

PROJECT HAVEN EVALUATION

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

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1.0 PROJECT HAVEN PROGRAM

The Project Haven Program, delivered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) on behalf of Health and Welfare Canada, was developed as a component of the Federal government's interdepartmental Family Violence Initiatives which provided support to a national strategy against family violence. The priority of the program was to focus on the needs of those women currently underserved with this type of accommodation such as rural, Aboriginal, immigrant women, and women with physical disabilities.

The Project Haven Program provided capital funds in the form of non-repayable financing to non-profit community sponsor groups and First Nations to create emergency shelters for women and their children who experienced family violence. Mortgages were provided by CMHC and forgiven at a rate of one fifteenth of the mortgage per year over the fifteen year period, provided that the sponsor groups continued to operate the facility as a shelter under the terms of the mortgage agreement.

Shelter operating assistance was not provided under Project Haven. Sponsor groups had to secure an assurance of operating assistance from the responsible federal, provincial, territorial or other agencies prior to CMHC's commitment of funds. In general, most of the operating funding for these shelters was provided by provincial/territorial governments (with Federal cost-sharing under Canada Assistance Plan) and from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, for shelters located on reserves, and in communities primarily serving aboriginal women. Operating funding was often supplemented by different sources, including municipal government funding, fundraising, donations and grants.

There are currently seventy-eight shelters for abused women and their children which received funding under the Project Haven Program across Canada. Twenty-four of these shelters were targeted primarily for Aboriginal families. These shelters are part of Canada's larger effort at providing shelters for women and children experiencing family violence -- a "system" including over 400 largely independent shelters, with the operating cost met primarily through funding by provincial/territorial governments and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

2.0 EVALUATION STUDY

As part of its responsibilities under the Federal Family Violence Initiatives, CMHC has undertaken an evaluation of the Project Haven Program. The overall evaluation included over a year of program monitoring (Client Information System), as well as surveys and qualitative research.

Case studies were undertaken to collect qualitative information to supplement and support the statistical findings in the database. The three main areas addressed by the case studies included community needs related to the provision of shelters and services for women and children experiencing family violence, community impacts including the effects of locating the shelter for family violence in communities, and providing a description of service models adopted to address family violence.

This report includes highlights of the following case study reports prepared for the evaluation of the Project Haven Program.

- **COMMUNITY NEEDS AND IMPACTS STUDY OF PROJECT HAVEN:**
A Report Focused on Shelters in Non-Aboriginal Communities.

- **COMMUNITY NEEDS AND IMPACTS STUDY OF PROJECT HAVEN SHELTERS:**
A Report Focused on Shelters in Aboriginal Communities.

- **A REPORT ON A STUDY OF THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE UNSERVED POPULATION OF ABUSED WOMEN.**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These studies would not have been possible without the extensive efforts of the staff of the participating shelters for women experiencing family violence. They gave generously of their time in research visits to the shelters and arranging community contacts.

3.0 CASE STUDY APPROACH

Case studies of thirteen Project Haven shelters were carried out between May and July, 1993. Seven Aboriginal and six non-Aboriginal shelters were studied. Aboriginal shelters are defined as those shelters administered by a First Nation or Aboriginal organization and which are funded by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. While the thirteen shelters chosen for the study were not necessarily representative of all Project Haven shelters, they did include important types of shelters in a wide range of environments.

Case studies included shelters in every region in Canada. There were two case study shelters in B.C., four in the Prairies, three in Ontario, two in Quebec and two in the Maritimes. Shelters were selected to reflect a mix of characteristics including: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal; on-reserve and off-reserve; and urban, rural and remote communities. Altogether, seven shelters were studied in the East (defined as Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada) and six in the West (The Prairies and British Columbia).

Several types of individuals who were knowledgeable about family violence and shelters' services were interviewed in each community. These included: shelter Executive Directors, members of the sponsor group, shelter staff, social service personnel, Band staff, health officials, counsellors, police, justice officials, former clients of the shelter, Aboriginal Elders and community members.

The case studies addressed three main areas:

- **service models adopted to address family violence;**
- **community needs related to the provision of shelter and services for women and children experiencing family violence; and**
- **community impacts including the effects of locating the shelter in a community.**

The special needs study stemmed from feedback from a number of shelters that some shelters for abused women were having difficulty providing services to women whose experience of family violence is compounded by special needs.

Special needs are defined here as including such different situations of women as poor mental health or mental illness, alcohol, drug or substance abuse, or ethnic/cultural differences, such as Aboriginal background (e.g., cultural differences from majority culture), multicultural/visible minority status (e.g., women who have language barriers, or are new immigrants), and women with physical disabilities, or with children with physical disabilities.

Six special needs case studies involved personal and telephone interviews with sponsor groups, shelter personnel and community agency/organization staff, law enforcement and justice officials,

health care professionals and community members interested or involved in areas of special need. Researchers interviewed approximately 16 respondents in each community studied.

Communities for the Special Needs Study were chosen according to the following criteria:

- geographical considerations to ensure a regional assessment (Western, Central and Eastern Canada);
- balance between urban and rural locations (two cities, one suburb of a large city and three small towns);
- two Project Haven shelters located in areas known to have large multicultural populations; and two Project Haven shelters off-reserve located in areas known to have significant Aboriginal populations (to determine, in part, if Aboriginal women who are victims of violence are accessing shelters and community services off-reserve).

Additional interviews were conducted with selected national and provincial-level agencies and other groups involved in provision of services to the special needs groups of concern.

The special needs study included, in addition to direct information gathering from shelters, interviews and consultations with community agencies or organizations (from lists of potential interviewees provided by shelters) including mental health organizations, organizations dealing with substance abuse, Aboriginal service agencies, ethnocultural minority service agencies, physical disabilities services agencies, and other agencies involved in crisis intervention (e.g. hospitals, police, etc.).

4.0 HIGHLIGHTS OF CASE STUDY FINDINGS

While there are many similarities between family violence in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, there are also a number of important differences. Some factors in Aboriginal communities (such as loss of traditional culture, high unemployment, lack of adequate housing, alcohol abuse, and community denial) may exacerbate the contemporary problems of family violence. An emphasis on keeping the family together and the ethics of non-interference and non-blaming may lead to non-reporting of family violence situations. On the other hand, values of caring and sharing and the presence of an extended family can facilitate the provision of assistance to women and children who experience abuse.

In the eyes of many, the cultural revitalization and movement toward self government currently occurring in Aboriginal communities across Canada, in which Aboriginal people are taking control of their institutions and blending aspects of the traditional culture with contemporary conditions, will potentially have a positive impact on reducing family violence in Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal shelters are successfully integrating significant aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture into their shelters' service delivery models to meld today's social service need with tomorrow's vision of more caring communities.

4.1 SHELTERS' SERVICE MODELS

One of the most important findings of the case studies was that shelters, have been highly successful in developing service models to meet the diverse needs of women and children who have experienced family violence. Many common aspects of service delivery models were found in all communities.

While each community is unique with many shelters at different stages of development, they all share the common goal to provide shelter and services to women and children experiencing family violence. These efforts are often made more challenging by the need to serve a number of scattered -- in some cases "fly-in" -- communities in aboriginal and rural communities.

Case study shelters are successfully meeting the needs of abused women and children in terms of emergency shelter, food and clothing. Respondents reported that shelters are providing a safe and comfortable environment for women to begin to make plans for their future. Shelter staff give support and counseling, refer women to appropriate agencies and advocate on behalf of their clients.

At the same time, differences in approaches and philosophies were noted. Aboriginal shelters, those operated by First Nations or Aboriginal organizations, have developed a distinctive model of service delivery to Aboriginal women successfully integrating elements of Aboriginal culture into their service delivery model. They take a "holistic" approach to providing services which involves the mind, body and spirit as well as, in some cases, a focus on the whole family. Various spiritual ceremonies such as sweat lodges are available and Elders often come to the shelter to counsel, facilitate healing circles and teach traditional culture. Concerns with healing in these

communities are found at three levels: the community; the family; and the individual. In line with these priorities, Aboriginal shelters were often found to engage in very extensive non-residential services.

One non-Aboriginal shelter has developed a very effective multi-faceted service delivery model for the whole family (women, children, teenagers, men). Several shelters were found to have extensive outreach programs including satellite offices serving large rural areas. In other communities, innovative and comprehensive programs have been put in place not only for the children of shelter clients, but also for other children referred to the programs from the community at large.

It was stressed by respondents in some communities studied that the shelter itself is not an isolated focus, but rather part of an integrated service process that includes extensive outreach services, satellite offices, public education and community involvement. Many of these non-residential community services were offered to women and children who were victims of family violence for a number of years before the establishment of the shelter. These included improved access to income and employment services for women who do not return to the abusive situation.

Shelters have links with a wide variety of community agencies and organizations with extensive cross referrals and ongoing efforts to coordinate services. Generally, shelters and agency personnel reported satisfactory relationships. Shelters also play an important role in making the community more aware of family violence through their outreach activities. Some shelters provide a number of additional services such as children's programs, daycare, parenting skills courses, professional counseling, assistance to women after they leave the shelter, social events, fundraising and training programs for volunteers. A few shelters have established satellite offices or provide individualized off-site counseling to meet the needs of their rural and remote clients.

4.2 COMMUNITY NEEDS

Respondents reported that the extent of family violence in all types of case study communities, is far-reaching but that there is no way to estimate the extent of the problem as much violence remains hidden. Individuals interviewed reported that many women, in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, are caught in a cycle of abuse that has extended over time and has come to be a way of life. Shelters were found to meet a wide range of needs. For example, two of the non-Aboriginal shelters studied reported that 30-40% of their clients are of Aboriginal descent. Other shelters provide services to immigrant women, rural women, and women of ethnocultural background in their communities.

The most pressing community need identified by respondents in all communities, but particularly Aboriginal communities, is for short and long-term housing. The problem is particularly acute in terms of the need for second stage housing for women leaving shelters. Housing for women and their children is also a serious problem on reserves where waiting lists, in many cases, mitigate against any hope for abused women to obtain adequate housing. Many women have little choice but to leave the community or return to the abusive situation.

The social and community context often plays an important role in both creating family violence and in determining whether or not these needs can be met. These situations impact on some women in special circumstances which often makes it difficult for them to access shelter services. Elderly women may not report abuse because they are isolated and often are not aware of services available. Rural women in abusive situations are often isolated, have limited resources, have severe transportation difficulties and may lack a community support network. Women in isolated communities also have especially unique needs in terms of difficulties of cost of transportation to the nearest shelter.

It is sometimes a problem for the women to go to a shelter in their own community because of lack of anonymity, safety concerns and the community family violence tolerance level. In non-Aboriginal shelters, respondents reported that immigrant women often have difficulty communicating in English/French and understanding Canadian cultural practices. They may also be under pressure not to report abuse because of community norms which prefer to handle matters affecting the ethnic group within their own ethnic community.

Some significant obstacles to addressing family violence in their communities identified by respondents were a lack of financial and human resources to establish new programs or make existing programs more comprehensive, the shortage of both short and long-term housing (causing difficulties for women in abusive situations to find suitable accommodation), the size of the catchment areas and the resultant transportation difficulties particularly for women from rural areas, and overcoming perceived barriers to shelter services because of cultural isolation and social stigma. Additional service needs of the communities were identified as expanded services to rural women, immigrant women, young adults, elderly people and men.

A number of other unmet community needs were also articulated by respondents in all communities, including needs for: additional programs for men who are abusers and counseling for adolescent youth to attempt to break the cycle of abuse in the community; programs that focus on assisting the whole family to reunite; training programs to qualify Aboriginal professionals to work with women and families experiencing family violence; ongoing support for women who leave the shelter; community outreach initiatives to educate the community on family violence; and advocacy on behalf of women who have experienced family violence to ensure that they are exercising their rights in dealing with agencies and the courts.

4.3 COMMUNITY IMPACTS

The research indicated that, despite the fact that some shelters have been in existence for only a short time, shelters generally have an extremely important impact on family violence in their communities. Although it is difficult to link the amount of family violence in a community directly to the efforts of a shelter, all community respondents interviewed agreed that their shelters were having a positive impact.

In the respondents' view, there is an increased awareness of family violence issues in their communities and, in some cases there have been significant changes in attitudes. While there remains some reluctance to accept the existence of family violence in some communities, the

presence of shelters as an option for women is seen as raising awareness of the issues, as well as pointing to a continuing need for public education to maintain the change in attitudes.

Shelters also reported that their programs have had an impact on changing the behaviour of women. Coming to the shelter was seen as breaking the family violence cycle (if only temporarily) and providing an option for women to change their situation. Interviews with shelter staff, agency personnel and community respondents indicated that shelters are having a positive impact by enabling some women to recognize and leave an abusive situation earlier than was previously the case. Women are also made more aware of alternatives that are available to them in the future. "Having an alternative to staying in an abusive situation -- having a choice" -- was reported to be the most important impact on the changing behaviour of women while some respondents expressed disappointment that men collectively have not addressed the family violence issue. No consensus among interviewees could be reached on whether shelters have had an actual impact on reducing the amount of violence occurring in the communities, but all agreed that more women are disclosing abuse.

Respondents reported that some shelters have had an important impact on the behaviour of men through one-to-one and group counseling and public education. Shelters have frequently assisted women to access the justice system and have helped to make police and justice officials aware of some of the limitations of the justice system regarding victims of family violence.

Shelter staff identified a number of gaps in the current delivery of services, including a need for: staff training; children's programming; services for special needs groups such as the elderly; (and in non-Aboriginal shelters) rural and immigrant women; and programs for men and young women.

Shelter and community respondents in all types of communities -- Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike -- recognized that in order to provide these additional services to meet the needs of women, children and communities generally, an increase in the availability of resources will be required. In addition, new policies regarding appropriate roles of shelters may need to be developed.

Evidence of community support was clearly visible at many of the shelters with many kinds of support and many needed items being donated by community members. However, there are still elements in the communities, interviewees report, practicing denial and subscribing to the attitude that family violence does not happen in their community.

4.4 SPECIAL NEEDS

The special needs study found that shelters are able to accommodate some special needs groups more easily than others. Most shelters have made their shelters fairly accessible to most women with physical disabilities. Aboriginal women and women of ethnocultural minority background or immigrant women are served by attempting to accommodate their culture and traditions.

However, the special needs of women with severe mental health problems, those with substance abuse problems and those with multiple special needs prove to be much more problematic given the issues reported by shelters. These issues include lack of staff training, inadequate funding levels, risks to the security of other women and children in the shelter and lack (in some

communities) of sufficient community service provision or referral sources. While it is widely thought that most shelters should not even attempt to handle severe mental health and substance abuse problems, or those of multiple special needs, it is at the same time widely believed that all shelters should have skills and mechanisms in place to refer and provide effective assistance to these women.

Although shelters have attempted to make their shelters accessible to Aboriginal women and women of ethnocultural minority background or immigrant women, service provision difficulties were still encountered for these groups. For example, Aboriginal women who experience family violence have a variety of cultural and related needs in the areas of spirituality, status concerns and parenting which often results in their preference for service from a shelter specifically designed for Aboriginal women. Immigrant and ethnocultural women face other unique barriers. They are often reluctant to leave abusive situations because of fear about their immigrant status or for fear they will be ostracized by their communities. Cultural barriers and the lack of interpreters also hamper both shelter and agency efforts to meet the needs of ethnocultural women.

For most special needs groups, there is support and advice available to shelters from community service agencies also responding to the needs of the particular special needs of these women who are victims of family violence (although it was noted that one shelter was found to be operating in isolation from community programs). Such cooperative relationships have been working well in most communities as evidenced by the formation of a number of interagency committees to respond to family violence initiatives. It appears that interagency cooperation and, potentially, co-facilitation of projects by shelters and agencies best serve the interests of the respective special needs groups. Women residing at the shelter can access the relevant service organization, or staff from that organization may send service or support to the shelter. This is, however, predicated on the availability of community service providers, which were not available for all special needs groups in all of the communities studied.

Responding to special needs groups requires extra resources (staff and financial) on the part of shelters to provide services. Insufficient funding of community agencies, cutbacks in programs or their disappearance, lack of public education, and family violence issues impact on special needs groups. The absence of service providers in some areas results in long waiting periods for available services and in some cases no service at all for these women with specialized needs. Without this continuum of support and services, many of these women are put at risk of returning to abusive situations.

Consultation with selected national and provincial-level agencies and other organizations resulted in a number of suggestions and recommendations regarding the provision of services to these special needs groups. These included: expanded training of shelter staff and agency personnel to increase their understanding and knowledge of the specialized services required when special needs are compounded by family violence; the need for sufficient and accessible community services; the need for enhanced inter-agency cooperation to structure service delivery systems for all special needs groups which would involve shelters, their sponsor groups, law enforcement and justice agencies, service providers and others; and comprehensive follow-up and outreach services to provide the support and information to these women with special needs to enable them and their children to lead lives in a non-violent environment.

5.0 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CASE STUDIES

A number of important themes have emerged from interviews carried out in the case studies which have important implications for the provision of services to women and children experiencing family violence:

SERVICE MODELS

- Shelters have developed a variety of successful service models to meet the needs of women and children experiencing family violence.
- The Aboriginal shelters have successfully developed community-based and culturally-based service delivery models to fit their community needs; that the service models developed by shelters are effectively addressing the needs of clients experiencing family violence.
- A critical component of shelters' service delivery models is community outreach work which is having an important impact on changing community attitudes towards family violence. In some non-Aboriginal communities studied, outreach services are being provided through the establishment of satellite offices or individualized off-site counselling to meet the needs of women and children experiencing family violence in rural and remote areas.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

- Family violence is a serious problem in all case study communities. For many women, in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, abuse has become a "way of life";
- The characteristics of the women who utilize the shelter include: being between 20 and 35 years of age, have low levels of education and few marketable skills, usually do not work outside the home and are receiving some form of social assistance;
- There remain a number of unmet community needs and service gaps for women and children experiencing family violence. These were often intensified by other severe social problems (very low incomes, alcohol and drug problems, etc.);
- There is an acute need for second-stage and long-term housing for women and children experiencing family violence in urban (e.g., cities), semi-urban (e.g., towns), and rural/remote areas;
- Despite some issues pertaining to safety and anonymity of shelters located in Aboriginal communities, the majority of Aboriginal community respondents believed that it is appropriate and desirable to locate shelters on reserves.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS

- Over time, shelters develop new programs and services that have an increasingly greater impact on clients and the broader community. While in some communities there was resistance to the existence of the shelter, most communities have come to accept and support and be involved in the work of the shelter. Many communities have increased their awareness and changed their attitudes toward the shelter as a result of community educational efforts on the part of shelter staff;
- Many shelters are having a positive impact on changing men's attitudes and behaviour towards family violence, especially in Aboriginal communities.

SYSTEM ISSUES

- In both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, shelters are one key part of the community response to family violence. Shelters were shown to be essential and to have many positive impacts, but to need complementary preventive and support services;
- The case studies suggested a need for shelters to have better information-sharing networks, so that shelters could benefit from the innovative experiences of other shelters. This was particularly evident for shelters serving a clientele of Aboriginal and immigrant women, because of the need to develop distinctive service models. In addition, significant needs for training were noted for new staff, and ongoing program development.
- The cultural context of Aboriginal shelter programs points towards increased cultural content and programming linkages to strengthen the efforts of shelters. Such efforts could be facilitated through increased information sharing among shelters and also through linkages with bodies such as the Indian Cultural-Educational Centres across Canada.

OTHER NEEDS

The case studies indicated that Aboriginal shelters have been successfully meeting the emergency shelter and many related family violence needs in their communities according to their mandate. Shelter staff, sponsor groups, agency personnel and community people reported that shelters have effectively provided emergency housing, food and clothing, as well as counseling and referral services in the communities served. Respondents pointed out, however, that there remain a number of unmet community needs regarding family violence which should be addressed to alleviate the problem in the long run. These unmet needs are in no way a negative reflection on the work of the shelters, but rather are a reflection of the complex and widespread nature of family violence.

Additional Programs: In the view of respondents, the most important need was for additional programs to be implemented. Several specific suggestions were put forward. Shelter staff, agency personnel and community members in Aboriginal communities emphasized the need to provide programs which involve the whole family, programs which are designed to assist in family reunification. This need reflects the strong emphasis on the family as a core value in Aboriginal culture. In addition, a number of recommendations for programs for men who are abusers were articulated. Community respondents indicated that there is a great need to assist men to understand and deal with their abuse. Services for men follows from the ethic of non-blaming which characterizes many Aboriginal communities. Individual and group counseling for children who had witnessed or experienced family violence was also mentioned. Facilities and programs for youth were also seen as a need. Overall, there was a much greater articulation of the need for family-oriented and men's programs in shelters in Aboriginal communities than in non-Aboriginal communities.

Support for Women Leaving the Shelter: A critical need mentioned by all types of shelters is the provision of physical and emotional support for women leaving the shelter. As mentioned previously, housing was seen as the most pressing need. Other areas of need to be addressed include: support groups on an ongoing basis to help the women with family reconciliation or coping with beginning a new life away from the abusive situation; parenting and child care skills courses; daycare facilities to allow women to look for housing and jobs and to be employed; and counseling services to help deal with the emotional aspects of the abuse. Shelter staff also emphasized the particular importance of providing "bridging" financial resources to assist women to establish themselves and their children in their new circumstances (e.g. first and last months rent, household goods, furniture etc.).

Community Education: An important component of shelters' operation relates to community education on family violence issues for both women and men. This type of concern is particularly important because of the high incidence of family violence noted, and its apparent acceptance by many community members. Yet there is a wide variance in the degree to which shelters carry out this service.

Many shelters mentioned that there was a great need to provide public education on the nature of family violence and the work of the shelter in their catchment communities. In some cases, shelters noted that their efforts in this area have yielded significant results in changing community attitudes toward the shelter, making women aware of the shelter's existence and family violence in general.

Community workshops have served to make the community aware of the fact that family violence exists in their community. Substantial support for the shelter from community organizations (e.g. churches, service clubs, local governments) has been demonstrated through financial and program support, and donations of material goods to the shelters. But a great deal remains to be done and public education remains an unmet need in some shelter communities. Carrying out these outreach activities often places a burden on staff because of the time-consuming tasks of writing proposals, negotiating funding and designing programs. In addition, the funding for these programs is usually short-term. More programming resources, particularly as linked to traditional cultural values which counter family violence, were seen as a priority.

Advocacy: Another set of unmet needs pertains to the role of shelters in assisting their clients in the area of advocating their rights when dealing with societal institutions. The needs mentioned by respondents in this area relate to helping women exercise their right to social assistance, to a fair hearing in court and to deal with landlords and police. Most shelters reported spending considerable time assisting women in the shelter prepare a plan of action to leave the shelter.

In this process, difficulties sometimes arise in accessing sufficient social assistance for the woman to afford adequate food, clothing and shelter and in arranging for suitable family benefits, custody of children and support. Shelter staff frequently accompany women to the welfare office and court to ensure that they receive appropriate services. Advocacy in another sense was also mentioned by shelter staff. In their experience, restraining orders and peace bonds are not adequately enforced. Many shelter staff and police suggested there needs to be a change in the system of issuing, administering and enforcing the legal documents to more accurately reflect the seriousness of the situation.

Security of Shelters: Several of the shelter staff interviewed indicated a need to provide better security. It was suggested that a possible solution to the apprehension about security would be for funding sources to make available grants to provide a standardized "security package" for shelters to access as they feel the need. Such a fund could provide resources to equip shelters to an agreed upon level of security.

Aboriginal Professionals: Many Aboriginal shelters articulated the need for more Aboriginal professionals trained to work with women and families experiencing family violence. Many of the shelters utilize non-Aboriginal personnel to provide professional counseling and other services. It is difficult for these shelters to find staff with the appropriate mix of Aboriginal and service skill/experience.

Funding: Insufficient funding generally was seen as an unmet need for some shelters. Funding for additional staff to provide needed programs and services was a priority for many shelters.

Second Stage Housing: The extraordinary housing problems of most First Nations communities were reported to provide special obstacles to women wishing to leave an abusive relationship. One remedy to be closely considered, as mentioned by many community respondents, is the provision of second stage housing for Aboriginal communities. This suggestion is important, but must be carefully appraised in terms of the larger housing issues facing First Nations.

Staff Training: Aboriginal shelters tend to emphasize life experience over professional training when hiring their staff. Most of the staff have experienced some form of abuse themselves which helps them understand the clients' situation. At the same time, many shelters in Aboriginal communities felt the need to have staff take counselor and other training to upgrade their skills and complement their life experience competence.

Additional Aboriginal Shelters: In communities where non-Aboriginal shelters have large numbers of Aboriginal clients, it was suggested that thought should be given to establishing Aboriginal shelters to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal women. Shelters in non-Aboriginal communities are integrating Aboriginal programming into their services but it would be

appropriate, where the numbers warrant, to have an Aboriginal shelter available. For example, there may be Aboriginal women who are reluctant to go to a non-Aboriginal shelter. On the other hand, the non-Aboriginal shelter would probably continue to receive Aboriginal women who wish to distance themselves from their community. Joint programming and culturally oriented staff training may be partial remedies.

Elderly People's Abuse: As stated previously, many respondents indicated that in their assessment, the abuse of elderly people is a serious problem which is largely unreported. Many of these elderly women are vulnerable because they are isolated, often not aware of available services and are reluctant to report abuse. Many of these women do not meet the shelter's requirement for admission, namely being in a primary relationship. Community respondents suggested that there is a need for outreach and treatment programs geared to the needs of the elderly.

Young Women: Young women as a group were also reported to experience unmet needs. Women between the ages of 16 and 18 often fall between the mandates of agencies. They are often too old for Children's Aid services, yet do not meet the criteria of the shelters because they are not in a primary relationship. Many of these young people are already products of an abusive cycle. They have witnessed violence in the home and, in many instances, take on the behaviour of the abusive parent by acting out the family violence and exhibiting aggressive behaviour. They then, in turn, form abusive relationships within their peer group and continue the violence cycle. Some respondents suggested the need for a Youth Resource Centre which would provide programs such as parenting skills for this group.

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