



Aboriginal Journey to Healing

Information Sheet

Family violence in Aboriginal communities impacts children, youth, Elders, and families. It compromises the integrity of Aboriginal culture, traditions and values.

“Our strength is in our visions and dreams, our ability to interpret the songs, dances of the earth, sky, spirit worlds, if we can remember our purpose, we will survive.”

(Canadian Council on Social Development, 1991)

Get Help

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

For help in your community or for more information, please call the 24 hour Family Violence Info Line toll free at **310-1818** or visit www.familyviolence.gov.ab.ca

Alberta Children's Services is proud to lead Alberta's Strategy for the Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying.

Is there family violence in my community?

Yes. Consider these staggering numbers:

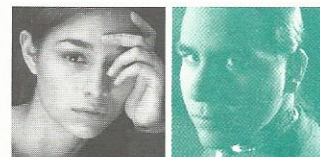
- In some northern Aboriginal communities, it is believed that between 75 per cent and 90 per cent of women are battered. The study also found that 40 per cent of children in these communities had been physically abused by a family member (Health Canada, 1997)
- Fifty-seven per cent of the Aboriginal women who experienced abuse indicated that children witnessed the violence (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2001b)
- Thirty-seven per cent of Aboriginal women and 30 per cent of Aboriginal men reported experiencing emotional abuse (such as insults, jealousy, and the regular attempt to control and limit the activities and social relationships of one's partner) during the previous five-year period (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2001b)

Family violence

These high rates are associated with the effects of “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.” (The Aboriginal Family Healing Joint Steering Committee, For Generations To Come: The Time is Now: A Strategy for Aboriginal Family Healing—Sylvia Maracle, Barbara Craig, co-chairs. Ontario: the Committee, 1993)

Family violence can be perpetrated on anyone: men, women, children, and Elders. It includes physical abuse (hitting, punching, kicking, choking, etc), emotional abuse (threatened, called names, etc), sexual abuse (forced sexual contact), child sexual abuse, incest, financial abuse, and spiritual abuse.

Family violence destroys a family. It impacts children and the whole community. It impacts the Aboriginal communities' struggle to heal trans-generational loss and grief as a result of colonization and residential schools. Family violence hurts everyone; it's a heavy painful burden to carry alone. It is not your fault.



Taking the first step on your healing journey

Eight things you can do if you are being abused

Everyone is impacted by family violence. Healing will restore the harmony and balance of your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well being.

Here's what you can do:

1. First, make sure you and any children are physically safe.
 - **If you are in immediate danger call 911.**
 - Make a safety plan. If your partner has ever been violent, the violence could happen again at any time. You will need a safety plan so you can get to a safe place quickly if necessary. See "safety plan" suggestions at www.familyviolence.gov.ab.ca or call a women's shelter or police-based Victim Services Unit for assistance.
 - If a child is being abused call the Child Abuse Hotline 24 hours a day at **1-800-387-5437 (KIDS)**.
 - Call **1-866-331-3933** toll free to be automatically redirected to a shelter nearest you.
 - The Wheatland Emergency Shelter in Strathmore accommodates abused men with or without children, phone **1-877-934-6634**.
2. Know that you are not responsible for the abuse. You did not cause the abuse even if your partner would like you to think so.
3. Understand that the abuse and violence will continue. Abuse and violence are not likely to stop without intervention.
4. Tell someone you trust about the abuse — a community social worker/child intervention specialist, community service worker, regional health nurse, teacher, counsellor or school administrator. Secrecy gives abuse more power.
 - Connect with a trusted Elder in your community.
5. Find out more about abuse in relationships. You are not alone. Other women have had this experience and were eventually able to create new and healthy lives for themselves. Once you start looking for sources of help, you will meet people who understand your situation.
6. Get professional help from a qualified counsellor.
7. Care for yourself. Anything you do to uplift your body, emotions, mind or spirit will help you to get through this difficult situation and create the life you want for yourself.
8. Spend time with healthy people. Even if they cannot help you directly, being with healthy people will remind you that most people have kind and rewarding relationships. You can too.

Call the 24 hour Family Violence Info Line, toll free at **310-1818** or visit www.familyviolence.gov.ab.ca for information about accessing resources and support services. Some reserves and Aboriginal rural communities have community based domestic violence programs and support services.