

USER'S GUIDE



FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



GIGNOO TRANSITION HOUSE INC., the only Aboriginal women’s shelter in New Brunswick, and the **PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION AND INFORMATION SERVICE OF NEW BRUNSWICK**, a non-profit organization that helps promote access to the law and the legal system, collaborated on the development of a booklet for Aboriginal women experiencing family violence called **Creating Healthy Personal Relationships**. The positive and enthusiastic response to the booklet became an inspiration for expanding this collaboration and developing



a “toolkit” full of appropriate and culturally sensitive violence prevention resources and information for Aboriginal communities. The kit and all of its components are also available on the “Healing Journey” website – www.thehealingjourney.ca.

The first step was to form a “Working Group” of key New Brunswick Aboriginal organizations, police and service providers who provide resources on family violence. The working group came together to brainstorm the important information that should be in the kit – information that is often lacking in non-aboriginal materials about family violence. Considerable time, effort and commitment were made by all members of the working group to this project and the members will continue to act as “champions” for violence prevention in their own communities. The response to the New Brunswick toolkit was equally enthusiastic. Aboriginal organizations, police and other service providers across Canada requested copies. In response to this demand, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provided funding to transform the toolkit website into a national Aboriginal violence prevention initiative. The **Working Group** was composed of:

- * Gignoo Transition House Inc. (Co-chair)
- * Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick (Co-chair)
- * Fredericton Native Friendship Centre
- * New Brunswick Native Women’s Association
- * New Brunswick Aboriginal People’s Council
- * New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- * Union of New Brunswick Indians
- * New Brunswick Coalition of Transition Houses
- * Codiac RCMP Victim Services
- * RCMP ‘J’ Division: Community Policing and Aboriginal Policing
- * Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre
- * New Brunswick Department of Family and Community Services
- * Health and Wellness, Woodstock First Nation
- * Child and Family Services, Woodstock First Nation
- * Women’s Issues Branch, Executive Council Office
- * New Brunswick Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat

We wish you success on your “Healing Journey”

“Nepisimkewey Pemkenikn” – Mi’Kmaq

“Nuhshkmone Kikehewik Awt” – Maliseet

The Working Group will continue to act as “champions” for family violence prevention

We are particularly pleased to extend our appreciation to the many federal and provincial funders who have contributed to the development of this information kit, the website and to a conference to explore the issues around interpersonal violence prevention in Aboriginal communities.

We also wish to thank and acknowledge our funders, who are making significant financial and in-kind contributions to the following:

- * Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (Needs assessment, promotional materials, qualitative evaluation, development and printing of the “national” kit and upgrading the website to include national resources.)
- * Justice Canada (Development of the law information materials, design and printing of resources in kit, design of website and conference development, evaluation)
- * Canadian Heritage (Project coordination, conference development and participation of Aboriginal women, evaluation)
- * New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Translation of materials)
- * New Brunswick Department of Justice and Consumer Affairs (Conference)
- * New Brunswick Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat (Resource development and conference)
- * New Brunswick Department of Intergovernmental Affairs (Conference)
- * Mounted Police Foundation – RCMP (Kit development and conference)
- * Women’s Issues Branch, Executive Council Office, Government of New Brunswick (Conference)
- * Status of women Canada (Conference)



DISCLAIMER



THE HEALING JOURNEY (Family Violence Prevention in Aboriginal Communities) is intended to provide Aboriginal women, men, elders and youth with information and resources to help them better reflect on the complex reasons for family violence and the options for dealing with it in their lives. It is also intended to help service providers who might work with victims of family violence, particularly those who are most vulnerable such as women and children. The information in this guide is not intended to replace the advice and services of professionals such as counsellors, lawyers or healthcare providers. We have developed the kit based on current research and information about family violence in Aboriginal communities and have been inspired by the work of Aboriginal organizations and groups across Canada who are dealing with this issue. Any reference to legislation should be considered general in nature and scope. Laws change from time to time.

This guide is made available to individuals and service providers with the understanding that Gignoo Transition House Inc. and the Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick who were involved in the preparation of the materials, as well as the Working Group, authors, editors and contributors, are not providing legal or professional advice. Service providers and individuals using this kit should seek legal advice on specific legal matters.

We hope the information and resources contained in this Toolkit are useful to you. The list of services and resources set out in the kit should help you to locate and consult with professionals who can provide specific services.

TOOLKIT CONTENTS

- * Purpose of the Kit
- * How to Use the Kit
- * The Healing Journey - Fact Sheets
 - Understanding the Roots of Interpersonal Violence
 - Recognizing the Harm of Interpersonal Violence
 - Individual Healing
 - Family Healing
 - Community Healing
- * Family Violence Resources and Networks
- * Safety Plans for Aboriginal Women and Children
- * Starting Over: What You Should Know About Family Law Matters
- * An Exercise for Creating a Family Violence Prevention Community Action Plan
- * Skit: Script for *An Aboriginal Youth's Cry for Help* (on the website and available up request)
- * Poster, bookmark, and postcard
- * Resource materials from other sources
- * Creating Healthy Personal Relationships (Booklet)
- * Healing Journey Feedback Form

PURPOSE

The purpose of the **HEALING JOURNEY TOOLKIT** is to provide culturally appropriate resources for Aboriginal communities to assist in their on-going efforts to address family violence and its impact on individuals, families and entire communities. The Toolkit is intended to offer a comprehensive and holistic approach to violence prevention. It includes resources that promote an understanding of the root causes of family violence in Aboriginal communities (*public education*). It uses a medicine wheel approach to foster discussion on behaviours, feelings and attitudes about family violence that need to be addressed across all age groups and stages of life (*public awareness*). It offers resources to help individuals in crisis, or the service providers to whom they turn, to find ways to take the first steps on their journey to well-being (*crisis intervention*). Finally, the Toolkit is intended to foster family and community healing through community dialogue, the creation of positive messages about respectful behaviour and attitudes, and the development of supportive initiatives to address the multiple root causes of family violence and meet the needs of all the people affected by it (*prevention*).

SPECIFICALLY, THE OBJECTIVES OF THE TOOLKIT ARE:

- A** To promote awareness of the unique issues and barriers that confront Aboriginal communities generally, and Aboriginal women in particular, in their effort to deal with violence and abuse;
- B** To provide culturally appropriate resources in a variety of formats that will assist service providers working with Aboriginal people to better recognize and deal with abuse and violence in their interpersonal relationships and in their lives;
- C** To demonstrate how the various forms of abuse and violence are interconnected and their relationship to other issues such as gender equality, racism, residential schooling, and so on;
- D** To profile the resources and services that are available to help Aboriginal women and their families deal with violence;
- E** To highlight the range of legal remedies for family law and criminal law matters that can help Aboriginal people, including those on-reserve, to address the violence they are experiencing; and,
- F** To explore the traditional and mainstream social and health services that can support victims and families on their road to creating healthy personal relationships.

The information in the kit is available on the Healing Journey Website at www.thehealingjourney.ca

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

WHO SHOULD USE THE KIT?

Service providers, such as crisis workers, social workers, guidance counsellors, police, health/mental health professionals and others who come into contact with Aboriginal people experiencing violence in their interpersonal relationships can use this Toolkit as a valuable resource to promote healing. Although the Toolkit is appropriate for Aboriginal people living on-reserve and off-reserve, special attention is paid to information and barriers that are unique to people on-reserve. Much of the information in the kit can be shared directly with individuals who are seeking help with their own relationships. The kit was designed specifically for Aboriginal people in New Brunswick; however, much of the information is suited for use by Aboriginal people across Canada.

HOW TO USE THE KIT

Some of the ways to use parts, or all, of information in this Toolkit include:

1 Crisis intervention

The information in the kit can be shared with individuals or families coping with abuse and its related affects. The Toolkit offers information on recognizing abuse, safety planning for women and their children, and resources for getting help in a crisis. It encourages friends, neighbours and service providers who know people experiencing abuse to adopt an “I believe you” attitude that NEVER blames the victim, yet reaches out to everyone to join the healing journey, including the abuser. Knowing what to do in a crisis and what to expect if you seek help can make the journey less frightening.

2 Public Education and Awareness

When somebody is being abused, it harms the victim, their family, and the entire community. In other words, everyone feels the negative consequences of abuse. Everyone should have the opportunity to become part of the solution. The Toolkit provides a range of educational resources for Aboriginal communities and service providers to use to create public education and awareness of family violence issues.

- ♦ There is information on recognizing abuse, understanding the link to multiple inter-related problems, legal options, and suggestions for mobilizing and promoting community healing.
- ♦ Some of the information is designed specifically for particular age groups, such as youth.
- ♦ Creating awareness of family violence issues and resources can happen at many levels – social service agencies, band councils, workplaces, schools and other places where people live, work and play.

3 Prevention

The Toolkit encourages communities to find ways, traditional and non-traditional, to support healing and new beginnings. Although the first step of a personal healing journey comes from within, everyone can play a role in helping to make the journey as smooth as possible. Prevention involves addressing not only physical safety, it also means dealing with people’s emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. Prevention includes helping people take the time to reflect on how they act, think and feel about family violence as individuals and as a community. It means establishing a community climate of respect, caring, and healing, along with supporting or advocating for preventive services and resources including alcohol/drug rehabilitation services, social and mental health services, counselling, housing, and income generating opportunities.

The Toolkit includes posters, bookmarks, fact sheets and a variety of resources that can be shared and even discussed throughout the community.

HELP ONE ANOTHER!

We encourage you to work collaboratively to introduce the Toolkit in your workplace, school or community. Bring in a group of interested people together to talk about the kit and how it might be used to support your efforts to work with victims of family violence, create awareness of family violence, and prevent further violence from occurring. Consider a range of initiatives to promote individual and community healing since everyone can play a role in addressing family violence issues and finding solutions. We hope this kit inspires you to take action, whether you are an individual experiencing violence, a service provider working with families, or somebody whose interests are at the community level.

You should try to identify the respected and key elders and individuals in your community who can also promote the use of this kit. In developing this project, we too sought out “champions” and “mentors” from Aboriginal communities in our province, both on and off reserve. Such individuals may be willing to promote the Toolkit and work with Aboriginal people to address family violence and its related issues. Be sure to tell us about these “champions” in your community.

No matter how you use this Toolkit, we hope that it will contribute to a healthier, safer and more respectful community for everyone.

TELL US WHAT YOU ARE DOING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Share your success stories and challenges in using the toolkit. Tell us about your events—workshops, public awareness initiatives and so on. We will post them on the Healing Journey Website so check in often at www.thehealingjourney.ca.





WWW.THEHEALINGJOURNEY.CA