

Exhibit: National Inquiry into Missing and

Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Location/Phase: Part 2: Calgary

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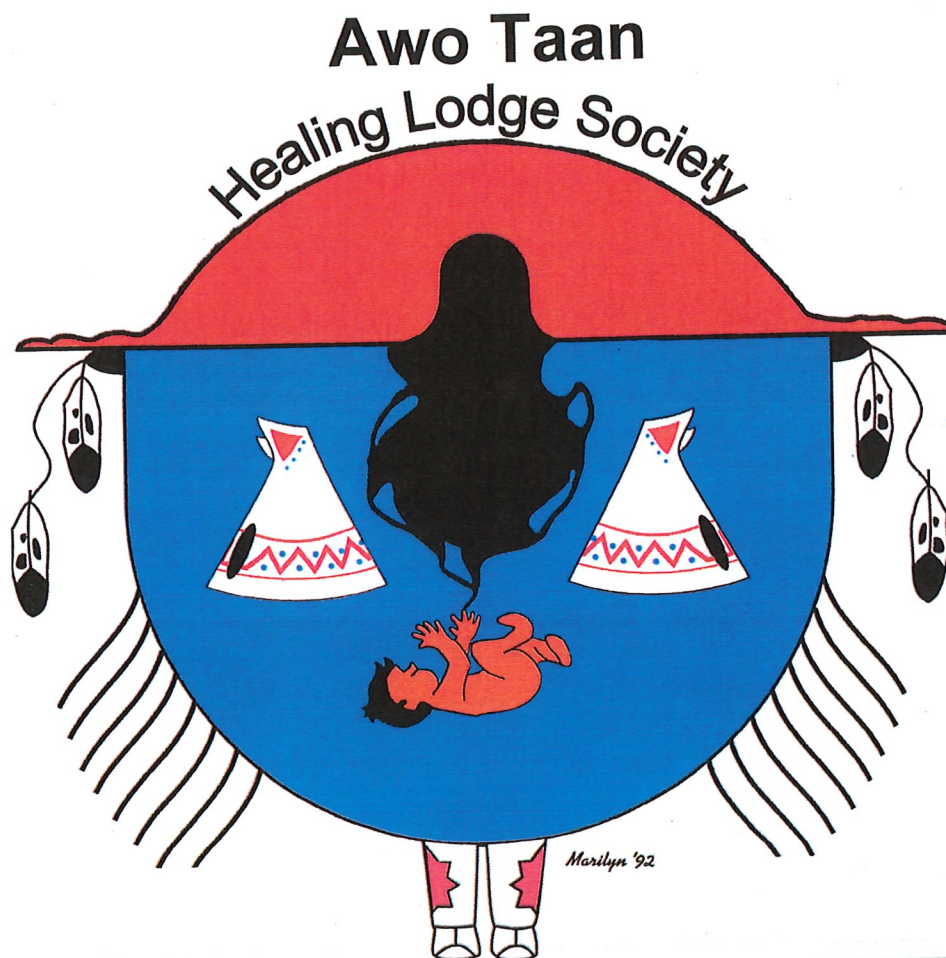
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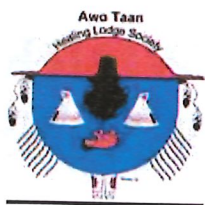


ABORIGINAL FRAMEWORK FOR HEALING & WELLNESS MANUAL©

MAY 30, 2007

Prepared for: Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society
Funded by: Alberta Children's Services

Alberta
Government



Our Vision

Nurturing Families Living in Peace

Our Mission

To provide shelter and integrated services,
guided by Native traditional teachings
to anyone affected by family violence.

The Aboriginal Framework Healing & Wellness Manual© or portions thereof may be reproduced for use; however, we ask that credit be given to the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society. The manual is intended for service delivery providers who provide services to Aboriginal peoples.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society would like to acknowledge the traditional territories and customs of the Blackfoot people on whose traditional land that the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society is located.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society extends thanks to the members of the Transitional Framework Committee, the Healing Lodge Committee, Elders, Winston Thompson, and scholars, Les Jerome, Dr. Nancy Gibson, and Dr. Joel Christie whose guidance facilitated the development of this manual. Acknowledgement is also provided to Awo Taan staff, and Consultants, and others who assisted in the development of the manual.

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The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the Alberta Children's Services, who provided the funding for this project.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society acknowledges the community provider organizations and shelters for their interest in expanding their awareness and capacity to better address the Aboriginal clients who access their services. We believe that the manual will provide you with some basic teachings and tools that have continued to be part of Aboriginal organizations most successful approaches and strategies utilized when providing services to Aboriginal peoples.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society also acknowledges Aboriginal scholars, researchers, various Aboriginal political, social service, and community organizations, and government bodies who have undertaken to document the Aboriginal world view and perspectives in various reports and documents that have been referenced in the manual. Particular thanks go to Betty Bastien for her knowledge about Blackfoot ways of knowing.

Copies of the Aboriginal Framework Healing & Wellness Manual© may be obtained by contacting:

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Manual

The purpose of The Aboriginal Framework Healing & Wellness Manual© is to provide a tool and resource for service delivery organizations committed to providing a range of culturally sensitive services to their clients, many of whom include Aboriginal women and their family members.

The Aboriginal Framework Healing & Wellness Manual© was developed by the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, in response to the need identified to develop a more responsive and culturally appropriate strategy for providing services to Aboriginal clients.

The development of this manual was guided by the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society's philosophy and principles which are inherent to the traditional wholistic and spiritual based model of programming and service delivery.

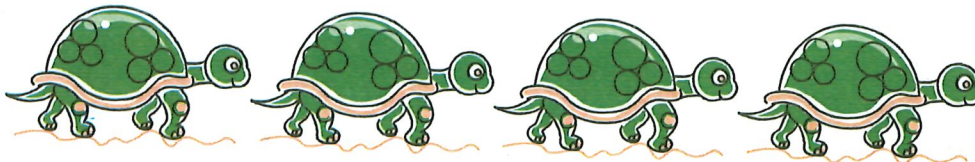
The manual provides the following:

- (a) definitions of key words used throughout the manual;
- (b) provides some background discussion leading to the development of the manual;
- (c) highlights the findings from the literature review with respect to best practices;
- (d) discusses the key aspects of the traditional framework for healing and wellness; and
- (e) suggests strategies for developing a more culturally sensitive service delivery model, including tools and resources that can be utilized by service providers to enhance their own delivery model.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society is pleased to share our service delivery model with you and the best practices that have guided our ongoing development over the years.

May your learning journey be as enlightening as ours has been

"The manual is here to bring out our way of life. It is like lifelong learning. It is a reality within our people . . ." Andy Black Water, Kanai Elder, Alberta



✦ Definitions

The following definitions have been provided to guide the reader and enhance their understanding of the context in which the terms have been utilized and their relevance to this manual.

Aboriginal

The term Aboriginal peoples refer to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples of Canada (*Section 35(2) Constitution Act, 1982*). Aboriginal is also a term that mirrors other terms such as Indian, Native, Indigenous which are used to convey the same meaning.

Awo Taan

Awo Taan means "Shield" in Blackfoot. It was given to Ruth Scalp Lock by her late grandmother, Margaret Bad Boy of the Siksika Nation. The name was later transferred to the Healing Lodge Society through a Blanket Ceremony. Hence, the organization is known as the "Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society" (*Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society*).

Best Practice

Andy Black Water, describes "best practices" to us as a mentoring process between Board and staff and the women and families with whom we work. It is a process through which we share our world view and teachings from the Sacred Circle of Life. These teachings come from our heart and they guide us in the work to assist women and families impacted by family violence. This wisdom guided by the Elders helps us to understand their humanity and the impact of their relationships and environment. These dynamics influence our healing and wellness.

In an Aboriginal context, literature describes "best practice" as promising practices, recognized as how each community finds its own key issues, priorities and healing path *Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men, Aboriginal Healing Foundation, W. J. (Bill) Mussell, 2005*. Context for best practice is important because one shelter's best practice may not be considered even a good practice in another environment. One must take into consideration the unique circumstances of the organization and the people it serves. (*Ending Violence in Aboriginal Communities: Best Practices in Aboriginal Shelters and Communities, National Aboriginal Circle on Family Violence, January 2006*).

Elder

Elders in Aboriginal communities are those recognized and respected for knowing, living, and teaching the traditional knowledge. They see the world through the eyes of the ancestors and interpret the contemporary world through lessons passed down through generations (*Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 4: Perspectives and Realities, Minister of Supply & Services Canada. Ottawa, Ontario, p3*).

Andy Black Water, describes an "Elder" to us in terms of criteria related to when a group of people or community comes to acknowledge a person's resourcefulness, their knowledge, their lifestyle, their relationship to family and to the well-being of the community. The criteria and qualifiers for an Elder come from others and their community. An Elder is an individual who is caring and sincere; someone who possesses specialized knowledge of medicine, herbs, Aboriginal philosophies, dreams, justice, education, healing and wellness, and spirits of the Ancestors, to name a few. Different Elders have different areas of knowledge and no one Elder is gifted with them all.

Family

Andy Black Water, describes "family" to us in an Aboriginal context. Family is a mother and father who have children. It includes siblings, extended family, traditionally adopted family members who become your own as if they were your birth child/mother/father/, grandparents/grandchildren, aunt/uncle/cousin, community/clan/tribe, including non-traditional adopted members. The teaching from the Sacred Circle of Life, teaches us that the Creator's gift of life to parents must be respected and that the work of the Creator is not to be questioned because the Creator does not make mistakes. This allows for families to embrace individuals who possess male/female qualities and who may be born with physical, mental challenges, and to respect differences.

To Aboriginal people, family signifies the biological unit of parents and children living together in a household. But it also has a much broader meaning. Family also encompasses an extended network of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins (*Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 3, Gathering Strength. Minister of Supply & Services Canada. Ottawa, Ontario. p.11-12*).

Family Violence

Family violence is more often associated with the colonialization process than with Western concepts of patriarchy. The root of family violence is described in direct relationship to various forms of Western contact, such as boarding schools, introduction to alcohol, loss of the family structure, as well as the loss of traditional male roles in society. . . the overall disruption in the traditional structures of culture is attributable to Western control and influences. This influence is further exemplified in the abuse of power, be it by men to women, parents to children, or by spiritual leaders to individual's seeking help (*Treaty 7 Community Study, 1993, p62*).

First, Aboriginal family violence is distinct in that it has invaded communities and cannot be considered a problem of a particular couple or an individual household. Second, the failure in family functioning can be traced in many cases to interventions of the state deliberately introduced to disrupt or displace the Aboriginal family. Third, violence within Aboriginal communities is fostered and sustained by a racist social environment that promulgates demeaning stereotypes of Aboriginal women and men and seeks to

diminish their value as human beings and their right to be treated with dignity (*Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Vol. 3 Gathering Strength, 1996*).

Healing

To heal is to create an environment that promotes balance between the duality of life. Across the Plains and South, among the Crows and the Sioux, this duality is a shared concept and is expressed in sacred symbols and healing lodges. Balance invites harmony, unity, order and spirituality into the landscapes of our relationships with our Creator, our community and one another. Balance is the path that bridges the duality of life – the two opposites – to function together, in harmony, creating an environment of wellness (*Definition as guided by Andy Black Water, Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, March 2007*).

Healing Circle

A healing circle is a term used to describe an activity when people come together and sit in a circle to discuss safety and safety planning. It is educational and prevention focused. It is used as a tool for building and nurturing an individual's spirit. The person leading the circle utilizes a variety of methods within the circle to facilitate this process for whom the healing circle was called (*Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, 2007*).

Indigenous Knowledge or Traditional Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge and traditional knowledge are used interchangeably to refer to Aboriginal peoples' ways of knowing. The term traditional knowledge is used to describe information passed from generation to generation. This information is rooted in storytelling, ceremonies, traditions, ideologies, dances, medicines, arts and crafts, or a combination of all of these. Traditional knowledge is collective knowledge (*Sacred Ways of Life: Traditional Knowledge, Chelsea Crowshoe, First Nations Centre, NAHO, 2005, p2*).

Intergenerational Impacts

This includes the range of effects of sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological abuse that were inflicted on to the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, families and communities of Aboriginal people who attended the residential school system (*Third Interim Evaluation Report of Aboriginal Healing Foundation Program Activity, Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003, pvi*).

Protocols

Andy Black Water, describes "protocols" to us as a respectful way of approaching Elders for cultural teachings, advice, prayer, healing, and guidance that will assist you on your life journey. Protocols include preparation for the visit to the Elder. This involves inquiry to find out what the Elder prefers as an offering or gift for the particular request

of an individual. The request will determine the offering or gift to the Elder. Typically, offerings or gifts include tobacco, blankets, food, and other generousities such as an honorarium that an individual may wish to bestow on the Elder to assist him/her meeting their daily needs.

Protocol is a way to have a meaningful conversation . . . there are protocols that are unique to different nations (*First Nations Protocol: Working with First Nations, Kakwirakeron & Dave Good, Frontlines, 2000*).

Sacred Circle of Life

Andy Black Water, describes the “Sacred Circle of Life” to us as a bundle of life teachings which expresses our continuity of life as a spiritually significant journey that takes on different forms and carries one beyond the physical world. These teachings help to regulate life, and teach us that if we do not follow them that it will impact ourselves and others. They also teach us that we follow the same seasonal paths as other life forms. The Sacred Circle of Life teaches us that experiences in the physical world allow us to share our gifts and to take on the gifts of the forces, such as the Sun and Moon, all of which give us strength, and when we leave the physical world, these gifts become our legacy. The Sacred Circle of Life teaches us that life is a continuation of a cycle of events that we experience; it is our conscience of today that influences tomorrow.

The Sacred Circle of Life, also referred to as the Medicine Wheel, is a teaching device associated mainly with the First Peoples of the plains – Cree, Blackfoot, Dakota and other Indigenous nations. It represents the circle that encompasses all life and all that is known or knowable, linked together in a whole with no beginning and no end. The lines intersecting at the centre of the circle signify order and balance (*Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back, p646*).

When used as a healing tool, the Medicine Wheel is a symbol used to represent the dynamic system of mind, body, emotions and spirit, and the needs related to each of these aspects that must be met for the development of human potential (*Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men, W.J.(Bill) Mussell, 2005, p115*).

Medicine Wheel is a concept of the cycle of life, including “health and well-being symbolized by a circular pattern recognized for encompassing the four areas of life: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, espoused by plains and western First Nations” (*Sacred Ways of Life: Traditional Knowledge, Chelsea Crowshoe, First Nations Centre, NAHO, 2005, p20*).

Seven Sacred Teachings

The Seven Sacred Teachings are also referred to as the Aboriginal Code of Ethics which describes what wisdom means in the relationship between individuals, in family life, and in the life of the community. They represent the path of safety leading around the circle of life. They include traditional concepts of honesty, humility, truth, wisdom, love, respect, and bravery (*Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, By-Laws, 1992*).

Sharing Circle

A sharing circle is a tool that is like a peer based support group where people of similar backgrounds come together to sit in a circle to share similar experiences that they can relate to. It is similar to supportive counseling, but in a group setting. For children, it is used as a tool for education purposes, where the Child Support Worker will engage the children in an activity that may focus on storytelling in the oral tradition, reading books, or Elders' teachings. Sharing circles involving Elder's teachings are co-facilitated by the Child Support Worker and the Elder (*Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, 2007*).

Spirit

A fundamental feature of Aboriginal world view continues to be that all life is a manifestation of spiritual reality. We come from spirit; we live and move surrounded by spirit; and when we leave this life we return to the spirit world (*Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back, Minister of Supply & Services Canada. Ottawa, Ontario, p628*).

Wholistic Approach/Healing

A wholistic approach is a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated approach that is flexible enough to respond to the complexity of human needs related to spirit, emotion/social, physical and intellectual aspects of being (*Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 3: Gathering Strength, Minister of Supply & Services Canada. Ottawa, Ontario, p226*).

The wholistic view sees all parts of life as interrelated. Spiritual life, family relations, emotions, thinking and physical health are all related to each other and the environment (*Swinomish Tribal Mental Health Project, 1991 in Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men, W.J (Bill) Mussell, 2005, p95*).

Wholistic healing is healing of the mind, body, spirit and emotions (*Journey and Balance: Second Interim Evaluation Report of Aboriginal Healing Foundation Program Activity, Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003, pviii*).

Wholistic vs. Holistic

Awo Taan prefers to use the following spelling of the term “wholistic” rather than “holistic” to describe the model because Awo Taan works with the whole person, whole families, and acknowledges the interconnectedness and impacts of all aspects of the individual’s life and environment on their healing journey.

✦ Guiding Principles

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society's principles are grounded in the organization's vision and mission.

1. We believe that we are each born into Spirit and that we are Spiritual beings having a human experience;
2. We believe that Spirit knows no color;
3. We believe that wholistic healing requires attention to healing the mind, emotions, body and spirit;
4. We value the traditional knowledge of Elders and the transfer of that knowledge as sacred;
5. We acknowledge and value the Spirit and Integrity of all individuals affected by violence;
6. We believe that healing requires a multifaceted response, including intervention, provision of safe shelter, spiritual and cultural services, community-based services and information to victims and to those who batter, as well as public education and the enforcement of appropriate laws;
7. We believe that violence is manifested through intergenerational trauma and that the healing of that trauma is influenced through community-based education;
8. We believe that the Seven Sacred Teachings underlie the philosophy of healing and wellness.

✦ *Role Of Indigenous Knowledge or Traditional Knowledge*

Aboriginal peoples believe traditional knowledge is a vehicle for the transmission of culture through storytelling, traditional practices, song, dance, ceremony, arts and crafts, and teachings. These bundles of knowledge are unique to Aboriginal peoples. As a result, many Aboriginal peoples are taking measures to protect their intellectual property rights, to ensure that the public domain is aware that Aboriginal peoples are “the primary guardians and interpreters of their cultures, arts and sciences, whether created in the past, or developed by them in the future” (*Respectful Treatment of Indigenous Knowledge, Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, Toronto, 2001*).

Aboriginal peoples are taught that the transfer of traditional knowledge is sacred; therefore traditional knowledge needs to be handled with the utmost respect, care and humility by both the person(s) sharing the knowledge and the person(s) receiving it. This is the primary protocol for sharing traditional knowledge. When utilized as a tool for healing and wellness, traditional teachings can become “a powerful tool for increased self-knowledge and self-care” (*Mussell, 2005*). As a result, there needs to be a mutual reciprocal understanding that it will be handled with the utmost care.

Traditional knowledge has been the foundation upon which Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society was founded. It has continued to serve the organization well and contributed immensely to the healing and wellness of the women and family members we have served and continue to serve. Awo Taan is an example of a community-based model where “Aboriginal peoples are involved in healing their own traditions, repairing the ruptures and discontinuity in the transmission of traditional knowledge and values, and asserting their collective identity and power” (*Healing Traditions: Culture, Community and Mental Health Promotion with Canadian Aboriginal Peoples, Laurence Kirmayer, Cori Simpson and Margaret Cargo, Australasian Psychiatry, Vol.11, Supplement 1, 2003*).

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has agreed to share some fundamental traditional teachings with service delivery organizations who also work with Aboriginal women and family members, and families. Our purpose is to increase awareness and sensitivity among service providers who may be searching for a new approach to understand their Aboriginal clients and new strategies that will assist them in gaining strength to continue on their healing journey to wellness.

We respectfully request that service providers and other users of this manual acknowledge the protocol of handling these bundles of knowledge with respect, care and humility.

We also encourage you to seek out credible resource persons to assist in facilitating a deeper understanding of these teachings and their relationship to the healing journeys of those you serve (refer to Regional Community Resource Networks, Section 4). Awo Taan

Healing Lodge Society would be pleased to act as a resource and assist in the areas of cultural competency that we have developed which are related to best practices when working with Aboriginal women and family members, in particular.

And lastly, we encourage you to utilize the evaluation feedback form found in Section 5 of the Manual. Your feedback on the Manual's usefulness would be most appreciated. It is part of the Awo Taan Healing Lodge's continuous monitoring and evaluation model.

Evaluation feedback forms can be forwarded to:

Attention: Aboriginal Framework for Healing and Wellness Manual©
Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society
P.O. Box 6084, Station "A"
Calgary, AB
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2. BACKGROUND

✦ *Need for Manual*

The need for a culturally appropriate shelter for Aboriginal women and family members was first discussed by a group of concerned stakeholders in 1986. The discussion focused on the need for a culturally appropriate model that reflected an Aboriginal framework for healing and wellness. These discussions led to the establishment of the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, or Awo Taan Native Women's Shelter as it was formerly known, in 1992. The subsequent years of experience helped to shape the program service delivery model into a framework incorporating traditional teachings and practices that support and nurture healing and wellness. In 2006, the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Committee determined that they would share the key components of their program model with others who also work with Aboriginal women and family members fleeing from family violence.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society began in 1992 with a focus on crisis intervention, and has evolved into a 27-bed, full service emergency shelter, of which 23 beds are funded. The shelter provides services to women and family members from all cultures who have suffered from family violence and all forms of abuse. The shelter operates 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. The 21-day shelter program offers a full range of services and programs which include: a child support program, parents' circle, children's circle, wellness clinic, and family circle. The non-residential programming includes outreach, family wellness-centre parent link, family violence prevention, and the Taking Action on Bullying Initiative, which provide counseling, healing circles, referrals, advocacy and cultural support (*The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel*© Training Manual, Counselor Guide, 2007).

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has been providing culture-based services to women and family members fleeing from family violence and abuse since 1992. Awo Taan's services are inclusive of men and extended family members impacted by family violence and makes provision for them in the family's healing process. The inclusion of men has been an important part of the wholistic healing and wellness model. They are currently involved as partners and as single parents in several components of Awo Taan's current programming and services.

The approach that Awo Taan has taken to working with women and families has resulted in the development of a traditional wholistic and spiritual based model that prefers a strengths-based approach to working with whole families and the community. The model is consistent with traditional Aboriginal healing. It is within this experience and modeling of coming to know what works best for the women and family members being served, that the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has worked to develop this manual to share with others committed to excellence in service delivery to Aboriginal peoples.

✦ *Methodology*

The funding provided by the Alberta Children's Services enabled the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society to develop the manual through a process that included:

- (a) Establishment of a Healing Lodge Committee to guide the work;
- (b) A literature review;
- (c) Site visits to other urban and rural communities with program models of wellness: Hollow Water, Manitoba; Ma Mawi Chi Itata Society, Winnipeg; Wahbung Abinoonjiiag, Winnipeg; Native Women's Transition Centre, Winnipeg; Aboriginal Health & Wellness Centre, Winnipeg; and Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa.
- (d) Focus groups with key stakeholders, such as Shelter Board, Staff, Elders, Families (in-house and outreach), Senior Housing residents;
- (e) Consultations with a sampling of service providers; and
- (f) Consultations with the Healing Lodge Committee and Elders' Group.

These methods of information gathering and consultation led to the development of the manual and gave shape to its contents as a user friendly manual for service delivery providers working with Aboriginal women and family members.

✦ *Literature Review Findings*

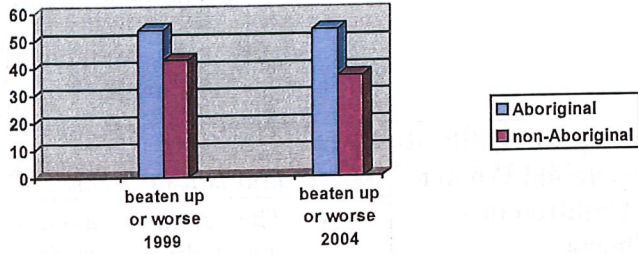
The literature review focused on current demographic statistical and research evidence related to Aboriginal models of healing and wellness, and identifying what works best to support the need for culturally-specific programs and services for Aboriginal women and family members impacted by family violence. Given the target population for service delivery providers and the users of the manual, the statistics begin with a national incidence of family violence among Aboriginal women and family members, and then become specific to the province of Alberta, the City of Calgary and surrounding area, and the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society.

The findings on Aboriginal models of healing and wellness begin with the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, followed by overviews of other Aboriginal healing and wellness models, some of which include reference to sites that were visited during the course of this body of work.

The research and literature findings on best practices are broad based; however, the literature on best practice in the context of Aboriginal organizations working with Aboriginal peoples is beginning to grow (*Ending Family Violence in Aboriginal Communities: Best Practices in Aboriginal Shelters and Communities, National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence, January 2006, p17*). The reader is cautioned to be cognizant that a best practice for one agency may not be the best practice for another. Therefore, the reader must take into consideration the unique circumstances of their agency and determine if and/or how these strategies might be helpful.

Table 1. Literature Review Findings - Statistics

CATEGORY	FINDINGS
Incidence of Family Violence Among Aboriginal Women and Family Members In Canada	Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) Sisters in Spirit Campaign continues to raise the issue of violence against Indigenous women. Although Indigenous women represent 3% of the Canadian population, they are over represented as victims of racialized, sexual violence.
	NWAC has estimated that over the past 20 years, 500 Indigenous women have gone missing in communities across Canada (<i>Sisters in Spirit, Native Women's Association of Canada, March 2004</i>).
	Aboriginal women are 3 times more likely to experience violent relationships than non-Aboriginal women (<i>The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel© Training Manual, Counselor Guide, 2007, p11</i>).
	The 1999 Statistics Canada General Social Survey (GSS) results indicated that 20% of Aboriginal people, compared to 7% for non-Aboriginal people, reported being assaulted by a spouse in the past five year period (<i>Evaluation of the Family Prevention Program, Indian & Northern Affairs Canada Corporate Services, June 2005, p13</i>).
	48% of Aboriginal people experienced life threatening types of violence compared to 31% for non-Aboriginal peoples (<i>Ibid., p13</i>).
	The Aboriginal rate of spousal homicide is 8 times higher for female victims and 18 times higher for male victims than the corresponding rate in the non-Aboriginal population (<i>Ibid., p13</i>).
	The 2004 General Social Survey findings indicate that Aboriginal women are at greater risk to suffer more serious types of violence, greater injuries, and to take time off from day-to-day activities than Aboriginal men (<i>The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel© Training Manual, Counselor Guide, 2007, p12</i>).
	While the experience of Aboriginal women may be similar to other Canadian women, recent statistics have found Aboriginal women in Canada are at significantly higher risk of spousal violence than other segments of society (<i>Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends, 2006, p10</i>).
	24% of Aboriginal women, compared with 18% of Aboriginal men said that they had suffered violence from a current or previous spouse or common-law partner in the five-year period up to 2004 (<i>Statistics Canada, 2005</i>).

	Aboriginal women reported higher rates of spousal violence in 2004, and significantly more severe or life-threatening forms of violence (54%) than their non-Aboriginal counterparts (37%), (<i>Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends, 2006, p65</i>).  <table><caption>Spousal Violence Rates (Estimated from Chart)</caption><tr><th>Year</th><th>Aboriginal (%)</th><th>non-Aboriginal (%)</th></tr><tr><td>1999</td><td>55</td><td>45</td></tr><tr><td>2004</td><td>58</td><td>40</td></tr></table> • 343 Aboriginal females out of every 1,000 are victims of violent crimes compared to 96 out of every 1,000 non-Aboriginal women; • 54% of Aboriginal women surveyed said they had been a victim of spousal assault compared to 37% of non-Aboriginal women; • 1/3 of these women reported that their children had witnessed the violence; • Aboriginal females are 3.5 times more at-risk to be a victim of a violent crime than non-Aboriginal women (<i>Public Health Agency of Canada, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence</i>).	Year	Aboriginal (%)	non-Aboriginal (%)	1999	55	45	2004	58	40
Year	Aboriginal (%)	non-Aboriginal (%)								
1999	55	45								
2004	58	40								
Incidence of Violence among First Nations On-Reserve	• Assaults are 8 times higher on reserve than off reserve; • Sexual assaults are 7 times higher on reserve than off reserve; • Homocides are 6 times higher on reserve than off reserve; • Charges on reserve for violent crimes are 10 times higher than off reserve; • Youth crimes on reserve are 3 times higher than off reserve; • Youth homicide on reserve are 11 times higher than off reserve (<i>Public Health Agency of Canada, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence</i>).									
Multi-causal Factors Related to Aboriginal Family Violence	Aboriginal family violence is a result of multi-causal factors related to colonization and its legacy. These factors have contributed to the breakdown of family. Factors include: • Marginalization and dispossession; • Loss of land and traditional culture; • Breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal law; • Entrenched poverty; • Racism;									

	• Alcohol and drug abuse; • Effects of institutionalization and removal policies, such as residential schools, child welfare; • The redundancy of traditional Aboriginal male role and status compensated for by an aggressive assertion of male rights over women [and] children” (<i>Blagg, 2005 in Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men, W.J. (Bill) Mussell, 2005</i>).
Statistical Profile of Aboriginal Women & Children in Alberta	• 51% of the Aboriginal population in Alberta are women (<i>Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001</i>);
	• The spousal assault rate for Alberta has remained relatively the same in the five-year period 1999-2004, however, Alberta ranked as having the second highest incidence of spousal assault (<i>Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999, 2004 in Trends, 2006, p18</i>).
	• Treaty 7 region study on family violence and wife assault, reported that: (a) 58% of respondents have experienced physical abuse at one time or another in their lifetime (<i>The Blood Tribe Family Violence Study, Armstrong-Esther, et al, 1991</i>); (b) Of 18 agencies and departments, 61% reported that their employees were directly affected by family violence (<i>Family Violence and the Impact upon the Peigan Community, Grier, 1991</i>); (c) A native urban study conducted in 1990 reported that 91% of women had personally experienced family violence (<i>Bastien et al, 1990</i>), ranging from psychological abuse (88%), physical abuse (64%), to being touched against their will or having sex forced on them by their partners (16%) (<i>Treaty 7 Community Study, Brenda Manyfingers, 1993, p15-16</i>).
	The Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters reported in 2005-2006 that provincially: • 13,000 women and family members were resident in shelters; • Over 20,000 women and family members asked for shelter but could not be accommodated; • There was a 34% increase in crisis calls received;
Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society Statistics 2005-06	Awo Taan statistics indicates significant numbers of crisis calls (1,833) received from women, and another 3,665 women who were referred to different agencies. These statistics lend support to the statement that the “demand for shelters continues to exceed availability as reflected in the fact that some 200 women are turned away from shelters on an average day”, (<i>Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends, 2006, p65</i>).

<i>Annual Statistics for Residential & Child Support April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2006</i>	
Admitted Women	253
Admitted Children	226
Bed Nights (Women)	3164
Bed Nights (Children)	3896
# of Crisis Calls	1833
# of Turn Away (Women)	774
# of Turn Away (Children)	480
# Requesting Supporter Information	479
Healing Circles (Women)	99
# of Attendants (Women)	375
# of Attendants in Child Support (Parents)	103
# of Attendants in Child Support (Children)	183
# of Attendants (Children's Healing & Sharing Circles)	88
# of Children Seen at Wellness Clinic	70
# of Referrals to Different Agencies (Women)	3665
# of Referrals to Different Agencies (Children)	1163

Source: Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society, PowerPoint Presentation, 2006 Annual Report.

Given that Awo Taan is a 27-bed facility, of which 23 beds are funded this demand far exceeds the availability of shelter services. It is a demand that is felt province wide in Alberta. It is also among the reasons that Awo Taan finds it imperative to encourage other shelters and service delivery providers to expand their capacities when providing services to Aboriginal women and family members in crisis.

Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society Statistics 2006-07

The current levels of participation by children in both the monthly Outreach and Residential Programs Child Support Circles indicate that circles are held 3 to 4 times per month with a average participation level of 13-24 children per month.

<i>Annual Statistics for Awo Taan Residential & Outreach Program Child Support Circles</i>				
<i>Date</i>	<i>Outreach Program</i>		<i>Residential Program</i>	
	<i># of Circles</i>	<i># of Children</i>	<i># of Circles</i>	<i># of Children</i>
July '06	4	10	4	30
Aug '06	3	9	6	37
Sept '06	3	6	3	12
Oct '06	4	22	4	14
Nov '06	1	7	7	42
Dec '06	n/a	n/a	2	11
Jan '07	4	18	n/a	n/a
Feb '07	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mar '07	3	11	n/a	n/a
Apr '07	3	19	n/a	n/a

Note: n/a = not available at time of printing

Source: Awo Taan Statistical Year End Report on Child Support Circles, May 2007.

Generally, the statistical overviews indicate that there is a need to respond to the incidences of violence among Aboriginal women and families, and the need for residential shelter and outreach program supports that include the whole family. Currently, the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society is tracking the levels of participation of men who are accessing programs and services to demonstrate the need for specific family violence supports among this population.

Table 2. Literature Review Findings – Aboriginal Models of Wellness

Facility & Community	Elements of the Model
Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society	Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society was founded and established by concerned members of the Aboriginal community who wanted to address the issue of family violence through wholistic healing and wellness from an Aboriginal cultural perspective. This work began in 1992 with a focus on crisis intervention, and has evolved into a 27-bed, full service emergency shelter, of which 23 beds are funded. The Lodge provides services to women and family members from all cultures who have suffered from family violence and all forms of abuse. The Lodge operates 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. The 21-day shelter program offers a full range of services and programs that includes: child support program, parent's circle, children's circle, wellness clinic, and family circle. The non-residential programming includes outreach, Family Wellness-Centre Parent Link, family violence prevention, and the Taking Action on Bullying Initiative which provide counseling, healing circles, referrals, advocacy and cultural support (<i>The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel</i>© Training Manual, Counselor Guide, 2007). In 2004 Awo Taan began the work to reclaim the original vision for wholistic healing and well-being. Today, key elements of Awo Taan's program and service delivery model include: • Providing programs and services from an Aboriginal worldview which incorporates traditional knowledge and practices of healing and wellness; • Working with women and children, including the whole family, inclusive of men and extended family members in the community; • Providing programs and services to all family members fleeing from family violence and other abuses; • Working from a strengths-based approach that builds on the strengths of the individuals and moves forward to increase self-esteem, recovery, healing and eventually self-directed healing; • Providing a safe and nurturing environment for family members and staff; • Providing opportunities for women and family members to reconnect with community through various activities, events, and celebrations.

Hollow Water, Manitoba	The First Nations community of Hollow Water and the partnership they developed with the other three surrounding Metis communities provides a good example of a community which was able to map their own healing journey by taking ownership for the problem of sexual abuse and the violence that followed. This model began in 1984 with the help of a resource team of community people across all disciplines and sectors. Key elements to the Hollow Water "Community Holistic Circle Healing" are: • Community people with a vision to build a healthy community; • Initial steps included a training program called S.A.F.E. (Self-Awareness For Everyone) modeled after the training at Alkali Lake for the resource group; • Reaching out to community members who were ready to begin their healing journey by taking the self-awareness training and supports; • Emphasizing the importance of the abuse and the accountability required for abusers; • Negotiating new relationships with social agencies, community, justice system and families of the victims and perpetrators; • Developing a 13 step process for dealing with abusers that includes: (1) disclosures; (2) establishing safety for the victim; (3) confronting the victimizer; (4) supporting the spouse or parent of the victimizer; (5) supporting the families that are affected; (6) holding a meeting between the Assessment Team & RCMP; (7) holding circles with the victimizer; (8) holding circles with the victimizer and victim; (9) preparing the victim's family for the Sentencing Circle; (10) preparing the victimizer's family for the Sentencing Circle; (11) holding a special community gathering for the Sentencing Circle; (12) holding a sentencing review; and (13) holding a Cleansing Ceremony. This unique program model has been very effective in moving their community on a path toward recovery and healing, which has brought them to an estimated 80% sobriety rate and given strength to deal with the issue of sexual abuse (<i>Community Holistic Circle Healing: A Community Approach</i>, Burma Bushie, Hollow Water, Manitoba Online @ www.iirp.org/library/vt/vt_bushie.html).
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Squamish, British Columbia	A small group of concerned Elders from the Squamish Nation in North Vancouver came together to focus on community healing from addictions, suicide, violence and abuse. This community initiative which began as a crisis intervention response has grown over the past twenty years to a longer term healing model based on a wholistic approach to working with people. This includes: • counseling and referrals for treatment; • support circles; and • a range of prevention activities (<i>Mapping the Healing: Experiences of Canadian Aboriginal Communities, Aboriginal Healing Foundation & Solicitor General Canada, 2002</i>).
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba	Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre is one of the largest urban Native child and family support programs in the country, which has reclaimed control over family and community support services available to Aboriginal people. It was established by the urban Aboriginal community in fall of 1984. Ma Mawi has been achieved by developing culturally appropriate support programs and services that serve to empower and build capacity of individuals, families and community. These programs include a Men's Program, Women's Program, and the Honoring the Spirit of Our Little Sisters Safe Home for Aboriginal female and transgender youth who have been victimized. Key ingredients of Ma Mawi's model of healing and wellness: • provides culturally relevant preventative and supportive programs and services to Aboriginal families; • focuses on the positives and builds upon individual strengths; • creates meaningful opportunities for community and family involvement; • believes that the entire community has responsibility for the healthy development of future generations; • builds partnerships within neighbourhoods, and with private, public and government stakeholders to support this belief; and • builds on community capacity; (<i>Ma Mawi On Line @ www.mamawi.com</i>).
Wabano Centre Ottawa, Ontario	The Wabano Centre provides a wide range of traditional and Western health programs and services, including traditional healing programs and culture reclamation, to an approximate caseload of 3,000 individuals living in the Aboriginal community of Ottawa and surrounding areas. The program and service delivery model key ingredients are: • a philosophy based on traditional teachings and practices related to healing and wellness; • inclusion of ceremonies, traditional teachings, circles, referrals to Elders, traditional healers, and sessions on native identity and culture reclamation; and

	ensuring the ongoing development and delivery of culturally appropriate and sensitive services and programs to the Aboriginal people in their catchment areas.
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The models of healing and wellness that have been discussed in Table 2 have all based their models on an Aboriginal worldview of healing and wellness as a means of ensuring that the programs and services provided to their clients are culturally appropriate, and inclusive of others who wish to utilize this approach to their own wellness and healing. These traditional teachings and practices provide the framework from which all programs and services are developed and delivered. It is important to also note that these particular program models were all established by concerned groups of Aboriginal peoples who came together to address healing and wellness issues stemming from violence and victimizations in their community. The models have demonstrated over time that they are effective in working with the people they serve, which is the reason they call them their best practice.

The following Table 3 highlights the ingredients that have contributed to the success of these community models. The commonalities are consistent with the literature review findings on contributing factors leading to the success experienced among organizations working with Aboriginal populations, which are sometimes referred to as best practices.

Best practice can be defined as "what works well in the Aboriginal community," Belinda Vanden Broeck, Wabung Abinoonjiag, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Table 3. Literature Review Findings – Successful Aboriginal Strategies for Working with Aboriginal Peoples

Contributing Factors to Successful Program and Service Delivery Models among Organizations working with Aboriginal Peoples
- Acknowledging how the impact of Aboriginal peoples history on individuals, families and communities can empower them to address the issue; - Acknowledgement that it is important to work with the whole person, considering all aspects of their personal development: spiritual, mental, physical and emotional, including the environmental factors; - Solutions must be community driven; - Train staff to be culturally sensitive and integrate Aboriginal traditions and service providers are part of program delivery systems; - Develop innovative, culturally appropriate solutions, rather than adapting existing programs and services when working with Aboriginal peoples (<i>Family Violence in Aboriginal Communities: An Aboriginal Perspective</i>, Public Health Agency of Canada, On Line @ www.phac-aspc.gc.ca); - An understanding that in urban areas, high rates of family violence and abuse are "exacerbated by isolation, loneliness, racism, transience, and the loss of family, community, and cultural support systems" (<i>Aboriginal Domestic Violence in Canada</i>, Michael Bopp et al., Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2003). - Programs for Aboriginal people should be developed by Aboriginal service providers (<i>Calgary Family and Sexual Violence Sector Review</i>, 2004, p46).

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has experienced similar factors and developed additional key strategies that have continued to contribute to the success experienced in working with women and families. Additional key strategies include:

- Integrating an Aboriginal cultural context into the whole program and service delivery model;
- Establishing protocol on how to approach Elders in the community;
- Possessing the protocol knowledge of knowing what is an appropriate offering for what it is you are asking of the Elder(s);
- Developing an awareness of community protocols by contacting key people;
- Developing agency policy to address the organization's cultural competency among staff, operations, management, governance, and funders; and
- Ensuring that Indigenous research related to family violence and the Aboriginal population being served in the catchment area is overseen and supported by the Society, and conducted by Indigenous peoples.

Table 4 below provides a summary of lessons learned about healing and wellness in Aboriginal communities which is referenced in *Mapping the Healing: Experiences of Canadian Aboriginal Communities, Aboriginal Healing Foundation & Solicitor General Canada, 2002*. It is important for the reader to know that these summary statements are those of the authors of the referenced document.

Table 4. Lessons About Healing and the Healing Journey

Lessons About Healing and the Healing Journey
• Healing is possible for individuals and communities, as the experience of communities indicate that both appear to go through distinct stages of a healing journey. • The healing journey is a long-term process, probably involving several decades. • Healing cannot be confined to issues such as addictions, abuse or violence. • Healing interventions and programs have most impact when they take place within the context of a wider community development plan. • Community healing requires personal, cultural, economic, political, and social development initiatives woven together into a coherent, long-term, coordinated strategy. • Such a coherent strategy requires integrated program development, funding delivery and on-going evaluation. • Healing is directly connected to nation building. At some point, there needs to be a merger of program efforts between community healing activities and movements towards self-government and community development (<i>Mapping the Healing: Experiences of Canadian Aboriginal Communities, Aboriginal Healing Foundation & Solicitor General Canada, 2002, p43-44</i>).

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society's lessons about healing and wellness are connected to the Sacred Circle of Life teachings, which serve to guide the relationships that continue to be developed among staff and the women and families being served.

These key lessons are reflected in the Society's guiding principles which are discussed more in depth in Section 3: Aboriginal Framework for Healing and Wellness. They provide another perspective on how key lessons learned translate into guiding principles, and are developed into methodologies and strategies for practical application.

✦ *Strengths-Based Approach to Developing the Framework*

The strengths based model draws on the strategies and coping skills that individuals have previously used to help them function in their relationships and environment, and then builds on them to strengthen their capacity. It provides a way to understand people by taking into consideration their strengths and how they function in their environment. This approach is contrary to the deficit model which focuses on problems, suggesting that something needs to be fixed. The strengths model begins from the premise that strengths are culturally defined and valued. (*Native American Children and Youth Well-Being Indicators: A Strengths Perspective*, Charolette Goodluck, 2002, p.11).

This perspective and approach to working with people is most consistent with the Aboriginal worldview that is wholistic in its approach to understanding people and their relationships with Creation. The wholistic approach seeks to understand all aspects of an individual in terms of their development (mental, physical, emotional/social, spiritual), life stages (birth/childhood, adolescence, adulthood, eldership), relationships (individual, family, community, nation), and environment (social, economic, political, cultural) (*The Medicine Wheel: Understanding "Problem" Patients in Primary Care*, Louis Montour, presented at Fifth Annual Meeting of the Native Physicians Association, Ottawa, August 1996).

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has determined a preference for a strengths-based approach when working with the women and family members fleeing family violence, as it is most consistent with the incorporation of traditional knowledge and practices of healing and wellness. Working from a strengths-based approach encourages the Lodge to build on the strengths of the individuals and moves forward to increase self-esteem, recovery, healing and eventually self-directed healing. This approach combined with the traditional teachings and practices of Aboriginal peoples provides a framework for healing and wellness.

3. ABORIGINAL FRAMEWORK FOR HEALING & WELLNESS

Key Areas of Aboriginal Framework for Healing & Wellness

Awo Taan believes that, in addition to the contributing factors leading to the success experienced among organizations working with Aboriginal populations found in the literature review, the following have been part of the Society's best practice and learnings, which have contributed to the Society's success when working with women and families fleeing family violence. These learnings and contributing factors to our success have led to the development of an Aboriginal Framework for Healing and Wellness, which came from the original vision for the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society. Through experience and reflection, it was realized that the original vision had not been fully implemented. This implementation process began immediately in 2004 and has resulted in the production of several significant documents that support the original vision for healing and wellness, including this manual.

Table 5 provides insight into the key elements that have guided the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society in the ongoing evolving nature of services and programs for the women and family members being served. They serve as the Society's guiding principles which have developed into key methodologies for practical application in the Society's work with women and families fleeing from family violence.

"... the symptoms include lack of identity. We have to help them connect to who they are and make referrals where needed... what we are doing is trying to humanize them, we are not just processing them." Andy Black Water, Kanai Elder, Alberta

Table 5. Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society Framework for Healing & Wellness

Guiding Principles	Methodologies For Practical Application
We believe that we are each born into Spirit and that we are Spiritual beings having a human experience;	• Providing programs and services that are culturally based which incorporate traditional knowledge and practices of healing and wellness; • Utilizing Elders' wisdom and teachings to guide us to continue to develop Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society's model based on traditional teachings and values; • Understanding life as a journey that is fluid and ever changing, as a result the organization must be flexible to meet the evolving needs of the women and family members being served; • Conducting needs assessments to determine priority areas; • Identifying and overseeing relevant community-based research to support the Society's understanding of the needs of the women and families;

We believe that Spirit knows no color;	• Providing programs and services to all women and family members fleeing from family violence and other abuses; • Nurturing a positive self-identity that acknowledges the cultural context of the individual's lives, whether they are Aboriginal or not; • Respecting women and families as individuals and their decision to choose how they would like to approach their recovery, healing and wellness journey;
We believe that wholistic healing requires attention to healing the mind, emotions, body and spirit;	• Utilizing the Sacred Circle of Life teachings to guide the development of programs and services which take into consideration the needs of the whole individual - their spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual aspects of being, their relationships, and their environment; • Developing culturally appropriate tools based on traditional teachings, such as the Assessment Wheel©, which assists staff in their work with the women and their families;
We value the traditional knowledge of Elders and the transfer of that knowledge as sacred;	• Grounding the organization in the Aboriginal community that founded and established the Society; • Actively engaging Elders in the ongoing governance, operations and program and services development of the Society; • Including access and referrals to Elders for teachings, healing, guidance; • Holding community gatherings where Elders are acknowledged and honored for their contributions to the Society;
We acknowledge and value the Spirit and integrity of all individuals affected by violence;	• Working from a strengths-based approach which builds on the strengths of the individuals and moves forward to increase self-esteem, recovery, healing and eventually self-directed healing; • Acknowledging that the place to begin working with the women and family members is from their place of strength and continue working to build on that foundation;
We believe that healing requires a multifaceted response, including intervention, provision of safe shelter, spiritual and cultural services, community-based services and information to victims	• Providing a safe and nurturing environment for both women and families, and staff; • Ensuring that services include support for the whole family, including partners, extended family, and community; • Importance of employing staff that have an understanding of the cultural background and social

and to those who batter, as well as public education and the enforcement of appropriate laws;	context of the women and family members being served; • Ensuring that the referral networks are diverse and able to respond and assist the women and family members who are referred for services;
We believe that violence is manifest through intergenerational trauma and that the healing of that trauma is influenced through community-based education;	• Developing programs and services that are sensitive to the multi-causal factors impacting Aboriginal peoples' lives; • Providing opportunities for women and family members to reconnect with community through various activities, events, and celebrations;
We believe that the Seven Sacred Teachings underlie the philosophy of healing and wellness.	• Understanding that healing and wellness are interconnected, to heal is to create an environment that promotes balance, and balance helps create an environment of wellness; • Sharing the Sacred Circle of Life and the Seven Sacred Teachings that life is a continuation of a cycle of events that we experience, as a result we must be conscious of our behaviour today and how it influences tomorrow; • Providing guidance to women and families as to how they can use the teachings as a tool to help regulate their daily lives and move to recovery, healing and wellness; and • Taking responsibility as staff to act as role models for the women and families.

✦ Strategies for Program Development & Service Delivery

While there are many strategies for program development and service delivery, the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has learned that some strategies are more effective than others. These strategies have been particularly effective in working with the populations that the Society has worked with over the years, which are 60% Aboriginal, 30% Immigrant, and 10% Non-Aboriginal women and family members.

The following strategies provide an introduction to some key Aboriginal cultural concepts, teachings, and practices that have guided the Awo Taan Lodge Society in the work with families impacted by family violence. In addition, some key strategies are outlined around how to identify, access and utilize appropriate community resources, including identifying those resources within your own organization. These strategies are presented to the reader as a beginning of a learning journey into understanding someone else's cultural worldview – those of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Specific strategies, key concepts, teachings and practices are interwoven in the following sections:

1. Wholistic Model of Healing and Wellness;
2. Aboriginal Cultural Approaches and Protocols;
3. Role of Elders;
4. Utilizing Appropriate Community Resources;
5. Building Organizational Capacity; and
6. Reaching In, Looking Out.

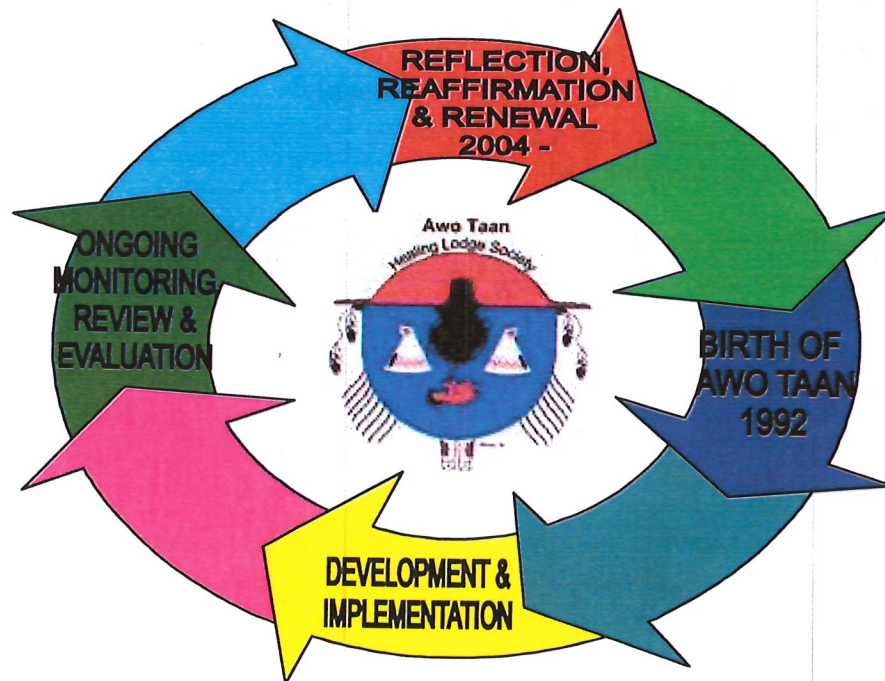
We respectfully request that service delivery providers and other users of this manual acknowledge the protocol of handling these bundles of knowledge with respect, care and humility.

WHOLISTIC MODEL OF HEALING & WELLNESS

The concept of wholistic healing and wellness is a teaching that is part of the Aboriginal worldview. Aboriginal peoples describe this concept by using different terms and illustrations, such as the Sacred Circle of Life or Medicine Wheel. This concept is often described as “holistic” and/or “wholistic” because the teachings take into consideration the whole person and the whole of Creation. It teaches us a way of life; how life can be regulated so that we balance our healing and wellness to attain a level of well being that enables us to have good relationships with all Creation around us.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has continued on its journey of acquiring a deeper understanding about the teachings of the Sacred Circle of Life to help better understand how the teachings can help in the work with women and families fleeing from violence.

A reflection on these teachings in relation to our experience developing and implementing programs and services has led to a process of reaffirmation, and renewal.



Birth of Awo Taan, 1992

The journey of the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society is very similar to the Circle of Life teachings. Like the birth of a child, the birth of Awo Taan came in through the eastern door in 1992, as a result of a concerned group of Aboriginal community people who

wanted to address the issue of family violence from an Aboriginal perspective of wholistic healing and wellness. This work led to the establishment of the Shelter, which subsequently led to the development of a variety of programs and services that would support women and their families on their journey to recovery, healing and wellness. The recovery, healing and wellness journey of the women and their families is symbolic of a new beginning and reclamation of their free will to choose the path of the good life. This path to a good life was open to all peoples. This stage of birthing also included funders who began their journey to developing awareness of the Aboriginal worldview, and the traditional teachings that guide a wholistic way of healing and wellness.

Implementation and Development

The period of development and implementation grew in relation to the capacity of the Shelter, and in response to the growing and evolving needs of the women and their families. Ongoing consultations with key stakeholders involving governance, staff, women and their families, Elders, the community, funders and other key stakeholders within the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society's network has contributed to the growing capacity of the Society to support the women and families who are being served.

Ongoing Monitoring, Review & Evaluation

The Sacred Circle of Life teaches us that life is a series of events or experiences which shape who we are and who we become. Through a self-evaluation process we come to learn what our strengths are and what aspects of our being need nurturing in order for us to regain and achieve that balance leading to well-being. Through a process of ongoing monitoring, review and evaluation of the Society's programs and services, the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has been able to develop culturally appropriate and sensitive programs and services consistent with the Society's philosophy and guiding principles.

Reflection, Reaffirmation & Renewal

In the longer term, which was in 2004, the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society began a more in-depth reflection process, which has led to the reaffirmation of the Society's philosophy and guiding principles. This process has further guided the Society to a place of renewal, which has evolved into developing the framework for healing and wellness as a way of building on the Society's strengths and key contributing factors that have successfully supported the healing and wellness of the women and families fleeing family violence. The Sacred Circle of Life teachings remind us that we are all both a learner and a teacher as we journey through our life cycle. It is a time for the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society to acknowledge that we all continue to learn, to evolve in relation to our changing relationships and environment. This reflection period has also led to the need to begin sharing our learnings and successes with others, who share the same sense of responsibility to women and families fleeing from family violence.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society is reminded that:

- Wholistic healing is inclusive of the mind, body and spirit and subject to the environments in which one functions, which may or may not support and nurture a balance between the mind, body and spirit. This balance between mind, body and spirit is also described as a balance between the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects of our being.
- Balance is critical to nurturing and maintaining a wholistic model of healing and wellness.
- The interrelationships between spiritual life, family relations, emotions, thinking and physical health are all connected to each other and the political, economic, social, and cultural environments in which one functions.
- Wholistic healing and wellness is a progressive state of being that one achieves and works to maintain once the individual has discovered what “balance” means for their health and well-being.

If you wish to learn more about the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society’s framework for healing and wellness, you can approach the Society and be advised of the processes, protocols, and requirements that are in place for learning, which include opportunities for organizational professional development, training, presentations, information workshops, and research.

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL APPROACHES & PROTOCOLS

The following discussion on Aboriginal cultural approaches and protocols is an expansion on the teachings that have been received from Elders, and most recent teachings from Andy Black Water, Kanai Elder from southern Alberta Blackfoot territory.

The reader is reminded of the manual's definition provided for "protocols":

"Andy Black Water, describes "protocols" to us as a respectful way of approaching Elders for cultural teachings, advice, prayer, healing, and guidance that will assist you on your life journey. Protocols include preparation for the visit to the Elder. This involves inquiry to find out what the Elder prefers as an offering or gift for the particular request of an individual. The request will determine the offering or gift to the Elder. Typically, offerings or gifts include tobacco, blankets, food, and other generosities, such as an honorarium, that an individual may wish to bestow on the Elder to assist him/her in meeting their daily needs."

Protocol is a way to have a meaningful conversation . . . there are protocols that are unique to different nations (*First Nations Protocol: Working with First Nations, Kakwirakeron & Dave Good, Frontlines, 2000*).



The following provides a discussion on the protocols of approaching an Elder through four key stages identified in this illustration. It is an important teaching to share so people will be guided to good Elders, to the true Elders.

Preparations – Search for An Elder

It is common for Aboriginal people to seek out reputable Elders for advice, counsel, guidance, teachings, healing, prayer, medicines, and other purposes. At the onset, it is important:

- to know what it is you are going to be asking from the Elder;
- to learn a few things about the Elder, such as their community, their family, their name and its meaning, their area of specialized knowledge and experience, their preferences for an offering or gift, their reputation and qualifications which come from their peers and their community and not a self-declaration;
- to learn where you will find them and when is the best time to approach them i.e. season, day of the week, time of day, and setting, whether in their home, or otherwise;
- to ensure that you believe in what it is you are doing – seeking an Elder for direction, and taking those teachings to determine how best you can use them as tools to help you. This mutual respect sets the tone for your relationship with an Elder; and
- to be patient with the process and time requirements when engaging an Elder.

Approaching an Elder – The Visit

When approaching an Elder with an offering, it sets the stage or tone for your request. This is common because as Elders they will have been approached by many different people already and asked to share parts of their specialized knowledge and experience.

The following are important basic protocols to remember when you are approaching the Elder and beginning your visit:

- introduce yourself with a handshake and giving thanks for the Elder's time;
- show appreciation for the Elder's time by providing them with an offering or gift which may include food, tobacco, a blanket, or other generosity, such as an honorarium that you may feel is appropriate for the amount of time you expect to engage the Elder; and
- be patient enough to visit with an Elder before getting to the specific purpose of your visit, your request.

Offerings & Gifts

The offerings and gifts we bring to an Elder may include food, tobacco, a blanket, or other generosities, such as an honorarium that you may feel is appropriate for the amount of time you expect to engage the Elder. These offerings and gifts show appreciation, demonstrate respect, and are symbolic acknowledgements of the spiritual connection that the Elder has with Ancestors of the past and the gifts of knowledge which have been bestowed on him/her.

Visiting an Elder

The actual visit with the Elder is a time of sharing, of listening, of talking, of understanding, and a time where insights are sometimes discovered. The first part of the visit with the Elder is a time of visiting, getting to know one another. It is a time when humor is also introduced as a method of healing and wellness. It is the time that the Elders treasure, when someone has come to them and taken time to just be with them without purpose other than to visit. It is understood that the "purposeful" visit will come later on. Therefore, patience is of the essence.

Elders often have their own way of assessing the individual who has approached them, and utilize a variety of methods to arrive at a place when they determine the type of specialized knowledge that is required to help the individual before them. This may take more than one visit depending on the nature of your request.

ROLE OF ELDERS

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society values the participation of Elders in the work that we do. This value is acknowledged in our guiding principles as a statement that: *"We value the traditional knowledge of Elders and the transfer of that knowledge as sacred"*.

The process of engaging Elders involves the protocol of knowing what type of Elder is required for which task. This knowledge then assists in determining which Elder is to be approached and which protocol is most appropriate.

The role of an Elder originates from their gifts of specialized knowledge and life experiences that have been acknowledged by their peers, and people from their community. These public testimonies to their knowledge and experiences give credibility to the individual in their role as an Elder. It is through this process that they are validated and come to be known more widely beyond their community as individuals who have demonstrated care for their families, their people and their community over time. As the awareness of an Elder grows, so do the requests for them to help others beyond their community.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has been fortunate to have been guided to good Elders who have assisted in a variety of ways as advisors, cultural teachers, healers, spiritual helpers, and as guides.

Elders have been involved in the visioning for the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society at the onset and have been among the original founders of the organization. Their involvement has continued throughout the re-visioning process by:

- requesting them to provide teachings on the seven sacred teachings, the sacred circle of life, and specific areas of traditional knowledge related to healing and wellness;
- inviting them to participate in the discussions for the purpose of listening, and advising on particular key issues related to the Lodge's vision, philosophy, and guiding principles;
- requesting their participation in offering prayer and/ceremony to bless work of the Lodge whether on-site at the Lodge, at another location in the city or within the surrounding area;
- through representation at the Board meetings to advise the Board on matters respecting governance, operations and program and services development and delivery;

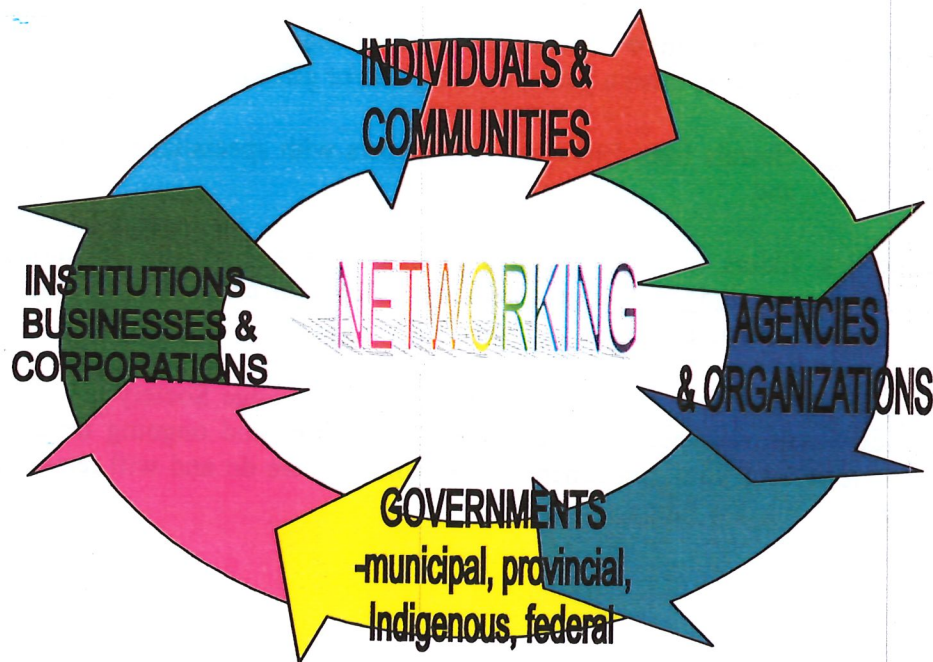
- through participation in workshops related to program and service development and delivery where the Elders have been specifically requested to provide prayer, teachings and advice;
- through participation in Committee meetings concerning new initiatives where they have been requested to provide advice on how the new initiative is connected to the Lodge's vision, philosophy, and guiding principles;
- referring women and families connected to the Lodge to Elders for teachings, healing, guidance, and/or ceremony, if requested;
- facilitating the connection between women and families with appropriate Elders by making the referral, assisting in preparing the women and families for the visit to the Elder, and coordinating the referral through to follow-up, if required;
- inviting Elders to participate in community gatherings where they have been asked to provide prayer, to address the gathering by speaking to a specific topic, and/or to participate in discussions;
- honoring Elders for their contribution to the Lodge, in both private and public gatherings by giving them a public offering and/or gift(s);
- requesting referrals from Elders to other Elders with specialized knowledge and experience; and
- requesting Elders to conduct ceremonies such as a cleansing ceremony, face painting, sweat lodge, smudge ceremony, full moon ceremony, all night lodge ceremonies, and others.

These are a few of the ways that the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has utilized to integrate Elders into all aspects of the Society's activities and ongoing development. Elders continue to be a vital component to the work that we do and will remain a vital part of our growth into the future.

UTILIZING APPROPRIATE COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society acknowledges that networking is an integral component to the work of the Society. It is through networking that a host of multi-cultural and diverse partnerships, referrals, and working relationships are developed, which are based on one of our guiding principles that states, *"We believe that healing requires a multifaceted response, including intervention, provision of safe shelter, spiritual and cultural services, community-based services and information to victims and to those who batter, as well as public education and the enforcement of appropriate laws"*.

By acknowledging that a multifaceted response to the eradication of family violence is required, the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has continued to work with a number of different agencies, organizations, governments, institutions, corporations, individuals, and communities who share concern with family violence as a societal issue that impacts everyone.



Agencies & Organizations

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has formed working relationships and partnerships with several different Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies and organizations in the City of Calgary. Some of these working relationships and partnerships have been related to establishing referrals for women and families, conferences, community gatherings,

workshops, sharing resources i.e. human resources, information, research, and undertaking joint initiatives.

Governments (Municipal, Provincial, Indigenous, Federal)

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has been fortunate in developing working relationships with a variety of government bodies. The nature of these working relationships has included gaining access to funding that supports the work of the Society, participating in provincial initiatives related to family violence and Aboriginal peoples, gaining representation on various committees, coalitions, and boards that advocate for the eradication of family violence through research, public education, awareness, cultural sensitivity training, and professional development.

Institutions, Businesses & Corporations

The Society's working relationships with institutions have been related to accessing professional resources that can assist with specific projects as advisors, and Board/Committee members, donors, including engagement in various preventative and intervention initiatives, and research projects. Our working relationships with businesses and corporations has been related to gaining support for specific projects, such as capital, fundraising, and pilot projects, gaining their representation on Boards and/or committees, engaging them as sponsors for specific events and/or activities, including collaborating on public education and cultural awareness events that showcase Aboriginal culture and create greater awareness about family violence.

Individuals & Communities

Individuals have come to Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society in many different capacities, as volunteers at the governance level, as volunteers at the operations level, as staff, as consultants, as resource personnel, as advisors, as Elders, as contractors, and as honorary members of the Society. Specific skills, qualifications, experience, and cultural competencies are required depending on the role the individual will have with the Society. The Society's current policies and procedures provide guidance to the Society's governance and operations when engaging individuals in various capacities and for specific purposes.

Communities have remained an integral part of the Society. They include urban neighbourhood communities, the surrounding First Nations and Métis communities, the urban Aboriginal communities, and corporate communities of greater Calgary. The Society engages communities in various ways, through participatory research projects, celebrations, cultural activities, events, and other collaborative projects or activities that have a connection to the vision and mission of the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society.

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has developed many different strategies for building organizational capacity to meet the diverse needs of the women and families in the residential and outreach programs. These strategies assist the organization to be responsive to the needs of the women and families we serve, and to ensure that the programs and services developed and delivered are culturally appropriate and sensitive.

1. Ensuring that the vision and mission are understood by:
 - (a) profiling them in annual reports;
 - (b) referencing them in key documents;
 - (c) posting them prominently in the office spaces;
 - (d) reviewing them through evaluation and periodic reviews of programs and services;
2. Utilizing mentoring and peer learning as a way of ensuring that the programs and services remain culturally appropriate and relevant to the diverse needs of the women and families in the residential and outreach programs by:
 - (a) engaging Elders as mentors with Board and staff members for traditional teachings to determine the most appropriate teachings, practices, methods and strategies to be used when working with women and families impacted by family violence;
 - (b) supporting staff to mentor women and families in healing circles, sharing circles, workshops, individual counseling sessions, residential and outreach programming;
 - (c) facilitating interaction between Elders and the women and families at the Society through programming, and referrals;
 - (d) creating opportunities for staff to share their learnings with each other;
 - (e) engaging Elders, Board, staff, women and families in gatherings that include community members;
3. Utilizing several different Elders as resource persons to assist with the work of the Society as a way of:
 - (a) acknowledging the diversity of Aboriginal cultural teachings and practices;
 - (b) celebrating the wealth of traditional knowledge and gaining new insights into its application in the workplace; and
 - (c) finding community-based solutions to a long standing societal problem.

Many of these strategies are discussed in more detail in *The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel*© Training Manual, Counselor Guide, 2007. Practical approaches and methods that support the healing and wellness of women and families have been shared in the manual and provide a guide for staff in their work with the women and families.

For further information on *The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel*© Training Manual, Counselor Guide, 2007 please contact:

Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society
P.O. Box 6084, Station "A"
Calgary, AB
T2H 2L3
Phone: (403) 531-1970

REACHING IN, LOOKING OUT

The term “reaching in” and “looking out” refers to the way in which the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society views the organization’s health and wellness.

“Reaching in” is a way of reaching into the organization to acknowledge the gifts of the people working within the Society, and the strength and energy that this collective has on the organization to achieve its goals and objectives. It is also a way of acknowledging the areas that need improvement or need to be changed in response to the changing world around us.

“Looking out” is a way of looking out of the organization to acknowledge that we don’t know everything, that there is still much learning and growth that must go on; and that as one organization, we cannot meet the needs of all women and families fleeing family violence.

We accomplish this “reaching in” and “looking out” through a continuous process that includes monitoring, review, evaluation, reflection, reaffirmation and renewal, all of which involve a commitment to time, including networking in the community at large.

This approach to organizational health and wellness is consistent with traditional teachings and the guiding principles as they relate to the Seven Sacred Teachings of humility, respect, wisdom, honesty, truth, love, and bravery. These seven sacred teachings help us understand relationships between individuals, families, and community, combined with the Sacred Circle of Life teachings, they guide us in our behaviours as we move in and out of the various environments in which we function.

4. TOOLKIT RESOURCES

This section provides a toolkit of resources that non-Aboriginal service delivery providers may wish to utilize for their own professional development to assist them in understanding some key concepts and protocols, accessing additional resource for further reading, and linkages to broader networks within the Aboriginal community across Alberta.

The resource list includes:

- (a) Sacred Circle of Life;
- (b) Awo-Taan Self-Assessment Wheel©;
- (c) Respectful Relationships & Partnerships;
- (d) Reference Reading List; and
- (e) Regional Community Resource Networks.

We respectfully request that service delivery providers and other users of this manual acknowledge the protocol of handling these bundles of knowledge with respect, care and humility.

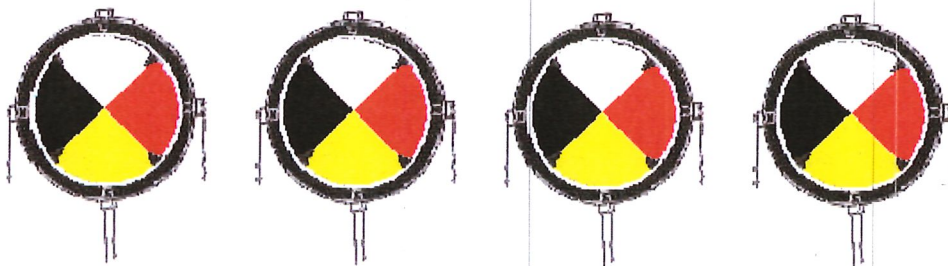
SACRED CIRCLE OF LIFE

Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society acknowledges that there are several different ways that the Medicine Wheel has been taught. Common to all teachings is the teaching about the importance of balance in our lives which is achieved by nurturing of the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional aspects of self.

The concept of wholistic healing and wellness is a teaching that is part of the Aboriginal worldview. Aboriginal peoples describe this concept by using different terms and illustrations, such as the Sacred Circle of Life or *Medicine Wheel*. This concept is often described as “holistic” and/or “wholistic” because the teachings take into consideration the whole person and the whole of Creation. It teaches us a way of life; how life can be regulated so that we balance our healing and wellness to attain a level of well being that enables us to have good relationships with all Creation around us.

Common to these descriptions are the concepts of the four directions, the four aspects of our being, the four stages of development, the four types of environments in which we function, the four seasons, the four elements, the four colors of mankind, and many other significant teachings around the numbers four and seven. For this purpose, we will concentrate on a select few teachings which are key to create an awareness of the importance of balance to our well-being.

The Sacred Circle of Life is visually illustrated in four colors. Some of the most common four colors used are: red, yellow, black and white, symbolic of the four races of people on Mother Earth; or green, yellow, red, and blue, symbolic of the four elements of earth, wind, fire, and water.



The following visual illustrates the Sacred Circle of Life teachings taught to Awo Taan and how we have come to understand them. We acknowledge the Elders, cultural helpers, and teachers who shared these teachings with Awo Taan.



The Sacred Circle of Life teaches us the gifts of the four directions and what life could be like if everyone maintained a healthy balance in our families, in our homes, in our clans, in our communities, and in our nations.

The Gifts from the East

- the East is our birthing place;
- a place of new beginnings;
- a place of celebrations and ceremony for the spiritual gift the Creator has given to the family to which the child has been born;
- it is where we begin our journey as an infant, as a child. We are born into a family, a clan, a tribe, a community. These people become our caregivers and our teachers with responsibilities. They teach us our cultural ways of being and knowing. They teach us how to begin nurturing the four aspects of our being – the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental;
- it is the beginning place of our identity here in the physical world;
- it is the place where we begin to discover our gifts as an individual;

- it is a place where we begin to bond with others, develop relationships, and become aware that we are part of the larger Creation;
- it is here we are given our name that will carry us through our life journey;
- it is here we are allowed to be a child, free to discover and explore the world around us;
- it is like the Spring, a time of new birth among the plant life, a time when the birds return, and the animals come out from their hibernation.

The Gifts from the South

- As we continue our journey around the circle of life, we begin to grow in our responsibilities;
- the direction of the South teaches us that by the time we reach adolescence we have grown in the knowledge about our families, our people, our community;
- it is here we come to know who are our family members and the kinships that exist. It is a time of celebration and ceremony to acknowledge our life transition to the stage of adolescence where we learn about self-respect and relationships with others;
- it is also a place where we learn about our gifts and how we might be able to use them;
- it is here where those gifts are nurtured and strengthened;
- it is here we begin to develop our leadership skills;
- it is a place when we begin to seek out mentors who will help prepare us for the responsibilities as a woman/man, and who will expand our thinking and help prepare us for our growing independence.

The Gifts from the West

- The direction of the West teaches us about our adult responsibilities;
- it is here we begin to learn how to provide for ourselves and eventually prepare for a time when we will have our own family;
- it is here we learn about parental responsibilities, about community responsibilities, and about nation responsibilities;
- the West is also a place where we begin to assume leadership responsibilities that can eventually grow to leadership positions;
- it is a place our relationships with our mentors deepen and grow to include others who will influence us in our thinking, feeling, spiritual and physical self;
- it is a time of great independence and freedom for self, when all that we have learned thus far about life can influence our paths;
- it is a place where we determine the extent of our responsibilities and come to embrace our gifts, and others begin to acknowledge us as mentors, as teachers.

The Gifts from the North

- The North teaches us about a time when aging becomes more evident and others begin to seek us out more as mentors and teachers;
- it is the beginning of our Eldership years as we move closer to returning to the spiritual world;
- it is a time when others begin to recognize us for the specialized knowledge, skills and life experiences. They honor us for the good life we have lived and the love and care we have and continue to demonstrate for our family, our community, our clan, our nation;
- the North is the place where we come to eventually rest.

SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS

The following Seven Sacred Teachings is an excerpt from *The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel*© Training Manual: Counselor Guide, 2007. They are the teachings that continue to be shared with others. They have been given to the Awo Taan Healing Lodge.

“The Seven Grandfather Teachings” are also called the Native Code of Ethics. This code describes what wisdom means in the relationship between individuals, in family life, and in the life of the community. They represent the path of safety leading around the medicine wheel and are summed up as follows.

Honesty

Each morning upon rising, and each evening before sleeping, give thanks for the life within you and for all life, for the good things the Creator has given us and for the opportunity to grow a little more each day. In order to grow, we must take a good honest look at ourselves, recognize who and what we are (our strengths and our challenges) and change what we don't like. When we can be honest with ourselves, we can be honest with others also. Seek always for the things that will benefit everyone.

Humility

Be humble and recognize that no matter how much you think you know, you really know very little of the entire universe. To serve others, to be of some use to family, community, nation or the world is one of the main purposes for which human beings have been created. “Do not fill yourself with your own affairs and forget your most important task. Rather have reverence for every part of creation, and do your part to help maintain life's balance”.

Truth

Be truthful at all times, and under all conditions. Learn what truth is, speak your truth, and walk your truth. We are role models for everyone around us. It is your choice as to the kind of role model you wish to be. When you live your truth, you become a positive role model for others to follow.

Wisdom

Respect the wisdom of the people in council. Once you give an idea to a council or a meeting it no longer belongs to you. It belongs to the people. Respect demands that you listen intently to the ideas of others in council and that you do not insist that your idea prevail. Indeed you should freely support the ideas of others if they are true and good, even if those ideas are quite different from the ones you have contributed. The clash of ideas brings forth the spark of truth. Once a council has decided something in unity,

respect demands that no one speak secretly against what has been decided. If the council has made an error, that error will become apparent to everyone in its own time.

Love

Always practice unconditional love. When people are weak they need your love most, and they need to know that your love is given freely with no conditions or expectations placed on others. Always receive strangers and outsiders with a loving heart and as members of the human family. All races and tribes in the world are like the different colored flowers of one meadow. All are beautiful and as children of the Creator must all be respected.

Respect

Treat every person, from the tiniest child to the oldest elder with respect at all times. Special respect should be given to elders, parents, teachers and community leaders. No person should be made to feel "put down"; avoid hurting other hearts, as you would avoid a deadly poison. Touch nothing that belongs to someone else (especially sacred objects) without permission, or an understanding between you. Respect the privacy of every person. Never intrude on a person's quiet moments or personal space. Never walk between people that are conversing. Never interrupt people who are conversing. Speak in a soft voice, especially when you are in the presence of elders, strangers or others to whom special respect is due. Do not speak unless invited to do so at gatherings where elders are present (except to what is expected of you, should you be in doubt). Never speak about others in a negative way, whether they are present or not. Treat the earth and all of her aspects as your mother. Show deep respect for the mineral world, the plant world, and the animal world. Do nothing to pollute the air or the soil. If others would destroy our mother, rise up with wisdom to defend her. Show deep respect for the beliefs and religions of others. Listen with courtesy; listen with your heart.

Bravery

Courage was a virtue greatly honoured and valued by our ancestors. The purpose of life was to learn to remain calm, fearless and efficient in every possible stressful situation and under all circumstances, since one's life depended on clear thinking. Consider your thoughts and actions of the past day and seek the courage and strength to be a better person." (*The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel*© Training Manual: Counselor Guide, 2007, p.35)

AWO TAAN SELF-ASSESSMENT WHEEL

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society developed *The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel© Training Manual: Counselors Guide* in 2007. It is used to assist women and families while accessing services from the Lodge's Emergency Shelter program, and Outreach Services program or the Family Wellness Centre – Parent Link. The manual was written to assist in the training and orientation of new staff in the field of family violence. There are four main parts to the manual:

1. Overview of Family Violence, Including Aboriginal Family Violence;
2. Examination of Healing and Wellness Conceptualizations;
3. Training on How to Incorporate the Assessment Wheel as a Practice Tool; and
4. Case Scenarios to Facilitate Understanding of the Medicine Wheel in Practice.

The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel© is a tool that is based on the teachings from the Sacred Circle of Life or Medicine Wheel. It is used for assessment and intervention for women at different phases of their shelter residency or connection to the Outreach program. It is also used as a teaching tool for other family members involved in the family's healing and wellness journey. The assessment is not a requirement to access services, although women and family members are encouraged to learn how to utilize it as a self-care tool for daily living and planning which will assist them after they have left the Lodge.

The Healing Lodge Pre-Assessment Wheel© is used as a guide to help Wellness Counselors determine how the woman or family member is doing when they are first admitted to the Emergency Shelter – “Where am I today?”. Like the Sacred Circle of Life, the wheel allows the Wellness Counselor to explore a woman's state of being – mind, emotional, spiritual, and physical health. It is a tool that blends both traditional worldviews and contemporary western social practices, with an emphasis on family resilience and strengths perspectives.

The Awo Taan Self Assessment Wheel© Training Manual: Counselors Guide can be obtained by contacting the Awo Taan Healing Lodge. They are available for purchase along with training for new staff working in the field of family violence.

Healing Lodge Pre-Assessment Wheel©

"Where am I Today?"

The diagram is a circle divided into four equal quadrants by a vertical and a horizontal line. Each quadrant contains an oval with a title, the word 'GOALS', and five horizontal dashed lines for writing.

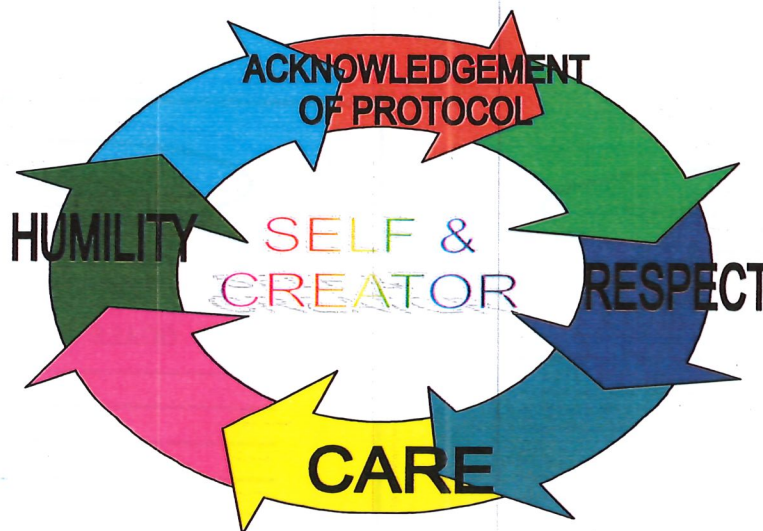
- Top-Left Quadrant:** Oval labeled "Physical/Body". The word "GOALS" is above five dashed lines. The numbers 4, 3, 2, 1, and 5 are arranged clockwise around the outer edge of this quadrant.
- Top-Right Quadrant:** Oval labeled "Mental/Mind". The word "GOALS" is above five dashed lines. The numbers 3, 5, 1, 2, and 4 are arranged clockwise around the outer edge of this quadrant.
- Bottom-Left Quadrant:** Oval labeled "Emotional/Heart". The word "GOALS" is above five dashed lines. The numbers 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 are arranged clockwise around the outer edge of this quadrant.
- Bottom-Right Quadrant:** Oval labeled "Spiritual/Soul". The word "GOALS" is above five dashed lines. The numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are arranged clockwise around the outer edge of this quadrant.

A large, light gray watermark with the word "EXAMPLE" is oriented diagonally from the bottom-left to the top-right, passing through the center of the circle.

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS & PARTNERSHIPS

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society is guided by the Sacred Circle of Life Teachings and the Seven Sacred Teachings in the respectful relationships and partnerships that are developed with the various stakeholders with whom we work. These teachings guide us to a place of calmness, to a place of understanding, to a place of appreciation, to a place of humility, to a place where mutual respect is developed. They are a code of conduct. We invite you to that place when you come into our circle, and we invite you to nurture such circles for the women and families with whom you work.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society continues to work with a number of different stakeholders within our network that includes community based agencies, organizations, governments, institutions, businesses, corporations, individuals and communities. Within each of these relationships we use the teachings provided to us that include respect, care, humility and the acknowledgement of protocol that is appropriate for that moment in time.



The following elements of a respectful relationship are discussed in terms of a working relationship with other colleagues in the field of family violence, who may be utilizing this manual or other parts of the work that the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has opened up to share.

Respect

We are told to treat everyone with respect – child, woman, man, Elder - regardless of who they are, with special respect bestowed upon Elders, parents, teachers and community leaders. This applies to the relationships that we develop with others,

including encounters upon first meeting new people. We are taught that people are born with gifts; this includes the gifts of knowledge and experience that are acquired over time. The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has developed these bundles of knowledge and experience in the field of family violence when working with women and families, and we have chosen to share them with you, the reader. It is one way of working with people impacted by family violence. It is one of the ways that has been successful with the Lodge's women and families with whom we work. When using these bundles of knowledge, we ask that you respect them. Showing respect for these bundles of knowledge may include:

- Acknowledging where these bundles of knowledge come from by naming the organization;
- Sharing any experience you may have had with the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society that shows you have some connection to the people and the work that is being done and some understanding of the work in the field of family violence;
- Bestowing the honor of requesting representatives from the Awo Taan Healing Lodge to come into your circle(s) to conduct an information sharing session, to do an orientation workshop on the Lodge's framework for healing and wellness, to facilitate a teaching from an Elder(s), or to share the Assessment Wheel© tool, for example.
- Offering the gift of thanks if the information has helped you in your work, which may take the form of a letter or card, or visit, or telephone call; and
- Listening respectfully with your heart to what the bundles of knowledge have to offer to you and allowing them to speak to what it is you have to do to use them as tools to help others.

Care

We have asked that you take care in handling these bundles of knowledge. Care can be demonstrated by:

- Knowing when the appropriate time is to share these bundles of knowledge and with whom; that is, sensing when people are open to learning new things from a different perspective or worldview, knowing when there is a high level of respect operating among a group of individuals who are open to expanding their thinking and learning about new strategies for working with families impacted by family violence; and
- Introducing the bundles of knowledge in a way that is complete with the application of respect and protocol, as discussed here.

Humility

Humility teaches us to be humble and to acknowledge that we do not know everything. This includes the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society. We are all on a learning journey together during our time here in the physical world. The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society believes that over the years we have learned a way of working with families impacted by family violence that has demonstrated success, which is why we believe it is time to share these teachings and strategies with others. There is still much to be learned much to be understood, and even more to be experienced that will deepen our understanding of what it is we think we already know. We also acknowledge that there are other ways of knowing and being that have teachings and strategies which work for the populations they serve. This is just one way of working with families impacted by violence.

When using this manual we also respectfully request that you use it with humility.

Acknowledgement of Protocol

We are reminded of the definition of protocol:

“For the purpose of this manual, Awo Taan, in consultation with Andy Black Water, describes “protocols” as a respectful way of approaching Elders for cultural teachings, advice, prayer, healing, and guidance that will assist you on your life journey. Protocols include preparation for the visit to the Elder. This involves inquiry to find out what the Elder prefers as an offering or gift for the particular request of an individual. The request will determine the offering or gift to the Elder. Typically, offerings or gifts include tobacco, blankets, food, and other generosities that an individual may wish to bestow on the Elder to assist him/her meeting their daily needs.” Section 3 found on page 34 in this manual provides additional information on the details of protocol when seeking out an Elder.

Additional protocol may include the acknowledgement of the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society as the authors of the manual and acknowledgement of all the people who assisted in the process, which included others outside the Lodge itself. The process of developing this manual has been very much like the “reaching in” and “looking out” process discussed in Section 3, page 44.

REFERENCE READING LIST

The following reference reading list includes some key documents that may be utilized as references when seeking information on Canada's Aboriginal peoples, and gaining some insight into the multi-causal factors of family violence impacting Aboriginal peoples and communities.

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RRCAP), Minister of Supply and Services, Canada, 1996 is a large body of work that was undertaken in the late 1990's by the Government of Canada. It contains five volumes of broad based hearing and research findings and recommendations on Canadian Aboriginal people's issues and relationship with the federal government. Copies can be purchased at local booksellers or obtained from Canada Communication Group – Publishing, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9.

Commanda, Doreen. *Blankets, Bibles and Beads*. Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, Edmonton, 2002: a manual that was developed as a resource for shelters and their staff. The manual explores Aboriginal worldviews, history, ways of being, social issues, cultural awareness, healing, and planning for families impacted by violence.

Other resources include the following videos:

Hollow Water, National Film Board of Canada, 2000: explores topics related to incest, sentencing circles, and healing which has been part of the community healing and wellness model that was developed by the community as a response to their need for healing and wellness.

Rage: A Documentary Video Series About Men Caught in the Cycle of Violence. Native Counseling Services of Alberta and Cunningham Communications, Edmonton, 2000: explores topics related to self-discovery, gender roles, and healing.

REGIONAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE NETWORKS

The following is a small sampling, but is not exhaustive listing, of regional community resource networks. These networks include potential sites and organizations that may be visited to access human resources that may be able to assist with your learning journey. They may also be useful resources to access research data on furthering your awareness of Aboriginal peoples issues related to family violence.

NATIONAL SCOPE

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) is an advocacy organization that speaks to issues impacting Aboriginal women in Canada. NWAC advocates for the eradication of violence against Aboriginal women. They can be found on-line @ www.nwac-hq.org.

Sisters In Spirit (SIS) is a key initiative of the Native Women's Association of Canada's (NWAC) campaign to address violence against Aboriginal women, which can be found on-line @ www.sistersinspirit.ca.

PROVINCIAL – ALBERTA

Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women (IAAW) is a non-profit society whose head office is located in Edmonton, with various chapters throughout Alberta, including Calgary. The IAAW responds to complaints from Aboriginal women on a broad range of issues, including violence against Aboriginal women, investigates human rights violations, and promotes the achievements and advancements of Aboriginal women. The IAAW can be found on-line @ www.iaaw.ca.

Alberta Friendship Centres represents 20 centres throughout Alberta, dedicated to working with urban Aboriginal peoples to improve their quality of life, and opportunities to improve relations. The Alberta Friendship Centres can be found on-line @ www.albertafriendshipcentres.ca.

LOCAL – CALGARY

Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society is a 27-bed, full service emergency shelter, of which 23 beds are funded. The Lodge provides services to women and family members from all cultures who have suffered from family violence and all forms of abuse. The Lodge operates 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. The 21-day shelter program offers a full range of services and programs that includes: child support program, parent's circle, children's circle, wellness clinic, and family circle. The non-residential programming includes outreach, Family Wellness-Centre Parent Link, family violence prevention, and the Taking Action on Bullying Initiative which provide counseling, healing circles, referrals, advocacy and cultural support.

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society can be contacted directly at:

Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society
P.O. Box 6084, Station "A"
Calgary, AB
T2H 2L3
Phone: (403) 531-1970

5. EVALUATION FEEDBACK FORM

The following evaluation feedback form has been developed to assist the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society in determining how user friendly and useful this manual has been to you in your work. Please complete this form and return it to the Lodge at the address provided below.

AWO TAAN FRAMEWORK FOR HEALING AND WELLNESS MANUAL© EVALUATION FEEDBACK FORM	
I liked . . . 	I would change
The most useful part of this manual was . . . 	Suggestions . . .

Overall, on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how would you rate this manual as a user friendly document? Please circle one:

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent

Forward to : Attention: Aboriginal Framework for Healing and Wellness Manual©
Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society
P.O. Box 6084, Station "A"
Calgary, AB
T2H 2L3

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Quotes from Mothers



- *"I liked the staff they were great also the healing circle."*
- *"I liked how everyone is very helpful and how they find solutions."*
- *"This was an excellent place, safe and secure."*
- *"You people are very good in helping one move into a new structure of life, very supportive."*
- *I don't think I would have been able to achieve my goal without all the support from the workers here you were all so good to me."*
- *"Felt very comfortable and well taken care of."*
- *"The staff is very supportive. I felt like this became my second home."*
- *"The staff was very excellent, they all treated me well and were very comforting!"*



Source: Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society Annual Report 2005-2006, PowerPoint Presentation, 2007.

APPENDIX 2

THE AWO TAAN HEALING PIN

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has designed the *Awo Taan Healing Pin*© that symbolizes healing and wellness. The four colors blue, yellow, red and white represent cultural diversity. Family violence affects all races. Together we will strive for the eradication of all forms of violence.

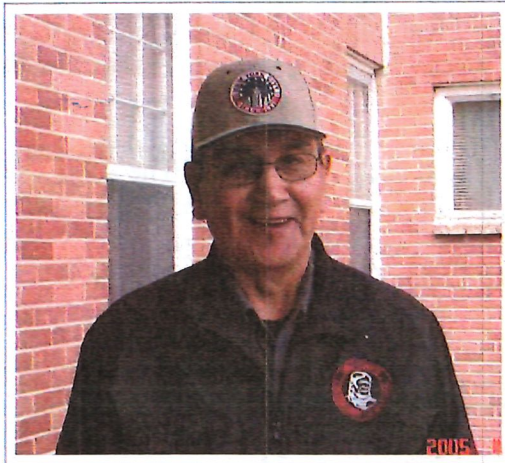
The pin is for sale at the suggested donation of \$10.00 each. It is part of The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society's fundraising strategy. Proceeds go toward the cost of programming and services offered through The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society. Pins can be obtained by calling The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society at (403) 531-1970.



STOP THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN,
CHILDREN AND FAMILY MEMBERS

APPENDIX 3

AWO TAAN PHOTO GALLERY



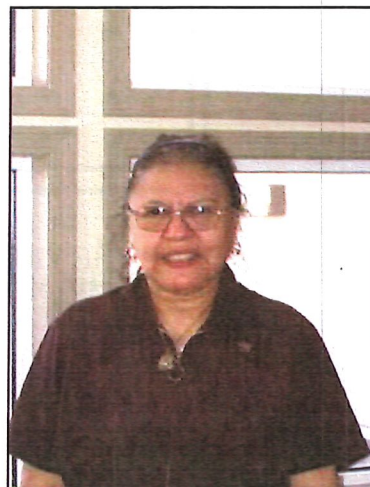
Andy Black Water, Kanai Elder



**Gerri Manyfingers, President, Awo Taan
Healing Lodge Society**



Beryl Kootney, Stoney Elder



Olive Manitopyes, Cree Elder