

Violence Free Community Declaration

Steps a community can take to help address the issue of family violence:

- ⇒ **Individual Responsibility** - we are all responsible for our own actions and behaviours, we want to take responsibility for what we do and realize that we are accountable for our actions.
- ⇒ **Promote Respect And Equality** - support equality to ensure that men, women, children, Elders, youth, and people with disabilities are given equal treatment in all aspects of community life. We will acknowledge and respect that every person has a right and the ability to make his or her decisions.
- ⇒ **Education And Awareness** - public awareness and education are key to ensuring that the community is aware of how family violence negatively affects all members and that there is help available. We also want to promote healthy living and give members opportunities to learn more about healing and creating a healthy balance in life.
- ⇒ **Resources And Training** - gather resources from local programs and also organizations outside of the community or on the internet. The more we know about family violence prevention, the more capable we are to start making a difference. Learning is a life long process and we want to take part in any training, workshops, or information sessions available in the community. We can also start hosting sessions of our own by utilizing community resource people.
- ⇒ **Reporting And Safety** - acknowledging the importance of keeping women and children safe in the communities. It is important to know that we must protect our children from harm, even if it means reporting abuse to authorities. We want to provide healthy communities for our children to grow up in. Healthy children means that children can live free from any harm.
- ⇒ **Working Together** - taking a collective, holistic approach towards dealing with the issue. It will take community networking, cooperation, and group efforts to decrease the rates of family violence. A thriving community will have members who can work together, support and respect one another.

Violence Free Community Declaration continued

With each community being unique and diverse in their own way, community needs of any kind will differ slightly from the needs of a neighbouring community.

There clearly is a need to work collectively to address the issue of family violence, an issue that has plagued our communities for generations. There needs to be an effective strategy when searching for solutions to the issue.

There is a need for involvement of all key stakeholders in a community, which also means including all members of a community. There is a need for a long term holistic approach to reducing family violence and healing needs to begin from within each community. Although there are gaps in services to northern communities, it does not mean that the issue can go on unnoticed and unspoken.

Family violence has been identified time and again as a critical issue facing Aboriginal people. There is a need to strengthen and support individuals and families, to keep families intact, to keep them together. Healing is required for all members of a community, not just victims, not just abusers.

Communication among all First Nation members is crucial when addressing such a significant issue. It is not an issue that can be tackled by one earnest individual, it needs to become a group effort. Teamwork and collaboration is a requirement if reducing family violence in Aboriginal communities is going to be effective. Also, a high level of commitment must accompany such efforts.

Family violence is not part of the values and culture of Aboriginal people. It weakens individuals, families, communities, and Nations. Family violence exists. It matters. It can be reduced.

A collective approach to preventing family violence in a community may be to develop a **Violence Free Community Declaration**. It can be a starting point towards formulating a commitment to addressing the issue of family violence.