

Healthy Families Healthy Nations

Domestic Violence Training

Theme - Improving Our Communities - Understanding Violence

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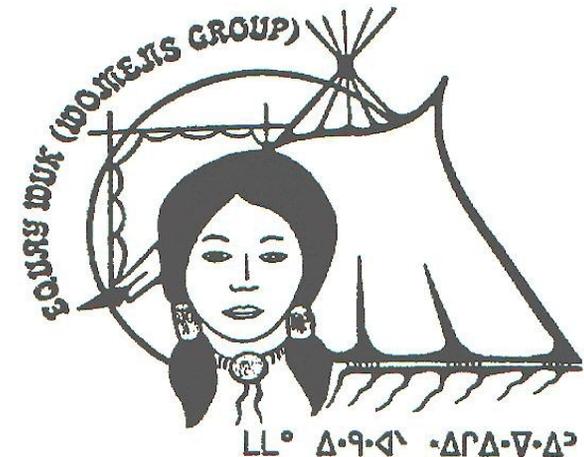
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Understanding Violence and Our History

Background Information



Healthy Families Healthy Nations

Domestic Violence Training

for professionals and service providers

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2009

Example: Little Johnny has vandalized the community band office. We can let Little Johnny know that vandalism is wrong, now the community looks awful and criminal charges may be laid against him. We should let him know that the behaviour is 'bad', not him. We must also let Little Johnny know that we love him and care for him. We also have faith that his behaviour will improve.

We can move forward to healthier lifestyles by having pride and healthy self esteem.

We can hide our shame and show our pride.

Shame makes us private. Pride makes us public.

Resource: Ron Thorne-Finch (M.A., M.S.W., R.S.W.) - Effective Strategies-
Aboriginal Education Conferences and Workshops.

Historically, most marriages were arranged. The woman did not choose who she would have as a husband. Traditional marriages were arranged by the parents. A woman was not to marry into her own clan family. The newly married couple would either reside with the bride's family or the groom's family. In times of conflict, the women's blood relatives would be there to defend her. Support was also found within the communities. If she lived with her husband's family there would be no one to protect her.

At times, when there was abuse against a woman, the woman's mother would talk and spend time with the abuser's mother. They would talk about how the boy was raised and how they could support the couple. If this did not work, the abuser was brought before the clan (family) leaders. Again, they would talk about how to support the couple. Marriage problems were resolved within the community. If this still did not resolve anything, the abuser would be banished from the community.

"Long ago, Aboriginal people gave hope to others. They would plan on how to provide support to the family, the person without a plan (how to help that person). After the plan was made, they would approach the family members (individuals). The next step was to provide spiritual support, and people would be identified to follow up with the family members to make sure the support plan was carried out."

Sadie McKay-Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug

Canadian Residential School System

The arrival of the Europeans drastically changed the lives of Aboriginal people. There were a number of processes forced upon the people in the attempt to dismantle and 'civilize' Aboriginal families and communities. The European culture and belief systems were very different from Aboriginal concepts and values. They did not understand the patient ways in which we raised our children and how highly respected and free the women were.

A new government system forced policies upon the people which included the Indian Act and residential schools. The policy was to make education mandatory for all Aboriginal children. Education was to be based on 'religion.'

Historically, the Aboriginal people hunted, trapped, and grew their food. They took part in community feasts, ceremonies, and other traditional practices. They spoke their own language, made their own handicrafts, developed a means of transportation, and made their own tools. All of these skills were passed down, orally, from generation to generation. An education system had already existed among many cultures and communities.

Signals That Shame May Exist:

rage/anger	power struggles
blaming	striving for perfection/power/control
verbal/physical abuse	self righteousness/contempt for others
"all or nothing" thinking	withdrawal/isolation
low self esteem	feelings of guilt
preoccupied with image	depression
addictions	defensiveness
fears of intimacy	compulsive behaviours
people pleasing	overprotective
extreme mood swings	fears of abandonment
disrespecting others	disrespecting self

To Avoid Shame, Sometimes We:

1. attack or do harm to ourselves (self blame, addictions)
2. avoidance (avoid others, situations)
3. attack others (verbally, physically)
4. withdrawal (from the world and others around us)

Shame can be seen as a learning tool, we learn to feel bad about some of the things that we do.

Example: We feel 'bad' if we steal from the store (misbehaviour), then we go to jail (consequence).

Shame helps in the development of **conscience**. If we do something bad, we begin to think of the consequences, or feel remorse. We can also teach this to our children.

Trauma:

- a pain felt or experienced at an original event. Pain is felt and acted out long after the event is over.

Shame:

- an overwhelming feeling of embarrassment or disgrace brought on by doing something wrong.

Forms Of Shame:

- embarrassment
- guilt
- shyness
- discouragement
- self consciousness

Shame damages our self esteem because, at times, we truly do believe that we deserve to feel so badly.

Shame Affects Us In All Senses:

- **physical** - our pulse and skin temperature changes
- **emotional** - low self esteem
- **mental** - thoughts of inadequacy, we are not good
- **spiritual** - little to no self worth

Results Of Shame Are:

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| stress | confusion | low self esteem |
| self-doubt | rage | high blood pressure |
| violence | fatigue | other physical problems |
| poverty | bad attitude | |

Other Processes Used To Dismantle The Aboriginal Way Of Life:

Acculturation	to change the culture of a group or individual as a result of contact with a different culture
Colonization	the process of one culture imposing their will over another culture
Assimilation	to become similar to another culture
Cultural Genocide	a deliberate process to wipe out and destroy a whole culture (example: by war, by disease)
Discrimination	unfair, unequal treatment to another person based on their gender, culture, race, ethnicity, age, etc.
Racism	to discriminate on the belief that one race is superior to another
Dispossession	to deprive another of the possession or occupancy of something, such as real property
Dispossession of Status	women would lose their Indian status if they married a non-native person
Marginalize	to transfer someone away from their roots in order to render them powerless
Oppression	an unfair, excessive exercise of power where one group does not have the ability to negotiate or make meaningful choices

At this point, the status of Aboriginal women began to decline. Women were seen as second class citizens and not equal to man. They became vulnerable to violence, which included vicious abuse and sexual assaults and attacks. They began to lose their respected roles in the communities. The traditional role of women was no longer recognized.

The Indian Act is male dominated and placed men as the head of families. It was an extremely difficult time because we came from a place where there was equality and respect for all.

Government and church missionaries worked together to impose their values and principles upon the people. They taught them that men were superior to women and they were to be dominated. The government did not understand traditional values, beliefs, and ceremonies, therefore they banned them.

A reservation (reserve) system was set up where groups of Aboriginals were to live. This system eliminated the connection to the land and a traditional nomadic way of life. They were moved from the traditional lands to spots of land that were 'leftover' and deemed as having little value. Historically, there were no boundaries to the places we called home.

The intentions of the government was to assimilate the Aboriginals away from their culture and way of life, not realizing that there was already a complex system in place among the people. A way of life that 'worked' for the people. The idea to 'civilize' and 'convert' Aboriginal people has proven to be very ineffective.

The residential schools (started in 1845) was a process to displace Aboriginal families and replace them with an

Historical Losses Of Aboriginal People:

- nations/ tribes died due to diseases/ epidemics (smallpox, influenza, tuberculosis)
- loss of traditional lands and livelihood (placed on reservations)
- loss of political autonomy and self reliance
- loss of language, religion, tradition, culture, pride
- loss or lack of parenting skills (children were taken away)
- respect for all members of the community (men, women, children, Elders)
- breakdown of traditional communities (roles and responsibilities)

An overwhelming sense of guilt began to surface among the people. Communities began to suffer from the effects of multi-generational trauma. A deeply rooted sense of shame began to direct the lives of the people. After years of being told that Aboriginal people are less than the dominant non-native society, it certainly began to effect the esteem of communities. We learned not to talk, we began to self internalize our feelings of self hate. We were taught not to speak our own language, to be ashamed of who we were as Aboriginal. We were taught that what we had to say meant nothing, so don't say anything at all.

To come from a community where everything taught was done verbally, the idea of not communicating has had a traumatic effect on our relationships and making meaningful connections with one another. Not communicating with one another created confusion among communities that were once so self-reliant and based on healthy relationships.

we were taught that men were superior to women. We were taught that violence meant power and that those who took control would have more 'power.'

Family violence can also be traced back further to days when there was no contact yet with any European. However, it was not a normal feature of every day life. In many communities, the abuser would indeed be confronted by peers, family members (both of victim and abuser), and leadership. If the abuse continued after support was offered, then there were serious consequences, which included being banished from the community, castration, and sometimes even death.

Traditional Aboriginal communities were not 'perfect', but there was a common understanding that the women and children were always to be honoured, respected, loved, protected, and well cared for. Abuse and conflicts in the communities were discouraged and usually resolved at a community level. Most communities provided a place where balance, harmony, respect, and cooperation was a necessity.

The many traumatic events that followed European contact became unbearable. The negative, historical impacts has indeed impacted Aboriginal family life. The residential school system, for example, introduced patterns of violence and abuse into the lives of Aboriginals across the country, in all types of families and communities.

unknown European way of life. It was at these schools that certain behaviours were learned. These learned behaviours, which included different types of abuse, were carried on throughout the lives of a lot of the students who attended these schools. The students began to forget, and at times, were forced to stop remembering what it means to be an Aboriginal person.

There were five churches involved in residential schooling.

- ▶ The Roman Catholic Church
- ▶ Church of England (Anglican)
- ▶ Methodist (United) Church
- ▶ Presbyterian Church
- ▶ Mennonite

There were students who were abused at these residential schools. There were students who had died at these residential schools. However, not all students who attended these schools had negative experiences of abuse and sexual abuse. But they all suffered a great loss. That loss was their traditional way of living. Living the traditional way of life, where everything to survive was taught and there was a life of balance and harmony.

Children were forced to enter a foreign place, often separated from the only family members known to them. There was often punishment for any student who spoke their language, practiced any ceremony, or for even speaking to other family members.

The cultural and geographical separation of Aboriginal families was harmful to family life. Parenting skills were lost or decreased because the children were no longer in the community. Generations of children became more and more confined to the European ways.

The losses to the people were significant and common feelings began to surface among the people. Feelings of depression, low self-esteem, confusion, guilt, grief, and shame, to name a few. Children were left with the legacy of what happened to the parents, grandparents, families, and other community members.

Intergenerational impacts - the negative effects of abuse that were passed down to several generations of children of Aboriginal people who attended residential schools

More recently, the government has made attempts to apologize to the Aboriginal people across Canada. Funds were allocated across the country for healing initiatives (short term) and programs (ten years) that attempt to aid in the healing of all Nations. Public apologies were made to Aboriginal people from various churches and even one from the past Minister of Indian Affairs, Jane Stewart, in 1998. They had apologized for the abuses suffered and endured at the residential schools.

Damage to the hundreds of families across the country had been done. Whole nations were weakened as traditional

structures and systems were almost eliminated. The significant role of women was misplaced, placing whole communities in a confused, disorderly state. Children were not concerned about hurting one another and were not willing to obey and respect their Elders.

The residential school system has indeed affected many Aboriginal people. There are thousands upon thousands of people trying to regain their culture, heritage, and traditions. Solutions are found within the communities, among the community members (men, women, youth, and Elders.) Aboriginal people have remained resilient, despite the processes forced upon us (the process to disrupt our families). We have remained strong and intact. We will continue to thrive and grow.

"I see where violence comes from. I like to help the community see where the problems come from and not to blame themselves for their problems, but to accept the past and get on to healthy life choices. Healthy living, healthy nation and how to live in harmony again."
NAN Member

History Of Family Violence And Shame

Family violence has been in existence in Aboriginal communities for many years. It can be traced back to the days when the government had imposed the various processes to disturb the Aboriginal families. In these days,