

# What Is Family Violence?

There is no universal definition of what family violence is. It is very difficult to translate 'family violence' into Anishinaabemowin (the language). When attempting to translate 'family violence' one is often describing an action (for example: miigaaz -hitting or fighting).

## **For our purposes, we may describe family violence as:**

- ⇒ the abuse of power within the family unit
- ⇒ violence against any member of the family
- ⇒ an issue of power and control in family relationships
- ⇒ a direct or indirect violation of an individual
- ⇒ invasive to whole communities, not just one family or couple
- ⇒ effects the emotional, physical, mental, or spiritual parts of our very beings
- ⇒ often, it is a pattern of abuse that has been present over several generations

## **Forms Of Family Violence Include:**

- child abuse
- domestic abuse
- elder abuse
- parent abuse
- lateral violence
- suicide and self harm

# What Is Family Violence? continued

## Family Violence Can Be:

- violence from one partner to another
- violence from parent to child (foster parent to foster child)
- violence from child to parent
- violence against Elders (grandparents)
- violence between brothers/sisters (young & old)
- violence towards others (including pets/property)

## Types Of Abuse Include:

- emotional abuse
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- social abuse
- financial abuse
- verbal abuse
- mental abuse
- spiritual abuse

Family violence is a serious social problem that affects us all. It is not an individual problem. Family violence does not only occur in Aboriginal families. It happens in all races around the world.

Everybody in the community is affected by family violence. This includes: victim, abuser, children, parents, extended families, neighbours, helpers, communities, leaders, even pets.

- ⇒ Abuse is multi-generational, a cycle that can continue over several generations
- ⇒ Abused children are likely to grow up and become either victims or abusers

# What Is Family Violence? continued

**One million children witness violence in Canada.**

Source: Statistics Canada 2004

Family violence is not acceptable. It is a learned behaviour that can be traced back to the government processes to disrupt Aboriginal families. It weakens us, our families, our communities, and our Nations.

## **Family violence continues today as a result of several factors:**

- ⇒ a racist, social environment that promotes a negative stereotype of Aboriginal men and women
- ⇒ inequality of men and women
- ⇒ collective trauma to hundreds of families ('stuck' in the past, unable to move forward)
- ⇒ violence is seen as 'normal' in communities (abuse to solve problems)
- ⇒ negative attitudes towards women
- ⇒ lack or loss of parenting skills, values, beliefs
- ⇒ lack of healing initiatives, resources (funding)
- ⇒ lack of support services
- ⇒ poor communication among key stakeholders
- ⇒ struggle to take ownership and responsibility for self change
- ⇒ lack of knowledge and awareness at community levels
- ⇒ increased levels of substance abuse and other poor coping skills
- ⇒ poor living conditions and overcrowding
- ⇒ poverty and high unemployment in communities

**Family violence exists. It matters. It can be reduced.**