

BRIEFING NOTE ON AWO TAAN HEALING LODGE SOCIETY WOMEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER EVALUATION

"To obtain evidence-based information on how the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society –Emergency Women's Shelter provides culturally safe and trauma-informed approaches for family violence prevention, intervention and healing from all forms of abuse for families of all cultures."

SCOPE OF EVALUATION

The evaluation is focused on identifying culturally safe frameworks, models, and strategies for family violence protection, intervention, prevention and healing at emergency shelters for Indigenous women, including the Awo Taan Healing Lodge in order to contribute to knowledge on how to support community-based and culturally appropriate approaches to assist Indigenous community members struggling with family violence.

The scope of the evaluation looks at the last 10 years of services and programs (operations, framework, reporting), with a focus on the current delivery practices (previous year) and impact on clients. The evaluation work takes place from August 2017 to end of June 2018, and also includes efforts to identify additional resources to improve and sustain evaluation practices by the shelter (i.e., grants, research internships).

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

From what little is known, the problem of family violence in Canadian Indigenous communities is a chronic and serious problem (Weatherburn 2010: 197) and has been described as reaching epidemic proportions (Nahane 1995). Research shows that family violence is the costliest and most common social and economic problem in Indigenous communities (Brownridge 2003) and that it represents a grave threat to the general health and wellbeing of families (Bopp, Bopp & Lane 2003 in Ellington et al. 2015: 287). For example, in a study of Indigenous women in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, when asked about the health of their communities, the vast majority ranked family violence as their most important health concern (Brownridge et al. 2014: 353). In fact, violence itself has been described as the greatest killer of Indigenous people of every age (Barsh 1994 in Campbell 2007: 58).

Available statistics consistently point to a greater disproportionate incidence of violence against Indigenous women in Canada (Amnesty International 2014: 2). First Nations, Métis and Inuit women face much higher rates of violence throughout their lifetimes than all other women in Canada. Nearly 40% of Indigenous woman will experience interpersonal violence within their lifetime (Puchala et al. 2010: 89). In a 2014 survey by Statistics Canada, the reported rate of sexual assaults against Indigenous women 15 and older in the 10 Canadian provinces was more than three times higher than the national average. The same survey revealed Indigenous

women in the provinces were more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous women to report having experienced spousal violence. Rates of violence against Indigenous women are consistently higher in all contexts, whether the reported perpetrator was a spouse, a family member, acquaintance or stranger (NACAFV 2017: 16). Indigenous women in Canada not only face higher rates of violence, the forms of violence are more severe (Amnesty International 2014: 2). Almost 60 percent of Indigenous women who reported spousal violence in between 2004 and 2009 said they had been injured, compared to 41 percent of non-Indigenous survivors of violence. Statistics Canada has concluded that the homicide rate for Indigenous women and girls was at least 6 times higher than for non-Indigenous women and girls (NACAFV 2017: 16).

In Canada, numerous programs and policies have been developed to address violence against women (Johnson and Dawson 2010; Status of Women Canada 2002 in Statistics Canada 2008: 6). However, these responses have not been based upon any long term strategic plan until recently. Building on the Government's 2010-2015 initiative to enhance the justice system and law enforcement response and promote community safety, the Government of Canada will invest \$25 million from 2015 to 2020, as part of their continued commitment to tackle crime and ensure justice for all Canadians. In addition to the \$25 million investment, the Government of Canada is taking action to protect Indigenous women and girls by: funding shelters and family violence prevention activities, at a level of \$31.74 million annually (\$158.7 million over five years). This *Action Plan to address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls*, together with other federal support for shelters, family violence prevention, and increasing economic and leadership opportunities for Indigenous women, will result in an investment by the Government of Canada of nearly \$200 million over five years, starting in 2015-16 and 2016-17 (Canada 2014: 1).

Of the 158.7 million secured for Indigenous Services Canada's (formerly Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development) the Family Violence Prevention Program will receive \$13.24 million annually (or \$66.2 million over five years) to expand its support for family violence prevention projects that respond to needs and gaps identified by Indigenous communities (Canada 2014: 7). \$18.5 million (or \$92.5 million over five years) directly supports shelters. The Program supports a network of 41 shelters in the provinces and in the Yukon. It also funds the *National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence* (NACAFV), which provides training forums, tools and resources for shelters and their staff (Canada 2014:12). The NACAFV reports that currently there are in actual fact 37 operational INAC funded women shelters in Canada. In February 2017, the federal government announced plans to build an additional 5 shelters for the 634 First Nations communities (NACAFV 2017: 20).

The federal government is the only source of funding for emergency shelters for First Nations women living on-reserves. There are nearly 2,500 reserves in Canada (including First Nations), the vast majority do not have emergency shelters or transitional homes for women creating significant access barriers especially since some women have to travel over 100km to the nearest shelter (Amnesty International 2009:8). The announcement to build 5 more shelters represents a woefully inadequate response to the needs of Indigenous women when hundreds

of reserves are without shelters (Amnesty International 2009:9). Therefore, most Indigenous women are either referred to or have no other option to find emergency shelters in urban settings far from their communities. In addition, there are relatively few shelters across Canada in urban areas designated for Indigenous women. Not only are there not enough shelters, but a review of the literature indicated that many shelters designated for Indigenous women both on and off reserve lack strategic and planned approaches to family prevention projects and activities, few have a strategic or community level plans in place to address family violence and that culturally appropriate services are not measured or assessed by shelters in a consistent manner (Lane et al. 2003, AANDC 2015; NACAFV 2006; Brown and Languedoc 2004).

The lack of strategic planning, especially as it relates to culturally appropriate services is important as the body of research on Indigenous family violence stresses that family violence occurs within a cultural context (Jones 2008: 117); and therefore requires a focus that is different from the current mainstream responses to family violence (Campbell 2007: 76). It has been well documented that the narrow understandings of western models of domestic violence as the abuse of power in intimate relationships does not fit with Indigenous people's understandings of family violence which is embedded in the social context of colonization, dislocation, and poverty (Bennett 1997; Robertson 1999; Taylor et al., 2003 in Nickson et al. 2011: 88). Violence against women was not a traditional tribal value. Indeed, in many First Nations, Indigenous women shared power with men precisely because of the respect that Indigenous values afforded women. "Tirado and others argue that this power structure changed with colonization, likening the colonization process to the pattern of learning violent behavior. To that end, mechanisms that attempt to reinforce traditional tribal values may be an important means of combating domestic violence. Since many argue that this type of violence is learned, the process of "unlearning" violence could begin through reinforcing tribal values through tribal remedies" (Hart and Lowther 2008: 191).

Intimate abuse in Indigenous communities is a contemporary manifestation of colonialism and requires specialized resources that address this legacy. (Cameron 2006:504). Namely, that approaches at shelters should address the devastating impacts of colonialism, racism, and misogyny (root causes of family violence) by fostering Indigenous pride, self-esteem, and cultural identity (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in Bailey and Shayman 2016: 333; Lane et al. 2003; PAAFV 2002). McTimoney (1994) reports that Indigenous women when asked, stress that the solutions must be delivered by Indigenous people and must include traditional teachings and healing practices (also in PAAFV 2002: 18; PAFNW 2005: 17). For Indigenous women who are victims of domestic violence, rediscovering spirituality and culture is crucial at uncovering and discovering the meaning of abusing experiences (Murphy et al. 2003: 170). This is especially crucial since Indigenous women hold different perceptions regarding the history, definitions and causes of family violence (Teehee and Esqueda 2008). Thus, the need for community-based, tribally and/or Indigenous controlled and culturally appropriate approaches to family violence (Matamonasa-Bennett 2014:22) which place family strengthening interventions within an honest, relevant, and respectful historical and cultural context (Dionne & Dishion, 1998; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999 in Dionne et al. 2009: 912).

Many of the study themes in our review of the literature suggest the importance of the historical social context and Indigenous cultural values as essential elements in family violence prevention and treatment initiatives (Matamonasa-Bennett 2014: 20). Yet, the literature did not present a study, evaluation or report on definitions of cultural appropriateness and impact of approaches on family violence prevention, protection, intervention and healing for Indigenous women who accessed emergency shelters. Rather the focus was on describing the scope of the problem of family violence and on recommendations on best practices and/or elements of cultural frameworks for implementation. Where evaluations had occurred they tended to focus on the relevance, performance, efficiency and economy of the program.

Little work has explored the perspectives of Indigenous people about what works in Indigenous family violence protection planning. Therefore much of the work that goes on is not publicized (Brown and Languedoc 2004: 478), and there is little investment and support from funders for Indigenous shelters to gather in order to promote and share successful approaches across regions in Canada (AANDC 2015: 28). While still limited, our knowledge of the scope of family violence among Indigenous people is growing. However our qualitative understanding of family violence within and among Indigenous people has just begun (Murphy et al. 2003; Dreddy 2015; Zeller 2013). Our evaluation is a step towards addressing the gap in understanding and articulating culturally appropriate approaches and their effectiveness at emergency shelters for Indigenous women and their families fleeing family violence. Preliminary results from our evaluation indicates that more in-depth consultation is required with stakeholders to learn about their traditional and modern articulations of culture and required cultural supports in order to enhance our Framework to facilitate culturally appropriate approaches to family violence. We also need to better understand, align and learn from community, how they have brought effective culturally appropriate approaches in service delivery.

Another primary contribution we would like to make is to be able to suggest ways for multijurisdictional partners across Canada on how to support community-based and culturally appropriate approaches to assist Indigenous people struggling with family violence given the current attention and investment by the Government of Canada.

Goal:

To obtain evidence-based information on how the Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society – Emergency Women's Shelter provides culturally safe and trauma-informed approaches for family violence prevention, intervention and healing from all forms of abuse for families of all cultures.

Objectives:

- Identify relevance, in particular *cultural relevance*, performance, impact and efficiency of Awo Taan to inform enhancement to policy and program delivery for families of all cultures fleeing family violence.

- Complete an internal and external literature review to inform AwoTaan and key stakeholders of culturally relevant frameworks, models, principles and strategies to family violence prevention, intervention and protection services models, social networks and services utilized by Indigenous people
- Emphasize approaches of Awo Taan that reflect the cultural distinctions and social realities of its clients
- Identify how the AwoTaan Healing Lodge Society Framework for Healing and Wellness facilitates culturally appropriate and safe family violence protection and support against family violence and all forms of abuse for women and children of all cultures
- Review the Intake Assessment and Outcomes Tracking Tools to for cultural appropriateness

METHODOLOGY

Our evaluation adopted a generic approach as qualitative research, it was not guided by one particular theoretical or methodological approach; though the evaluator deliberately explored methodological frameworks in the literature useful for describing and addressing approaches to family violence and in Indigenous communities (i.e., Indigenous Feminist Theory, Colonization Theory, Critical Theory, Resilience Theory and Historical and Intergenerational Trauma as Collective Trauma). Frameworks and models were also sought to help interpret culturally appropriate approaches (i.e., Historical, Resilience and Transcendence Holistic Framework by Burnette & Figley). We hired an Evaluator and established an Evaluation Committee and completed an Evaluation Plan and Program Logic Model to guide our evaluation process. The next section summarizes our evaluation efforts to date and our methodology.

We conducted an internal literature review on our program documents over the last 10 years to help assess the cultural relevance, performance, impact and efficiency of Awo Taan administration, programs and services. We learned that we are applying our Framework for Healing and Wellness in practice but need to be more deliberate in how we apply of the framework by embedding the Framework throughout our policy and procedures and in particular how to use the language of the framework for our program/service reporting. We also analyzed exit interviews with our clients over the last year to help us understand their experience at Awo Taan and its impact; and so that we could also compare this information to data collected from other shelters in the province. We completed an external literature review based on documentation from years 2000 to the present on approaches to review frameworks which have been created and/or implemented for service delivery to address family violence at emergency shelters with Indigenous people in Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. We briefly reviewed general approaches to addressing family violence for Indigenous women to help inform our background and understanding on the issue, but focused our scope to emergency shelter settings. Our findings from the literature gave us a substantial understanding of the efforts by others to explain the problem and scope of Indigenous family violence, but provided a limited understanding of how to redress Indigenous family violence through cultural

appropriate approaches. For example, there was identification of Indigenous shelters who had developed culturally specific frameworks but no information was provided on whether or not they had been implemented, and if so to what extent and impact.

Currently, we are nearing the completion of individual interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders (Board, leadership, staff, clients and Elders) from our shelter to identify how cultural relevance facilitates the performance, impact and efficiency of our shelter to inform improvements to policy and program delivery. The use of personal interviews/narratives and focus groups with identified stakeholders were based on loosely structured, open-ended interviews. The approach to data collection and analysis utilized principles and techniques from grounded theory and ethnographic content analysis. Therefore following an inductive approach, rather than beginning with a theory and formal hypothesis. This approach allows for information provided by the stakeholders to be examined for theories that may be contained within them. Our evaluation followed established methods for conducting ethical and culturally sensitive research with Indigenous populations and services which will respect the integrity of our shelter and stakeholders. This required collaborative work which was underpinned by the OCAP principles, (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession, ANIFGC 2017). We are especially anxious to hear results from our stakeholders help achieve an understanding of what has worked (working), and where improvements may need to be made; especially in our emphasis to ensure our services meet the cultural distinctions and social realities of our clients.

We have not forgotten to include the broader Indigenous community as a stakeholder. The evaluation approach and findings to date will be shared with the community at our annual general meeting in June 2018 to help obtain recommendations for further exploration on key areas for validation on approaches and overall outcomes. It is imperative our evaluation present the perspectives of Indigenous women and their families, communities, leaders and Elders the approaches they named as being culturally appropriate and safe in having potential impact on family violence.

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Appendix 1: Proposed Reading List (104 Documents)

Systematic Reviews on Emergency Women's Shelters and/or Family and Domestic Violence (6)

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Theoretical Approaches/Foundations to the Study of Domestic Violence (18)

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- Indigenous Feminism (27)**
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Exhibit: *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

Location/Phase: Part 2: Calgary

Witness: Josie Nepinak

Submitted by: Darrin Blain, Awo Taan

Add'l info: MAY 31 2018

Date: MAY 31 2018

Initials

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