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TREATY 7 COMMUNITY STUDY

FAMILY VIOLENCE
and
COMMUNITY STRESS

Book in Safe.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

The **Treaty 7 Community Study** was commissioned by the Royal Commission of Aboriginal People in June of 1993. The broad mandate of the Commission is reflected by approximately 100 community-based and 300 commissioned works in Canada. This particular study is one of three in existence through the Commission and is representative of the Treaty 7 region. The Commission has had several levels of enquiry, ranging from exploring and defining various problem areas, to establishing national and community-based solutions. The **Treaty 7 Community Study** is primarily solution-oriented and exploratory in nature, with a focus on a number of issues facing both tribal and urban communities, namely, family violence and community stress.

The study endeavours to explore cultural definitions of family violence. More specifically, is family violence, as perceived by aboriginal people, consistent with those views held by western society? Further, we wanted to explore family violence in the context of societal structures such as gender differences, as well as, socio-political, judicial, and cultural differences. In other words what impact, if any, do these institutions and societal structures have upon family violence?

Thirdly, we wanted to explore how victims and perpetrators of family violence understood and coped with family and community stress. In aboriginal communities, the word "family" is often interchangeable with "community." We wanted to examine people's awareness of community crisis or stress and how this stress impacted upon the individuals within each community.

Lastly, we wanted to determine what resources, both natural and formal, were accessed by people. More specifically, we wanted to identify the cultural resources specific to each community and how effective these resources were perceived to be in comparison to more formal services. Exploration into this area would possibly

reveal how each community responds to community stress and family violence. Further, does the community reflect only non-native values or have they maintained traditional values and to what degree are traditional values reflected? This area in particular would serve to develop recommendations at the community and individual levels as well as validate those services currently in use.

The colonial model has been utilized as a framework for this study serving to clarify the context of the Canadian aboriginal experience. While indigenous cultures are unique in their traditions, languages and societal structures, their experience of colonization is a collective experience. Colonization of indigenous peoples has occurred and continues to occur globally. Simply put, colonization refers specifically to the collective aboriginal experience of European expansionism; that is, the annexation and subordination of territories, for economic interests. Negating the colonial experience legitimizes western interpretations of history which, historically, have been both supremist and oppressive in nature. The forces of oppression took shape through racism, classism and sexism.

Aside from utilizing the historical orientations of a people, the colonial model is useful for its political applicability. Family violence is very much a political issue for both natives and non-natives. Once again, however, even "political" is defined culturally. For majority society, family violence is primarily a power issue. The societal structures and institutions are grounded in perpetuating the patriarchy with women and children being the primary targets of exploitation. The key words here are "power" and "control". Indeed, these concepts are very much a part of the western worldview. Family violence is viewed as a gender-based problem within the patriarchy. With regard to intervention and prevention, westerners believe that in order to overcome family violence and the patriarchy that legitimates this behaviour, the

roles of women must ***change*** in society, such that "power" is shared between the sexes. This belief is reflected in changes in social policy such as in equal opportunity programs, wage-equity programs, etc. Hence, the solutions are based upon their understanding of what the problem is - their worldview.

For the most part, indigenous cultures were not traditionally based upon power, but rather, balance and harmony with the environment and self. Many indigenous cultures have managed to maintain their traditional cornerstones of society through structures such as the extended family and spirituality. Family violence is but one response to a myriad of social, psychological and behavioural responses of colonialism. Every facet of their lives have been influenced by colonialism. Family violence is more associated with oppression than with gender specifically. This oppression is rooted in racism, classism and sexism, together. Many indigenous cultures embrace the concept of woman as nurturers, caregivers and leaders. They strive to ***strengthen*** their roles within their communities. To do otherwise would be committing an act of cultural suicide.

Another important concept of the colonial model is that in time, the oppressed internalize their oppression. Internalized oppression becomes apparent when members of the oppressed society perpetuate various forms of classism, sexism and racism. The colonization model calls for a process of "decolonization" which involves community healing and the rebuilding of traditional structures. Because the impact of colonization upon societies will vary, so too will the process of decolonization vary from one society to the next. The point to be made is that the model acknowledges internalized oppression as a state of being, which may indeed be argued as a form of assimilation, in itself.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Target Area

The research was conducted in six urban and tribal communities, representative of the Treaty 7 region. Treaty 7 specifically refers to the following First Nation communities: Siksika, Tsuu Tina, Peigan, Kainai and Stoney.

Because we wanted to begin developing culturally relevant services in the urban settings, we felt it imperative to include urban communities in the research. Lethbridge and Calgary (both in Southern Alberta) were chosen, given their close proximity to First Nation communities and their reportedly high concentration of aboriginal people compared to other smaller urban centres (such as Medicine Hat).

This study was unsuccessful in receiving consent to proceed with the research in the Peigan Nation community. They did not feel comfortable participating in research commissioned by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. Thus, the following communities participated in the study, with approval from tribal councils or their representatives:

Kainai Nation
Tsuu Tina Nation
Stoney Nation
Siksika Nation

Lethbridge Urban Community
Calgary Urban Centre

Sample

Eight respondents were selected from each community (4 males; 4 females), for a total sample size of 48. Selection of respondents was made though referral, by agencies and services which have worked with families who have experienced family violence. Because of the nature of the study, it was believed that better results

would be achieved if the sample was drawn from people who had experienced family violence at some time in their lives.

The nature of the referral took place by method of notices. That is, notices were placed in various agencies and services throughout the communities. People patronizing these services, upon enquiry into the notice, were then referred to the respective researcher. In some cases (20%), respondents were self-referred. These respondents contacted the researcher directly (i.e., the notices detailed the researcher's name and phone number).

Procedure

The research process selected for the study involved face to face interviews. The interviews were guided by a number of pre-determined and open-ended questions. Each respondent was interviewed by a same-sex researcher and was asked to sign a consent form. The consent form was preceded with a statement of the purpose of the study, ethical considerations and obligatory conditions of the study. All interviews were audiotaped with the condition that they were to remain confidential and would be returned upon completion of the study. As a token of appreciation, each respondent was given a $25.00 honorarium.

The questions were developed in conjunction with a female elder. It was assumed that because of the nature of the topic under study, much effort needed to go into the types of questions asked and the way in which they were asked. This sensitivity was adhered to in order to avoid offending respondents with inappropriate questions. Following each interview, demographic information was collected from the interviewee.

Data Analysis

The preferred analytical tool utilized in this study was grounded theory, a qualitative approach (Glaser, 1978). Grounded theory is based upon generating themes by compartmentalizing

responses and "tagging" key ideas. These key ideas are then analyzed for common elements and underlying concepts. Qualitative research was chosen over quantitative, in order to capture cultural nuances (Courtrille, 1991). It is particularly useful when there is little previous knowledge in a substantive area.

The demographic data were analyzed by use of the SPSS Windows program, a quantitative analysis.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Aboriginal communities appear to have an awareness and understanding of family violence. However, there exists much inconsistency in the types of services and programs provided for offenders, victims and the community. This inconsistency appears to stem from inherent problems when clarifying the underlying causal factors, the conflicting theoretical orientations and the parameters by which family violence is defined. Therefore, it becomes imperative to begin with an historical orientation of First Nation peoples. It should be noted that very few studies researched particular indigenous cultures, but rather, referred to certain geographical areas which could encompass a few, or several, First Nations. For those studies that were conducted within tribal communities (Armstrong-Esther, et. al., 1991; Grier, 1991), the focus was upon the prevalence of family violence, rather than from an etiological or historical context. While this particular study was conducted within the geographical area of Treaty 7, there exists much cultural variation. More specifically, of the five tribal communities under study, three are members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, while two (Tsuu Tina and Stoney) are unique, with distinct languages. Inclusion of the urban centres further expands the cultural diversity.

Historical Overview

Several studies point to the necessity of examining family violence in context of the colonial experience, rather than in isolation or by other prevalent theories (Armstrong-Esther, et. al., 1991; B.C. Task Force in Family Violence, 1992; Maracle, 1993; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989). Simply put, this particular approach is required because it is a "cultural" experience, specific to peoples of indigenous descent. It is a history shared by virtually each and every First Nation in Canada and throughout North America and cannot be minimized or excused as irrelevant.

The Treaties signed in the 1800's secured lands from Ontario to Alberta for the Dominion of Canada. The primary focus of this relationship was: westward expansion and assimilation of indigenous people into non-native society. This policy of assimilation was premised on the ideological framework of the europeans belief in the "universality of their culture" and is reflected in various institutionalized forms of legitimacy such as the Indian Act (Indian Association of Alberta, 1987). For instance, in 1858 "an Act for the Gradual Civilization of Indians" was passed (Tobias, 1976), which was later amended to "an Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians." In the early 1800's, the responsibility of assimilation was left primarily with the missionaries (Miller, Hoffman & Turner, 1980). The principle objective of the missionaries was to christianize and assimilate the Indians into white society.

> The policy was aimed at the young and carried out in the context of religion and education. The mandate for implementing it was given to the missionaries who established, first, industrial schools and then residential schools (Kilgannon, 1989, p.1).

The introduction of boarding or residential schools separated Indian children from their families and communities resulting in the destruction of the traditional way of life. Through children, culture is transmitted to future generations. By removing children from their traditional societies and placing them in a foreign environment, where a different set of values, philosophies and practices exist, their ability to maintain and transmit traditional culture is destroyed.

> These schools, which were often located hundreds or thousands of miles from the children's homes, frequently prohibited the use of Native language and tribal customs, required the wearing of uniforms, and enforced rules in an authoritarian manner completely divorced from traditional Indian child-rearing practices (Hull, 1982, p.311).

The destruction of Indian culture has often been equated with "cultural genocide" (Carasco, 1986; Johnston, 1983; Indian Association of Alberta, 1987). Assimilation was the policy, with its manifestations rooted primarily in the wholesale removal of Indian children from their communities. This was first demonstrated in the boarding schools in the early 1900's where Indian children were separated culturally as well as geographically from their families and more recently, in the child welfare system. By the 1950's, where it became apparent that previous forms of assimilation were ineffective, the child welfare system was extended to Indian people, whereupon the separation of families continued (Hudson & McKenzie, 1981; Hull, 1982; Johnston, 1981; Kilgannon, 1989; Slaughter, 1976; Sullivan, 1983). The process of colonization, along with its consequences, is eloquently described by Blauner (1969) in four stages:

> Colonization begins with a forced, involuntary entry. Second, there is an impact on the culture and social organization of the colonized people which is more than just a result of such

> natural processes as contact and acculturation. The colonizing power carries out a policy which constrains, transforms, or destroys indigenous values, orientations, and ways of life. Third, colonization involves a relationship by which members of the colonized group tend to be administered by representatives of the dominant power. There is an experience of being managed and manipulated by outsiders in terms of ethnic status. A final [*fundamental component*] of colonization is racism. Racism is a principle of social domination by which a group seen as inferior or different in terms of alleged biological characteristics is exploited, controlled, and oppressed socially and psychically by a superordinate group (p. 396) [italics mine].

Western Impact Upon Political & Judicial Structures

The process of assimilation involved tactics other than those directed towards childrearing or spiritual practices. The political institution as well as the judicial system, were further targets of the "civilization" process. The traditional forms of governing in tribal societies were quite unlike the adversarial nature of the non-native governing process. Traditional methods often took the form of mediation and negotiation (Supernault, 1993). This loss of traditional leadership can be traced to the implementation of the Indian Act, which governed all aspects of aboriginal affairs:

> Under Section 91 (24), the Act amalgamates bands; defines bands; how and what powers they have; how their money is spent; how councils are elected and who can be member. The elected chief and council were not answerable to their community but to the Minister of Indian Affairs in Ottawa (Supernault, 1993, p.18).

The Indian Act essentially removed the community's ability to maintain traditional concepts of justice which were based upon the goal of restoring harmony and balance within the community. Another significant aspect of this change was the focus on individual versus group (or collective) rights. Through decapitation of

tribal authority, a fundamental role of the community's leadership was replaced and eventually lost. Thus, the community's ability to maintain or restore harmony among its members was also lost.

> ...Consequently, nobody in the community could define, let alone enforce proper behaviour. Values of non-interference meant nobody had the right to do so anyway. Behaviour by example could be ignored. Instead of mediation or negotiation, disputes were settled through political nepotism or survival of the strongest (power and control) (Supernault, 1993, p. 19).

Several recent studies, reviews and Task Force Reports have conclusively found that major reforms within the administration of justice system are needed (Alberta Solicitor General, 1991; Attorney General of Alberta, 1991; Canadian Human Rights Commission, 1989; Correctional Law Review, 1988; Jackson, 1988; Royal Commission on the Donald Marshal Prosecution, 1989). These reports generally recommend greater participation of aboriginal communities in the existing justice system. These recommendations vary in nature from affirmative action efforts, court communication programs, R.C.M.P. Special Constables and a variety of outreach programs sponsored by various parts of the criminal justice system (Sawatsky, 1993). However, in spite of the positive intent of the recommendations, the First Nations generally do not advocate the reform of a system that does not respect the worldview of the aboriginal community.

First Nations have a dramatically different view of the administration of justice than that of the anglo-Canadian perspective of justice. Under western notions of criminal jurisprudence, the objectives are to establish fault or guilt and then to puniush. The sentencing goals of retribution, revenge, deterrence and isolation of the offender are extremely important, though the system often pays lip service to the concept of rehabilitation as well (Blood Tribe Chief & Council, 1990).

Associate Chief Judge Murray Sinclair of the Provincial Court of Manitoba remarked on aboriginal views of the courts,

> It is fair to say that aboriginal people generally regard the courts of our country as tools of oppression and not vehicles of dispute resolution and positive influence. The vast majority of aboriginal contacts with the justice system even today involve appearances in our criminal courts as accused (Attorney General of Alberta, 1991, p. 4.9).

The Canadian legal system of justice does not reflect the perceptions of what a justice system means to many First Nations of Canada. The judicial system, the courts, police, correction centres and all that encompasses the Canadian administration of justice, are elements that continue to be foreign to aboriginal people. A foreign element that is imposed upon a people is obviously rejected, with little or no respect extended to that element or system. Until such time that the system is changed in keeping with the aboriginal customs and traditions, will the legal system become a 'just' system (Blood Tribe Chief & Council, 1990).

For many aboriginal cultures, the primary goal of the concept of justice was to mediate the case to everyone's satisfaction. Sawatsky (1993) offers an excellent overview of an aboriginal and European paradigm for criminal justice. The adversarial, retributive model of criminal justice is not an adequate response to the problem of crime. For one, it does not meet the needs of either the victim or the offender. Victims need to meet the offender face-to-face, receive personal restitution and be directly involved in a fair settlement. Likewise, offenders must meet the victim face-to-face and understand the consequences of their actions. They must be held accountable and take direct responsibility by repairing the damages and restoring harmony in

the community. The experience of punishment and imprisonment damages the human spirit and usually encourages further harmful behavior. Although individual needs and responsibilities are addressed, traditional dispute mechanisms focus upon sustaining the health of the community rather than with a preoccuption with the offender.

To further illustrate the world view of two very different perceptions of justice, Sawatsky's (1993, p.92) outline of paradigms, is provided. It should be noted, however, that use of Sawatsky's paradigm is for illustration purposes only. An obvious weakness of the paradigm is it's failure to recognize cultural diversity among First Nation's people.

European and Aboriginal Paradigms for Criminal Justice

	European/Retributive	**Aboriginal**
1.	Crime defined as violation of the state	No word for crime but recognition of injury, harm, conflicts and disputes
2.	Focus on establishing blame, guilt, on the past (did he/she do it?)	Focus on identifying the conflict, on establishing account-ability, on the current situation (what can we do?)
3.	Adversarial relation-ships and process are normative	Consensus of elders/ chiefs to advise on steps to take towards establishing harmony
4.	Imposition of pain to punish and deter/ prevent	Holding parties in conflict accountable to each other in context of family, community and Mother Earth

5.	Justice defined by intent and process, right rules	Justice defined by social harmony and needs being met, judged according to community solidarity and survival
6.	Interpersonal, conflictual nature of crime obscured, repressed: conflict seen as individual vs. state	Interpersonal conflict acknowledged in the context of responsibility to family, community and Mother Earth
7.	One social injury replaced by another	Focus on repair of social injury and restoration of social equilibrium and healing
8.	Community on sideline, represented abstractly by state	Community as facilitator, role of the elder respected
9.	Encouragement of competitive, individualistic values	Encouragement of spirituality, self-esteem and collective identity
10.	Action directed from state to offender: -victim ignored -offender passive	Recognition of victim's needs and offender accountability but in the context of wisdom and insight exercised by elders
11.	Offender accountability defined as taking punishment	Offender accountability defined as willingness to take steps to restore peace and harmony with self, victim, families, community and the Great Spirit
12.	Offence defined in purely legal terms, devoid of moral, social, economical or political dimensions	Offence understood in whole context -- morally, socially, economically, politically and in relation to the land
13.	"Debt" owed to state and society in abstract	Offender is held accountable to the victim, victim's family and community

14.	No encouragement or opportunity to express remorse or forgiveness	Encouragement for apology, forgiveness and healing with a view to making peace
15.	Dependence upon proxy professionals	Direct involvement of participants to the dispute under guidance of elders

In spite of the fact that there have been substantial efforts to revamp the Western criminal justice system to ensure greater participation by the aboriginal community, this system is simply incompatable with the aboriginal worldview. In order for aboriginal communities to effectively deal with their problems, a judicial system must be implemented which reflects First Nations' customs and traditions in their development of a 'just' system. To date, the discussion about First Nation self government has focused primarily upon the legislative and executive branches of government. The entire notion of self government would be incomplete without the inclusion of a judicial branch.

Overview of Family Violence

In relation to family violence, statistics comparing the aboriginal and mainstream population are dismal. Estimates of wife assault in Canadian society in general are reported to be one in eight (B.C. Task Force, 1992). This same study reported that 62 percent of women murdered was a result of wife assault. A recent report from the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba found that one in three aboriginal women are victims of wife assault (Manitoba, 1991). In an Ontario study of family violence (Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989), it was revealed that,

> .....80% of the (104) respondents indicated that they had personally experienced family violence....
> 89% of the respondents indicated that they felt that mental and emotional abuse was a feature of family violence; 87% indicated that physical abuse was feature; and 57% suggested that sexual abuse was a feature of family violence in aboriginal communities (p. 18-19).

Of the Treaty 7 region, three studies have been conducted in the area of family violence and wife assault. The Blood Tribe Family Violence Study (Armstrong-Esther, et. al., 1991) reported the following statistics:

1. That 58 percent of respondents have experienced physical abuse at one time or another in their lifetime.

2. There are no significant differences between the responses of women and men to the question of whether they had ever been physically abused (however, they add that victimizers of men among the Blood Tribe were typically other men).

3. Whereas there was a frequently sharp difference of opinion between men and women concerning whether they themselves were victims of emotional abuse, there was close male/female agreement over the frequency of emotional abuse faced by other family members. While women tended to identify their male partners, men identified a wider range of individuals (such as other men).

4. Of the female respondents, 13 percent claimed to have been sexually abused by a member of their family at some time in their lives. This figure is lower than the general Canadian figure of 25 percent.

5. Of all respondents, 38 percent claimed that at one time or another, they had considered suicide as a solution to their personal problems.

In their report, Family Violence and the Impact upon the Peigan Community, the Peigan Nation (Grier, 1991) reported the following:

1. Of the 18 agencies and departments interviewed, 61 percent reported that their employees were directly affected by family violence. Further, 38 percent reported that family violence had an impact upon absenteeism, while 28 percent reported other effects on work performance such as job attendance and concentration on duties.

2. In relation to elder abuse, 65 percent of the elders interviewed cited awareness of mental/psychological abuse. However, the study did not clarify whether this was awareness of elders being abused, or others.

Lastly, in a native urban study conducted on women in Lethbridge (Bastien, Bastien, Eastman, & Wierzba, 1990), they reported that 91 percent identified having personally experienced family violence, ranging from psychological abuse (88%) and physical abuse (64%); to being touched against their will or having sex forced on them by their partners (16%). Further, 75 percent reported being targets of violence in their homes, as children. In their most current or recent relationships with men, 67 percent reported that violence was prevalent.

Defining the Parameters of Native Family Violence

As noted previously, there exists much inconsistency in the types of services and programs offered in response to family violence. Further, this inconsistency appears to stem from the conflicting theories on the underlying causal factors and parameters of family violence.

When defining the parameters of family violence, some studies appear to isolate family violence to that of wife assault and sometimes child or elder abuse (Bastien, Bastien, Eastman & Wierzba, 1990; Courtrille, 1991; Ontario Native Women's

Association, 1989; Grier, 1987), while others broaden their definition to include concepts such as suicide, alcohol/substance abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or spiritual abuse (B.C. Task Force, 1992; Frank, 1992; Graveline, 1986; Twin, 1992; Whipp, 1985).

Frank (1992) acknowledges this same problem and suggests that definitions be developed by "...gathering information from individual experiences" (p. 5). The concept of having the individual define the problem is a relatively unique one and, surprisingly, one that has received little attention. Most research on family violence or wife assault utilizes western definitions to guide the research. That is, of the research that includes the original questionnaire or survey in their reports, they either do not explore the personal definition or they define it for the individual (Armstrong-Esther, et. al., 1991; Bastien, Bastien, Eastman & Wierzba, 1990; Graveline, 1986; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989).

The difficulty reflected in defining family violence may stem from a number of factors. For instance, conceptualization and analysis of family violence, as well as development of services, commenced in the late sixties and early seventies (B.C. Task Force, 1992). However, most of this research was conducted in majority society. Research did not materialize within native communities until the eighties and nineties. As a result, very little research exists, particularly by native people themselves, regarding native family violence. Because research was initiated in the dominant society, much of the theoretical constructs have been applied to aboriginal peoples.

Maracle (1993) cautions against the "pan-Indian" approach, which is basically the application of western theoretical constructs, adding that the aboriginal people of Ontario,

> ....define family violence as a consequence of colonization, forced assimilation, and cultural genocide, - learned negative, cumulative, multigenerational actions, values, beliefs, attitudes and behavioural patterns practised by one or more people that weaken or destroy the harmony or well-being of an aboriginal individual, family, extended family, community or Nation (Maracle, 1993, p.1).

Dr. Lundy, a Sioux who specializes in working with Native men and domestic violence in Minneapolis, noted in his presentation at the 1987 Annual Conference for the Canadian Psychiatric Association, that there appears to be a difference between native and non-native men and women, in respect to power differentiation:

> In the majority society it is evidenced to me that white men have much more access to power, resources and control, than white women...A few years ago people would argue with that and in the Indian world...it is not that simple. What I mean by that is that most of the violence between couples in the native world, in Minnesota at least, is still from men to women, but it seems to come from different places, it doesn't have the same purposefulness or meaning behind it (Lundy in Brant, 1987, p. 27).

He adds that many more Indian women than men are employed, therefore having more financial resources than Indian men; positions of political power appear to be shared, if not dominated by women; and most of the social service programs are administered by women. This is true for both urban and tribal environments.

> In the majority culture differences between men and women have been judged to be different in importance. That is foreign to this land, it is a new, strange and somewhat damaging concept. In our traditions women's and men's roles are equal and valuable and crucial and there is not judgement about which one is more important (Lundy in Brant & Brant, 1987, p.30).

Failure to understand family violence from a culturally holistic perspective is yet another problem evidenced in non-native research, leading to a preoccupation with the "individual" as victim, versus the "community" in need of healing. This cultural misunderstanding is further exemplified when comparing philosophies of the women's movement. The western model is a movement against patriarchy and male-dominated traditions. In this movement, women want to redefine their roles such that there is a more equitable relationship between the sexes and power is shared. In indigenous cultures, native women are struggling for survival. As Kaye (1990) states, "Native women don't need to be liberated. We're already free" (p. 13). This struggle for survival is not a secret in Canada. While there are varying points of views among women and First Nations on these issues, much research exists which points to the appalling conditions aboriginal people must endure in a relatively affluent industrialized country. For instance, in their presentation to the Canadian Public Health Association's 81st Annual Conference, McBride and Bobet (1990) report that infant mortality rates are still very high -- almost double the Canadian rate. Further, that stillbirth rates have not decreased over the past 10 years. They add the following points:

1. Up to age 65, Indian women are about four times more likely than Canadian women to die from accidents or violence.

2. Around 1981, diseases of the circulatory system replaced accidents and violence as the most frequent cause of death.

3. Some studies of Indian communities have found links between the incidents of respiratory diseases, as well as infectious diseases, and housing conditions such as central heating, running water and crowding.

4. Less than one-quarter of Indian women on-reserve are employed compared to one-half of all Canadian women. Further, Indian women are amongst the lowest bracket of individual incomes in Canada: $8,800 in 1985 compared to 12,600 for Canadian women.

Graveline (1986) points out another factor which may be contributing to the problem of defining the parameters of family violence. An overwhelming number of studies have been conducted in native communities, past and present, by urban non-native researchers. The majority of these researchers have their own personal agenda, with very little commitment to advancing beyond data collection and understanding the status quo. They do not have a vested interest in contributing to the aboriginal community in the same sense as does an aboriginal researcher conducting similar research. Much of the research is empirical and thereby fails to understand the nature or context of the aboriginal experience. Thus, these experiences become embedded in western science, which historically, has roots in scientific racism (Colorado & Collins, 1987). In her essay on "Violence and the American Indian Women", Paula Allen Gunn (1986) voices the reluctance in writing about violence:

> ....writing about violence against Indian women by Indian men is frightening and dangerous to Indian people; it is dangerous to say anything that can be used to perpetuate negative beliefs (p. 6).

Violence certainly exists within aboriginal and urban communities; however, in which context does it exist? The answer is obvious. First Nations must have the freedom to develop ethical and research standards for their communities be it for their own membership conducting research, or "outsiders."

Because few culturally-oriented theories exist, people are compelled to adopt western theories of analysis. However, more

recent studies, particularly those that are conducted by, or in conjunction with, native people, are reflecting a more consistent form of analysis--that of the colonial model.

Overview of Preventive/Interventive Strategies

The literature highlights a number of cultural considerations in treatment and prevention strategies in relation to family violence. While some studies note the lack of resources, or the limited applicability of existing resources, such as in Northern Alberta (Twin, 1992) and in Northern Manitoba (Graveline, 1986) it appears that for the most part, people are aware of family violence and have, in many cases, developed various levels of services.

The rejection of western philosophies is illustrated in strong statements regarding the need for holistic or community-based solutions (Cariboo Tribal Council, 1990; Frank, 1992; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989; Twin, 1992). This point was reinforced when research began to explore resources that people utilize, in the absence of formal services. For example, it has been determined that informal, or natural resources, such as the use of community leaders/healers, spiritual leaders, elders, and the like, are accessed first and foremost (Cariboo Tribal Council, 1990) and that these services are far more effective (Canadian Psychiatric Association, 1978).

> ...what was most striking about these responses was that they indicated reliance on Native and other informal sources of help, rather than an a comprehensive network of professional sources of support. The two most recently used sources of advice, counselling or therapy, included Native Elders and the sweat lodge, but more than a quarter of the responses also received help and support from other Natives and traditional medicine persons (Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991, p. 180).

As mentioned previously, many studies point out that family violence cannot be addressed in isolation, but need a holistic perspective. That is, family violence needs to be addressed in context of the whole picture, in conjunction with alcohol/substance abuse, unemployment, suicide, etc. From this perspective, it is understandable why so many communities tend to shy away from the western formal approach. The western approach has been identified as inappropriate to the aboriginal situation for a variety of reasons. The exclusion of men as being part of the solution is one factor (Focus, 1992; Maracle, 1993; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989). Another factor is the preoccupation with the individual versus collective (or community) experience (Frank, 1992; Kilgannon, 1989; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989; Twin, 1992).

> Programs should be directed not only at the abused spouse/partner but the abuser, children, and relatives. Prevention policy should also be developed in such a way extending beyond the actual family situation, to bring about new life skills (Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989, p. 63).

Majority society further conflicts with native philosophy through concepts of justice and punishment. Tribal concepts of justice are often conciliatory versus adversarial, grounded in restitutive principles versus retribution (Nuttall & Light, 1985). Sentencing offenders is not always desirable because it is based upon punishment and the separation of families. Treatment is a low priority (Supernault, 1993; Twin, 1992). However, these same studies recommend a jail sentence with mandatory treatment and support from extended family members.

In respect to types of services and needs that were identified in the research, there is much variation. Some communities identified a need for more information on family violence (Graveline, 1986) as well as crisis centres, family counselling and

support services (Armstrong-Esther, 1991; Cariboo Tribal Council, 1991; Courtrille, 1991; Graveline, 1986). Supernault (1993) discusses an innovative program offered at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre where they combine traditional spiritual healing with western psychotherapy, "sweetgrass, smudge ceremonies, sweatlodges, and vision quests are combined with an entire family treatment approach" (p. 36).

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 55 years, with 85 percent falling between 18 and 45 years of age. While 61.7 percent has less than a grade 12 education, 40 percent ranged from having completed grade 12 to having a postgraduate degree.

Forty-two percent of both male and female respondents were married or cohabiting, while 58 percent reported being single, widowed or divorced. Thirty percent rated themselves as single parents. The number of children that respondents have fell between a range from none to over five. Within this range, 8.0 percent reported being childless; 57.4 percent have one or two; and, 43.0 percent reported having three to five children. Seventeen percent of those with children have three children under the age of 10 years, while 44.7 percent have one or two children under the age of 10 years.

To summarize, the majority of the sample fall between the ages 18 and 45 years, with half being male; half, female. There is an equal number of married and single male respondents than there are female respondents. Slightly more than 60 percent reported having less than a grade 12 education.

Ninety-one percent of all respondents have children, although approximately 25 percent do not live with their children. Roughly half report a maximum monthly income of $1500.00. The majority of respondents are employed as labourers, in the human service industry, or are students.

5.2 FAMILY VIOLENCE: DEFINITIONS, EXPERIENCES & CAUSES.

Definitions

Examining family violence from the aboriginal experience was accomplished by having the respondents identify what family violence meant to them as well as their personal experiences and beliefs.

Female respondents identified a large spectrum of abuse under the umbrella of family violence:

Physical abuse	Psychological abuse
Sexual abuse	Child abuse
Emotional abuse	Elder abuse
Verbal abuse	Parental abuse
Mental abuse	Financial abuse
Wife abuse	Abandonment
Husband abuse	Community abuse
Sibling abuse	Spiritual abuse
Suicide	

For the most part, these definitions are consistent with those of majority society. For example, one woman describes the different types of family violence:

> There's the physical, where you get beat up. The mental abuse, where they call you down, you're nothing; you can't do nothing, you can't be nothing. The financial abuse where they just allow you so much and have to spend it. Sexual abuse having to give in to sex without really wanting it.

Similarly, another woman describes her memories as a child and the impact of spousal abuse:

> I was raised in a dysfunctional environment. My Dad and Mom were alcoholics. As a child I saw my Dad beat up my Mom and that's a very very traumatic experience for a child. I used to hide under the bed. As a child, it affects your adulthood.

Yet another woman reflects back on her teen years, recalling her first experience with physical abuse by a partner:

> ...I used to have black eyes. I even have scars. He stabbed me with a pencil while we were in class, in high school. He stabbed me with a nail. This happened in class. He would tease me and pinch my arms. All that time I didn't know it was abuse, I thought it was...I was crazy...I thought it was love. Couldn't even talk to my cousins.

In relation to men and their definitions/experiences of family violence, their responses were similar to those made by women. As described by three male respondents:

> Family violence happens within the family and it can happen between the spouses or it can happen with the children. Abusive situations regarding the children. It may mean a man beating up on the wife or the husband beating up on the children.
>
> I think there's various stages, for example, elder abuse, physical abuse, mental abuse, sexual abuse,and I think all those go under family violence.
>
> There's spiritual violence, emotional violence, parental violence, mental, physical violence. I've experienced them all.

Although most male and female respondents refer to men as being the perpetrators of violence, they also discuss the woman as perpetrator:

> I seen my Dad strike my Mom when I was a kid. I was only nine or ten years old. They were drunk. After that they broke up for a while. My Dad pulled himself together. We started talking and my Mom and Dad got together after that. He never hit her. They always drank and it was always my Mom that was hitting my Dad. You know, my Mom would slap my Dad and my Dad would cry. (male respondent)

> Growing up I've experienced family violence when I lived with this one aunt and uncle. They were good providers. They worked all week, but every weekend it seemed like there was a party at our house, and of course, when they drank, then they'd fight. What I've seen with my aunt and uncle, was my aunt was the abuser. She was the one that was mean to my uncle and the police were never called. They certainly received scars and stuff like that, from the fighting that went on. (female respondent)

While gender differences do not appear to be a factor in defining family violence, there does appear to be a cultural difference which is specific to the aboriginal experience. 'Spiritual violence' is often included in definitions of family violence, by both men and women, and is described by the following male respondent:

> Spiritual violence is related to something like self-esteem, where your spirit dies. Part of me has died through the years, I've never realized it. Not really died, but slowly dying. Spiritual violence to me means people using medicine as a tool of gaining something or getting back at somebody.

Another variation which appears specific to the aboriginal experience is identified as 'community abuse,' as described in the following quote:

> ...my children were getting abused from the community and I didn't realize this but they were being named white trash, because their grandmother was white, you know. (female respondent)

Personal Experiences

Once respondents identified the various types of family violence, they were then asked which types of family violence they had personally experienced. The focus of the section was simply to determine if respondents had indeed experienced any type of family violence in their lifetime, in order to clarify their understanding of family violence. An interesting number of responses were given, illustrated in Table 1.1. In some cases respondents reported having experienced more than one type of family violence (i.e., physical and emotional abuse). It should be noted that in many cases, respondents did not clarify whether they had experienced family violence as victims, perpetrators or witnesses. Approximately 80 percent of respondents reported having personally experienced family violence at some point in their lifetime. However, because 17 percent chose not to respond, this figure is not accurate.

Table 1.1
Personal Experiences

	No. responses (%)		
Type of abuse	M	F	T
Physical	45.0	72.2	57.9
Mental/ psychological	20.0	44.4	31.6
Emotional	20.0	22.4	21.0
Verbal	15.0	16.7	15.8
Spiritual	15.0	5.5	10.5
Financial	-	16.7	7.9
Sibling (male)	5.0	16.7	10.5
Sexual	-	11.1	5.3
Parent (by child)	-	5.5	2.6
No Response	13.0	21.7	17.4

When male and female responses are collapsed, the predominant forms of family violence are physical, mental and emotional. The remainder of responses are distributed among other forms of family violence such as spiritual and parental abuse.

Childhood Exposure to Family Violence

Table 1.2 illustrates the various responses given for exposure to family violence as a child. Exposure to spousal abuse includes having been exposed to family violence between parents, extended family members and siblings who have partners. Sibling abuse has been entered as a separate category and is defined as abuse inflicted by another sibling. The various other forms of abuse identified by respondents specifically refer to exposure to abuse as a child.

Table 1.2
Exposure As Child

	Responses (%)		
Type	M	F	T
Yes	31.6	42.1	36.8
Physical	22.2	10.5	15.8
Sexual	-	15.8	7.9
Sibling	5.3	10.5	7.9
Mental	10.5	-	5.3
Verbal	5.3	5.3	5.3
Emotional	-	5.3	2.6
Exposure to spousal abuse	47.4	57.9	52.6
No exposure	30.8	30.8	21.0

Approximately 79 percent of all respondents had been exposed to family violence in their homes, as children. Of this population, 36.8 percent (31.6% male; 42.1% female) did not distinguish the types of family violence. Approximately 52.6 percent specifically named spousal abuse between parents, as being the primary type of abuse exposed to, as children. The remainder of responses were specifically identified as being exposed to; physical, sexual, sibling (by another sibling), mental, verbal, and lastly, emotional. However, respondents did not clarify the nature of exposure (i.e., as victims, perpetrators or witnesses). The issue explored here was one of *exposure to abuse as a child*, and not an issue of *context*, which would require a new research question.

Causal Factors of Family Violence

Respondents were asked what they thought were the overall causal factors of family violence (versus precipitating factors for individual experiences). While approximately 20 percent either did not respond or understand, 80 percent identified a variety of causal factors. Table 1.3 itemizes the frequencies by which respondents cited various causes, with residential school, alcohol and loss of culture/values, together accounting for 61 percent of total responses. The remaining 39 percent of responses is assigned to stress, jealousy, loss of family structure, male dominance, and lastly, unemployment.

Table 1.3
Causal Factors

Factors	Responses (%)
Residential school	22.2
Alcohol	22.2
Loss of culture	16.7
Child welfare	11.1
Clash of cultures	11.1
Stress	8.3
Jealousy	8.3
Loss of family structure	8.3
Male dominance	5.5
Unemployment	5.5
No response	21.7

Interestingly, when all causal factors are divided into two categories, noncultural and cultural phenomena, a different picture emerges. Table 1.4 identifies that roughly 70 percent of the total responses identify culturally-related phenomena as being the root of family violence. Of the total responses, 50 percent identify other factors such as alcohol, stress, male dominance, unemployment and jealousy, as being the primary causes of family violence. However, it could be argued that alcohol and unemployment be included in "cultural factors," given that they were foreign to aboriginal people, prior to non-native contact. Inclusion of alcohol and unemployment would increase the "cultural factor" to 97.1 percent of all responses.

Table 1.4
Causal factors by culture

	No. responses (%)
Cultural factors	
Residential school	22.2
Loss of culture/values	16.7
Child welfare	11.1
Clash of two cultures	11.1
Loss of family structure	8.3
Noncultural factors	
Alcohol	22.2
Male dominance	8.3
Jealousy	8.3
Stress	5.5
Unemployment	5.5

When respondents discussed factors of a cultural nature, it often related to the colonization process where certain aspects of culture were undermined:

> I would say like from looking at my parents, they talked a lot about those boarding schools and what they've gone through, how those Catholic people would take the kids away and they wouldn't be with their parents. I would say that and not having been employed, being on welfare, I would say that would cause a lot of family violence. (male respondent)

> It's an absence of values. Before the values were so strong, so stringent that to step over those boundaries would mean severe, maybe ostracization or the family would do something. Because the values were so strong then, individuals would have to think quite hardly before they did something. Because they had so much strength and spirited value that such thoughts never entered their mind. But now there are so many things that are eroding our culture. (male respondent)

> I guess in a way I blame the boarding schools because we didn't have that daily interaction like how to solve your problems to deal with stress and whatever. That was all taken away from you. It was outlawed to go to Sundance. We were brought up going to Sundances and Raindances and then we weren't allowed to do that and as a result we lost some of that. We lost our Cree language because of the boarding schools, we weren't allowed to talk our language. We also lost some of that family structure...I'm the second generation to go to boarding school. (female respondent)

The impact of residential schools upon three generations is revealed in the following quotes:

> One good example is my grandpa. His education was up to grade two, I think. I didn't hear it exactly from him, but from what my father tells me, there was a lot of abuse going on. A lot of namecalling, a lot of put-downs with the priest towards the kids. For every little thing they got the whip. My grandpa grew up with that and he learned that, then he used it on his kids. Then my father used it on us. If I don't try to do something about it, I'm going to use it on my kids. So that's the pattern, where we picked it up from, the boarding school. (male respondent)

> My mother told me that when she was placed in a boarding school her parents had no control over her anymore. It was left in the hands of the nuns and there she experienced violence, physical abuse by the nuns; and so was my uncles and aunts. They all experienced it. So when they came home, my grandparents didn't know that this was going on, but apparently, my grandmother experienced it when she was

> placed at a young age at boarding school and apparently she was the one who was physically abusing her kids - like my mom, aunts and uncles. My grandmother was the one who was abusing her children and my mom was so glad to get away from grandmother but when she got to the boarding school, it was happening there. So she came home and she was forced to finally have a family. (female respondent)

Causes of Cultural Change

Respondents were asked to address the issue of cultural change in their communities and to what they attributed these changes. Approximately 20 percent of all respondents did not respond; however, an overwhelming majority of respondents attributed change to some aspect of culture. The impact of westernization upon tribal communities was a significant focus. Table 1.5 illustrates this finding.

TABLE 1.5
Cultural Change

Factors	Number of Responses (%)
Loss of traditions	21.6
Boarding school	18.9
Influx of Westerners	16.2
Loss of language	13.5
Alcohol	8.1
Loss of Elder	8.1
Child welfare	8.1
Indian religion outlawed	5.4
Money	2.7
No response	20.9

With the exception of alcohol and money (together accounting for 10.8% of responses), impact of western influence accounts for 91.8 percent of the total responses. This impact is further exemplified in the following quotes:

> It seems like it's more like me, myself, the environment. You don't share with each other. You survive for yourself. You don't share or help people anymore. Not like before. Everything was shared. It's like the "I" generation and you don't care about the next person. So I think that's all due to residential school and getting brainwashed. Like two generations before me. They lacked nurturing and never nurtured their children.

> I think it was more progressive than all at once. First of all, our family structure started to fall apart. That happened with the white man taking the kids away from the parents. Before that came along, what we had, we had everyone looking out for the kids, and trying to give them a safe environment. Grandparents had a lot of patience and understanding where they didn't have to resort to physical violence to keep them in line or in check. Basically, from the other elders I know of, what they told me was basically, I have my own circle. Like everything I do comes back to me. If it's negative or hurtful, it's coming back to me. Maybe I should take a look at myself and see what I'm doing cause everything comes back to us. (male respondent)

> A lot of people back then were sort of brainwashed into believing the white man's way of life. The old people say that they say we were always praying to the devil and things like that; that our way wasn't right. That their way was the right way. (male respondent)

A sense of hopelessness and loss is reflected in some of the statements made by male respondents:

> Well, in the past, in the old days, people were really into the people, or people from other tribes. There was a stronger bond. There was more commitment; let's say something like the sundance or powwows. As for the modern participation, it isn't there as much as it was in the past. People are less interested. People have more or less adopted the whiteman's way of doing things. The whiteman has more or less taken over.

> My personal opinion is we have to learn to live like white people to survive in this world and to do that it's our culture that's suffering because it gets left behind. I would think that's why our culture has changed so much.

Coupled with this erosion of values and sense of despair is another form of loss -- that of the male role in contemporary culture:

> Since I've been here, my role has been the breadwinner. I worked and he didn't have a job. I went to school, he didn't go to school. There was a lot of pressure on me. He never supported me through my job -- you know, moral support. He was always trying to stop me from going to work. In my community, the women have the jobs. Men are unemployed. So it's us women who are the breadwinners. That role has changed. (female respondent)

> I think culture, I guess it got lost between two cultures. Before, the man use to always work to support his family, like hunting and all that stuff. Then money came and then, all of a sudden, we just had lots of money and everybody got use to spending money and forgot how to work. After the money was gone, still the people didn't know what to do or get the money. All they were used to was getting handouts and they didn't know where to start,

> to work. They had to be taught again and they're lost right there. That's when they get real frustrated and start drinking and can't do anything. They start drinking and they start taking it out on their families, wife and kids. (female respondent)

> Well, I guess everything changes, like a new era, all the modern technology, computers and all that. So they're learning to cope with all these from when they use to live you know, the traditional way...hunting, gathering and stuff like that. They have to change their lives, like working, getting an education; so they're learning a new way. (female respondent)

Resistance to Seeking Help

Respondents were asked to comment on what they thought prevented people from seeking help for family violence. Almost half of all responses (45.2) were attributed to shame. Both male and female respondents believe that feelings of shame is a predominant factor preventing people from seeking help for family violence.

While community differences did not appear significant, gender differences were apparent (see Table 1.6.)

Table 1.6
Factors Preventing Help

	No. responses (%)		
Factors	M	F	T
Shame	20.0	50.0	45.2
Fear	10.0	36.4	23.8
Pride	25.0	-	11.9
Denial	15.0	9.1	11.9
Lack of resources	10.0	13.6	9.5
Ignorance	5.0	9.1	7.1
Male dominance	5.0	4.5	4.8
Guilt	10.0	-	4.8
Apathy	5.0	-	2.4

Female respondents named shame and fear (86.4%) to be the predominant factors preventing someone from seeking help:

> Shame. Shame is the biggest fear; being scared. Those two.

> I think it may be shame. A lot of women feel ashamed and that's why they don't go for help. I know I was. I was ashamed. I was scared and embarrassed from the community. I was scared that if I separated from my daughter's Dad, that people were going to talk about me or people were going to say that I wasn't a good enough wife, that I caused the break up. I think that from the community, I thought too much of them, instead of myself.

On the other hand, the predominant responses from male respondents (60%) were noted to be; shame, pride and denial:

> Them feeling shame, guilt. It depends on whatever problem they are facing. I think those would be one of the two biggest things. Having to deal with that problem.

> The fear of what they really have to face up to amongst themselves.

> Being afraid to admit to their actions, not wanting to own up to certain...not being able to let go of their pride.

Interestingly, a couple of respondents believed that male dominance was the key factor in preventing women from seeking help:

> I think one of the biggest reasons would probably be fear from the person, the abuser. For example, the lady that I was talking about previously, she told she was scared to go to the cops because next time her husband would really work her over. So she had this fear all the time. She never told the cops. She only took off because of fear of her husband. (male respondent)

> If you have a really dominant...someone in the family, to stop them from going. Making threats. Like a dominant spouse. (female respondent)

Other factors were cited, such as lack of resources and ignorance:

> Red tape. The limits that the government gives us to work on. Like we get so much, like a grant, to deal with , like as far as education goes, health goes. There's a limit as to how much you get per year. It's the same thing with people with social services, child welfare; they get limits. And when people are trying to get more than what they receive, they only get turned down. A lot of our people turn to alcohol because they don't get the real help that you get off the reserve. (female respondent)

> You need some kind of place for them where they can go to. They should have a place where they can sit around. Where they can go and talk to somebody. (male respondent)

> A lack of understanding and knowledge. They don't know about these things...lack of knowledge, I guess. (male respondent)

5.3 TRADITIONAL & NONTRADITIONAL RESOURCES

Traditional Resources

(a) Healing Circles

Of all tribal respondents, 37 percent actually attended a healing circle. This figure is divided amongst communities with Kainai citing the highest frequency (75%); followed by Siksika (62.5%); and lastly, by both Tsuu Tina and Stoney communities, at 42.8 percent each.

Kainai First Nation attendance rate was relatively high (75%), of which the majority were male. In fact, twice as many men than women have attended healing circles. There were also a number of favorable evaluations with regards to the effectiveness of healing circles for family violence:

> If the spouse was there to hear the wife's story, when she shares with the hurt that she has been experiencing maybe it will, maybe something will go through his head and he will know that he has been hurting his family by his actions. (female respondent)

> Because you really get down to the centre of the problem. For example, the one that I went to where the mother and daughter hated each other. They forgave each other for what they did in the past and I think from that experience as of today I see these two people, the mother and daughter, I think there is a bond there that really grew from that experience I seen. (male respondent)

Slightly less than half (42.8%) of Tsuu Tina First Nation respondents reported having attended a healing circle. As with Kainai tribal community, twice as many men (28.6%) than women (14.2%), reported attendance. All respondents identified positive feedback regarding the effectiveness of healing circles with respect to family violence; however, they also emphasized the individual's responsibility in the healing process:

> It depends on the individual. If he wants to get help, he has to change himself, it comes to that. (male respondent).

Less than half (42.8%) of Stoney First Nation respondents reported having attended a healing circle. Unlike Tsuu Tina and Kainai, female attendance was double that of male. Respondents of this community shared positive feedback in their evaluation of healing circles:

> It helps people to get closer to talk about things that are bothering them and things that happened to them a long time ago that they never let out. It bothers them inside, things that happened when they were small children. Some of those things are the reason that they are what they are today. They never talked about those stuff when they were small and growing up in residential school. These are what you talk about, what happens in a healing circle, where you want to talk about things. People start to understand and people start to listen to each other. (female respondent).

> I guess when you use sweetgrass it makes you more confident in yourself, even to talk. If you smoke sweetgrass and pray. With native people it's different. You have to work in the circle with the whole family -- the extended family. (female respondent)

> They get them to know more about their problems and kinds of problems they're having. Maybe some just need to be heard and supported. (male respondent)

Lastly, of the eight respondents interviewed from Siksika Nation, five (62.5%) reported having knowledge of healing circles, with 4 (50%) identifying actual attendance. There were no male respondents who identified attendance at a healing circle, although one male shared his knowledge of how effective they were:

> They say they're going to have a shelter and a healing circle every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Even an elder, talk to them and sit around together. Share what's happening when they were young. A lot of people try to bury stuff within them, or try to put it behind them. And maybe some, they just won't talk about it. Until they want to get drunk, then they let it all out.

As with all other tribal communities, Siksika Nation responses regarding effectiveness of healing circles were favorable:

> When you can't open up, it just comes out naturally, after you've been in a healing circle...knowing that you're not alone. (female respondent).
>
> You feel supported. I know that when I went to some of the healing circles, I walked away feeling more supported. You know you're not the only person going through this, or you're not crazy or whatever. When you're talking about family violence, you're talking about abuse. It's kind of awkward. In the norm of society you don't talk about it. But when I find I can talk about it with people who have been involved in the same struggles, it really helps. (female respondent)

b) Traditional Counselling

Respondents were asked to clarify the helping relationship by sharing their experiences when they access help. In this sense, counselling is used generically and not in relation to professional counselling.

When tribal respondents were analyzed for community differences, it was discovered that such differences did not exist. That is, responses varied with no relationship to community residency. However, when responses were categorized by gender, there were notable differences. Table 2.1 summarizes this relationship.

Table 2.1
Traditional Counselling

	No. responses (%)	
Type	M	F
Helper listens	8.3	81.8
Helper offers advice	83.8	18.0
Spiritual guidance	50.0	9.1
No response	20.0	26.7

Approximately 75 percent of tribal respondents shared their experiences regarding the helping relationship. The majority of female respondents stated that the helping relationship consisted primarily of active listening. In a few cases, female respondents felt that a variation of both listening and the offering of advice, was the focus:

> To listen and help you make decisions. Just to get the stress out of you in telling another person your problems...feels good instead of keeping it to yourself, holding it.

Only one female respondent identified provision of spiritual guidance as the foundation of the helping relationship:

> With the spiritual leader that I was seeing, he'd give me sweetgrass and he'd kind of cleanse me and talk to me and I have sage and sweetgrass that I use. I think that helps me a lot because when I smudge I feel good.

In respect to male respondents, the majority (83.8%) indicated the giving of advice or wisdom, as forming the basis of the helping relationship:

> For me, myself, I like speaking with older people because they've gone through most of the stuff I'm going through and their wisdom really helps out.
>
> They talk to me, show me different ways of handling my problems, instead of through violence. Talking it out, working it out, try not to go to the bottle all the time.
>
> Just by what they say, I'm inspired. I just don't go to anyone for help. If I feel that someone's advice or speech, or just their aura helps, I may go to them. But usually I'm inspired by the words that they say.

Other male respondents (50.0%) identified spiritual guidance as being the role of the helper:

> First off, they sit down and talk to me. He'll relate stories and maybe he'll pray for me. He'll tell me how I should feel, put me on the right path.
>
> Well, like I go to the elders and explain what's going on. They tell me their views and sort of guide me. They don't tell me what to do but sort of lead me in the right direction and pray for me.

The reluctance to discuss a problem, but at the same time receive help, is illustrated in this quote:

> Sometimes when I have a problem, I try to keep it to myself. I'll just mention something to some person but in a real abstract way. They'll give me an answer, maybe not a direct answer, but I'll kind of pick them, then I'll decide if I like that answer or not. If not, the heck with it, I'll go ask somebody else, and put it in a different way.

Unlike female respondents, male respondents identify that the helping relationship varies by the type of help you seek. For instance, as two respondents put it:

> It depends on which person you go for help. If you go to your counsellor, they'd help you out with advise. If you go to an elder, they can help you out with spiritual advice too.
>
> There's a lot of different ways, it depends on what I'm going in there for.

This distinction between "spiritual guidance" and "counselling" may explain why women rated so low where it applied to guidance or spirituality. Women may have interpreted "help" to mean in the "counselling" sense. On the other hand, men may be

more reluctant to discuss emotional issues, preferring to listen rather than talk.

(c) Access to Tribal Communities

Respondents were asked if they, or anybody they knew, had accessed other tribal communities for help. Of the 30 tribal respondents, 46.6 percent responded positively. Little variation exists among communities as members from all First Nations have accessed tribal communities other than their own. Gender variations are nonexistent as there are an equal number of male respondents (23.3%) as there are female respondents (23.3%).

While respondents identified accessing other tribal communities, 27 percent (8) specifically indicated that the purpose of this access was for spiritual guidance, and not necessarily for family violence:

> I went to go see this medicine man, in Siksika, and went to him, and we asked for help. He helped us. (male respondent)
>
> Yes, that's the spiritual leader that I was telling you about, he's a medicine man. (female respondent)
>
> I've heard of others who seek guidance and healing off the reserve. But I don't know of people going off the reserve for counselling. But I do know of people from off the reserve who seek counselling here. (male respondent)

(d) Traditional Healing

Respondents were asked to comment on the use of traditional methods of healing such as the sweatlodge, for family problems. Slightly more than half (54.3%) of the respondents gave favorable feedback. The remaining 45.6 percent either refrained from answering this question, or stated that they did not know.

Of notable significance was that 26 percent of respondents

qualified their answers with discussions surrounding the belief systems of others and the value of respect and noninterference. This point is poignantly summarized in the following quote:

> I wouldn't [*refer people to sweats or ceremonies*] because the beliefs on this reserve are many. There's the traditionalists who believe in sweatbaths and sundances and such. There's the christian type people who have not embraced native spiritualism and depending on who I approach, I basically know who's who. If I feel they will not be comfortable, I would not advise them to. However, I would suggest that they speak to a knowledgeable elder or if they are of the christian faith, I may recommend a notable member of their church or group. There are revivalist groups here. It all depends on their own spiritual beliefs. Native spirituality should not be imposed on people. Even elders say this. Native spirituality should not be preached upon people. People should feel the need to embrace it, that's why many elders don't preach the traditions. (male respondent) [italics mine]

Nontraditional Resources

(a) Tribal Agencies/Resources

Only 13.3 percent of tribal respondents indicated accessing formal tribal services for help with some form of family violence. Of these services, two were counselling facilities, one was a shelter for battered women and one was a facility dealing with alcohol services. The types of family violence addressed by respondents were divided equally between spousal abuse and child sexual abuse. All four respondents were female, although one respondent noted that both she and her spouse attended counselling together. Each respondent offered favorable remarks regarding their experience with respective agencies and felt that the services were effective.

(b) Urban Agencies/Resources

Responses were categorized by those who resided in tribal communities and were accessing urban services, from those who

resided in urban centres, accessing services in that particular urban community.

Tribal respondents

Seventeen percent of tribal respondents sought services from an urban setting. Of these services, two were counselling facilities, two were shelters for battered women and one was a native alcohol service facility. With all but one exception, respondents identified access of services specifically for spousal abuse. In only one case did a female attend counselling with her partner. In one situation, the respondent identified utilizing the service for alcohol abuse rather than family violence, whereupon she learned about the cycle of violence, along with information on accessing healing circles.

In reference to services being both effective and positive, three (10%) respondents gave positive feedback. However, two respondents(6.6%) rated services as ineffective:

> In a white women's shelter the goals and expectations of the women are different from the native perspective. Like the first time I went to a women's shelter in the city, I was expected to do this and that, and I couldn't do this and that. It was hard to cope and I didn't know how to live in the city. I didn't know how to deal with this and that, so it was hard. (female respondent)

> Right from the start he was willing to help us, but later on he just sort of walked out. He just didn't want to work with us anymore. (female respondent)

Urban Respondents

Of the total number of respondents in urban communities, slightly less than half (37.5%) identified attending a service for family violence. The majority of these respondents were female

(62.5%), with only one (12.5%) being male. While the male respondent identified that he attended AADAC, for alcohol abuse, all female respondents noted access to services specifically for family violence. While all respondents reported that the services were effective and that they had positive experiences, twenty-five percent of respondents suggested more workers of Native ancestry:

> More native workers with degrees and less of White people doing our work. You know, directors, leaders for us where a native should be their own leader. (female respondent)

> Having a native shelter. A shelter for native women. (female respondent)

5.4 FAMILY STRESS

Respondents were asked a number of questions directly related to family stress, such as; how they defined and experienced family stress; how they responded to stress; whether they accessed formal or informal resources for problems in family stress; how their parents coped with stress; and lastly, how community events impacted upon family stress.

Definition of Family Stress

(a) Tribal respondents

Respondents provided a diversity of experiences that they considered stressful to their family (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1
Tribal Experiences

	No. responses (%)		
Experiences	M	F	T
Extended family	33.3	40.0	36.7
Marital problem	20.0	20.0	20.0
Death	20.0	13.3	16.7
Financial problems	33.3	-	16.7
Children	13.3	13.3	13.3
Unemployment	20.0	6.7	13.3
Workplace	13.3	6.7	10.0
Alcohol	6.7	13.3	10.0
Fighting/violence	6.7	13.3	10.0
Completing education	6.7	6.7	6.7
Single parenthood	-	6.7	3.3

Respondents did not identify a single source of stress; rather, the most often cited experiences were characterized by two to three sources of stress, such as that identified by the following respondents:

> Well, my spouse is probably the first part, but I don't have a spouse anymore. When I started school there was a lot of stress involved, trying to raise a family, plus having to deal with your spouse and then school. So that's the kind of stress I've had. (female respondent).

> I find, with family stress, the only time it comes around is with the loss of a loved one or also when, a lot of it has to do with money, financial...a lot of family stress has to do with financial. (male respondent)

For both male and female respondents, extended family is a great source of stress (36.7%), but more so for women. For male respondents, the two most frequently cited sources of stress are extended family and poverty/financial hardship. Female respondents identified extended family and marital problems as being the two greatest sources of stress on the family. When gender is collapsed, the greatest factors of family stress appear to be extended family, marital problems, death and financial difficulties (in descending order).

(b) Urban respondents

Both male and female urban respondents identify alcohol as being the predominant source of family stress (see Table 3.2) Marital problems fall second to alcohol, for both male and female respondents.

Table 3.2
Urban Experiences

	No. responses (%)		
Experiences	M	F	T
Alcohol	37.5	25.0	31.3
Marital problems	12.5	25.0	18.8
Financial problems	12.5	12.5	12.5
Education	12.5	-	6.3
Single parent	12.5	-	6.3
Incarceration	-	12.5	6.3

Response to Stress

Respondents were asked to comment on how they responded to stress, individually. As Table 3.3 points out, there was a high

variety of responses, with some interesting gender differences.

Table 3.3
Stress Response

	No. responses (%)	
Response	M	F
Talk with friends	13.0	35.0
Walk it out	26.1	15.0
Recreation/sports	4.3	25.0
Prayer	17.4	5.0
Discuss problem	21.7	5.0
Run away	4.3	10.0
Isolate self	8.7	5.0
Use of alcohol/drugs	13.0	-
Spiritual guidance	4.3	10.0
Write/journal	-	10.0
No response	-	13.0

For females, the two most frequently cited responses to stress were: talking it out with friends (29%); or, engaging in some type of recreational or leisure activity (21%). These two alone account for 50 percent of responses. The remaining 50 percent is dispersed among activities such as attending church or running away.

For male respondents, the three most frequently cited responses to family stress were: going for a walk (23.1%); discussing the stress within his family (19.2%); and lastly, engaging in prayer (15.4%), which together account for 57.7 percent of the total responses. It appears that while men prefer to be by themselves during stressful times (walking or praying), women prefer to be with others:

> I cope with [family stress] a number of ways. But it's mainly through prayer. Number one, I pray every day, in the morning and at night and I feel I'm a survivor. I've undergone a lot of conflicts and crises myself in my life. As early as 1984, I changed my whole life around. It's almost 10 years now and I attend sweatlodges, pipe ceremonies, sundances too; I guess for healing and for spiritual purposes. And through this it has helped me a lot. Of course there's bicycling, exercising and reading and all the other things that I do now and again to escape stressful situations but basically it's a lot of beliefs and prayer. (male respondent) [italics mine]

> Well, if I could I sometimes talk to someone about it. I try to release it somehow. Sometimes I write, just to release the stress or like, last year I was playing basketball and that did a lot of help for me. Sometimes, I just go hug a tree and squeeze it. (female respondent)

Coping Mechanisms

(a) External Resources

Tribal respondents were asked if they left their communities to attend resources in the city, or on another reserve. The majority of respondents (80%) stated that they did not leave their tribal communities for help, for this purpose (see Table 3.4.)

Table 3.4
External Resources (Tribal)

	No. responses (%)	
Resources	M	F
No	86.6	73.3
Other tribal community	6.7	6.7
City	6.7	13.2
Yes	-	6.7

Of the small number who have accessed external resources (20%), only one male and one female accessed another tribal community for help; two females and one male accessed an urban centre for help; and, one female respondent did not clarify whether the help she accessed was in the city, or in another tribal community.

Similarly, the majority of both male and female urban respondents (62.5%) did not seek help in the city, nor from a tribal community for family stress. In fact, only one male noted accessing a tribal community, other than his own, for services; two respondents identified receiving services from the city; two identified accessing their communities of origin for services; and one respondent did not clarify whether the service was in the city or a tribal community (see Table 3.5.)

Table 3.5
External Resources (Urban)

	No. responses (%)		
Resources	M	F	T
No	62.5	62.5	62.5
Tribal community	12.5	-	6.2
Home community	12.5	12.5	12.5
City	12.5	12.5	12.5
Yes	-	12.5	6.2

(b) Traditional Counselling

When asked if it would be helpful to see an elder or spiritual leader for help with family stress, a number of interesting responses were given. For the tribal population, the majority of male and female respondents (86.7%) found elders to be a strong resource (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6
Traditional Counselling

	No. responses (%)	
Tribal	M	F
Yes	100.0	73.3
No	-	26.7
NR	-	-
Urban		
Yes	62.5	87.5
No	25.0	
NR	12.5	12.5

Note. NR denotes No Response

While most preferred to seek counsel from an elder, a few accessed both traditional and nontraditional resources:

> I think I would go see, for myself, if there was stress in my family...sometimes I'd probably go speak to an elder and sometimes I'd go speak to a priest about it, just to let everything out and feel a lot lighter, I guess. (male respondent)

> Yes, an elder. I've been meaning to go talk to a priest or something like that. (male respondent)

Interestingly, while 100 percent of male tribal respondents gave positive feedback on the utilization of elders for family stress, 26.7 % of female respondents indicated accessing other resources. However, these same respondents identify a lack of understanding of the traditional role of the elder, primarily due to lack of exposure to elders as counsellors:

> Well, for me, I consider seeing a counsellor, someone that is professional, because for a priest, it would be more like religious, spiritual way. And whereas sometimes there's problems that I have, I'd rather talk to somebody that could be at fault too at times and I want to help myself. That's why I'd rather see a counsellor. I've never talked to an elder so I couldn't answer. (female respondent)

> The way it helped me, was that I had to go back to the happiest time of my life -- that was when I used to go to church, when I used to be with my family and community affairs. That's how I dealt with my stress, was in the open and I knew that my higher power was beside me. That's when I took control of my stress. I realized that I was not alone, that I didn't have to run to elders and didn't have to run to church, in which I was trying to do. I was trying to go to the Catholic Church for help, but they just told me that it was up to you, you're the only one who can do it, you're the mother and from then on I added my Lord's Prayer and that's when I took control of my stress. (female respondent)

> With me, I'm not really into native religion. I was baptized into Full Gospel church, our beliefs are different. I didn't grow up with that kind of environment. My grandparents are both Full Gospel preachers. They both preach in the church. I've never experienced face-painting or any medicine woman. I didn't ask for any help from them. (female respondent)

Seventy-five percent of respondents provided positive feedback regarding the utilization of elders; 12.5 percent did not know whether they would access this resource; and lastly, 12.5 percent would not access elders. The latter respondents (who were male) identified a preference for nontraditional forms of counselling:

> Well, my stress hasn't gone that far yet. But if it did, I would probably go to a priest.

> My family doesn't want to participate in stuff like that.

For those respondents who noted that they did not know whether they would seek an elder's counsel, it appears that they are isolated within the urban setting, coping with issues of family stress by themselves:

> I've never been to an elder or like, anybody to talk about my problems. The only time I talked about them was when I took up lifeskills, and my grandma. Those are about the only two sources that I've had. (female respondent)

> I don't know [*if I would go to an elder*] because I'm really new to all this Native stuff. I've been brought up in fosterhomes and cities all my life. I've gone to church and stuff like that. I don't know, most of the time I've dealt with it myself. So I wouldn't know if it would help or not. (male respondent) (italics mine)

Both tribal and urban respondents identify why elders are such a strong resource:

> I think it's [*helpful*] because when I went to the women's shelter in the city, I was very uncomfortable to be around, you know...I couldn't communicate with them like I do my own. (female tribal respondent) (italics mine)

> I've sat down with psychologists, psychiatrists, even priests. To me, they don't make sense. They want to put you down, keep you down, instead of helping you. For a native elder, you're allowed to say whatever you want to say. They'll give you the right answers, you know, guide you. So I prefer to talk to native elders. (male tribal respondent)

> I think it's a good idea because most of the elders that I know, back home and from what I hear from others, elders have been through family, grown up, they know exactly how to deal with it. I think they are more open-minded than as, say something like a social worker or counsellor. (male urban respondent)

> Seeing an elder would be helpful. When I see an elder it makes me feel good and somehow seems to help with the actual healing and how to deal with things. (female urban respondent)

By contrast, the slow erosion of this traditional form of counselling is illustrated in the following quotes:

> The elders that I knew as a young kid, and the elders I know of now, there's a major difference in there. The family structure we had before, it was a pretty good system. We had the parents in there, the grandparents and kids. The grandparents did most of the teaching and they had a lot more patience with the kids. The parents were out there trying to keep the whole family going. The grandparents basically helped as much as they could. But somewhere along the line we lost that. And you know, there's no elders we can go talk to . It seems like we're avoiding them. We're abusing them. We're just pushing them aside. But back in my situation, I was not allowed to talk to outside people. To share things with anybody. (male tribal respondents)

> I've heard a lot of bad things about elders but, I don't know. I went to my home reserve and spoke with an elder there. And all they said is to keep on the right path, and don't drink. I got a lot of positive things from him. (female urban respondent)

(c) Extended Family

In Plains Indian traditional culture, the family structure was based upon the extended family system (versus nuclear family), which was highly structured and complex in respect to roles and responsibilities. Concerning children, each member of the clan held a certain role in the care and upbringing of children, as well as maintaining community norms and providing support to other members in need.

In this section, respondents were asked whether or not they accessed extended family members as a means of support or help.

For tribal communities, approximately half of all respondents (56.7%) provided positive experiences regarding the access of extended family for support. Slightly less than half (43.3%) of tribal respondents identified a lack of utilization of family support. Regarding gender differences, men (66.7%) access family support more frequently than women (46.7%).

For the urban respondents, a small number noted accessing family support, while 68.8 percent noted having no contact with extended family for the purpose of support (see Table 3.7.)

Table 3.7
Family Support

	Tribal		Urban	
Responses	M	F	M	F
Yes	66.7	46.7	25.0	37.5
No	33.3	53.3	75.0	62.5

(d) Parental Response to Stress

Respondents were asked to identify how their parents dealt with stress. Approximately twenty-two percent of the respondents refrained from commenting; either they did not know how their parents dealt with stress, or they stated that their parents, "didn't deal with it." Of the male and female respondents who provided details, use of alcohol was the most frequently cited method (34.7%) used by parents when dealing with stress. When responses were classified by 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' methods of dealing with stress, it becomes apparent that, while 21.7 percent of respondents identified healthy parental methods, the majority of respondents (56.5%) reported unhealthy methods of coping with stress (see Table 3.8.)

Table 3.8
Parental Response

	No. responses (%)		
Unhealthy responses	M	F	T
Alcohol	44.4	44.4	44.4
Arguing/violence	16.7	16.7	16.7
Running away	-	5.6	2.8
Kept things inside	11.1	5.6	8.3
Healthy responses			
Talked it out	11.1	16.7	13.9
Sought help	16.7	5.6	11.1
Prayer	-	5.6	2.8
No response	21.7	21.7	21.7

(e) Impact of Community Events

Respondents were asked to comment on the impact of community events on their family in regard to causing stress. While there was a wide range of responses (see Table 3.9), little variation existed from one community to another. A significant number of people (34.8%) could not think of any community events that had a stressful impact upon their family. However, the three most frequent cited responses was that for death (15.3%), gossip (8.7%) and alcohol abuse (8.4%), together accounting for 32.7 percent of responses.

Table 3.9
Impact of Community Events

Event	Responses (%)
Death	23.3
Gossip	13.3
Alcohol	13.3
Politics	10.0
Violence	10.0
Racism (urban)	6.7
Celebrations	6.7
Community rejection (tribal)	6.7
Workplace nepotism	3.3
Poverty	3.3
In-laws	3.3
No response	34.8

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS BY RESPONDENTS

Knowledge of Community Workshops

Respondents were asked if they were aware of any workshops held in their community on family violence. While 34.8 percent of all respondents identified that they were aware of workshops, 65.2 percent noted that they were not aware of any workshops held in their communities. Table 4.1 provides a summary of responses, for each community.

Table 4.1
Knowledge of Workshops

	No. responses (%)	
Communities	Yes	No
Kainai	25.0	75.0
Tsuu Tina	14.3	85.7
Stoney	57.1	42.9
Siksika	37.5	62.5
Urban Centres	37.5	62.5
Total responses	37.5	62.2

Respondent Recommendations

Respondents were asked to comment on what more their respective communities could do to stop family violence. The following Tables provide a number of recommendations, for respective communities.

Table 4.2 summarizes recommendations made by respective Treaty 7 communities, highlighting more common responses.

TABLE 4.2 COMMON COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS	Kainai	Stoney	Siksika	Tsuu Tina	Urban
More workshops on family violence (all areas)	*	*	•	*	•
•Greater resources (psychologists, counsellors/outreach workers)	•	•	•	•	•
•Increased community recreation	•		•	•	
•Support groups for couples	•	•	•		•
•Greater community awareness	•	•			•

Table 4.3 provides a summary of 'other' less common recommendations offered by respective communities.

TABLE 4.3 LESS COMMON COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

	"OTHER" COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS
Kainai	•More employment •Treatment facilities for couples
Stoney	•Support from Chief & Council
Siksika	•Groups for men •Support from Chief Council •Greater Elder involvement
Tsuu Tina	•Greater cultural activities
Urban	*Greater native services •Greater Elder involvement •Cultural functions/ceremonies

***Denotes highest response for that community**

PREVIOUS WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE

Respondents were given the opportunity of commenting on what they liked about family violence workshops that they have previously attended, as well as what they would change about the workshops. Approximately 40 percent of all respondents actually attended workshops on family violence.

The following quotes provide some insight as to what respondents found helpful in the workshops they attended:

> Well, it's changed me just by listening. I have learned a lot and today I have changed. If I hadn't gone to these kinds of workshops to help myself, I'd still be where I was before. So, it has helped me in a lot of ways. I liked it when my husband was there because he wasn't aware of this. (Kainai female respondent)

> Listening to other people--how others coped with that situation; other ways to cope with a situation. (urban female respondent)

> I liked how they explained the whole cycle of violence, what happens when tension is building, the honeymoon stage, cause you can see how it happens. I've been to several. The main topic was family violence but they broke it up to little workshops. So there was one workshop where they talked about the cycle of violence; in another they talked about sexuality. The other one they talked about was F.A.S. [*fetal alcohol syndrome*]. It was really good. I learned a lot. (Stoney female respondent)[italics mine]

> It opened my eyes on some of the things that I thought I was the only one going through this experience. It's everybody. It opened my eyes to what was really going on. So it really made me re-evaluate myself. (Siksika female respondent)

A small number of respondents further provided feedback on some areas they would change, in the workshops:

> From the workshop, I think I would change the christian spirituality. They didn't have what we were looking for. That was the feedback we got. (urban female respondent)

> To me, it wasn't long enough. I think sometimes when you talk about a touchy topic such as family violence, you need to sit for a whole week, cause you're only actually getting a piece of the pie...you need to allow for some healing to happen in the workshop too. Like in the evenings, have some healing happening, having men circles and women circles. I think we need more and more of these workshops. (urban female respondent)

> I would focus on abusers. Try to educate them. A lot of Indian communities are very shy people cause that's the way they were brought up. So most of them won't come. So I'm a strong believer in educating them about violence and on their personal issues. (Siksika female respondent)

Areas of Interest

Lastly, respondents were asked if there were particular areas of interest in family violence that they would like to learn more about. The following chart summarizes respective community responses.

Table 4.4 summarizes recommendations made by respective Treaty 7 communities, highlighting more common responses.

TABLE 4.4 MOST COMMON AREAS OF INTEREST

AREAS OF INTEREST	Kainai	Stoney	Siksika	Tsuu Tina	Urban
•"All areas" of family violence	*	*	*		*
•Prevention	•	*	*	•	•
•Spousal abuse		•	•	•	•
•Child abuse	•	•			•

Table 4.5 provides a summary of additional areas of interest offered by respective communities.

TABLE 4.5 'OTHER' AREAS OF INTEREST BY COMMUNITY

	"OTHER" LESS COMMON AREAS OF INTEREST
Kainai	•Sexual abuse •Anger management
Stoney	•Elder abuse •Symptoms of abusive family
Siksika	•Sumptoms of abusive family •Traditional healing techniques •Working with extended family
Tsuu Tina	•Generational aspect of family violence •Relationship to suicide •Relationship to alcohol
Urban	*Treatment •Relationship to alcohol

*Denotes highest response for that community

5.6 DISCUSSION

1. Cultural variations of family violence

The manner by which aboriginal people define family violence is basically consistent with majority society definitions; however, there are two areas that appear to be specific to the aboriginal experience: spiritual and community abuse. Spiritual abuse is

defined as the abuse of Indian medicine for self-gain. It is when a traditional elder or spiritual leader/healer intentionally misdirects the power vested in him or her, to either hurt someone or gain something. In this sense, spiritual violence is an abuse of power. Community abuse is a term used to define a situation where a tribal community rejects a member or family, for a variety of reasons. The significance of this type of abuse is directly related to the concept of "tribal identity." By virtue of tribal membership, individuals are members of a collective, versus nuclear family. Certain members have an influence upon individual behavior, similar to the influence that Westerners have upon nuclear family members. Hence, the rejection of an aboriginal person by his or her community is akin to a westerner being abandoned by her family. The feelings of overwhelming loss are equally devastating.

The predominant forms of family violence experienced by aboriginal people are physical, mental and emotional abuse. While the majority of respondents identified being exposed to family violence as children, nearly half of this population named spousal abuse between parental figures, as the nature of this exposure.

The context in which Native people understand family violence is of significant importance. Family violence is more often associated with the colonialization process than with Western concepts of patriarchy. The root of family violence is described in direct relationship to various forms of Western contact, such as boarding schools, introduction of alcohol, loss of the family structure, as well as the loss of traditional male roles in society. In fact, most respondents related that the overall disruption in the traditional structures of their culture is attributable to Western control and influences. This influence is further exemplified in the abuse of power, be it by men to women, parents to children or by spiritual leaders to individual's seeking help.

Lastly, the majority of respondents identified that the most significant factor preventing people from seeking help for family violence, is shame. Even when respondents identify fear as the factor, this fear is related to loss of children through child welfare authorities, or fear of how community members will react to the family, more than anything else.

In summary, while the aboriginal experience of family violence is similar to that of majority society, the context by which this violence is understood, is fundamentally different. Further research is necessary to determine the impact of family violence as victim, perpetrator or witness, in order to develop appropriate short- and long-term preventive services. Lastly, it appears that for aboriginal people, shame is a powerful obstacle in addressing family violence.

2. Traditional and Nontraditional Resources

Very few people accessed formal services such as counselling services/agencies, regardless of whether these services were located in the tribal or urban community. There were, however, notable differences in satisfaction between tribal and urban services. While only a small number of people accessed formal services within their tribal community, they felt that the services were effective and appropriate. However, of the small number of respondents who accessed formal services in the urban setting, half of them rated these services to be ineffective. The problem with urban services appears to be related to cultural sensitivity and communication barriers.

Less than half of the urban sample reported the utilization of urban services, for family violence. This rate is significantly higher than that of tribal respondents. However, 25 percent of this population identified the need for more Native-oriented services and personnel.

The overwhelming majority of tribal and urban respondents favored traditional resources such as Elders, spiritual

leaders/healers and healing circles. Almost half of the total sample reported accessing tribal communities other than their own, for services. However, about a quarter of this population utilize other tribal communities for spiritual guidance only, rather than for family violence, in particular. It appears that 'family violence' is not isolated as a specific problem, but rather, part of a larger problem with the 'self'. This is certainly an area in need of further research.

An interesting finding was the context in which people relate to 'helpers.' That is, when men or women access community helpers (paraprofessionals), they have certain expectations of that individual's role as a helper. The research clearly identifies that the majority of women characterize this helping relationship by defining the helper as "active listener." On the other hand, men identify the helper as offering advice/wisdom or spiritual guidance. This has obvious implications for treatment and preventive strategies.

Lastly, more than half of the total sample identified accessing traditional forms of healing such as engagement in smudging, sweatlodges and pipe ceremonies. However, a significant number of respondents qualified this information by stating that they would not recommend Native spirituality to people, without having knowledge of how they felt about it. Clearly, there is a diversity of beliefs and attitudes in communities regarding spirituality. This diversity ranges from the 'traditionalists,' who incorporate the traditional teachings of that particular culture into their lifestyle, to various secular religious institutions, with their various practices and teachings. Further, these groups may practice a mixture of ideologies. For instance, they may attend sundances while refraining from accessing spiritual guidance from an elder, preferring to see a priest, or counsellor. On the other hand, others may not have a particular religious persuasion and, at the same time, practice very little 'cultural'

customs.

(3) Cultural perspectives of family stress

Urban men and women identified that the predominant form of stress confronting their families is alcohol. Marital problems fall second to alcohol. Further research needs to be addressed in the area of alcohol, to determine whether it is a factor in itself, or it is a *symptom of stress-related factors.*

By contrast, tribal respondents identified other factors. The most significant factor of family stress is identified as extended family, for both men and women. Marital problems, together with, death and financial problems, rated second to extended family. It is of interest that identification of extended family as a source of stress is not made reference to at all, by urban respondents, particularly when tribal respondents rated this to be the most significant factor of stress. This may be attributable to the nature of tribal communities, in that families are in close proximity to many extended family members. Urban respondents, on the other hand, may be several hours away from the closest relative, residing in the urban setting for employment or education purposes. It is of further interest that 'marital problems' is categorized as the second predominant factor of family stress, for both tribal and urban respondents.

(4) Response to stress

Of particular interest is how men differ from women in response to family stress. When women are faced with family stress, they prefer to share information with friends or engage in various forms of recreation/leisure activities. Women prefer to be among people in times of stress. Conversely, men prefer to be by themselves during stressful periods, maintaining their distance from people. When men engage in dialogue regarding family stress, they prefer to do so within the framework of their family, rather than with friends.

(5) Coping mechanisms

Tribal respondents

Interestingly, while the majority of tribal people do not access other tribal communities for help with family stress, they felt that utilization of traditional structures within their own communities is a strong resource. Virtually all male respondents favored traditional resources. A small, but significant, number of women preferred nontraditional services, such as counselling. It is apparent, however, that for this latter population, they lacked a basic understanding or appreciation of the traditional role of elders and spiritual healers.

Lastly, in relation to utilizing extended family members for support during stressful periods, more than half of tribal respondents accessed this traditional custom. However, men appear to access extended family more readily than their female counterparts. This is consistent with the previous finding that women rated the extended family as the predominant source of stress, significantly greater than that of men. While men still rate extended family as stressful, they depend upon the support, more so than women, that extended families often provide. This may be influenced by the patrilineal nature of Treaty 7 tribal communities whereupon women tend to move to men's communities, thereby having 'in-laws' as extended families. Further research is needed for clarification.

Urban respondents

Slightly more than half of the urban respondents have not accessed any type of service or resource for family stress.

However, given the opportunity to access traditional resources, urban respondents would do so. Hence, urban respondents do not have access to services or resources and are therefore an isolated population. It should be noted however, that 25 percent of male respondents prefer to access formal services rather than traditional or natural resources.

Lastly, the majority of urban respondents do not access extended family for support. This is in direct contrast to tribal respondents. Again, it may have more to do with proximity to family members, than anything else. Nonetheless, this population tends to be more isolated than the tribal population.

(7) Impact of community events

The most frequently cited community event that impacts family stress is death. Respondents identify that loss of community or family members plays an important factor in family well-being and that death is more difficult to cope with than other factors impacting stress. The second most frequently cited factor of stress from the community was both gossip and use of alcohol.

(8) Community Recommendations

Table 1.1 summarizes recommendations made by respective Treaty 7 communities, highlighting more common responses.

TABLE 1.1 COMMON COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS	Kainai	Stoney	Siksika	Tsuu Tina	Urban
•More workshops on family violence (all areas)	*	*	•	*	•
•Greater resources (psychologists, counsellors/ outreach workers)	•	•	•	•	•
•Increased community recreation	•		•	•	
•Support groups for couples	•	•	•		•
•Greater community awareness	•	•			•

Table 1.2 provides a summary of 'other' less common recommendations offered by respective communities.

TABLE 1.2 LESS COMMON COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

	"OTHER" COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS
Kainai	•More employment •Treatment facilities for couples
Stoney	•Support from Chief & Council
Siksika	•Groups for men •Support from Chief Council •Greater Elder involvement
Tsuu Tina	•Greater cultural activities
Urban	*Greater native services •Greater Elder involvement •Cultural functions/ceremonies

*Denotes highest response for that community

Clearly, tribal communities offer a number of recommendations to address family violence, such as: more workshops in all areas of family violence; greater resources in the area of psychologists, counsellors and outreach workers; increased community recreation; support groups for couples; greater community awareness; and a host of other recommendations such as greater support from Chief and Council and more employment. It is apparent that tribal respondents have given some thought to prevention and intervention. Bearing in mind that any social problem must first be acknowledged and 'owned' by a community before it can be overcome, it appears that tribal respondents have moved beyond the ownership phase, and are actively addressing family violence. On the other hand, urban respondents identified that their priorities are; firstly, for greater native-oriented services; access to traditional Elders; and lastly, more workshops and support groups. The nature of these requests further stresses the isolation that this population is subjected to in a nontribal setting.

Areas of interest

Respondents were given the opportunity of clarifying their particular areas of interest in relation to family violence. For the vast majority, respondents identified an interest in all aspects of family violence, such as treatment and prevention, various dynamics of child sexual abuse, spousal abuse, as well as the relationship of other factors such as alcohol and suicide. More importantly, however, was the fact that virtually all communities cited prevention as an area of interest. Clearly, both tribal and urban respondents are receptive to gaining new insights and strategies of overcoming family violence.

5.7 CONCLUSION

The major findings of this study are as follows:

(1) CULTURAL VARIATIONS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

- The manner in which Treaty 7 people define family violence is basically consistent with western definitions, although there are two areas - spiritual and community abuse - that appear to be specific to the aboriginal experience.

- The predominant forms of family violence experienced were reported to be physical, mental and emotional abuse. While the majority of respondents identified being exposed to family violence as children, nearly half of them named spousal abuse between parental figures, as the nature of this exposure.

- Causal factors of family violence are attributable to constructs consistent with the colonial theoretical orientation (i.e., loss of family structure, boarding school, unemployment).

- The majority of respondents identified that the most significant factor preventing people from seeking help for family violence is shame.

(2) TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

- In spite of the devastating impact upon First Nations by western control and influences, the majority of people continue to rely upon traditional structures within their tribal communities for help, guidance and spiritual enrichment.

- Very few people accessed formal services for family violence, such as counselling services, regardless of whether these services were situated in tribal or urban communities.

- Of the small number of people who accessed formal services in the urban setting, half of them rated these services to be ineffective. The problem with urban services appears to be related to cultural sensitivity and communication barriers.

- More than half of the total sample identified accessing traditional forms of healing such as engagement in smudging, sweatlodges and pipe ceremonies.

(3) CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF FAMILY STRESS

- The nature of problems and the method by which people address, and cope with, family difficulties, is directly related to tribal or urban residency. Aboriginal people who reside in the urban setting identify different sources of stress prevalent in their families, than those residing in the tribal setting. Further, urban residents are far more isolated, with fewer opportunities of accessing resources/services, than their tribal counterparts.

- Urban men and women identified that the predominant form of stress confronting their families is alcohol. Marital problems fall second to alcohol.

- Conversely, tribal respondents identified the extended family as being the most significant factor influencing family stress. Marital problems, together with death and financial problems, rated second to extended family.

- Men differ from women in their response to stress. That is, women prefer to be among people in times of stress while men prefer to be by themselves.

- Virtually all male respondents and a small, but significant, number of female respondents preferred access to traditional, over nontraditional, resources.

- More than half of the tribal respondents accessed extended family for support during stressful periods. However, men appear to access extended family more readily than their female counterparts.

- More than half of the urban respondents have not accessed any type of service or resource for family stress. However, given the opportunity to access traditional resources, urban respondents would do so.

- The majority of urban respondents did not access extended family for support.
- The most frequently cited community event that impacts upon family stress was death. The second most frequently cited factor of stress was both gossip and use of alcohol.

For the most part, aboriginal peoples of Treaty 7 region appear to be aware of family violence and have identified prevention as being the predominant area of interest in both tribal and urban communities.

The need for community development from an holistic perspective has been identified throughout the study. More importantly, however, is the validation that cultural variations do exist and need to be addressed in both tribal and urban communities. Utilization of western research and prevention models, for instance, could have an undesirable impact upon communities. It is therefore imperative that caution be excercised when accessing such models, for their cultural applicability.

Special consideration needs to be given to the fact that respondents identified a number of recommendations for their respective communities. It is not surprising that several of these recommendations were consistent across communities. Nor is it surprising that the urban community requested greater *native* services as well as cultural functions/ceremonies. It becomes clear throughout the research that the urban communities are far more isolated in relation to family support and access to community resources and services. On the other hand, tribal communities continue to struggle with maintaining their traditional structures in an increasingly *urbanized* society. The majority of respondents have a fundamental understanding of family violence; an understanding that will undoubtedly provide strength, courage and guidance in their struggle against family violence.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Treaty 7 Community Study (1994) explores fundamental constructs associated with family violence and community stress, in the Treaty 7 region. The study was conducted with aboriginal people, by aboriginal people, in both urban and tribal communities. The Study provides a broad overview, both historical and current, of family violence and community stress.

Given that the Study was exploratory in nature, the preferred analytical tool was a qualitative approach. This approach provided the opportunity for capturing cultural nuances. The results offer a comprehensive conceptualization in relation to:

(1) CULTURAL VARIATIONS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

- The manner in which Treaty 7 people define family violence is basically consistent with western definitions, although there are two areas - spiritual and community abuse - that appear to be specific to the aboriginal experience.

- The predominant forms of family violence experienced were reported to be physical, mental and emotional abuse. While the majority of respondents identified being exposed to family violence as children, nearly half of them named spousal abuse between parental figures, as the nature of this exposure.

- The context in which native people understand family violence is more often associated with factors related to the colonization process than with western concepts of patriarchy.

- The majority of respondents identified that the most significant factor preventing people from seeking help for family violence is shame.

(2) TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

- Very few people accessed formal services for family violence, such as counselling services, regardless of whether these services were situated in tribal or urban communities.

- Of the small number of people who accessed formal services in the urban setting, half of them rated these services to be ineffective. The problem with urban services appears to be related to cultural sensitivity and communication barriers.

- A significant majority of tribal and urban respondents favored traditional resources such as Elders, spiritual leaders/healers and healing circles.

- The context in which people identify 'helpers' is of interest. While the majority of women characterize this helping relationship by defining the helper as *active listener*; the majority of men identify the helper as *offering advice/wisdom or spiritual guidance*.

- More than half of the total sample identified accessing traditional forms of healing such as engagement in smudging, sweatlodges and pipe ceremonies.

(3) CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF FAMILY STRESS

- Urban men and women identified that the predominant form of stress confronting their families is alcohol. Marital problems fall second to alcohol.

- Conversely, tribal respondents identified the extended family as being the most significant factor influencing family stress. Marital problems, together with death and financial problems, rated second to extended family.

- Men differ from women in their response to stress. That is, women prefer to be among people in times of stress while men prefer to be by themselves.

- Virtually all male respondents and a small, but significant, number of female respondents preferred access to traditional, over nontraditional, resources.

- More than half of the tribal respondents accessed extended family for support during stressful periods. However, men appear to access extended family more readily than their female counterparts.

- More than half of the urban respondents have not accessed any type of service or resource for family stress. However, given the opportunity to access traditional resources, urban respondents would do so.

- The majority of urban respondents did not access extended family for support. Given that urban respondents lack family support as well as access to community services/resources, this population is far more isolated than the tribal communities.

- The most frequently cited community event that impacts upon family stress was death. The second most frequently cited factor of stress was both gossip and use of alcohol.

(4) COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 summarize various recommendations made by respective Treaty 7 communities, comparing more common responses, with less common responses.

TABLE 1.1 COMMON COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS	Kainai	Stoney	Siksika	TsuuTina	Urban
•More workshops on family violence (all areas)	*	*	•	*	•
•Greater resources (psychologists/counsellors/ outreach workers)	•	•	•	•	•
•Increased community recreation	•		•	•	
•Support groups for couples	•	•	•		•
•Greater community awareness	•	•			•

TABLE 1.2 LESS COMMON COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

	"OTHER" COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS
Kainai	•More employment •Treatment facilities for couples
Stoney	•Support from Chief & Council
Siksika	•Groups for men •Support from Chief Council •Greater Elder involvement
Tsuu Tina	•Greater cultural activities
Urban	*Greater native services •Greater Elder involvement •Cultural functions/ceremonies

***Denotes highest response for that community**

The Study is organized in such a manner as to be useful to both native and non-native service-providers; community development initiatives; future research initiatives; and, in the development of urban and tribal resource manuals.

Given the exploratory nature of the Study, it is imperative that further research be directed, supported and conducted by native people themselves. The application of western research on aboriginal communities lends itself to an inherently ethnocentric bias which could inadvertantly delay, or otherwise inhibit, successful efforts of overcoming family violence, as perceived and understood by native people.