop an advocacy strategy as well to lobby for these services. They could include alcohol/drug rehabilitation services, social and mental health services, counseling, housing, and income generating opportunities.



FIND FUNDING, STAY MOTIVATED AND GET CONNECTED

Communities have a wealth of human resources, and you may be able to accomplish many initiatives based on volunteer time and equipment, local resources, and community contributions. However, eventually, you may need to find outside funding sources and/or resources to accomplish your goals. One way to find out about such resources is to become connected to other family violence networks and initiatives around the province, and perhaps nationally.

- Take a look at the booklet in your kit *Family Violence Resources and Networks*. It sets out some of the violence prevention networks and projects, both provincial and national, that you might wish to join or contact. There is strength in numbers and motivation in getting the feedback – and praise – of others doing similar work. So, please think about sharing what you are doing, and learning how other communities are addressing family violence prevention.
- The *Family Violence Resources and Networks* booklet includes information on several federal and provincial funding sources for family violence projects. Some of these are specific to Aboriginal issues and projects.



POTENTIAL RESOURCE PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY

RESOURCE PEOPLE	IN COMMUNITY		NAME	POTENTIAL HELPER	
	YES	NO		YES	NO
Drug and Alcohol Worker					
Child and Family Services					
Doctor					
Nurse					
Health Centre					
Teacher(s)					
Chief / Band Councillor(s)					
Counsellor(s)					
Elder(s)					
Youth(s)					
Volunteers(s), etc.					
Victim Services					
Others?					
Others?					





WWW.THEHEALINGJOURNEY.CA