

Education And Awareness

When helping Aboriginal communities to address the issue of family violence, education and awareness is important. When working towards solutions to the issue, it is key to understand more about the issue. It is also helpful to understand the history of Aboriginal people and where violence stems from.

Violence is not something that Aboriginals promote in the communities. It is not an acceptable behaviour. It has been an issue in the communities prior to and following European contact. The difficulties that communities face when dealing with family violence has been an issue for years. It is evident that family violence has been harmful to Aboriginal people.

Education

Definition from Webster's Dictionary

- the action or process of educating or being educated
- a field of study dealing with methods of teaching and learning

Awareness

Definition from Webster's Dictionary

- having perception or knowledge

Aboriginal communities are 'family oriented' and seek to maintain and support family systems. We want to be able keep the families together and support them during hardships.

A Process Of Helping Our Communities:

- ▶ **Education And Awareness** - educating community members and bringing awareness to the general public (we do not know who we may be reaching out to or helping)
- ▶ **Prevention** - coordinating healthy community events (supports members who are seeking healthy living)
- ▶ **Intervention** - assisting those who want to make healthy changes in their lives, ensuring safety of all family members
- ▶ **Referral And Support** - finding appropriate services and providing ongoing support

Education And Awareness continued

Tips For Creating Awareness:

- recognize the need to create awareness
- know your values and beliefs
- be sincere about helping (help because we want to, not because we have to)
- be sensitive to the issue (very 'touchy' subject)
- promote respect, trust, love, honesty, equality
- create a balance in learning (for every negative there should be a positive)
- integrate a variety of learning styles (visual, hands-on learning)
- be consistent with message (be assertive, not aggressive)
- stay positive, take a holistic approach
- be consistent with support
- be a positive role model (walk the walk)
- be knowledgeable about the subject (understand the issue and it's effects)
- network and discuss possible solutions with other workers (in community and other surrounding communities)
- seek help, advice, and support from others (community leaders, Elders, other community workers)
- be creative -use different ways to create awareness (posters, newsletters, radio shows, television messages, etc)
- encourage and support people who are making positive changes in their lives
- engage in and coordinate community events that promote healing and wellness

Education and awareness is a starting point towards healing communities. When we can begin to openly talk about and discuss ways in which we can work together and heal from the 'damage' family violence causes, then we can work together to mend families and promote healthy living.

Family violence will not 'go away' simply by ignoring that it exists. Rates of family violence will not likely decrease unless there is a strategic approach to addressing the issue.

"There needs to be team work in the community in order to implement family violence awareness effectively."

NAN Member 2006