

Coalition Against Family Violence

Strategic Directions in Ending Family Violence in the NWT

Draft Report February 3, 2016

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Introduction and Definitions

For many families in the NWT family violence is a harsh reality. Family Violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels. Family violence occurs in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships and can happen to intimate partners who are married, living together or dating.

According to a Statistics Canada Statistical profile released on January 15, 2015 the Northwest Territories has epidemic rates of family violence that are nine times the national average, placing the NWT in second place for the highest rates of violence in Canada. Family Violence does not only affect those who are abused, but also has a substantial effect on family members, friends, co-workers, other witnesses, the economy and the community at large. Children who grow up witnessing domestic violence are among those seriously affected by this crime. The NWT has four times the national rate for family violence against victims under 17 years of age. We are also 17 times the national rate of violence against victims who are seniors.

What is Family Violence?

Family violence is abuse or violence that occurs between intimate partners or family members it takes many different forms and involves the abuse of power and the betrayal of trust. It crosses all socio-economic, religious and ethno-cultural boundaries.

Some common terms used to describe family violence are: domestic abuse, spousal assault, violence against women, elder abuse, child abuse, neglect, battery or intimate partner violence.

The Definition of Family in the Context of Family Violence

When we refer to family, we are speaking about anyone who has an intimate affiliation with the person that is choosing to abuse. This could be an older adult such as a grandparent, or it could be a child. Family can be a couple that is living together, a boyfriend/girlfriend, or same sex partners. This can also include brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles. The term family in this context is not just limited to the “nuclear” definition of family; it encompasses the whole family dynamic such as extended family and blended family members, like a step father or half sister.

Who is the Coalition Against Family Violence?

The Coalition Against Family Violence NWT is a group of concerned people who work together on family violence issues. Its members include territorial and community-based groups, GNWT government departments, and individuals. The Coalition was formed in 1999, when government and non-government organizations began meeting in Yellowknife.

The Coalition Against Family Violence NWT envisions a peaceful, equitable society where all NWT residents, as individuals, members of families, communities, organizations or governments, are valued, respected, safe and free from abuse and inequalities. The Coalition Against Family Violence NWT wants to provide the public with an accurate picture of family violence and its impacts on our families and communities.

The Coalition Against Family Violence is made up of the following non-government and government agencies:

Status of Women Council of the NWT (Chair)

A New Day Program

Association of Social Workers in Northern
Canada

Aurora College

Centre for Northern Families

City of Yellowknife

Dene Nation

Inuvik Translational Home

Family Support Centre, Hay River

GNWT, DAAIR

GNWT, Department of Education, Culture and
Employment

GNWT, Department of Justice

GNWT, Department of Health
and Social Services

Native Women's Association of the NWT

Northern Territories Federation of Labour

North of 60 Military Family Resource Centre

NWT Disabilities Council

NWT Housing Corporation

NWT John Howard Society

NWT Seniors' Society

On Eagles Wings

RCMP

Salvation Army

Sutherland House

Tree of Peace

Tuktoyaktuk Women & Children Shelter

Victim Services

White Ribbon Campaign

YWCA of Yellowknife

History

In response to the prevalence of family violence, attempts to address it in a strategic way have been made. In 2003, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) responded to the Coalition Against Family Violence's 'call to action'. Since then, the GNWT and the Coalition Against Family Violence have worked in partnership on many initiatives framed within two key Action plans (2003-2007/2007-2012). These Action Plans have resulted in additional services and programming as well as the implementation of ongoing funding which has helped stabilize current initiatives. A comprehensive continuum of programs and services for both victims and perpetrators are an essential part of an overall strategy to end family violence.

In 2011, the Coalition released 19 recommendations in the report *Recommendations for addressing gaps, shifting attitudes, and enhancing services to reduce family violence in the NWT*. Since then some of the recommendations have been addressed and funded by the GNWT but there is still much work to be done. Non-profit organizations also continue to work on projects and research funded by various levels of government, industry and community.

To further understand the situation in the NWT, a Family Violence Report Card was developed by the Coalition Against Family Violence. This tool reviewed services available, as well as identified gaps for families impacted by violence. A second report card is due to come out in the next year.

"Strategic directions in ending family violence in the NWT" has been prepared to provide an update on services currently available. It also includes the strategic directions the Coalition hopes the GNWT will consider to address family violence in the NWT.

Progress to Date

Coalition Against Family Violence

A Coalition made up of territorial organizations and concerned citizens, government and non-government entities is continuing to hold policy makers accountable and lobbying for change within the NWT. The Coalition meets once a month and is administered through the Status of Women Council of the NWT.

A Common Risk Assessment Tool (ODARA)

A common risk assessment tool (Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment) was implemented in 2009/2010. This is an actuarial tool that measures the likelihood that a perpetrator will reoffend against his female partner. The RCMP 'G' division amended their policies so that as of March 15, 2010 the use of the ODARA tool is mandatory for all male offender family violence investigations in the NWT. The information collected through this tool is also submitted to Crown Prosecutors as part of their court package. The ODARA is the most accurate tool currently available in calculating recidivism. ODARA can also be used by shelter workers, victim services workers, health care professionals and social workers to support safety planning with victims. The use of a shared tool will ensure that agencies have a mutual understanding of risk.

In 2014, training on how to use the ODARA became available through an on-line format, ODARA 101. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) obtained 250 licenses for ODARA 101 that is valid over a 5 year period. Approximately 170 new licenses have been provided to front-line service providers throughout the NWT to take the training. Although training is not required in order to use the ODARA, training will significantly improve participants' accuracy in scoring the ODARA. The GNWT continues to work closely with the RCMP 'G' Division to collect statistics on the use of the ODARA.

NWT Family Violence Shelters

NWT Family Violence Shelters continue to be a vital part of women and children's safety when fleeing family violence. Funding for shelters is provided by the Department as core funding to the Health and Social Services Authorities who sign a contribution agreement with local shelter operators. Along with providing support and safety planning to victims and their children, shelters also provide recovery and support programs for children who have witnessed and/or have been victimized by family violence. The Department has signed a contribution agreement with YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) Yellowknife, to administer the 'Building Capacity NWT Shelters' project. The goal of the Capacity Building project is to enable NWT Family Violence shelters to collaborate with each other and with the shelter movement in Canada to build their individual and collective capacity to most effectively serve women and children fleeing violence in the NWT. The Department continues to work closely with all five shelters conducting shelter visits and providing support.

Prevention & Awareness Raising Campaigns

In 2014/15, the Department of Health and Social Services, in collaboration with the NWT Coalition Against Family Violence, has developed a social marketing campaign aimed at changing attitudes and beliefs about family violence. The campaign is entitled “What Will It Take?” and is geared towards bystanders - people who witness family violence. When people are bystanders to family violence they often have an opportunity to step up and make a positive difference but aren’t sure what to do. This campaign is designed to give the public the confidence and skills they need to respond to situations of family violence.

The Department produced a promotional video (PSA) for the “What will it take?” campaign. On October 8, 2014 the “*What Will it Take?*” social marketing campaign was launched with a public information event and reception at Northern United Place. On February 3, 2015 a “What Will it Take?” facilitators workshop took place in Yellowknife where all five NWT regions was represented. In 2015/16, the WWIT social marketing campaign partnered with the Status of Women Council, FOXY (Fostering Open Expression Among Youth), and Tait Communications to advance its efforts in promoting WWIT workshops throughout the NWT.

RCMP Dedicated Position

“G” Division RCMP staffed a dedicated position (Family Violence Coordinator) in 2013 to coordinate family violence initiatives and training for RCMP members across the NWT. The Family Violence Coordinator also participates in several government and non-government committees that address family violence issues, providing input and support from a policing perspective.

Emergency Protection Orders (EPOs)

Emergency Protection Orders can be part of a longer-term safety plan for victims and their children and keep them safe in their own homes. These court orders are available in emergency situations 24 hours a day, and usually require a violent person to stay away from a victim and her children. Longer-term protection orders contain similar provisions. A victim can take either type of order to the rental office to end her tenancy and move out of the unit. They are used sporadically throughout the NWT.

Victim Services

Victim Services are available in person in 8 communities in the NWT with telephone outreach to victims in other communities. Workers help victims deal with the emotional and physical consequences of crime, and support them from the time of the crime throughout the court process. They help with victim impact statements, which are considered by the court when an offender is found guilty. Workers also help victims of serious violent crimes apply for financial assistance with emergency expenses that are a direct result of the crime. They often make referrals to other community or territorial services, including the Victim Notification Program administered by the Corrections Service.

Domestic Violence Treatment Option (DVTO) Court/PARTNER Program

The NWT's Domestic Violence Treatment Option (DVTO) Court allows people who have used violence against a spouse to take responsibility for their behaviour and receive support and counseling. DVTO Court sits in Yellowknife, Hay River, and Behchoko with services available to residents of nearby communities such as Enterprise. Behchoko clients attend group sessions in Yellowknife. The DVTO is for low- to medium-risk offenders who plead guilty and are ready to change their behaviour. Clients participate in an eight-week program that addresses the emotional and psychological causes of violence, and may be referred to other professionals who can help them with related issues. Throughout the program, a judge monitors the client's progress and receives reports from a treatment team of probation officers, bail supervisors, counselors, and victim services. The program supports clients to take dramatic and meaningful steps toward long-term change, and the sentencing judge will take this into consideration. As of December 2015, 59 clients had successfully completed the program.

Community Justice

Community Justice Committees throughout the NWT use a restorative approach to deal with local justice issues. They work on crime prevention and promote a greater understanding of victim, offender and community needs. Their efforts are focused on meeting local needs and making their communities safer by helping youth and adult offenders take responsibility for their actions.

Programming for Children Who Witness Abuse

The Children Who Witness Abuse programs in Hay River and Fort Smith and Project Child Recovery at the YWCA Yellowknife work to lessen the impacts of family violence on children. Some of the work involves primary prevention (ex. promoting healthy relationships through school based programming). The programs also act as secondary prevention strategies because they offer programming for children and youth who have been exposed to violence and are at risk of perpetrating or being victimized by violence later in life.

Counseling for Men Who Use Violence in their Intimate Relationships – A New Day

"A New Day" is a community-based, culturally appropriate, therapeutic program that provides individual and group counselling to medium to high risk men who have used abuse. The program has been designated an Aboriginal Best Practices program by the Public Health Agency of Canada and is delivered by The Tree of Peace Friendship Centre with funding provided by the GNWT's Department of Community Justice. Clients are able to self-refer to the program if they are not involved with the justice system helping prevent future incidents. If necessary, counsellors also report to other services such as child protection, probation, parole, case managers, courts, and other counsellors. Through six months of counselling, men learn how to build on their positive traditional values, take responsibility for their past abusive behaviour including addictions, resolve traumas such as the impacts of Residential Schools, build relapse prevention plans and monitor progress. If clients have partners, they are invited for individual counselling to for safety planning, progress reporting, and referrals to other services. In the first year of operations, 138 clients have been served, ensuring women and children are safer as men take responsibility to heal.

Abuse of Older Adults

The NWT Seniors' Society established the NWT Network to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults. Initial research was conducted in 2010 and the subsequent Building Networks Symposium was held in Yellowknife in 2011. "Leading the Way to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults was born and continues as a "living network" which includes partnering agencies and older adults across the NWT with a focus on the eradication of abuse towards older adults. The NWT Network is the first model of community and regional support networks in Canada where older adults lead the way to safer lives and safer communities. The NWT Network currently has a membership of over 75 people and continues to meet on a regular basis by teleconference. The NWT Network received approval from the NWT Network partners and the Board of Directors for a five year strategy to address abuse of older adults which will go forward for approval by the Minister Responsible for Seniors and the Members of the Legislative Assembly early in 2016. The NWT Seniors' Society contributes to the NWT Network by providing administrative support and co-ordinates of the activities of the NWT Network.

The Department of Health and Social Services provided funding to the NWT Seniors' Society for the development of screening tools to be used to detect abuse of older adults and potential abuse by caregivers. A Working Group including NWT Seniors' Society representatives, Department of Health and Social Services and Aurora College staff as well as a contractor to develop the tools for testing was created. In December a formal focus group testing was conducted. The draft tools were reviewed and feedback provided by 30 people, 75% being older adults from nine regions in the NWT. Changes have been made to the tools based the feedback from the older adults and front line staff who were present.

Family Violence Service Provider Training

Front line service providers have received training in Response-Based Practice and work to give victims positive responses when they come in or call for help. They have also had the opportunity to learn more about Motivational Interviewing, Narrative Therapy and Compassion Fatigue.

Prevention & Awareness Raising Campaigns

Aside from the larger social marketing campaign, the Coalition Against Family Violence has been funded by the GNWT for several years to launch a territory wide Family Violence Awareness Week which includes: resources for communities, promotion items, media ads, and small \$1,000 grants to communities that wish to host their own events.

Research

Northern and Rural Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence is a five year study funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council and the Canadian University Research Alliances that seeks to answer three research questions: 1) What are the needs of women who experience intimate partner violence? 2) What are the gaps in the services to meet these needs? 3) How do we create and sustain non-violent communities? The research team began by conducting an environmental scan, gathering statistical incidents of women as victims of intimate partner violence, and portraying the findings on a geographical information system map. This guided the second phase of the research whereby the team interviewed 31 front-line workers in 12 Northwest Territories communities and created a beginning theory entitled "*our hands are tied*". In phase three, they utilized a constant comparative method to build on this theory by profiling two communities, a regional center and a remote fly-in hamlet. They conducted focus group meetings and individual semi-structured interviews to build on the theory. The next phase continues the knowledge synthesis and mobilization through the creation of an action plan.

Key Priorities

We understand that there is a lot of work to be done in order to end family violence in the NWT. The CAFV has identified three key priority areas that we believe are the most urgent needs for addressing family violence. These priorities set the groundwork to more openly address family violence and to move forward on a number of other related projects by the community.

Prevention: Changing Language, Social Responses and Attitudes Around Family Violence

By recognizing family violence and working to change our social responses to it, we can better address the problem. Working to address the normalization of family violence is an important long term project that will lead to lower rates of violence in northern communities.

Primary Recommendation

1. Update the 2007 NWT Family Violence Attitudinal Survey to support the delivery of a complete family violence campaign applying social marketing principles.

Secondary Recommendations

2. Support the creation of a death review panel.
3. Train/inform changes to language and social responses to media, policy makers, leaders and services providers.

Emergency Response: Enhance emergency response options for victims of family violence

Taking into account the unique needs of communities and regions it is important to ensure consistent emergency services are available.

Primary Recommendation

1. Adequate and consistent funding for shelters and victim services.

Secondary Recommendations

2. Support and implement 911 across the NWT.
3. Develop and maintain consistent screening tools to be used by all front line services that promote the disclosure of violence with protocols for follow up.

Healing: Research and develop programs that include specialized courts and culturally appropriate healing options

Approaching the needs of those that are experiencing violence or perpetrating violence with holistic and relevant options will result in improved outcomes.

Primary Recommendation

1. Invest in permanent community based therapy programs for those who have used, experienced and/or witnessed violence available across the NWT.

Secondary Recommendations

2. Partner with the Law Society to provide specialized training around the dynamics of family violence for lawyers and other justice professionals, and community helpers.
3. Enhance specialized courts and supports. Including additional options for the wellness courts, DVTO and a courthouse information referral centre.

Detailed Rationale

Prevention: Changing Language, Social Responses and Attitudes around Family Violence

Actions	Strategies	Rationale
<p>1. Deliver a complete family violence campaign applying social marketing principles and an update to the 2007 NWT Family Violence Attitudinal Survey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the 2007 Attitudinal Survey as a baseline to run a survey to see if attitudes toward violence have changed. • Develop an evaluation strategy for the campaign which builds in a survey component to monitor if attitudes have changed in regular intervals. • Use existing “What Will It Take?” materials and create a full social marketing campaign around it. One that doesn’t just focus on workshops but on changing attitudes. • Continue to run workshops but also have a full media strategy and promotional piece that is not based only on workshops. 	<p>Language and the discourse around issues such as violence, is how we define it. We know violence is normalized in the NWT, blaming and shaming is part of our reality along with community retaliation when a victim exposes a perpetrator. These attitudes and behaviours must change to make violence unacceptable. By reporting family violence in a respectful way and providing positive social responses to victims we not only decrease the amount of trauma a victim feels when reporting but we create a society that no longer dismisses violence and really addresses the issue.</p>
<p>2. Support the creation of a death review panel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is of note that a death review panel is different from a coroner’s report in that a coroner can make recommendations based on their findings around the cause and circumstances of a death but is not an expert in domestic violence nor in systemic interventions of a social nature. A review allows for many prospective with possible partnerships in changing the fabric in policies, services and protocols to be at the same table. They call in experts that would otherwise not be seen as the cause of death but could be a contributing factor or identified gap. • For an example of the structure we would be looking for please go to http://www.ndvfri.org/fags.php 	<p>We need to review homicides and suicides that are connected to family violence so that we can prevent future domestic violence and domestic homicide. Provide safer provisions for victims of violence. Hold accountable both the perpetrators of domestic violence and the multiple agencies and organizations that come into contact with the parties. It will also enhance communities coordinated efforts to end family violence.</p>
<p>3. Train and inform changes to language and social responses to media, policy makers, leaders and services providers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with leaders in government and have an open dialog around family violence, what it is, what social responses are and what language can best support fundamental attitude changes. • Develop new hire packages or training presentations that target specific areas and introduce the importance of language and unintended meanings. 	

Emergency Response: Enhance emergency response options for victims of family violence

Actions	Strategies	Rationale
<p>1. Adequate and consistent funding for shelters and victim services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate funding means that funding is provided on a cost of living scale that would be adequate to run in whichever community the service is offered. i.e. the shelter in Inuvik would receive more funding for operations than the shelter in Hay River due to the cost of living and operations being higher. • Programs and Shelters would receive enough funding that they could be well staffed and provide competitive wages to retain workers. • Safety concerns would be addressed in Shelters. i.e. shatter proof windows, locks for doors, food safety concerns addressed. 	<p>Having consistency in integral emergency services in every community allows for a more timely response to violence. If providers know what the expected processes is for a “typical” case they can modify their responses as needed instead of reinventing a new way to provide the support needed each time. This helps keep victims and community members maintain their safe. It also demystifies the process allowing community and government to provide a collaborative approach to a deadly situation.</p>
<p>2. Support and implement 911 across the NWT.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement 911 for emergency access across the NWT. 	
<p>3. Develop and maintain consistent screening tools to be used by all front line services that promote the disclosure of violence with protocols for follow up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a protocol and tool that all front line workers (nurses, healthcare professionals, student councillors, income support workers, etc.) would be required to use that helps identify family violence and has a consistent follow up protocol if there are concerns. • Regularly train frontline workers in the tool and the protocols around disclosures. • Re-evaluate as circumstances change in each community and maintain an active protocol that closes gaps. i.e. the wellness workers position in Kakisa changes so the protocol is revisited so that there is still services that deal with supporting victims and healing perpetrators of violence. 	

Healing: Research and develop programs that include specialized courts and culturally appropriate healing options

Actions	Strategies	Rationale
<p>1. Invest in permanent community based therapy programs for those who have used, experienced and/or witnessed violence available across the NWT.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the current “A New Day” men’s program as a permanent community-based therapy program. • Have a roll out strategy for community based therapy programs across the NWT or a way for all residents to access therapy options in a timely manner. • Provide community options to access counselling support for victims who have experienced and/or witnessed family violence. • Support and properly fund the Child Recovery Project and other initiatives that focus on children who witness family violence. 	<p>Approaching the needs of those that are experiencing violence or perpetrating violence with holistic and relevant options will result in improved outcomes. We need to look at more restorative and/or rehabilitating approach to those that perpetrate violence so that we can reduce recidivism. We need those in the justice system to be well informed of the dynamics of family violence so they do not retraumatize victims and excuse active choices perpetrators make to abuse. With a wider variety of well defined and executed programs specialized courts can have more options that can reduce violence and increase safety. By providing a specialized referral centre within the court system this can also allow for both victims and perpetrators to access services outside the punitive system and create change.</p>
<p>2. Partner with the Law Society to provide specialized training around the dynamics of family violence for lawyers, Justice Professionals and community helpers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a training package for lawyers, Justice Professionals and community helpers that explain the dynamics of family violence. This could be done in partnership with the Law Society. • Provide presentations and have an open dialog with the Law Society and its members that speak to the positive and negative social responses when using certain language and tactics with victims. 	
<p>3. Enhance specialized courts and supports. Including additional options for the wellness courts, DVTO and a courthouse information referral centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs and services available for specialized courts should be accessible to people even if they have not offended. • Programs would also include support programs for partners of those accessing these services. Examples of these kinds of programs can be found at http://www.mcscalgary.com/, http://www.bridgesinstitute.org/ or http://wav-bc.com/ • Victims and perpetrators would not receive the same treatment but would receive the same level of care. 	

Conclusion

The prevalence of family violence in the Northwest Territories needs to stop if we are to enjoy greater health and wellness within all communities. The reduction of violence will only come from a strategic and integrated approach to reducing and preventing violence.

We need a collaborative approach to ending family violence now more than ever. We believe strongly that if we change the attitudes of our people, provide enhanced emergency response options and develop programs that include specialized courts and culturally appropriate healing options for all residents we can significantly decrease those suffering from the trauma and effects of family violence in the NWT.

We must remain committed to the work we are currently doing and look at ways to engage the community, industry and all levels of government to help in the eradication of violence. Family Violence can't continue.