

RESEARCH REPORT



Community Needs and Impacts Study of
Project Haven Shelters: A Report Focused
on Shelters in Aboriginal Communities



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**COMMUNITY NEEDS AND IMPACTS
STUDY OF PROJECT HAVEN SHELTERS:
A REPORT FOCUSED ON SHELTERS
IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES**

**Community Needs and Impacts Study of Project Haven Shelters:
A Report Focused on Shelters in Aboriginal Communities**

FINAL REPORT,
FOR THE PROJECT HAVEN EVALUATION

March 31, 1994

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STAFFING

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Executive Summary

1. APPROACH AND METHOD

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 and physically-disabled women.

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.

Project Haven Evaluation: 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.

As part of the Project Haven Evaluation, case studies of thirteen Project Haven shelters were carried out between May and July, 1993. The purpose of the case studies was to provide qualitative, in-depth information on issues affecting the structure and functioning of shelters, community needs regarding services for family violence, community impacts of the shelters and the shelters' service model, with a primary focus on Aboriginal communities and secondly on rural communities.

The study team endeavoured to select as wide a range of shelters as possible in order to provide for comparisons in terms of issues of cultural uniqueness of Aboriginal communities and the impact of isolation on service models. To this end, 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. Shelters were chosen from a list drawn up by CMHC. 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 and Provinces east) and six in the West.¹

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, counselors, 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.

Two sub-reports were prepared, both drawing comparisons, but focused respectively on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (largely rural) shelters. This report is focused primarily on Aboriginal shelters and communities², beginning with a consideration of the unique cultural context of Aboriginal shelters (an overview prepared by the researchers).

¹ No geographical references beyond the east-west distinction will be provided in order to ensure the anonymity of individual shelters.

² However, some comparisons are drawn throughout to general similarities and differences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shelters, and comparisons are made with some specific groups, such as rural women and immigrant women.

2. FAMILY VIOLENCE AND ABORIGINAL CULTURE

As seen generally by Aboriginal respondents, family violence was not an accepted part of traditional Aboriginal culture. Rather, the historic cultural context was described as follows. Prior to contact with Europeans, Aboriginal communities were generally small and individuals were intensely interdependent and relied upon each other for survival. Women were held in high regard and were integral to the functioning of the family as well as the production of the necessities of everyday life. Several values which characterized traditional Aboriginal communities included: non-judging; non-interference; individual responsibility; avoidance of conflict in the community; respect; and sharing.

As seen by Aboriginal respondents, contact with Europeans -- residential schools, the Indian Act and government policies -- resulted in the development of very serious social problems, including an extraordinary level of family violence in many Aboriginal communities over the past 100 years. In this context, family violence is seen as exacerbated by the many other social problems of Aboriginal communities (see below) which evolved in this period.

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 may exacerbate the contemporary problems of family violence. For example, the 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. As is shown within, Aboriginal shelters are successfully integrating significant aspects of Aboriginal culture into their shelters' service delivery models to meld today's social service need with tomorrow's vision of more caring communities.

Several root causes of family violence in Aboriginal communities were identified by respondents including: high rates of unemployment leading to pressures on families, lack of adequate housing in communities, paternalistic attitudes toward male and female roles resulting in disempowerment of women, low levels of qualifications for jobs for women, and broad community denial that a family violence problem exists. Alcohol abuse was also reported to be a significant factor in family violence in some communities. As well, in a number of Aboriginal communities respondents reported that the loss of traditional culture still further compounded the problem.

At the same time it was reported that community attitudes toward family violence have changed significantly in communities where case study shelters and their related umbrella organizations have been in existence for a number of years.

3. SHELTERS' SERVICE MODELS

One of the most important findings of the case studies was that Aboriginal shelters, as well as other shelters, have been highly successful in developing service models to meet the diverse needs of women and children who have experienced family violence.

Meeting Basic Needs: Most shelters, including Aboriginal shelters, are integrated into larger organizations providing services to individuals experiencing family violence. Virtually all interviewed agreed that 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.

While each community is unique with many shelters at different stages of development, they all share the common goal of attempting to provide basic 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.

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.

Community Linkages: 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. COMMUNITY NEEDS

Respondents reported that the extent of family violence in case study communities, particularly Aboriginal communities, is far-reaching. 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.¹

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.

As reported to researchers, 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 a similar vein, 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.)

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.

1 Popular reports in Aboriginal communities in recent years suggested that perhaps 80% to 90% of Aboriginal women experienced violence or abuse at some time. These numbers, generally regarded as of uncertain validity prior to 1993, gained credibility in light of Statistics Canada's broader findings that more than half of all Canadian women experience violence at one time or another.

5. 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.

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.

6. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CASE STUDIES?

A number of important themes have emerged from interviews carried out in the Aboriginal case studies (and in many cases complemented by observations from the non-Aboriginal case studies) which have important implications for the provision of services to women and children experiencing family violence:

Service Models

- that the related processes of Aboriginal self-government and the revitalization of traditional Native culture has resulted in a strengthening of Aboriginal communities' sense of communal responsibility for issues in their communities, including family violence;
- that 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; many of these community oriented approaches were seen by the researchers as suitable for emulation by non-Aboriginal shelters, which could benefit from many of the Aboriginal shelter approaches.
- that a critical component of Aboriginal 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 counseling to meet the needs of women and children experiencing family violence in rural and remote areas; some of these are seen as providing useful models for selected use by Aboriginal shelters serving many communities;
- that while there have been instances of strained relations between shelters, First Nations sponsors, and social service agencies, most of the relationships have been satisfactory and have involved extensive cross-referrals and ongoing efforts to coordinate services.

Community Needs

- that there is a serious problem in all case study communities, but particularly Aboriginal communities, regarding family violence. For many women, in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, abuse has become a "way of life";
- that 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;
- that 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.);

- that 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;
- that 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

- that 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 is 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;
- that many shelters are having a positive impact on changing men's attitudes and behaviour towards family violence.

System Issues

- in case studies in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, the issue of shelters as one key part of the community response to family violence was clear. 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.

Program Implications

Gaps in Addressing Family Violence in the Community: 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 in many Aboriginal communities

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 of 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 (see Section 2, above). 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 (as discussed in Section 3.7 Security of Shelters). 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. As was noted earlier in this report, 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.

Service Gaps/Future Directions

As stated previously, the shelters studied are delivering effective services to women and children experiencing family violence. At the same time, there are areas of need that, if additional resources were available, and could be addressed by shelters and women's organizations. Shelter staff and agency personnel identified a number of specific gaps in the current services delivered by the shelters, and a number of directions for the future.

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.

Cultural-Educational Linkages: The central importance of cultural approaches to the work of existing shelters underlines the need for more support for culturally appropriate program initiatives. The researchers noted that such initiatives, particularly in the educational area, might be usefully linked to ongoing work of Indian Cultural Educational Centres serving Canada's First Nations.

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.

Children's Programs: Many shelters, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, suggested that there was a need for additional children's counseling programs to assist children of abused women cope with the effects of violence. While some shelter organizations were found to be providing outstanding programs for children, significant needs for these services were still noted. It was reported that most of the program funding that shelters are able to access is geared to women, and that fewer funding sources for children programs are available.

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.

Programs for Men: Many shelter staff, sponsor groups, agency personnel and community members reported that individual and group counseling programs for abusive men are needed, but are currently not widely available. Many staff argued that "...we should concentrate on treatment, not punishment" for abusive men. One group offers a very successful program which is having an important impact on changing attitudes and behaviour. One shelter on a reserve operates mens' counseling and healing circles in the lower level of the shelter. But such programs, like so many, are vulnerable to financial restraints and short-term funding. If the cycle of abuse is going to be broken, the needs of the abusers must be addressed.

RÉSUMÉ

1. DÉMARCHE ET MÉTHODE

Le programme Opération refuge, administré par la Société canadienne d'hypothèques et de logement (SCHL) pour le compte de Santé et Bien-être social Canada, a été élaboré en tant que composante des initiatives fédérales en matière de violence familiale entreprises à l'appui d'une stratégie nationale contre la violence familiale. Le programme visait d'abord et avant tout à répondre aux besoins des femmes dans l'incapacité de trouver un logement temporaire, c'est-à-dire les femmes en milieu rural, les femmes autochtones, les immigrantes et les femmes handicapées.

Dans le cadre du programme Opération refuge, la SCHL a accordé des mises de fonds non remboursables à des organismes de parrainage communautaires sans but lucratif et à des premières nations afin de produire des maisons d'hébergement d'urgence pour les femmes et leurs enfants victimes de violence familiale. La SCHL consentait des prêts hypothécaires dont le quinzième du principal faisait l'objet d'une remise chaque année sur une période de quinze ans, pourvu que les organismes de parrainage continuent de respecter la vocation de la maison d'hébergement d'urgence conformément aux modalités de l'accord hypothécaire.

Aucun fonds de fonctionnement pour les maisons d'hébergement n'était fourni dans le cadre du programme Opération refuge. Les organismes de parrainage devaient s'assurer d'obtenir des fonds de fonctionnement du gouvernement responsable (fédéral, provincial ou territorial) ou d'un autre organisme avant

que la SCHL ne s'engage à verser des fonds. En général, la majeure partie des budgets de fonctionnement des maisons d'hébergement provenait des gouvernements provinciaux ou territoriaux (le gouvernement fédéral assumant une part des coûts dans le cadre du Régime d'assistance publique du Canada) et du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, dans le cas des maisons d'hébergement situées dans les réserves et des collectivités principalement au service de femmes autochtones. Les fonds de fonctionnement étaient souvent complétés par diverses sources, dont un financement par les administrations municipales, des collectes de fonds, des dons et des subventions.

On trouve présentement 78 maisons d'hébergement, pour les femmes maltraitées et leurs enfants, qui ont reçu des fonds dans le cadre du programme Opération refuge d'un bout à l'autre du Canada. Vingt-quatre d'entre elles s'adressaient principalement à la clientèle autochtone. Elles font partie de l'effort plus vaste que le Canada a déployé pour offrir des logements d'hébergement aux femmes et aux enfants victimes de violence familiale, un «système» comprenant plus de 400 maisons d'hébergement presque autonomes, dont les coûts de fonctionnement sont principalement financés par les gouvernements provinciaux et territoriaux et par le ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada.

Évaluation du programme Opération refuge: Dans le cadre de ses responsabilités envers les initiatives fédérales en matière de violence familiale, la SCHL a entrepris d'évaluer le programme Opération refuge. L'évaluation comprenait, entre autres, un contrôle du programme sur une période d'un an (Système d'information sur la clientèle), des enquêtes et une recherche qualitative.

Dans le cadre de l'évaluation du programme Opération refuge, treize maisons d'hébergement Opération refuge ont fait l'objet d'une étude de cas de mai à juillet 1993. L'objectif de ces études de cas était de fournir des renseignements qualitatifs approfondis sur des questions touchant l'organisation et le fonctionnement des maisons d'hébergement, les besoins des collectivités en matière de services axés sur la violence familiale, les répercussions que ces maisons d'hébergement ont eues sur les collectivités et les modèles de prestation de services, le tout portant principalement sur les collectivités autochtones puis, en second lieu, sur les collectivités rurales.

L'équipe chargée des études s'est efforcée de choisir le plus vaste éventail possible de maisons d'hébergement afin de pouvoir établir des comparaisons sur les questions de la culture unique des collectivités autochtones et des répercussions de l'isolement sur les modèles de prestation de services. À cette fin, sept maisons d'hébergement autochtones et six non autochtones ont été étudiées. Par maison d'hébergement autochtone, on entend une maison d'hébergement administrée par un organisme autochtone ou des premières nations et financée par le ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord canadien. Le choix des maisons d'hébergement reposait sur une liste dressée par la SCHL. Bien que les treize maisons choisies pour l'étude ne soient pas nécessairement représentatives de toutes les maisons d'hébergement Opération refuge, ce choix comportait d'importants types de maisons d'hébergement dans bon nombre de milieux.

Les études de cas ont porté sur des maisons d'hébergement dans chaque région du Canada. Deux en Colombie-Britannique, quatre dans les Prairies, trois en Ontario, deux au Québec et deux dans les Maritimes. Le choix des maisons

d'hébergement avait pour but de présenter un amalgame de caractéristiques, notamment: maisons d'hébergement autochtones et non autochtones; maisons d'hébergement dans les réserves et hors des réserves; collectivités urbaines, rurales et éloignées. En tout, sept maisons d'hébergement ont été étudiées dans l'est (soit l'Ontario et les provinces de l'est) et six dans l'ouest du pays.¹

Plusieurs types de personnes ayant des connaissances approfondies sur la violence familiale et les services offerts par les maisons d'hébergement ont été interviewées dans chaque collectivité, dont les directeurs administratifs, des membres de l'organisme de parrainage, des employés de la maison d'hébergement, des employés des services sociaux, des employés de la bande, des autorités sanitaires, des conseillers, des membres de la force policière, des magistrats, des anciennes clientes de la maison d'hébergement, des Aînés (autochtones) et des membres de la collectivité.

Les études de cas ont porté sur trois principaux sujets:

- . modèles de prestation de services adoptés pour traiter la violence familiale;
- . besoins de la collectivité en matière de maisons d'hébergement et de services pour les femmes et les enfants victimes de violence familiale;
- . répercussions sur la collectivité, y compris les effets de l'implantation de la maison d'hébergement dans la collectivité.

¹ Aucune référence géographique hormis la distinction entre l'est et l'ouest ne sera fournie afin d'assurer l'anonymat de chaque maison d'hébergement.

Deux rapports ont été rédigés, les deux établissant des comparaisons, mais l'un portant sur les maisons d'hébergement autochtones et l'autre sur les maisons d'hébergement non autochtones (en grande partie rurales). Le présent rapport porte principalement sur les collectivités et les maisons d'hébergement autochtones,² en commençant par un examen du contexte culturel unique des maisons d'hébergement autochtones (aperçu rédigé par les chercheurs).

² Toutefois, certaines comparaisons sont établies çà et là au sujet des différences et des similitudes générales entre les maisons d'hébergement autochtones et les maisons d'hébergement non autochtones, et des comparaisons sont faites entre les groupes particuliers comme les femmes habitant des milieux ruraux et les immigrantes.

2. LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE ET LA CULTURE AUTOCHTONE

Conformément à la perception générale des répondants autochtones, la violence familiale n'était pas acceptée dans la culture autochtone traditionnelle. On a plutôt décrit le contexte culturel historique comme suit. Avant l'arrivée des Européens, les collectivités autochtones étaient généralement petites, et leurs membres très dépendants les uns des autres pour un motif de survie. Les femmes étaient très respectées et indispensables au fonctionnement de la famille et à la production des produits essentiels à la vie quotidienne. Parmi les nombreuses valeurs qui caractérisaient les collectivités autochtones traditionnelles, mentionnons les suivantes: l'interdiction de juger, la non-ingérence, la responsabilité individuelle, éviter des conflits dans la collectivité, le respect et le partage.

Selon les répondants autochtones, l'arrivée des Européens - les écoles résidentielles, la Loi sur les Indiens et les politiques gouvernementales -, ont amené de graves problèmes sociaux, dont un niveau extraordinaire de violence familiale dans de nombreuses collectivités autochtones au cours des cent dernières années. Dans ce contexte, on croit que la violence familiale serait amplifiée par maints autres problèmes sociaux (voir ci-après) ayant évolué au sein des collectivités autochtones au cours de cette période.

Bien qu'on puisse établir de nombreuses similitudes entre la violence familiale dans les collectivités autochtones et celle exercée dans les collectivités non autochtones, on trouve également des différences importantes. Certains facteurs dans les collectivités autochtones peuvent amplifier les problèmes contemporains de la violence familiale. Par exemple,

l'importance de garder la famille réunie et les règles morales de non-ingérence et d'interdiction de juger peuvent empêcher la divulgation de situations de violence familiale. Par contre, les valeurs de bienveillance et de partage ainsi que la présence d'une famille étendue peuvent faciliter la prestation d'aide aux femmes et aux enfants maltraités.

Aux yeux de nombreuses personnes, la revitalisation culturelle et le mouvement en faveur de l'autonomie gouvernementale se produisant actuellement dans les collectivités autochtones de l'ensemble du Canada, selon lesquels les autochtones assument le contrôle de leurs institutions et intègrent les aspects de la culture traditionnelle aux réalités contemporaines, auront éventuellement des répercussions positives pour ce qui est de réduire la violence familiale dans les collectivités autochtones. Comme le montre le rapport, les maisons d'hébergement autochtones parviennent à intégrer des aspects importants de la culture autochtone à leurs modèles de prestation de services dans les maisons d'hébergement afin d'intégrer le besoin actuel en services sociaux à la vision de l'établissement de collectivités plus bienveillantes.

Les répondants ont énuméré plusieurs causes de la violence familiale dans les collectivités autochtones, dont les suivantes: taux de chômage élevés occasionnant des tensions dans les familles, pénurie de logements convenables dans les collectivités, attitudes paternalistes envers les rôles masculins et féminins, de sorte que les femmes sont tenues à l'écart du pouvoir, femmes peu qualifiées pour occuper un emploi et négation répandue dans la collectivité de l'existence du problème de la violence familiale. L'alcoolisme a également signalé comme étant un facteur important de la violence familiale dans

certaines collectivités. En outre, dans des collectivités autochtones, les répondants ont indiqué que la perte de la culture traditionnelle aggrave le problème.

Par la même occasion, les répondants ont affirmé que les attitudes collectives envers la violence familiale avaient considérablement changé dans les collectivités où des études de cas de maisons d'hébergement et de leurs organismes cadres sont entreprises depuis un certain nombre d'années.

3. MODÈLES DE PRESTATION DE SERVICES DANS LES MAISONS D'HÉBERGEMENT

Une des plus importantes conclusions tirées des études de cas a été que les maisons d'hébergement autochtones et autres ont réussi à mettre au point des modèles de prestation de services répondant au divers besoins des femmes et des enfants victimes de violence familiale.

Satisfaction des besoins de base: La plupart des maisons d'hébergement, y compris les maisons d'hébergement autochtones, sont intégrées à des organisations plus vastes offrant des services aux personnes victimes de violence familiale. Presque tous les répondants ont convenu que les maisons d'hébergement ayant fait l'objet d'une étude de cas répondent aux besoins des femmes et des enfants maltraités pour ce qui est d'offrir un logement d'urgence, de la nourriture et des vêtements. Les répondants signalent que les maisons d'hébergement offrent un milieu sûr et confortable aux femmes, ce qui leur permet de commencer à planifier leur avenir. Les employés des maisons d'hébergement offrent de l'aide et des conseils, réfèrent les femmes aux organismes appropriés et défendent les intérêts de leurs clientes.

Bien que chaque collectivité soit différente et que de nombreuses maisons d'hébergement ne se trouvent pas au même stade de développement, elles tentent toutes d'offrir les services de base aux femmes et aux enfants victimes de violence familiale. Leurs efforts sont souvent soumis à rude épreuve par la nécessité de servir certaines collectivités éparses, parfois accessibles uniquement par avion.

Les maisons d'hébergement autochtones, celles qu'exploitent des organismes autochtones ou des premières nations, ont mis au point un modèle particulier de prestation de services aux femmes autochtones qui intègre harmonieusement les éléments de la culture autochtone. Les autochtones adoptent une «démarche holistique» dans leur prestation de services, démarche qui fait appel à la raison, au corps et à l'esprit et, parfois, à un examen de toute la famille. Diverses cérémonies spirituelles sont offertes, comme les étuves, et les Aînés rendent souvent visite aux maisons d'hébergement pour offrir des conseils, animer des cercles de vie et enseigner la culture traditionnelle. Ces collectivités se préoccupent de guérir à trois niveaux: la collectivité, la famille et l'individu. Conformément à ces priorités, les maisons d'hébergement autochtones offrent souvent des services très importants autres que l'hébergement.

Liens avec les organismes communautaires: Les maisons d'hébergement entretiennent des liens avec divers organismes et organisations communautaires, toutes recommandant souvent les services des uns et des autres et déployant des efforts continuels pour coordonner les services. En général, les employés des organismes et des maisons d'hébergement se disent satisfaits

des relations. Les maisons d'hébergement jouent également un rôle important dans la sensibilisation des collectivités à la violence familiale par leurs activités d'extension de services à la collectivité. Certaines maisons d'hébergement offrent d'autres services, tels que des programmes à l'intention des enfants, des garderies, des cours sur les compétences parentales, des services professionnels de counseling, de l'aide aux femmes qui ont quitté la maison d'hébergement, des événements de nature sociale, des collectes de fonds et des programmes de formation à l'intention des bénévoles. Quelques maisons d'hébergement ont établi des bureaux auxiliaires ou offrent des services de counseling à l'externe afin de répondre aux besoins des clientèles situées dans des milieux ruraux ou éloignés.

4. BESOINS DE LA COLLECTIVITÉ

Les répondants ont déclaré que la violence familiale dans les collectivités visées par des études de cas, et en particulier dans les collectivités autochtones, comporte de graves conséquences. Les personnes interrogées ont affirmé que de nombreuses femmes, qu'elles fassent partie ou non d'une collectivité autochtone, sont prises dans un cercle de violence qui s'est élargi avec le temps et est devenu un mode de vie.³

³ Les rapports connus dans les collectivités autochtones réalisés ces dernières années laissent supposer que peut-être 80 à 90 % des femmes autochtones ont été victimes de violence ou de mauvais traitements à un moment de leur vie. Ces chiffres, en général jugés non valables avant 1993, gagnent en crédibilité à la lumière de la conclusion plus globale tirée par Statistique Canada selon laquelle plus de la moitié de toutes les Canadiennes ont été victimes de violence à un moment quelconque de leur existence.

Le besoin le plus pressant de la collectivité souligné par les répondants de toutes les collectivités, mais en particulier des collectivités autochtones, c'est l'établissement de maisons d'hébergement à court terme et à long termes. Ce besoin s'avère particulièrement aigu en ce qui concerne les maisons d'hébergement de deuxième étape pour les femmes qui quittent les maisons d'hébergement. Le logement des femmes et des enfants dans les réserves pose également un grave problème, les listes d'attente étant tellement longues que les femmes maltraitées n'osent plus espérer obtenir un logement convenable. De nombreuses femmes n'ont d'autre choix que de quitter leur collectivité ou de se retrouver dans une situation de violence.

Comme l'ont indiqué les répondants aux chercheurs, le milieu social et communautaire joue souvent un rôle important pour ce qui est d'engendrer la violence familiale et de savoir si ces besoins peuvent être satisfaits. Ces situations se répercutent sur certaines femmes dans des circonstances particulières, ce qui leur rend souvent difficile l'accès aux services des maisons d'hébergement. Les femmes âgées peuvent cacher la violence dont elles sont victimes parce qu'elles sont isolées et que, souvent, elles ne sont pas au courant des services offerts. Les femmes habitant dans des milieux ruraux sont souvent isolées, disposent de ressources limitées, font face à de graves problèmes de transport et peuvent être privées d'un réseau de soutien communautaire. Les femmes situées dans des collectivités éloignées ont également des besoins particuliers, le moyen de transport pouvant les conduire à la maison d'hébergement la plus proche étant souvent difficile d'accès ou coûteux.

Les femmes ont parfois de la difficulté à s'adresser à une maison d'hébergement située dans leur propre collectivité en raison du manque de discrétion, d'inquiétudes entourant la sécurité et du niveau de tolérance de la violence familiale dans la collectivité. (Dans le même ordre d'idées, dans les maisons d'hébergement non autochtones, les répondants ont mentionné que les immigrantes éprouvent souvent des difficultés à communiquer en anglais ou en français et à comprendre les pratiques culturelles canadiennes. Elles peuvent également se sentir obligées de ne pas révéler la violence dont elles sont victimes pour une raison de pression collective, certaines collectivités préférant régler elles-mêmes les questions leurs groupes ethniques).

Les répondants de toutes les collectivités ont également indiqué certains besoins non satisfaits dans leur collectivité, notamment: programmes additionnels pour les hommes violents et services de counseling à l'intention des adolescents afin de tenter de briser le cercle de la violence dans leur collectivité; programmes qui visent à aider toute la famille à se réunifier; programmes de formation de professionnels autochtones afin qu'ils puissent travailler auprès des femmes et des familles victimes de violence familiale; aide permanente aux femmes qui quittent les maisons d'hébergement; initiatives d'extension de services à la collectivité afin d'éduquer la collectivité sur la violence familiale; défense des intérêts des femmes qui ont été victimes de violence familiale afin de s'assurer qu'elles font respecter leurs droits lorsqu'elles traitent avec des organismes et des tribunaux.

5. RÉPERCUSSIONS SUR LA COLLECTIVITÉ

Selon le projet de recherche, bien que certaines maisons d'hébergement n'existent que depuis quelque temps, elles ont généralement des répercussions très importantes sur la violence familiale dans les collectivités où elles sont situées. Bien qu'il soit difficile de relier directement le nombre de cas de violence familiale dans une collectivité aux efforts déployés par une maison d'hébergement, les répondants de toutes les collectivités ont affirmé que leurs maisons d'hébergement exerçaient une influence positive.

Selon les répondants, leur collectivité est de plus en plus consciente des problèmes de violence familiale et, dans certains cas, les attitudes ont considérablement changé. Bien que certains collectivités refusent encore d'admettre qu'elles ont des problèmes de violence familiale, certains estiment que la présence des maisons d'hébergement comme solution de rechange offerte aux femmes sensibilise davantage les collectivités à ces problèmes et souligne la nécessité continuelle d'éduquer le public afin d'assurer les changements d'attitude.

Les maisons d'hébergement ont également mentionné que leurs programmes ont contribué à changer le comportement des femmes. On estime que se réfugier dans une maison d'hébergement brise le cercle de la violence familiale (ne serait-ce que temporairement) et offre une possibilité aux femmes de changer leur situation. Selon des entrevues menées auprès des employés des maisons d'hébergement, des employés des organismes et des répondants des collectivités, les maisons d'hébergement exercent une influence positive en permettant à certaines femmes de reconnaître la violence et de s'y soustraire plus tôt qu'auparavant. Les femmes sont également plus sensibilisées aux perspectives qui s'offrent à elles.

Les répondants ont indiqué que certaines maisons d'hébergement avaient eu des répercussions importantes sur le comportement des hommes grâce aux services de counseling individuels ou de groupe et à l'éducation du public. Les maisons d'hébergement ont souvent aidé des femmes à avoir accès au système judiciaire et contribué à sensibiliser la police et les magistrats à certaines limites du système judiciaire touchant les victimes de violence familiale.

Les employés des places d'hébergement ont relevé des lacunes dans la prestation actuelle des services, dont la nécessité d'offrir une formation aux employés, des programmes aux enfants, des services à des groupes spéciaux comme les personnes âgées (et, dans les maisons d'hébergement non autochtones, des services aux femmes habitant dans des milieux ruraux et aux immigrantes), et des programmes à l'intention des hommes et des jeunes femmes.

Les répondants dans les maisons d'hébergement et tous les types de collectivités, autochtones ou non, ont reconnu que, pour offrir ces services additionnels afin de répondre aux besoins des femmes, des enfants et des collectivités en général, il faut augmenter les ressources disponibles. En outre, il peut être nécessaire d'élaborer de nouvelles lignes de conduite précisant les rôles appropriées que doivent jouer les maisons d'hébergement.

6. ENSEIGNEMENT TIRÉS DES ÉTUDES DE CAS

Certains thèmes importants sont ressortis des entrevues menées dans le cadre des études de cas des maisons d'hébergement autochtones (thèmes souvent appuyés par des observations faites lors des études de cas de maisons d'hébergement non autochtones). Ces thèmes ont des répercussions importantes sur la prestation des services aux femmes et aux enfants victimes de violence familiale:

Modèles de prestation de services

- . les processus reliés de l'autonomie gouvernementale et de la revitalisation de la culture traditionnelle des autochtones ont contribué à renforcer le sens de la responsabilité collective chez les collectivités autochtones pour des questions les concernant, y compris la violence familiale;

- . les maisons d'hébergement autochtones ont réussi à mettre au point des modèles de prestation de services communautaires et à caractère culturel afin de répondre aux besoins de leur collectivité; ces modèles répondent effectivement aux besoins des clients victimes de violence familiale; les chercheurs estiment que les maisons d'hébergement non autochtones pourraient s'inspirer d'un bon nombre de ces modèles axés sur la collectivité;

- . le travail d'extension de services à la collectivité constitue un élément crucial des modèles de prestation de services dans les maisons d'hébergement autochtones et a des répercussions importantes pour ce qui est de changer les attitudes de la collectivité à l'égard de la violence familiale. Dans certaines collectivités non autochtones étudiées, les services d'extension à la collectivité sont offerts par l'établissement de bureaux auxiliaires ou de services de counseling individuel externes afin de répondre aux besoins des femmes et des enfants victimes de violence familiale dans les milieux ruraux et éloignés; certains de ces services sont considérés comme des modèles utiles que les maisons d'hébergement autochtones au service de nombreuses collectivités pourraient utiliser;

- . bien que les relations entre les maisons d'hébergement, les organismes de parrainage de premières nations et les organismes de services sociaux aient été parfois tendues, la plupart des relations ont été satisfaisantes, tous recommandant souvent les services des uns et des autres et déployant des efforts continuels pour coordonner les services.

Besoins de la collectivité

- . le problème de la violence familiale est grave dans toutes les collectivités ayant fait l'objet d'une étude de cas, et en particulier dans les collectivités autochtones. Pour de nombreuses femmes, qu'elles fassent partie ou non d'une collectivité autochtone, les mauvais traitements sont devenus un «mode de vie»;
- . parmi les caractéristiques des clientes de maisons d'hébergement, mentionnons les suivantes: elles sont âgées entre 20 et 30 ans, sont peu instruites, ont peu de compétences en demande, ne travaillent habituellement pas hors du foyer et reçoivent une forme d'aide sociale;
- . certains besoins de la collectivité ne sont pas comblés et certains services ne sont pas offerts aux femmes et aux enfants victimes de violence familiale. Ces problèmes sont souvent aggravés par d'autres problèmes sociaux sérieux (revenus très faibles, alcoolisme, toxicomanie, etc.);

- . on observe une grave pénurie de maisons d'hébergement de deuxième étape et à long terme pour les femmes et les enfants victimes de violence familiale dans les milieux urbains (villes), semi-urbains (villages) et les milieux ruraux et éloignés;
- . malgré certains commentaires relatifs à la sécurité et à l'anonymat dans les maisons d'hébergement situées dans des collectivités autochtones, la plupart des répondants de collectivités autochtones croient qu'il est bon et souhaitable d'établir des maisons d'hébergement dans les réserves.

Répercussions sur la collectivité

- . au fil du temps, les maisons d'hébergement mettent au point des programmes et des services qui ont une influence grandissante sur les clientes et la collectivité en général. Bien que certaines collectivités s'opposent à l'établissement de maisons d'hébergement, la plupart des collectivités ont fini par les accepter, les aider et participer à leurs activités. De nombreuses collectivités sont devenues plus conscientes du problème de la violence et ont changé leurs attitudes à l'égard des maisons d'hébergement à la suite des efforts d'éducation de la collectivité déployés par les employés des maisons d'hébergement;
- . bon nombre de maisons d'hébergement exercent une influence positive pour ce qui est de changer les attitudes et le comportement des hommes à l'égard de la violence familiale.

Questions relatives au système

- . dans les études de cas réalisées dans les collectivités autochtones et non autochtones, on ne doutait pas que les maisons d'hébergement constituent un élément clé de la réaction collective à la violence familiale. Les maisons d'hébergement sont perçues comme essentielles et ayant des répercussions positives nombreuses, mais elles ont besoin de services préventifs et de soutien additionnels;

- . les études de cas laissent supposer que les maisons d'hébergement devraient être munies de meilleurs réseaux d'échange de renseignements pour qu'elles puissent tirer parti de l'expérience novatrice d'autres maisons d'hébergement. Cela s'applique particulièrement aux maisons d'hébergement au service de femmes autochtones ou immigrantes, en raison de la nécessité de mettre au point des modèles différents de prestation de services. En outre, les maisons d'hébergement ont grand besoin de former leurs nouveaux employés et d'élaborer continuellement des programmes;

- . compte tenu du contexte culturel des programmes des maisons d'hébergement autochtones, il faut accroître le contenu culturel et les liens entre les programmes afin d'appuyer les efforts déployés par les maisons d'hébergement. De tels efforts pourraient être allégés en favorisant l'échange de renseignements entre les maisons d'hébergement et en établissant des liens avec des organismes comme le fait le Programme des centres culturels et éducatifs dans l'ensemble du Canada.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Project Haven Program

The Project Haven Program, delivered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) on behalf of Health and Welfare Canada, was a component of the Federal government's interdepartmental Family Violence Initiatives which provided support to a national approach 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 and physically-disabled women.

The Project Haven Program provided capital funds in the form of non-repayable interest-free and fully forgivable 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 continue 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. 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 across Canada.

1.2 Project Haven Evaluation

In 1992-93, on behalf of the Government of Canada and in consultation with Health and Welfare Canada, CMHC began to collect basic information for an evaluation of the Project Haven Program. The evaluation was comprised of a number of components occurring as part of CMHC data collection activities. These components included: the development of a *Client Information System (CIS)* which provided profiles of the types of clients served by the program, their needs for housing assistance and the provision of services to meet client needs; a *CMHC Sponsor Survey* which obtained sponsor group views on the Project Haven Program, shelter policies, funding issues and short and long-term housing needs of shelter clients; a *Study of the Special Needs of the Unserved Population of Abused Women* to examine issues of access to shelter services; and the focus of this report, a *Community Needs and Impacts Study*, which provided case study information on the needs of women living in various types of communities including Aboriginal women, rural women and women living in remote locations.

1.3 The Case Studies

Case studies of thirteen Project Haven shelters were carried out between May and July, 1993 for the Community Needs and Impact Study, one aspect of the Project Haven Evaluation. The purpose of the case studies was to provide qualitative, in-depth information on issues affecting the structure and functioning of shelters, the shelters' service models, community needs regarding services for family violence, and community impacts of the shelters. The case studies addressed three main areas:

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

The case studies were conducted with shelter sponsor groups and communities to examine the following issues:

- the prevalence of family violence in the community;
- the need for family violence services;
- the match between shelters and community needs;
- gaps and obstacles to addressing family violence in the community;
- potential for the Project Haven Program to address family violence in the community;
- short and long-term housing needs of women experiencing family violence;
- the impacts of locating shelters in communities;
- the level of community support for shelters;
- the service networks to address family violence in communities;
- the links between community agencies and shelters;
- the service needs of the community; and
- the factors affecting the types of services required.

The objective of the study is to draw broad lessons to be learned from the needs of the communities and the operation of the shelters. **This report is primarily a reflection of the views expressed by the people who were interviewed, with supplementary interpretation by the researchers.**

1.4 Case Study Selection and Process

Shelters were selected to reflect a mix of characteristics and to allow comparisons between: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal; on-reserve and off-reserve; and urban, rural and remote communities. 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. (Shelters were chosen from a list drawn up by CMHC.) Case studies were carried out in shelters in every region in Canada. There were two case study shelters in British Columbia, four in the Prairies, three in Ontario, two in Quebec and two in the Maritimes. Seven shelters were studied in the East (Ontario and east) and six in the West.¹

The study team endeavoured to select as wide a range of shelters as possible in order to provide for comparisons in terms of issues of cultural uniqueness of Aboriginal communities and the impact of isolation on service models. To this end, seven Aboriginal and six non-Aboriginal shelters were studied. Of the Aboriginal shelters, four were located on reserves accessible by road, one was in a large city, one in a rural area off reserve and one was on an isolated reserve. Three of the non-Aboriginal shelters with reserves in their catchment area provided services to a limited number of Aboriginal women. Three of the non-Aboriginal shelters are located in small towns (under 10,000 population) and three are in larger cities (15,000 and over).

Initial contacts with case study communities were made as follows:

1. The Project Haven Evaluation CIS Centre initially contacted shelter staff to request their participation in the case studies.
2. A follow up phone call by the CIS Centre was made to shelter staff to request a list of appropriate people who might be interviewed and to schedule initial dates and times for the site visit.
3. CMHC Program Evaluation Division sent a letter to Sponsor Groups thanking them for agreeing to participate and explaining the nature of the case studies.
4. The CIS Centre sent study materials to case study shelters to provide them with an idea of the nature of the questions that would be asked by researchers.
5. The researchers followed up with a phone call to individuals on the list of potential interviewees provided by the shelters to set specific appointments for interviews.

¹ No geographical references beyond the east-west distinction will be provided in order to protect the anonymity of individual shelters.

The site visits were carried out by seven researchers, including two Aboriginal researchers, who spent 2-3 days in each community interviewing respondents. Assurances were given for confidentiality for all information and data collected and for the protection of the identity of individual shelters. An extensive Interview Guide containing questions pertaining to a wide range of shelter activities was designed for each type of respondent (shelter staff, sponsor group, agency personnel and community members). The Interview Guide was pre-tested in an Aboriginal community.

A detailed Case Study Research Protocol was also prepared and distributed to field researchers. The Protocol outlined the purpose of the case studies, procedures for interviewing respondents, methods for recording and returning data, a description of the community context and instructions on how to deal with problems encountered in the field. In addition, a one day training session for the study team was held.

Researchers interviewed, on average, approximately 16 respondents in each community. Telephone follow-up interviews were conducted with individuals not available during site visits. Several types of individuals who were knowledgeable about the shelter's services were interviewed in each community, including: the shelter Executive Director; members of the sponsor group (usually members of the Board of Directors or Band Council); shelter staff; social service personnel; Band staff; health officials; counselors; police; justice officials; former clients of the shelter; Aboriginal Elders and community members. An effort was made to interview at least one representative from each of the above groups in each case study community.

Shelter Directors were informed that the material from the case studies was being collected solely for the preparation of the Case Study Report and that this report would be sent to the case study shelter's Director and Sponsor Group for review. It was also stressed that the report would conceal the identity of specific shelters and communities to ensure the confidentiality of participants' responses and views. Finally, it was also made clear by the researchers that this was a study of community needs, impacts and service models and not an evaluation of the shelter itself.

Shelter Directors, shelter staff, officials from the Sponsor Group, agency personnel and community people were all extremely helpful to the study team in all aspects of the research.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The case studies had a number of limitations typical of this type of research:

- the sample of shelters selected for the case studies is neither random nor sufficiently large for any statistical analysis of some data of interest (for example, the incidence of family violence) to be carried out;
- as a one-time assessment, causal inferences or assessments of change through time are relatively subjective;
- reliance on participants in the shelters and community processes limits the opportunity for objective (statistical) assessments.

1.6 Outline of the Report

This report has seven sections following the Introduction which summarize the findings of the case studies. These sections are:

2. **Aboriginal Culture and Family Violence:** This section provides a context for a discussion of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal communities and family violence issues.
3. **Shelter Background:** This section describes the history of the shelters, the nature of the sponsor group, the area serviced by the shelter, and various aspects of the shelters including location, transportation, size of the shelters, safety and anonymity issues, security and the physical structures.
4. **Shelters' Service Models:** The various services offered by shelters are described including in-shelter and community outreach activities. Shelters' policies, philosophies, and a profile of clients are also provided. Also, the relationship with other agencies and the distinctive service models of Aboriginal shelters are discussed.
5. **Community Needs:** This section examines the prevalence of family violence in the community, the extent and nature of the need for family violence services, the degree of support for shelters in the community and short and long-term housing needs in the community.
6. **Community Impacts of Shelters:** The impact of shelters on family violence in the community as well as on women and children, men and other agencies are discussed in this section.
7. **Summary/Conclusions and Program Implications:** This section provides an overview of lessons learned from the case studies and implications for the future.

2. ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Below, the researchers will briefly outline some views of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture and society, because an understanding of these features -- and or how they different from mainstream society -- is essential to understanding the role of shelters in Aboriginal communities. This section of the report principally represents the researchers interpretation of background material, for the benefit of readers not familiar with historical and contemporary aspects of Aboriginal communities, including a discussion of very high levels of family violence found in many Aboriginal communities today. Readers familiar with this background information may wish to go on to Section 3, Shelter Background, where the case study analysis begins with a description of the shelters.

2.1 Traditional Aboriginal Cultural

In the view of Aboriginal respondents, family violence was not an accepted part of traditional Aboriginal culture. Rather, respondents described the historic and cultural context. Traditional Aboriginal society was based on the knowledge that all things in life are related in a sacred manner and are governed by natural laws. In their relationship with the land, people accommodated themselves to it in an attitude of respect and stewardship.¹ Proper conduct was determined by an understanding of the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature. Humans behaved in a manner consistent with the natural laws and nature, in turn, provided the sustenance required to live. Aboriginal communities were small and individuals were intensely interdependent. People relied upon each other for survival.²

The roles played by women in traditional Aboriginal culture were also critical to the survival of the group. Women were held in high regard and respected as they were integral to the functioning of the family as well as to the production of the necessities of life. Indeed, with the ability to create life, women maintained a closer spiritual connection to the land (mother earth) than men and were, therefore, spiritually very strong.³

These cultural values resulted in the development of certain attitudes that came to characterize Aboriginal ideals of community life. Individual equality which regards behaviour that placed anyone "above" anyone else was viewed as unacceptable. Decision-making was generally by consensus and involved the entire community. The attitude of non-interference in the lives of others and resistance to judging other peoples' behaviour or placing blame on individuals was also prevalent in Aboriginal communities.

¹ See for example: D. McCaskill, "When Cultures Meet", Bridges, Volume 3, Number 2, 1987. P. Beck, The Sacred: Ways of Knowing of American Indians, Navajo Community College Press, 1987. Edward Benton-Bani, The Mishamis Book. (year? publisher?)

² Ibid. (which one?)

³ See for example: Aboriginal Woman Issue, Canadian Journal of Women's Issues, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1989.

There were also significant expectations of reciprocal obligations among family members with an emphasis on the importance of maintaining the family together as a functioning unit. The family was the primary unit for production of the basic necessities of life and its maintenance was critical for survival. Aboriginal people traditionally maintained an emphasis on individuals' assuming responsibility for their own behaviour, a strong avoidance of overt conflict and a reluctance to openly express emotions. Conflict in the community was generally seen as a direct threat to the survival of the group because of the extensive interdependence of individuals.¹

Any violation of community norms, therefore, had to be dealt with immediately so as not to disrupt the functioning of the group. Informal social control mechanisms such as gossip served to ensure that individuals engaged in appropriate behaviour.² More severe measures such as banishment were utilized for more serious offenses.

2.2 Contemporary Aboriginal Culture

Traditional Aboriginal culture was significantly undermined as a result of contact with Europeans. Government policy from the middle of the nineteenth century until 1973 was based on active attempts to discourage Aboriginal culture and assimilate Aboriginal Canadians into mainstream Canadian society. Residential schools were the primary mechanism used to implement this policy.³ Children were removed from their homes at an early age and pressured to give up their traditional culture (e.g. forbidden to speak their Aboriginal language or to have contact with their parents), taught European ways and encouraged to become functioning members of white society.

At the same time, a reserve system was established which implemented a non-Aboriginal governing system in which Aboriginal people had little input, drastically marginalizing them economically. An *Indian Act* was passed which served to control most aspects of Aboriginal peoples' lives, repressing traditional social and cultural traditions and ceremonies. The result was that Aboriginal people became marginal to Canadian society. Frequently dependent on the government for many aspects of their lives, under pressure to give up their traditional culture and isolated on reserves, many of the positive aspects of their traditional culture and society were lost.

¹ See for example: Malcolm Ross, *Dancing With a Ghost*, University of Toronto Press, 1992.

² Ibid.

³ See, for example, Jean Barman et al., *Indian Education in Canada*, Vol. 1, Vancouver, UBC Press, 1987.

At the same time, Aboriginal people were not really assimilated to the alternative benefits of mainstream society. Government policy of isolating Aboriginal people on reserves ironically contributed to the maintenance of a distinct identity by reinforcing boundaries between Aboriginal people and the larger society. This allowed some degree of protection for their communal way of life, but with greatly diminished economic/cultural strengths. In addition, most students dropped out of residential school before learning sufficient skills to successfully function in white society. Thus, despite pressures to assimilate and despite significant social change, Aboriginal people remained fundamentally marginal to White society. As is noted in Section 2.3, one major symptom of this social disorder was the emergence of an extraordinary level of family violence.

The past 20 years have witnessed a significant change in the situation of Aboriginal people, particularly as regards *cultural revitalization*. Government policy no longer promotes the assimilation of Aboriginal people through repression of their culture, and important strides have been taken by Aboriginal people to rebuild their institutions and culture within the context of contemporary society. Self-government, economic development initiatives and a revitalization of Aboriginal culture has resulted in the development of a bicultural identity for many Aboriginal people; that is, the maintenance of Native culture while at the same time participating in the larger Canadian society. These changes are seen by many as providing a foundation for renewal of community life and change in many areas, including family violence.

2.3 Family Violence in Today's Aboriginal Communities

It is important to recognize that all Aboriginal communities are different. At the same time, the above-noted history of marginalization and isolation has had significant implications for family violence in many Aboriginal communities today. On the one hand, some Aboriginal communities have come to be characterized by serious social and personal problems brought on by contact with the larger society. The lack of control over many aspects of their lives, the acculturating experiences of residential schools; the assimilationist policies of government, the lack of economic opportunities and welfare dependence on reserves have combined to cause some Aboriginal people to internalize an inferior image; develop confusion (and often devalue) their Aboriginal identity; escape into some form of addiction and engage in violent behaviour (including family violence). This prevalence was widely reported as "epidemic" in Aboriginal communities in the 1990's, with popular estimates being that as many as 80% to 90% of Aboriginal women experienced family violence.

Many shelter staff reported that there was a lack of awareness of what "family violence" is on the reserves because it has, for many people, become an accepted way of life. It sometimes is often simply viewed as the usual way to deal with problems between partners. The traditional cultural values of respect and caring, have broken down in some communities leading to a this high prevalence of family violence.

Shelter staff reported that... "There is a lack of awareness of what family violence is on reserves because [family violence] has, for many people, become an accepted way of life".

On the other hand, some important aspects of traditional cultural attitudes and values described above remain as significant cultural features in Aboriginal communities. Paradoxically, some of these values which served a positive integrating function in communities in historical times may now be contributing to the maintenance of family violence.

For example, respondents stated that, in some Aboriginal communities (particularly where there are aspects of traditional culture), there is a strong ethic to keep the family together under almost any circumstances. In this vein, in the case studies described within, it was observed that sometimes community members will agree to have a woman go to the shelter in an emergency situation (e.g. when a partner is drunk and violent), but that when the crisis is over the woman should return to the home. In addition, the attitudes of non-interfering, non-blaming and non-judging other people remain strong in Aboriginal communities and may mitigate against the recognition and reporting of family violence when this behaviour has become entrenched. Furthermore, a woman's strong sense of family obligation and role in providing stability in the family may make her reluctant to seek help from an outside agency for an abusive situation. As well, some people regard shelters as a "non-Aboriginal" way of handling family violence in that the women and children are segregated from the rest of the family.

In Aboriginal communities, the extended family often plays a significant role in family situations. On the positive side, an extended family member can play a supportive role in an incidence of family violence. For example, the extended family may provide a safe place to stay temporarily in a crisis. In other circumstances, members of the extended family may be part of the problem, particularly in sexual abuse cases. In these communities, it is uncommon for a member of the family intercede in a family violence situation.

Through the major Aboriginal cultural revitalization which is taking place across Canada today, many of the Aboriginal traditions, beliefs, values and structures are being brought back and blended with the new social circumstances. Respondents on reserves, particularly in the West, reported that Aboriginal people in their communities are reviving ceremonies and cultural practices which are in turn contributing to a new sense of pride in Aboriginal culture and identity. Elders are being restored to their former place of honour and authority. Schools are integrating aspects of Aboriginal culture into their curriculum in an attempt to instill a constructive understanding of Aboriginal history, values and practices. In the case studies reported within, it was reported that the positive values espoused in the traditional cultural teachings are beginning to have an impact on people's behaviour. It is into this complex web of social and cultural change that shelters must be located, to achieve a positive impact on family violence.

In Aboriginal communities, the extended family often plays a significant role in family violence situations.

2.4 Shelters and Aboriginal Self-Government

While each community is evolving in its own unique way, Aboriginal people in all parts of Canada are increasingly assuming control of institutions in their community. The movement toward self government has witnessed a significant shift in how services are delivered in Aboriginal communities. Education, government, economic initiatives, health and social services are increasingly being designed and operated by Aboriginal people. First Nation governments assume these roles and often additional tension accompanies these processes where a male-dominated power structure responds slowly or only in part to the demands of women seeking remedies to family violence.

In many cases, the institutions that are being developed are based on a blending of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal values and practices. In the area of health services, for example, traditional healing practices are being incorporated into western medicine. Culturally-based social services based on the teachings of the medicine wheel and spiritual ceremonies such as sweat lodges, sweetgrass, fasting and healing circles are being established in areas such as drug and alcohol treatment centres, family counseling and justice programs.

The phenomenon of cultural revitalization of aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture, economic development and the movement toward self-government are resulting in a strengthening of Aboriginal communities. One result has been a decline in the number of social problems in some communities. In addition, many individuals are taking increasing responsibility for social processes occurring in their communities within the context of traditional cultural communal values. This is leading to an increased sense of collective responsibility for the social functioning of members of the community. In the future, these processes may have the impact of lessening the rate of family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Project Haven shelters in case study communities are also integrating traditional cultural values and practices into their service models to more adequately serve the needs of women experiencing family violence (see Aboriginal Shelters' Service Model section).

3. SHELTER BACKGROUND

3.1 History of Shelters

Virtually all of the shelters included in the case studies were started by groups of women who observed the need to address the problem of family violence in their community. Nine of the shelters were initiated by formal women's groups in existence in the community prior to the establishment of the shelter. In five shelter communities (three Aboriginal and two non-Aboriginal), needs assessments were undertaken to determine the degree of family violence in the community. In the Aboriginal communities, respondents reported that approximately 80% of women in the community had experienced some form of violence (sexual, physical, emotional) in their lives (exact statistics were not available for non-Aboriginal communities, but it was reported that a serious need was uncovered by needs assessments).

3.2 Shelter Sponsor Groups

Nine shelters are administered by Boards of Directors composed of volunteers from the communities served by the shelter. Four shelters are governed by Band Councils. Eight of the shelters (four non-Aboriginal and four Aboriginal) are operated by (or closely associated with) a larger umbrella organization (usually a woman's group) which provides other services related to family violence or social services, including: providing information to women on social assistance, housing, legal aid, employment and education; operating counseling centres; advocating on behalf of women experiencing family violence; referring women to social service agencies; providing child care programs; operating crisis lines; conducting public education workshops; initiating research projects on family violence issues; and, in a few cases, running men's support groups and second-stage housing programs. In some cases, the umbrella organizations and shelters are overseen by a common Board of Directors and the shelters have been integrated into the operations of the larger organizations.

3.3 Shelters' Age, Catchment Area and Clients

The majority of shelters in the case studies had only been in operation for a short time with most opening within the past two years (five opened in 1992). However, four of the shelters were initially established during the 1980's. A striking feature of these shelters is the large geographic area to which they provide services. All but one of the case study shelters contain a mix of cities or towns, rural areas and reserves within their catchment areas. One shelter serves an urban population exclusively. In many cases, Aboriginal shelters cover a number of reserves often spread over a large area.

<p>A striking feature of all the shelters is the large geographic areas in which they provide service. Many Aboriginal shelters serve a number of reserves, or in extreme cases, a number of "fly-in" communities.</p>
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It is interesting to note that all six non-Aboriginal shelters serve geographic areas that include reserves. Two non-Aboriginal shelters in the West reported that 30% and 40% of the clients respectively are Aboriginal women.

All of the case study shelters reported that they will serve any woman in their catchment area. In practice, however, the Aboriginal shelters' clients are almost exclusively Aboriginal women (primarily Status Indians for shelters on reserves) and non-Aboriginal women are the main client group of non-Aboriginal shelters (with the two exceptions noted above). As well, virtually all of the staff of Aboriginal shelters are Aboriginal (with the exception of professional counselors in a few shelters).

It was reported to researchers that, in most cases, Aboriginal women preferred to utilize the services of Aboriginal shelters even if it meant going to a shelter some distance from their community. Respondents reported that Aboriginal women felt more comfortable in the familiar surroundings of an Aboriginal shelter, preferred being with other Aboriginal clients and staff and appreciated the culturally-based service model of Aboriginal shelters.

On the other hand, in areas without Aboriginal shelters, it was reported that generally, Aboriginal women are happy to have a safe place to go and appreciate the services provided by the non-Aboriginal shelter. The two non-Aboriginal shelters which have a substantial number of Aboriginal clients endeavour to provide services that are culturally appropriate, have Native volunteers on staff, and at one shelter, coordinate their services with nearby Aboriginal social service agencies. In a few cases, it was reported that Aboriginal women preferred to go to a non-Aboriginal shelter to guarantee safety and anonymity while distancing themselves from the abusive situation.

One of the non-Aboriginal shelters in the East serves significant numbers of immigrant women while another shelter is challenged to provide service to women from a large rural population as well as to a relatively isolated long-established ethnic group. Reaching out to rural women in abusive situations in general is a particular mandate of a number of shelters with programs and procedures being initiated to bring shelter services to women in these outlying areas.

Respondents reported that before the shelters were established in all communities studied, women tended to stay in the abusive situation, go to the homes of relatives or friends, or attempt to access shelters in more distant locations.

Aboriginal women generally prefer to utilize the services of Aboriginal shelters. On the other hand, in areas without Aboriginal shelters, Aboriginal women, shelter staff report, are happy to have a safe environment at non-Aboriginal shelters.

3.4 Location of the Case Study Shelters

Five of the Aboriginal shelters are located in the centre of their reserves near the Band office and other services (stores, police station, social service agency, health services). One of the Aboriginal shelters is situated in a small town near a reserve. The other is in a large city in close proximity to a number of reserves. Many Aboriginal shelters serve reserves located a great distance from the shelter, often making it difficult for women to get to the shelter.

Two views on the appropriate location of Aboriginal shelters emerged from the interviews:

- o **Off-reserve Location:** A few informants suggested that shelters should be located off the reserve in nearby towns or cities. Such locations are seen as having the advantage of facilitating anonymity and safety of clients thereby making abused women more likely to go to the shelter. This problem was illustrated by one Aboriginal shelter which rarely receives women from the closest reserve because these women perceive that they will be recognized by members of the community. In another small reserve where tolerance of family violence is high, women go to the shelter for a period of only one or two days. These situations, however, were not typical of the circumstances for Aboriginal shelters.
- o **On-reserve Location:** In contrast, the majority of respondents from Aboriginal communities preferred to have the shelter located in the community (or on a nearby reserve). A number of advantages were cited for this alternative. The Band can maintain a degree of control over the shelter allowing Aboriginal people to develop appropriate culturally-based service models to meet the particular cultural needs of the shelter's clients. Furthermore, most respondents suggested that with adequate security measures, safety for the clients was not a problem in these community shelters. There was also the reported advantage of allowing children to continue attending their school and allowing the women to have easy access to daycare and other facilities. Another positive impact of locating the shelter in the community is that women have the option to leave a violent situation earlier. Many Aboriginal respondents reported that it was a source of pride that community members could develop and deliver an important social service in their community.

Thus, there are advantages and disadvantages in locating an Aboriginal shelter on reserve, but the majority of respondents (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) favoured the on-reserve location. This preference is seen in situations where women have an option, that is, they can access one shelter on the reserve or another in a nearby town or city. One Aboriginal case study community in that situation reported that the vast majority of women preferred to go to the shelter on the reserve. Only a few Aboriginal women went to the non-Aboriginal shelter in the nearby city.

Three non-Aboriginal shelters are located in cities and three are in small towns. Only one of these shelters, however, serves an urban population exclusively. The others contain a mix of cities, towns, rural areas and reserves, often covering a large geographic area. The non-Aboriginal case study shelters located in urban (cities) or semi-urban (towns) communities are close to available community services and facilities which can be accessed by their clients. Because all but one of the shelters serves a large catchment area, these central locations were judged to be the most appropriate in order to provide service to the large surrounding areas. The shelter providing service to an urban population is located in a suburb of the city, a re-location from a downtown neighbourhood for anonymity and security reasons. Although not centrally located, this shelter is accessible by bus to and from most other areas of the city.

3.5 Access and Transportation*

Women come to shelters using a variety of modes of transportation. A few arrive by driving their own cars. However, this was reported to be a problem in some communities because there is rarely a secure indoor facility at the shelter where vehicles can be parked. Cars parked on the street outside the shelter are accessible to abusers and compromise anonymity for the woman. One shelter on a reserve had a client's car vandalized while parked at the shelter. More frequently, it was reported to researchers that women are brought to the shelter by police or taxi (often shelters will pay for taxis). Three shelters (two Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal) had their own vehicle or use volunteers with cars to pick up women who telephone the shelter, unless the domestic situation is unsafe in which case they rely on the police. Transportation for women living in rural areas to the shelter was often cited by respondents to be a problem. In many cases, these women have severe transportation difficulties, are isolated, have limited knowledge of available services and are fearful of accessing services outside of their own communities.

In the case of Aboriginal shelters servicing remote reserves, women have to fly to the community nearest the shelter and be picked up. In such cases, the cost of the flight is often prohibitive and Bands tend not to provide funds to send clients to shelters. If the Band does agree to fly a woman out to a shelter, respondents report that the decision of who will be sent out of the community by air for safety reasons is often based on the recommendation of the social service worker on-reserve. Safe houses have been established in some Aboriginal communities for women who cannot access a shelter because of the transportation expense or because they are physically isolated due to winter weather conditions. For the Aboriginal women who are victims of family violence and who live close enough to a shelter to use ground transportation, a differential regarding the costs of this transportation was reported to exist between Status and non-Status clients. Status clients have a card that entitles them to free taxi service to the shelter; non-Status clients must pay for a taxi themselves (or often shelters will pay for taxis, an expensive decision for shelters if the woman has come from a distant location).

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women from remote or rural areas have transportation difficulties in accessing shelter services.

* For related discussions, see *Section 4.5 Client Profile: Coming to the Shelter*, page 22

Aboriginal women who travel to shelters from great distances, often decide not to have their children accompany them. A number of reasons were cited by respondents for this decision. First, because of the significant role the extended family often plays in Aboriginal family situations, caregivers are often available to look after the children. Secondly, there can be legal concerns (Status fathers have registered custodial rights, particularly as it applies to common-law relationships) and child welfare concerns (fear of having their children taken into care) for the mother and the shelter if the children are removed from an Aboriginal community. Thirdly, older children, if not being abused, may choose to remain with their fathers.

3.6 Safety and Anonymity Provided by Shelters

A number of issues pertaining to safety and anonymity emerged from the case studies. Generally, these issues relate to community factors that affect the ability of the shelter to provide adequate services. Most case study shelters reported no incidence of threats to women or problems regarding security. But some respondents, particularly Aboriginal individuals, mentioned issues relating to anonymity and safety of clients.

In a few situations, highly visible shelters located in small communities may not be a totally risk-free alternative for women leaving abusive situations. Under these circumstances, it was reported that it is virtually impossible for a woman to put any distance between herself and the abuser. There were reported incidents of abusers threatening and attempting to contact women in these shelters. A few women have resorted to going to a shelter in a distant city to get away from such dangerous situations.

Several individuals mentioned that women may hesitate to come to shelters because of the lack of anonymity as they might know some of the staff. Some respondents reported that women from all case study communities viewed coming to the shelter as a last resort and that their decision was often accompanied by feelings of shame and embarrassment. The situation is compounded by the fact that family violence in some communities has become "a way of life" for some women. A number of people interviewed indicated that sometimes clients feel uncomfortable coming to the shelter for these reasons.

One Aboriginal women's organization which sponsors a shelter in an urban area dealt with the issue of anonymity by maintaining a high degree of secrecy as to the location of the shelter. Similarly, one shelter with a large number of immigrant women clients relocated away from the immigrant community for confidentiality and security reasons.

Shelter staff deal with these issues in a number of ways including: ensuring sufficient security measures are in place at the shelter, developing strong community networks with agencies and organizations and carrying out community outreach activities which focus on changing people's attitudes towards family violence.

3.7 Security of Shelters

Overall, it was reported that security measures were adequate, although there was some variation among shelters. A few shelters have only basic security measures, such as locked doors (sometimes inside doors as well as outside). About half of the case study shelters are enclosed by a fence (of varying heights) and have an intercom system to identify individuals seeking entrance to the shelter. A few possessed more elaborate security measures including: windows made of bullet-proof glass; spotlights; video cameras; doors with security codes and regular police patrolling.

Individuals interviewed cited the need for increased security at some shelters. Some respondents reported that women staying in the shelter did not feel secure. Given the fundamental nature of this need it is important that shelters be given the financial resources to allow clients to know that they are in a safe environment during this stressful period of their lives. Several shelter staff pointed to a need to provide better security for the shelter. Suggestions made by respondents included: additional outside lighting; installation of a video camera for surveillance; the fences high enough to provide both privacy and security; and installation of bullet-proof windows. At the same time, some respondents articulated the desire to balance security concerns with an environment that is not overly "institutionalized" so that women and children can feel at home in the shelter.

3.8 Size of Shelters and Facilities

The size of the shelters varies in terms of the number of women and children that can be accommodated, from nine to twenty-one, with the average being fifteen women and children. The physical layout of shelters is similar. Each contains administrative offices, a common living room, a kitchen, laundry, smoking area and a number of bedrooms. Most also have a counseling office, a playroom for children and a T.V. room. A few maintain an outdoor play area, a large room for group counseling and a quiet room for clients. There was little difference between the physical set-up of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shelters.

Many respondents pointed out that there were problems with the physical structure of the shelters. The most frequently mentioned concerns about physical facilities were: insufficient funds for maintenance and repairs; lack of an outdoor play area for children; lack of adequate space for counseling and offices; lack of parking; and no space available to conceal a client's vehicle.

4. SHELTERS' SERVICE MODELS

4.1 Shelter Services

Given the geographical, ethnic, and philosophical diversity among case study shelters, it is very difficult to summarize their different approach to the provision of service. Also, it is important to be cautious when making generalizations about overall 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 in their respective communities. Here, service models refer to a shelter's (and in most cases, larger women's organizations to which they are connected) value perspective in providing services, the orientation of their staff and the type of services offered (range of shelter and support services, outreach services, etc.).

4.2 Common Services Provided by Shelters

Most shelters, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, are integrated into larger organizations providing services to individuals experiencing family violence. It is, therefore, important when discussing the service model of shelters to recognize the involvement of the larger organization. Shelter staff frequently commented that the shelter and the larger organization are inseparable. The impact of this integration has been the ability to offer a broader range of services to women experiencing family violence and to more effectively address the continuum of women's needs, from preventative community outreach activities through, in some cases, to assisting women after they leave the shelter. Tying shelter services into activities of larger organizations can also lead to the acquisition of a greater number of resources and the development of more extensive service networks through the economies of scale afforded by a larger organization.

All shelters provide a number of services -- food, clothing and emergency shelter for women experiencing family violence. These services are available to clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As one shelter's brochure suggested "...the dignity of every woman and child, regardless of race, creed, age or disability to live in the community they choose, without fear of violence" is the desired goal. One shelter's Mission Statement states that their organization is "... putting an end to family violence by promoting healing and recovery from violence through shelter, support, education and intervention". Another shelter describes their services as follows:

- Staff always available, families may arrive at any time
- Safety and complete confidentiality
- Providing meals , emergency clothing and related assistance
- Providing counseling for both women and their children
- Assisting with advocacy and referrals to community services
- Assisting with transportation to appointments and school
- Assistance in establishing new households.

Shelter Mission Statement: ..."(to protect) ...the dignity of every woman and child, regardless of race, creed, age or disability to live in the community they choose, without fear of violence."

Nearly all shelters provide crisis intervention either by telephone on a 24-hour crisis line or in person to women who arrive at the shelter. Shelter staff reported that if a woman in a crisis situation contacts the shelter and requests admission, transportation will be arranged for her, if possible, if admission to the shelter is requested. (See section 3.5 for a more detailed discussion on access and transportation.)

The shelters reported that they are oriented toward safety and security for women and children by providing short-term emergency housing. They attempt to provide a comfortable environment, free of the threat of abuse, to give women an opportunity to assess their situation and to make decisions about their immediate future. Trained staff are available to give support and counseling to women and children and to assist them in coping with their situation. As one shelter staff member put it "... the objectives are stabilization, maintenance, revitalization and enhancement". Some shelters, especially those which have been in existence for a number of years, provide a number of additional services including: children's programs; daycare; parenting skills courses; professional psychologists on a part-time basis; assistance to women after they leave the shelter; services to non-resident clients; social events; fundraising events; and training programs for volunteers. A few shelters maintain other programs including: counseling and support groups for men; newsletters; publishing materials (e.g. pamphlets, books, etc.) on family violence; a summer camp weekend program; resource centres; supervised visits between children and their fathers; and employing college and university students who wish to do field placements.

Information and referrals are also provided to women. The shelters assist in contacting social service agencies, legal aid, schools, housing agencies, court officials, police and immigration officials. In this process, shelter personnel will often act as advocates for clients in their dealing with outside agencies. They will frequently accompany women to appointments or court in order to lend support and expertise.

Shelter staff reported that there is often a pattern followed by women who come to the shelter in terms of their attempt to make changes in their lives. The first phase at the shelter is usually spent dealing with the emotional trauma of the abuse and separation from family. In the second phase, shelter staff assist the woman in formulating a plan of action for when she leaves the shelter. The third phase involves making arrangements to put the plan into action.

In most shelters, both one-to-one and group counseling are available. Many shelter staff stated that the possibility the woman may leave the shelter and return to the abusive situation is discussed early in her stay to make it clear that she can return to the shelter if necessary. She is assisted in developing a safe emergency plan to leave home if necessary. Staff stated that they discuss the risks involved in returning to the unchanged home situation with the woman, but emphasize that she has to make her own decision and whatever that decision is, it will be respected by the shelter staff.

There is a pattern followed by women who come to the shelter to attempt to make changes in their lives. The first phase is to deal with the emotional trauma of the abuse and separation from family. The second phase involves shelter staff assisting the women in formulating a plan of action. The third phase involves making arrangements to put the plan into action.

4.3 Community Outreach

Respondents reported that all shelters carry out various community outreach activities as resources allow. These include conducting educational workshops on family violence, offering parenting and child care courses, organizing group sessions on topics such as dating violence, giving lectures to community groups, and conducting mens' groups on abuse.

Outreach in the Aboriginal communities was reported to depend to a large extent on the parameters of staffing and funding. Distance and transportation must be taken into account when considering these outreach services. Individual support to women, including former residents, is possible in some immediate communities where staff can visit clients or, in the majority of cases, where women can come to the shelters on a drop-in basis. One shelter has set up a "peace room" where women can stop to reflect on their situation. In some communities, in keeping with the "holistic" approach adopted by their shelters, outreach support services are extended to the whole family.

Because of staffing and funding problems, a few shelters have found themselves restricted in the provision of follow-up services to the telephone. Outreach by telephone (support, information, referrals) was also reported to be the only method of providing support to women and families living in the catchment area, but far from the community where the shelter is located. Because many of the shelters in Aboriginal communities have only been established for a short time, some outreach programs are still in the initial stages of planning and development.

Non-residential services are provided in varying degrees by all non-Aboriginal shelters. When leaving the shelter, follow-up support and service is arranged on an individual basis at the woman's discretion. Outreach support and counseling is also offered to women who seek advice and assistance but not necessarily shelter. The majority of these shelters offer individual and group counseling services to women who may or may not have stayed at the shelter before. These services are offered at the shelter, an affiliated counseling centre or, in some cases, at a location of the woman's choosing. Satellite offices in two communities have extensive outreach programs designed to serve rural women.

Innovative and comprehensive outreach programs for women, children, young adults and men have been developed by some shelters and made available to the community at large. These programs are discussed in detail in Section 4.8. *Specialized Services in Non-Aboriginal Shelters.*

All of the shelters have developed pamphlets which outline the services they offer and provide contact telephone numbers. At least one Aboriginal shelter, together with its umbrella organization, has obtained funding and created culturally appropriate posters in English and a variety of Aboriginal languages. Some of these posters have been imprinted on T-shirts used for fundraising. They have also obtained funding for the writing and illustration of culturally relevant childrens' books dealing with issues such as child abuse. Two Aboriginal shelters are conducting Crisis Intervention Workshops in isolated areas, while healing lodges and circles are in place or are planned for many of the communities.

Some of the shelters have developed comprehensive libraries of books and videos related to family violence. One Aboriginal shelter has developed two videos: one which deals with types of family violence, and another which explains the cycle of violence, in two languages for use in isolated and remote communities. This is a valuable resource to staff, shelter residents and community members. All of the shelters find that they are called upon to speak to local organizations, participate in community planning groups, work with schools to develop educational programming related to family violence and to participate in health fairs or community awareness programs. Some shelters have developed newsletters as a way of keeping community members involved, sharing experiences and keeping people aware of the activities in which the shelter is involved. In addition, some shelters are finding they are being called upon by organizations well outside their catchment area to share information and make presentations.

Outreach shelter services are offered to many women who seek advice and assistance but not necessarily shelter.

The shelter directors and staff reported that they are eager to share information on family violence and contribute to public education. However, they find the staffing of their shelters is so tight and the demands are so great that they are often too stretched to begin to respond to these requests. In view of the fact that in some of the case study communities respondents identified the need for more communication on many levels, the importance of informed people being available to develop and participate in public education programs is essential. The issue of funding is a major one as shelters often do not have the resources to support this kind of service directly. Grants are at times available, but it is very time consuming to first learn about the grant, apply for it and train people to implement a program. The grant is often short term so the program is often disrupted, continuity and momentum lost and funding must be reapplied for (if indeed more funding is available).

Shelters are also called upon to accept students from colleges for their practicum placements which does provide an additional staffperson, but the impact in terms of training, supervision and administration is time-consuming as well.

A number of shelter staff reported that carrying out these community outreach activities often places a great strain on the shelter because they do not have enough staff to meet the demands. Shelter staff maintained that the community outreach activities are important because they address prevention and education needs and give the shelters an opportunity to make a contribution to the broader issue of family violence. In the long-run staff feel these efforts may contribute to a decline in the amount of family violence in their communities. The outreach activities also have the important effect of making the services of the shelter known to a larger number of women and community members.

4.4 Policies Regarding Length of Stay and Older Children

Shelters vary with regard to the maximum length of stay for women -- from two to six weeks. All shelters, however, allow for an extension if circumstances warrant it. All but three of the shelters have policies in place which do not allow older male children (usually 15 years of age and older) to stay at the shelter. In some cases, staff claimed that the older male children were found to be abusive to the women and younger children due, in their estimation, to behaviour patterns learned in their abusive household. Other staff suggested that frequently older children do not want to stay at the shelter, preferring instead to find their own place. Some shelters will assist older children in finding accommodation.

4.5 Client Profile

Demographics: Except for Aboriginal status, the shelter staff in case study communities reported that there was a remarkable similarity in characteristics of the women who utilize shelters. Nearly all women using Aboriginal shelters were Aboriginal persons, whereas (depending upon the shelter), Aboriginal women were usually only a small minority of the client group in non-Aboriginal shelters. Otherwise, women using shelters tended to share many demographic characteristics -- usually characteristics reflecting their lack of economic and social power.

In the view of respondents, women using shelters tend to be relatively young, the majority between 20 and 35 years of age, with low levels of education and few marketable skills. They usually do not work outside the home and are, therefore, financially dependent on their partners, or are receiving some form of social assistance. Most have been involved in a relatively long term relationship with their partners. For many, family violence characterizes not only their current family situation, but also the family in which they grew up. Many of the women have experienced both family violence and sexual abuse or assault.

Community respondents reported that older women are less likely to use shelter services. (This observation was made in all communities studied, regardless of whether the primary client group served is Aboriginal, ethnic, immigrant, urban, semi-urban, or rural women.) Shelter personnel and community respondents noted that older women tend to accept abuse, and in fact raise barriers rather than dealing with it. They practice denial because of the perception that abuse is a matter that should be dealt with within the family, or that it is more important to keep the family together. The women want to handle the abuse privately so they do not have to face the perceived stigma attached to making their situation public knowledge in their community. Younger women, on the other hand, tend to be less culturally isolated and through public education and peer support may well avail themselves of shelter services when they find themselves in abusive situations. In some instances, the younger women have gone on to volunteer their time to the shelter after being a resident.

Coming to the Shelter:* Community respondents reported that the women who come to the shelter are almost always in crisis. They want to escape the abusive situation, but are reluctant to leave their own home. Very often women can see the threat of abuse escalating, or perhaps a court date approaching related to custody of the children. They know from past experience that violence is likely to occur in these situations. In almost all cases, women hesitate to come to the shelter, but realize it provides a safe alternative.

Most women who come to the shelter are accompanied by their children. In some cases, however, the children are not being abused by their mother's abuser (although they would most likely have been exposed to the abuse of their mother) and thus are not in danger (although most women are reluctant to leave them at home). Some women whose children had previously been in the custody of Children's Aid were hesitant to bring their children to the shelter for fear that Children's Aid might take the children into custody again. Some children, particularly older children, may not want to leave their family home and go to the shelter. In some cases, children will stay with relatives or friends, sometimes joining their mother later at the shelter. Sometimes the father will have custody of the children. In cases where the children remain at home with the partner, there is often great pressure placed on the woman (by family) to return to the home even though she returns to an unchanged abusive situation.

Except for Aboriginal status, there was a remarkable similarity in the characteristics of the women who utilize shelters in all case study communities. Older women are less likely to use shelter services.
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* For related discussion, see *Section 3.5 Access and Transportation*.

4.6 Shelter Philosophy

Aboriginal shelters espouse a holistic philosophy of providing services which emphasizes efforts to heal the whole person -- body, mind and spirit. This philosophy tends to be reflected in an emphasis on community programming and non-residential services (see below, *Section 4.7 Specialized Service Models in Aboriginal Shelters*).

A number of the case study shelters assessed themselves as unique in the **feminist philosophy** that underlies their provision of services. For the most part, however, the actual services and programs offered by these shelters do not differ from those of other shelters. The major differences lie in the emphasis placed on the unequal power relations between men and women in abusive situations and their overall goal of assisting women in gaining greater autonomy in their lives. These shelters tend to place greater emphasis on advocacy on behalf of clients to ensure that they receive just treatment by social service agencies and by the courts.

4.7 Specialized Service Models in Aboriginal Shelters

The case studies indicated that Aboriginal shelters have successfully developed unique service models that fit the nature of their communities. This is particularly reflected in outreach services as was discussed earlier, but is also reflected in the provision of basic shelter services.

The basic services offered by Aboriginal shelters are similar to those of non-Aboriginal shelters, that is, they provide emergency housing, food, clothing, counseling, transportation, a crisis line, advocacy and referrals. At the same time, Aboriginal shelters have developed unique service philosophy. Aboriginal shelters stressed that they use a "holistic" approach to providing services, and approach their activities as an effort to heal the whole person -- body, mind and spirit. Another dimension of the holistic approach is the fact that many Aboriginal shelters deal with the whole family, not just the woman. In comparison, this type of approach was rare in non-Aboriginal shelters.

When asked the reason for this approach shelter staff simply stated that it was "...because that's the way the community works and just being Native, that's the way we think." The service model thus emerges out of the nature of the community with its roots in Aboriginal culture. It was reported that many women who come to the shelter have a very limited knowledge of traditional Aboriginal culture. Thus an important impact of the Aboriginal shelters' service model is the teaching of Aboriginal culture to clients.

Aboriginal shelters use a "holistic" approach to providing services: an effort to heal the whole person, and in many communities, the whole family.

The Aboriginal shelters operationalize the cultural component in a variety of ways. In some shelters, various spiritual ceremonies such as sweat lodges are available to clients. Some shelters are "smudged" with sweetgrass to purify them. Traditional teachings about Aboriginal culture are provided by Elders in some shelters. In all Aboriginal shelters, counseling is culturally-based, focusing on building the self esteem of the client and providing her with an understanding of the traditional values of Aboriginal families. Women's healing circles, often facilitated by women schooled in Aboriginal traditions, are held in many shelters, and give women an opportunity to share their life experiences and relate them to the traditional roles of Aboriginal women.

Staff development is another area where Aboriginal shelters have emphasized cultural concerns. It was emphasized that staff have a high level of self-awareness and a knowledge of the culture. This reflects the Aboriginal view that culture and behaviour are inexorably linked. Shelter staff are considered role models for women in the community and feel that they should "live their culture". Staff are frequently given time off to attend cultural ceremonies or events for both their personal and professional development. The fact that Aboriginal shelters face difficulty acquiring staff who possess the desired combination of cultural awareness, education and experience with counseling to work at the shelter, is an important issue.

Aboriginal shelters also reflect cultural values and practices in subtle ways through their administration. Like many other Aboriginal service organizations, shelters can be characterized by a distinctive "administrative ethos" or style of operating. This tends to be characterized by the following: informal physical atmosphere and interpersonal relations with an emphasis on equality; less hierarchy; less specialization in staff roles; seeking staff with experience working with Aboriginal people rather than formal qualifications only; less reliance on written than oral communications; a decision-making process based on consensus; a high degree of teamwork; a high degree of delegation of tasks; extensive use of volunteers; an emphasis on individuals assuming responsibility for their own behaviour; a service delivery model which reflects community values and norms; and a holistic approach to providing services. The operation of shelters is thus closely connected to the community. Women coming to the shelter appreciate this link and feel comfortable in the shelter's atmosphere. It is also important that the majority of the shelter staff are Aboriginal people. In many shelters, staff speak an Aboriginal language to more effectively communicate with clients.

In terms of administration, it was noted that ideally there should be no conflict between maintaining an organizational ethos which is based upon Aboriginal values on the one hand and administrative efficiency and effectiveness on the other. In reality, this presents a problem for some shelters. In hiring staff, for example, shelters sometimes have to choose between individuals who are knowledgeable about traditional culture but may not have extensive experience or formal qualifications (e.g. in counseling) and individuals who are professionally trained but are not grounded in Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal shelters generally maintain an organizational ethos based upon traditional Aboriginal values.
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The organizational norm of the fluidity of roles means that, at times, even senior shelter staff become involved in service delivery. Similarly, the values of openness, informality and equality often lead to a situation where Directors are available to both clients and staff on a regular basis, thus making it difficult for them to devote sufficient time to administrative matters.

4.8 Comparison Specialized Service Models in Non-Aboriginal Shelters

All the non-Aboriginal shelters studied share a common goal with the seven Aboriginal shelters to provide shelter and services to women and children who are victims of family violence. (Non-Aboriginal shelters attempt to provide culturally-sensitive services to Aboriginal women and their children by co-ordinating programs with Aboriginal agencies and having Aboriginal people as volunteers in the shelter.) However, the non-Aboriginal communities studied vary to a large degree in terms of their service models, with shelters being at different stages of development. There are aspects of the service delivery models, as noted in the previous sections, that are commonly found in all communities studied, but notable differences were discovered in approach and philosophy.

A multi-faceted service delivery model targeted at the whole family (women, children, teenagers and spouse/partners) was found to be operating effectively in one community. In other communities, innovative and comprehensive programs for children have been put in place, not only for the children of residents, and former residents but, in some cases for children referred from the community at large.

Shelter strategies relating to the desired profile in the community were also found to be notably different. In some communities, those interviewed pointed to significant community opposition to the existence of the shelter and a belief held by some, that shelter staff specialize in "breaking up families". There is a perception on the part of staff of one shelter that this negative attitude results in the credibility of the shelter being very fragile, in particular in ethno-cultural minority communities.

As one staff member noted: "If we are too loud, we could be smashed". Shelter staff feel they must keep a low profile and avoid confrontation. In other communities a more proactive high profile stand is taken to counteract community resistance through the use of media campaigns, involvement in community events and attempts to generate support from local businessmen and service clubs. Respondents differed in their opinions on whether shelters should maintain high or low profiles in their communities, but they agreed that many factors come into play in these circumstances, including the length of time shelters and sponsor groups have been established, how they have evolved, and the nature of the community itself.

Staffing procedures are another area of individualized policy in many shelters. In some shelters, staff work 24-hour shifts, while others operate with 8 or 12 hour shifts. One shelter has separate day and night staff, each with their own responsibilities. The night staff provide support through listening, but not in-depth counseling which is provided by day staff. In one shelter, each client is assigned a personal counselor and receives the majority of her counseling while at the shelter (and afterwards during follow-up) from this counselor. Other shelters adopt a more "talking it out" approach, with counseling delivered through support groups. Whichever staffing model is used, all shelters appear to initiate extensive training of staff which, in most cases, is ongoing through university courses and professional development seminars.

Satellite offices have been established by shelter organizations in two communities with large rural populations within their catchment areas to bring outreach services to rural women. These offices offer all services the shelter does except residential service. They provide crisis and support services, one-to-one counseling and referrals to the shelter, community agencies and social services. Preventative education programs have also been launched by shelter personnel in areas with rural populations in cooperation with farm women's organizations. Another shelter brings outreach services to outlying rural areas by having counselors travel off-site to meet rural clients at locations of their choice.

As noted above, comprehensive and innovative programs for children are features of the service models of some shelters. The scope and focus of some of these programs include: a full-time child advocate who provides facilitating support and follow-up in conjunction with a school board's family violence counselor; support groups tailored to various age levels; a pre-school play group; after-school programs; support group programs for children who have witnessed violence; and a 12-week program for young girls who have been sexually abused.

Research projects have been completed by one shelter organization on dating violence and on a counseling service for abusive men. The projects have resulted in the development of working models and extensive manuals. A program for abusive men has been established by this shelter, and has been available to the community for five years to good effect. As well, a support counselor/educator has been hired by the shelter organization to work with teenagers and to do classroom presentations on dating violence.

Non-Aboriginal Shelters were found to vary considerably in the types of service models they offered.
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4.9 Links Between Community Agencies and Shelters

The agency context for shelters is quite different for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shelters, particularly because of the general absence of independent agencies in Aboriginal communities, outside of the First Nation government. Even so, similarities were found in the patterns of linkages with community agencies and related issues.

The relationship between the shelter and other agencies and organizations was reported by most shelter staff and sponsoring agencies to be satisfactory, with extensive cross referrals and ongoing efforts to coordinate services. Most shelters have informal arrangements with a variety of agencies including: child and family services; legal aid; Family Court; mental health; police; medical services; housing authorities; and other social service agencies.

In a number of communities, inter-agency advisory committees are in place to examine how the needs of women and children who are victims of family violence can be met. Members of these committees include, for example, shelter personnel, law enforcement officers, health professionals, representatives from victim's services programs and various other service agencies. Once the committee is organized, it helps to give the shelter and other community agencies and organizations a forum to discuss and act upon family violence issues.

Networking among shelters and community agencies and organizations differed from community to community. In one community, one respondent described "an amazing network of people working on family violence across all sectors. You don't have time to fight over whose job it is so you work together". In contrast, another shelter appeared to work very much in isolation and the shelter's services were apparently not well-known to agencies in the community. This isolation was variously attributed by respondents and the researcher to a fragmentation of police, health and social services in a metropolitan area where there are many municipalities, to the relatively wealthy suburban location of the shelter, and to the marginality of the shelter to the network of health and social services. In most communities, differences in the development of these networks were observed by respondents. Some networks are strong and well-established ("before everyone worked in isolation, now we are working in partnership") while others are in their initial stages. The general consensus of opinion of respondents is that more work needs to be done in this area, especially in communities where shelters are operating in relative isolation.

Most shelter staff, reported that from time to time relations with other agencies become strained. A common complaint was that there are often long waiting lists for services (usually attributed by the respondent to under-funding) resulting in long delays -- sometimes up to six to eight weeks, for women referred by shelter staff.

For example, not being able to access legal aid as soon as needed compounds family violence issues. Women may be thrust into crisis situations due to unresolved family law matters, such as separation agreements that outline visitation rights, access to children and custody.

Relations with the police and others working in the judicial system were also identified as problematic by some shelter staff. Certain negative attitudes towards victims of family violence by some law enforcement and justice personnel led some shelter staff to suggest that training programs need to be developed to foster knowledge and sensitivity. Other shelters reported excellent relations with the police and justice officials through a collaborative rapport which has resulted in positive response and support. Generally, police were found to be supportive of the shelters. Some police officers indicated that it would be helpful to have increased communication with shelters, so that they could better understand each others' responsibilities and mandates.

Extensive cross-referrals and ongoing efforts to coordinate services are features of the relationship between most shelters and community agencies/organizations.

Shelter staff reported that they often find themselves in the position of helping, or referring for help, residents of the shelter to work their way through the legal system in terms of laying charges, obtaining a peace bond or restraining order, addressing custody issues, obtaining a lawyer, applying for legal aid and going to court.

Shelter staff and police reported that (where it is the woman's option rather than required for police) a greater number of women are laying charges than in the past. A respondent from a shelter for Aboriginal people in a large urban centre felt that fear -- fear of the partner, fear of police, fear of the justice system - - may play a part in preventing some women from laying charges. In addition, they felt that shame and fear of the repercussions of laying charges were an issue. The police officers interviewed, however, noted that some women want to withdraw the charges shortly after they have been laid.

Difficult experiences when attempting to access sufficient social assistance on their client's behalf were also reported by shelter staff. At more than one shelter, staff noted that their clients reported more appropriate service provision when accompanied by shelter staff than when accessing agencies on their own. The need for further training and education of all service providers was seen as a necessary remedy within these communities.

Outside agency personnel interviewed suggested that there were times when a shelter's confidentiality and security policies made it difficult to work with them regarding a specific client. They reported examples of when the formal procedure enabling inter-agency discussion about a client made it very frustrating for agency staff that had referred a client to a shelter and then wanted to follow up on how the client was progressing.

Respondents reported that a few shelters could be characterized as having poor relations with some agencies. In these cases, shelters tend to choose to be isolated in their operations. For one shelter, this was attributed to a feminist philosophy which is at odds with conventional definitions of family violence and social service delivery methods. For an Aboriginal shelter in an urban area, it was the result of the sense that non-Aboriginal social service agencies could not meet the unique needs of Aboriginal clients. Difficulties with the Band Council contributed to the isolation of another Aboriginal shelter and shelter staff said that they would try to reach out more to other social service agencies in the future.

4.10 Comparisons to Rural Non-Aboriginal Shelters

Other than the shelters or their umbrella organizations, specific agencies working to address the needs of rural women were not identified by the researchers. What was identified, however, was an increased level of awareness from rural community organizations and some church groups. In one community with a large rural population, however, a traditional rural women's organization (not focused on family violence issues) has taken a pro-active stand on family violence issues through the provision of a support network for women who have left the shelter and are re-establishing themselves in their communities. Volunteers from this organization accompany these women to housing, social service and law enforcement agencies and provide a parenting skills group in many of the communities.

Some churches in rural areas have organized support groups for victims of family violence, in addition to their more traditional support in the form of donations and fundraising. A community interviewee reported on a cross-Canada pilot project sponsored by The Canadian Church Council on Justice and Corrections (and funded by Health and Welfare Canada) to examine the root causes of family violence and to ultimately design a collective strategy to address family violence issues. The special circumstances of rural women need to be recognized through the development of programs such as job training, child care, transportation, and housing in an integrated community approach.

5. COMMUNITY NEEDS

5.1 Prevalence of Family Violence in the Community

When asked to rate the seriousness of the problem of family violence in the area served by the shelter, virtually all of the respondents replied "a very serious problem". Estimates made by respondents as to the percentage of people in the community who had experienced family violence varied. Aboriginal respondents tended to estimate a higher incidence in their communities compared to respondents in non-Aboriginal communities. This probably reflects the situation as Aboriginal communities tend to be characterized by more serious social and personal problems than non-Aboriginal communities.¹

Indeed some Aboriginal people interviewed suggested that for many women on reserves "abuse has become a way of life for at least two generations". In the opinion of other interviewees, for many women (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, including rural women), abuse is the only life they know. Once they are caught in the cycle of abuse and co-dependency, family members continue the pattern of violence over time. Often all members of a family experience some form of abuse and victims of abuse become abusers themselves.

Several shelter staff and community members (in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities) mentioned that the elderly are particularly vulnerable to abuse because they tend to be socially and physically isolated and are often reluctant to report the abuse or to leave their homes. They could be abused by a partner, adult children or housekeepers. Many respondents believed that this was the most common form of unreported abuse in their communities.

5.2 Factors Contributing to Family Violence in the Community

Several root causes of the family violence problem were noted by community respondents. One of the most important factors, cited by the majority of Aboriginal respondents, is the lack of an Aboriginal cultural base in many communities. Economic factors were also seen as extremely important. High rates of unemployment on reserves can lead to a sense of worthlessness among Aboriginal men, increasing stress on families. Unemployment rates on most reserves are extremely high, often reaching rates of 50-70%.² In the view of respondents, lack of adequate housing on reserves for both families and women who have been victims of family violence is another key factor in the higher incidence of family violence. Many respondents cited attitudes towards male and female roles (e.g. paternalism) and acceptance of violence as other causes of abuse in most case study communities.

¹ Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Indian Conditions, Ottawa, 1991.

² Ibid.

These factors are reinforced by economics. Most women who come to the shelters have low levels of education and few marketable skills. Indeed, the vast majority do not work outside the home. These women feel that they have little choice but to live with the abuse given the limited opportunities for them to make a living in the community.

Perhaps one of the most immediate factors contributing to family violence in Aboriginal communities as reported to researchers is alcohol abuse.¹ Law enforcement personnel interviewed reported that alcohol is involved in the vast majority of domestic disputes to which they are called. Circumstances usually involve individuals drinking to excess with the result that one partner ends up assaulting the other. (Some police also reported that there are numerous incidents of females assaulting their male partners.) They also report that they are often called repeatedly to the same family violence situation. They suggested that, in many cases, individuals would not engage in this violent behaviour if they were sober.

Some agency representatives interviewed emphasized that alcohol abuse was a factor in family violence in Aboriginal communities, but not a root cause. Rather, in their view, alcoholism, like family violence, was the result of cultural and social causes.² In non-Aboriginal communities studied, there was less emphasis on alcohol and drug dependency as a factor in family violence, but still regarded as a causal element by some respondents.

Comparison to Non-Aboriginal Communities: Cultural barriers and immigrant status are factors linked to family violence in some non-Aboriginal communities. In the view of one respondent, "You cannot say that family violence differs according to immigrant status. However, the effect of violence can be more serious depending on a woman's immigration status". (Women who are sponsored are not currently entitled to welfare, limiting their choices if they cannot find a job.) Also, the feminist intervention policy of some shelters was judged by some respondents to be not always appropriate for immigrant women when you examine language difficulties and cultural backgrounds. Many cultural communities have strong holds over the women in their communities and the fear of being ostracized is a very real concern, especially when a woman has come to this country accompanied only by her immediate family. In these circumstances, even if there is an abusive situation, it is very difficult for a woman to achieve autonomy.

The seriousness of the problem of family violence was rated by shelters in all communities studied as "a very serious problem".

¹ There are currently a number of Aboriginal treatment centres in existence on reserves to address this problem.

² In one of the case study communities, the shelter is located on a "dry" reserve. (A "dry" reserve is a reserve that prohibits the bringing of any alcoholic beverage onto the reserve.) No statistics are available to the study team regarding the incidence of family violence and alcohol consumption as it relates to "dry" reserves.

One shelter program is experiencing considerable difficulty in reaching out to women from a large long-established ethnocultural population in their catchment area. Much work has already been done by the shelter organization (e.g., attempting to involve members of this group in shelter activities, enlisting the support of the church, bringing in outside resource people from like ethnocultural groups in other communities etc.) but all respondents from this community agreed that much work still needs to be done to reach these women. Many attribute the problem to language and cultural barriers (many in this ethnocultural group in a predominantly English-speaking region have never learned to speak English), isolation, literacy problems and a patriarchal culture.

5.3 Level of Community Support for Shelters

Community respondents reported a wide variety of community responses to shelters. In some cases these attitudes were seen as changing over time. Many shelter staff suggested that first, the shelter was viewed with hostility as community members did not want to acknowledge that a problem of family violence existed in their community. Slowly, attitudes in many communities changed, as one respondent indicated, "...from apathetic disbelief to concern and awareness". Sponsor groups and agency personnel reported that much of the credit for contributing to the changes in attitudes can be attributed to the efforts of outreach programs developed by the shelters and women's organizations. Most shelters now report strong support from the leaders of the community and moderate support from members of the larger community.

Variance throughout the communities studied was noted regarding the role of volunteers in developing and motivating community support for the shelters. Volunteer training and participation is an important aspect of many of the shelters and provides a good supportive link with the rest of the community.

Volunteers in Aboriginal communities serve on Boards of Directors, committees, and act as liaison with other councils and organizations. Women as a group are beginning to take a larger role in some Aboriginal communities by establishing alternate networks in support of the shelters (e.g. safe houses for women in isolated and remote communities). Former residents, when returning to their communities, act as ambassadors of the shelter and contribute to public awareness of the shelter's work and approach.

Many of the volunteer programs in the non-Aboriginal case study communities (especially in communities where the shelter has been established for a number of years) are extensive and well-established. Volunteers in these communities, in addition to serving on Boards of Directors and committees, often provide office and administrative support at the shelter. In addition, they are actively involved in furnishing supplies, donating needed items, helping to improve the buildings, fundraising, transportation and special events.

Community respondents report that attitudes to family violence have slowly changed from "apathetic disbelief to concern and awareness" in many communities served by shelters.

In contrast, some respondents reported situations where there is little community support for shelters. In a few communities, there is a stigma attached to seeking the services of a shelter. Abuse is often perceived as a "family matter" that should be dealt with within the confines of the family. In addition, community members will deny that family violence is a problem in their community.

Community respondents suggested that in such situations the shelter becomes a reminder of the problem that some people refuse to recognize. This is particularly the case for Aboriginal shelters and (in non-Aboriginal communities) shelters attempting to serve women from ethnic groups where paternalistic attitudes remain strong. In some cases, the result is severely divisive: shelter staff reported that in one Aboriginal community, the Band Council (which is the sponsor of the shelter) is not supportive. Where there is a great deal of resistance in a community to the work of a shelter, a respondent observed the development of an alternative support network (safe houses, etc.) by women in outlying communities that do support the shelter.

5.4 Short and Long-Term Housing Needs

In the view of respondents, by far the most pressing problem facing all women who experience family violence is housing. This was reported for all communities, but was given particular emphasis as a problem in Aboriginal communities. Respondents reported two dimensions to the problem: lack of second stage housing for women who leave the shelter; and a general shortage of adequate affordable housing for women and children. The latter issue was particularly acute on reserves where housing alternatives are generally non-existent. In those communities, lack of housing often means the only choice is simply between returning to the abuse situation, or leaving the home community.

In contrast, women in non-Aboriginal communities generally were reported to have a wider variety of housing choices, but also one in which finding housing is a severe problem. There was general agreement among all interviewees in communities without second-stage housing that it is difficult for women to find suitable accommodation in the community upon leaving the shelter. Shelter staff stated that the main reason for the difficulty in finding suitable housing is the lack of sufficient income. The problem is made more difficult if the woman has a large number of children. Landlord discrimination was also cited as a problem especially for Aboriginal, immigrant women (in non-Aboriginal communities) and women with large numbers of children. Shelter clients also require a great deal of support and counseling when searching for suitable housing.

In many cases, in the view of one agency representative identifying herself as a strong proponent of second-stage housing: these obstacles to finding adequate housing prove so difficult for the women that they return to the abusive situation.

The most pressing problem facing women who want to leave their violent relationship is housing. In Aboriginal communities, the problem is especially acute.

In most communities, assisted housing is difficult to obtain because of long waiting lists. In a few communities, former shelter clients may get preference for subsidized housing, but given the fact that the waiting lists are so long, in practice this preference may be of little help. In many cases, because shelter clients are in a position where they must find a place to stay in a short time, they accept inadequate housing for a variety of reasons. One former shelter resident said "...you make decisions you wouldn't make if you had more time". In urban areas, rent for adequate housing is often well beyond the reach of women leaving the shelter. One former client with two children stated "...I looked at absolutely awful places -- no way I wanted to stick myself and my kids in a dark and dingy place".

Safety was another issue reported to be linked to housing. Some women move into places which have inadequate security or are in unsafe neighbourhoods. Other women move in with individuals or families who require cleaning or cooking assistance. Such arrangements are seen as easing financial burdens, but often denying the woman the privacy she needs to work through her personal situation.

These housing issues place a burden on the shelters in three ways. First, it puts pressure on shelters to allow residents to stay at the shelter longer, with the result that there will be fewer places available for other women who need assistance. Second, shelter staff will frequently go to great lengths to assist women leaving the shelter to find housing, often placing an extra burden on an already stretched staff. Third, women return home to an abusive situation and then often return to the shelter frequently as clients because the abuse continues.

5.4.1 Second-Stage Housing: an Important Unmet Need

Second-stage housing was frequently cited as the answer to these problems. Second stage housing is available in two of the case study communities (both non-Aboriginal). Former residents interviewed in one of these communities were grateful for the opportunity to have safe and secure housing to go to upon leaving the shelter. Some of them expressed the need to stay for longer than the maximum allowed at second-stage (for example to allow their children to complete the school year before moving). One Aboriginal organization had applied for second stage housing under the Next Step Program but had been turned down. Two other Aboriginal shelters have applied for second stage housing (one on a reserve and one in an urban area). The former has had their proposal accepted and is now well along in planning for the housing. The latter was waiting for approval.

It was reported to researchers that in some Aboriginal communities it may be difficult to establish second-stage housing because of community resistance to developing this type of housing -- especially where there is a housing shortage overall. Some members of the community recognize the need for shelters to provide short-term housing to deal with an emergency situation, but perceive second-stage housing as contributing to the break up of the family.

Lack of housing impacts on whether women return to abusive situations and subsequently then return to the shelter because the abuse continues.
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Shelter staff in one non-Aboriginal community with second-stage housing rated the facility as excellent in terms of security, physical space, policies and programs. On the other hand, staff from another shelter refused to refer any of their clients to the second stage housing in their city. The reasons they cited were that the maximum stay is only three months and that they do not accept women with children. This shelter is currently working on a proposal for second stage housing to meet the needs of their clients (many of whom are immigrant women). Shelter staff in communities near urban centres with second-stage housing reported that there is often a long waiting list and that women frequently do not wish to leave their home community.

5.4.2 Long-Term Housing

In the view of respondents interviewed in the Aboriginal case study communities, the absence of adequate long-term housing is an acute problem. There are long waiting lists for new housing and funding is available for only a few units to be built each year. Often families (rather than individuals or women on their own with children) will be given priority for new housing as it is not uncommon on some reserves for two or three families to be sharing a house. In addition, in many cases, housing that is available on reserves is sub-standard. It is frequently the case that Aboriginal women leaving the shelter will have little choice but to return to the abusive situation, leave the community to live in a distant community or move into an overcrowded situation with relatives or friends.

Generally, throughout the non-Aboriginal communities studied, there is a shortage of long-term affordable housing. There is a limited amount of assisted housing in most of the communities and although women leaving the shelters are given priority for rent-geared-to-income housing in some communities, it was reported these units come on the market infrequently. Respondents reported they would like to see more community-based housing across the catchment areas and, in particular, more second-stage housing because of the social support entailed within it and the stability it provides for both the women and their children. Where second stage housing is already available, respondents reported that they would like an extension in the length of the time that former shelter residents can live there.

Generally, community respondents would like to see more second-stage housing available to women for longer periods, so that both the women and their children are provided with stability.
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6. COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF SHELTERS

It was clear from the community interviews that shelters have had a major positive impact on the awareness of family violence in communities by providing services to their clients and by working to change individual attitudes toward family violence. There are similarities and differences in terms of the impacts of the case study shelters on their communities.

One factor which appears to be common to all the case study shelters is that the initiative for their creation grew out of an identified need within each community. Each of the communities studied had either identified the need informally or had conducted a formal needs assessment. Typically, they had developed some type of non-residential counseling program related to family violence or at least an organized group directly concerned with issues of family violence, before the shelter was established.

6.1 Impact on the Amount of Family Violence

Universally, community respondents felt it was difficult to conclusively identify or quantify the impact of the presence of a shelter in their communities on the amount of family violence. Respondents were positive, however, about general impacts and cited many incidents of positive impacts, particularly regarding levels of awareness.

The Aboriginal shelters had all been operating for two years or less and respondents felt that it was too early in the process to conclusively identify impacts of the shelter itself on reducing the amount of family violence in the community. Obviously, the availability of the shelter has reduced the incidence of family violence for those who have utilized the shelter. Even if those individuals returned to an abusive family situation, they knew they could return to the shelter.

Respondents also indicated that it is difficult to accurately assess reductions in family violence as so much is hidden or accepted as the norm. It was felt by many that the disclosure of family violence may have increased but no respondents were prepared to say that there had been a reduction in family violence.

Comparisons to Non-Aboriginal Shelters: Staff in one shelter which was quite new (but not a shelter specifically for Aboriginal women) noted the fact that it was too new to ascertain if family violence had been reduced as a result of its presence. Respondents also emphasized the point that the shelter was not located in the community to act as a deterrent, -- to reduce family violence -- but to provide a service.

Respondents indicated that "It is difficult to accurately assess reductions in family violence due to the presence of a shelter, as so much violence remains hidden."

Respondents involved in two shelters that have been in existence for over a decade were also not prepared to attribute any overall reduction in family violence solely to the existence of the shelter in their community. They indicated that there were many other factors impinging on the community and that one factor could not be isolated as causative. Factors such as public education through the media, changes in the approach to the laying of charges and the general increased awareness were reported to all play a part. "The shelter plays its part, but it is only one part... you do it collectively," commented one respondent.

6.2 Impact on the Awareness of Family Violence Issues.

As stated previously, most respondents, and particularly those in Aboriginal communities, identified family violence as being a very serious problem in their communities. One of the major impacts which respondents attributed to the location of the shelter in their communities has been the heightened awareness of family violence and related issues. Some members of the community had, over time, identified family violence as an issue, and had developed counseling services specific to family violence. These individuals were often instrumental in developing the shelter. The physical presence of a shelter was seen as having confronted the entire community with the fact that it is an issue in their community. One shelter in particular which is "always full" felt this vividly demonstrated the prevalence of the problem and the need for the shelter.

Respondents reported that on reserves, in rural areas, and particularly in isolated communities, the shelters' locations are generally well known and visible, thus confronting the community members even more concretely with their reason for being. Some individuals felt this was a positive impact in that it does not allow community members to "keep their heads in the sand" or deny the existence of family violence.

Many of the shelters in Aboriginal communities indicated that, at least initially, some of the men would joke about the shelters; other individuals would say the shelter, by its presence, instigated family violence which was not there before and still others felt the shelter contributed to "breaking up families." Negative community reactions were experienced in non-Aboriginal communities as well. Respondents from a small centre with a larger rural catchment area indicated that shelter staff have been the object of gossip, and that comments such as "lesbians are running the shelter", "shelter staff are pro-choice" have been heard. In that specific community, a prevalent opposition view reported was the feeling among some that the shelter is "breaking up families."

Community respondents indicated "...The shelter plays its part in the reduction of family violence in a community, but it is only one part... you do it collectively".

Awareness on another level was reported to have developed, particularly in Aboriginal communities, as a result of the shelter and related public education. That is, in virtually all Aboriginal case study communities, it was felt that family violence had been a way of life for several generations and that an awareness was now developing that these women had been living with family violence, that there were different types of violence, that they were not alone in experiencing it, that it is unacceptable and that they do not have to continue to live with it. In an isolated Aboriginal community, the respondents indicated that violence towards women has been tolerated for some time and that tolerance is high. In a school education program, it was noted that the majority of the 14 year old girls considered violence against women to be normal. It is also notable that the majority of the girls in the area are married by age 16 and that 50% of the population is under 25 years of age.

In Aboriginal communities, another issue that the shelters raise is the traditional (or at least historic) manner of dealing with family difficulties, and the approach developed by one shelter. That is, the expectation has been that these problems will be dealt with within the family, the extended family or the community, but not through a "shelter". As was mentioned earlier, with the breakdown in many of the traditional supports the family is not able to respond in the way it may have done traditionally.

Thus, one Chief in an isolated area expressed concern, saying that even if Elders actually show their support for the shelter, they continue to insist that women must return to their husbands after the crisis is over and that couples must not break up. At the same time, the Chief queries "why have a shelter if you are putting women back in the same environment after awhile? At what cost should we keep families together? We desperately need housing for single parents."

Shelter staff reported that "...a prevalent opposition view in some communities was that "shelters break up families".

It is not surprising, in light of such contrary views, that valid concerns have been expressed by respondents in Aboriginal communities regarding the impact of shelters and their philosophies on the social fabric of the communities. To some groups within these communities, encouraging women to leave is seen as tearing the family apart which will ultimately tear apart the community. Potentially, in the view of these respondents, this has the capability of changing the entire community structure because it will change the power relationship between men and women. These concerned respondents acknowledge that, in the long run, ways must be found to address the impact these changing cultural norms will have on the community.

Comparisons to Non-Aboriginal Communities: One respondent, interviewed with respect to a shelter which has operated for a number of years in a small city with a large rural catchment area, indicated that the shelter "has raised awareness more than any other organization." They felt the issue had been brought "out of the closet" helping to reduce shame, and to lessen denial and victim blaming. In a small urban area where the shelter has been in existence for several years it was felt that the presence of the shelter and community education were increasing community awareness of family violence issues and "helping to give a language to violence, helping people to articulate and identify it." At the same time, some respondents felt that denial still exists and there is a reluctance to "accept family violence as a community problem, reluctance to get personally involved." One respondent indicated that "silence and stigma are still a big issue and women won't use the service as they want to maintain their anonymity, especially in small communities."

In rural areas where some families have been established for generations, respondents described the social stigma attached to family violence which is considered a private family matter. Respondents from reserves where shelters were located also indicated that shame, guilt and embarrassment act as deterrents for some women and interfere with their use of the shelter. One extreme example of this is in an isolated Aboriginal community where the majority of the women who use the shelter are from the outlying areas, not from the small community in which the shelter is located, even though the need is there. The local women who did use the shelter were said to be ashamed of being seen going to the shelter and any who did, typically only stayed one or two nights. Protecting confidentiality in such a small community was seen as a problem and the vulnerability to pressure from a partner to return home was greater.

Similar concerns were raised by respondents in an area serving predominantly immigrants. They pointed out the need to move slowly in immigrant communities where cultural differences are great in terms of what are the acceptable roles of men and women in families and what are acceptable ways of handling police authority, decision-making and resolution of differences. The shelter indicated that its credibility in the immigrant communities is fragile, that workers have received threatening calls and that change is very slow.

Summary: Respondents in all types of shelters emphasized the importance and need for funding to support public education. It was felt that public education programs through transition houses and outreach services to schools and community groups have resulted in initial changes to the attitude towards family violence and the articulation that it is "unacceptable." A few non-Aboriginal shelters have also found that with public education they have been receiving anonymous donations. Others have been encouraged that they are beginning to receive support from area service clubs comprised of men. Shelter staff also reported that participating in inter-agency committees was also helpful in increasing the awareness of family violence issues.

Despite these differences of opinion regarding the impact on the awareness of family violence in the community, the majority of community respondents agreed that the shelters' presence was a positive factor in helping communities come to grips with the existence of family violence and to search for ways to effectively deal with it. Recognition that a problem exists is the first step in addressing it and shelters play an important role in creating this awareness.

6.3 Impact on Changing Women's Behaviour

The majority of respondents felt that it was important to have the option of a shelter to provide an alternative to remaining in a violent family situation. Many women are making a choice to leave a violent family situation and even if they return to an unchanged situation they know they have an alternative.

<p>Shelters give women in abusive situations an "option". Even if they return to an unchanged situation, they now know they have an alternative.</p>
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In terms of Aboriginal shelters, it was reported that women valued the cultural sensitivity of the shelter staff, the opportunity to communicate in their own language and that many women were looking to increase their own knowledge of their cultural heritage and to incorporate it into their own lives and those of their children. The culturally-based programs developed in the shelters specifically operated for Aboriginal women are providing a beginning exposure to culture and spirituality which also ultimately can contribute to the cultural revitalization of their reserve. For many women, these programs may be their first exposure to Aboriginal culture. Shelter staff report that many of the women who come to their shelters are actively asking for this input.

Respondents reported that while some women are making the decision to leave an abusive situation, if even temporarily, there are many factors that mitigate against their choice. These factors operate at many levels and are inter-related. Issues such as low self esteem, powerlessness, the feeling that they are responsible for the abusive relationship and that they deserve it, combine to keep them in their situation. In addition, there is typically financial dependency, family and community pressures to maintain the status quo, the long term history of family violence in their own families of origin, the acceptance of it as a way of life and very practically, no alternative housing. In many cases on reserves, more than one family is already living in a house that is inadequate for one family.

In terms of changing behaviour of women in the community with regard to family violence, it was clearly identified that this is a long-term process. As one respondent indicated, there is a "lifetime of learning to be changed." Many women have made a choice to leave violent family situations and even if they return to them they know they have an alternative, and that they can find support at the shelter. As one respondent said "women may never go to the shelter, but they know they can. They now know they have the right to live peaceful, secure lives."

6.4 Impact on Changing Men's Behaviour

The initial focus of all of the case study shelters has been to provide a safe, supportive temporary shelter for women and their children. All shelters, however, shared the view that men also need programs to help them confront the violence in their families. Shelters vary in their philosophical and practical approach to this issue.

One Aboriginal shelter, established for less than two years, is within an umbrella group that is currently providing one-to-one counseling for men who abuse their partners or their children. The counselor's office is in fact located in the lower level of the building which houses the shelter. Counseling for men is open to the community and there are plans to evolve into men's talking circles as well. The response of men who have been involved has been positive. A respondent from an Aboriginal shelter reported that men regularly call their crisis line. One Aboriginal shelter specified that counseling for men was important, but they did not see it as part of the shelter's service. The respondent felt it was important to

All shelters shared the view that " ...Men need programs to help them confront the violence in their families".

point out that they did not judge men and in fact had two part time-male workers in the reception area. The purpose of having male staff at this shelter, was to demonstrate to the women that not all men are abusive. She felt that the community did need to heal, but that the shelter's current focus was on women and children.

Several respondents from Aboriginal communities indicated that men were also assaulted by their female partners and that there was a need for emergency shelters for them -- not just a hostel type of accommodation, but a place where they could take their children with them when their female partner was the abusive individual. Male victims of abuse are definitely a small group, but they were mentioned in more than one case study.

Some Comparisons with non-Aboriginal Shelters: One non-Aboriginal shelter has identified the need to provide service to the whole family and there was already a counseling program available for men before the opening of the shelter. They view the men's program as a very important component in the attempt to break the cycle of violence. The counseling program operates from the basement of the building in which the shelter is located. Also, if the woman agreed and children want to have a supervised visit with their father, this can be arranged, but only after the woman and children have been at the shelter for at least seven days.

One shelter established for over a decade in a small city with a surrounding rural catchment area identifies itself as having its roots in feminist philosophy and focuses on public education and providing a safe place for women and children to make choices and decisions for their lives. Services are not provided to the abusive partner. A respondent in this community felt that some men had addressed the issue of family violence on an individual basis, but had not done so on a collective basis. An interesting point about this shelter is that a men's service club is considering providing help as a fundraiser, other organizations have donated money, food, decorations and the municipal council has decided not to collect property taxes from the shelter. The provincial social services agency in the same area has a program for abusive men. However, shelter staff did not report making referrals to this program. The idea that programming for men should be provided by an agency separate from the shelter was also articulated by a non-Aboriginal shelter which indicated it has a feminist orientation.

Respondents in communities serviced by a shelter largely used by immigrants saw the prospect for change in the behaviour of men from some different cultural groups as being a very slow process indeed and that the isolation of women in such situations and their dependency on their spouse supported the continuation of a violent family situation.

Summary: Respondents were not agreed in their assessment of whether the presence of the shelter had changed men's behaviour. Some felt that it may have had an impact in some cases where some abusive men may have become less abusive because they realized that their partners have the option of going to the shelter.

However, overall, respondents did indicate the need for counseling services for the abusive male partners. There were differences in the suggested location and responsibility for such a service. The need for a more family centred approach to the problem of family violence has also been identified. As a respondent in an area serviced by an Aboriginal shelter indicated, often the fact that the female partner is in the shelter plants a seed for change: in such instances it was suggested, both partners may realize the need to heal, and that both need to make a decision.

7. SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Summary and Conclusions

7.1.1 Family Violence and Aboriginal Culture

Today's climate of high levels of family violence is starkly different from the situation of historic Aboriginal communities as widely understood¹. These differences define important aspects of the response of contemporary Aboriginal communities to family violence and the resulting roles of shelters.

Family violence of the sort existing today was not a part of traditional Aboriginal culture viewed retrospectively. Aboriginal communities were small and individuals were intensely interdependent and relied upon each other for survival. Women were held in high regard and were integral to the functioning of the family as well as the production of the necessities of everyday life. In this vein, related values characterized Aboriginal communities including: non-judging; non-interference; individual responsibility; avoidance of conflict in the community; respect; and sharing.

Contact with Europeans, residential schools, the Indian Act and past government policies resulted in the runaway development of serious social problems, including family violence, in many Aboriginal communities. Thus, while there are many similarities between family violence in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, there are also important differences. Some factors in Aboriginal communities may exacerbate the family violence problem. For example, the emphasis on keeping the family together and the ethics of non-interference and non-blaming may lead to non-reporting of a family violence situation. 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 experiencing abuse.

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, is expected by community and shelter respondents to have a positive impact in reducing family violence in Aboriginal communities in the long run. Aboriginal shelters are therefore successfully integrating aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture into their service delivery model -- providing a context for the deeper social change needed to combat family violence.

7.1.2 Shelters' Service Models

One of the most important findings of the case studies was that Aboriginal shelters have generally been very successful in developing service models to meet the diverse needs of women and children who have experienced family violence.

1 See Section 2 for a more detailed discussion of this background as prepared by the SPR research team.

Most shelters are integrated with larger organizations that provide services to individuals experiencing family violence. The case studies discovered that shelters are successfully meeting the needs of abused women and children in terms of emergency shelter, food and clothing. The 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.

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 a satisfactory relationship. Shelters also play an important role in making the community more aware of family violence through their community 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.

Aboriginal shelters have tended to develop a distinctive model of service delivery to Aboriginal women which includes a number of elements of Aboriginal culture. These models 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 council, facilitate healing circles and teach traditional culture.

Shelter staff identified a number of gaps in the current delivery of services including: staff training; children's programming; services for special needs groups such as elderly women, and programs for men and young women.

Shelters recognized that, in order to provide additional services to meet these needs, an increase in the availability of resources will be required. Otherwise, shelters must be cognizant of delivering services within their current level of funding.

7.1.3 Community Needs

The extent of family violence in all case study communities, but particularly Aboriginal communities, is extensive. Many women are caught in a cycle of abuse that has extended over time and has come to be a way of life. Several root causes of family violence in communities were detailed for the researchers, including: high rates of unemployment leading to pressures on families; lack of adequate housing in communities; paternalistic attitudes toward male and female roles resulting in disempowerment of women; low levels of qualifications for jobs for women; and community attitudes which deny the existence of family violence. Alcohol abuse was also a factor in some communities. In Aboriginal communities, the loss of traditional culture was seen by community respondents as compounding these problems.

Yet it is clear from the case studies that shelters are making a significant contribution in meeting community needs of women and children suffering from family violence. At the same time, it was reported that community attitudes toward family violence have changed significantly in recent years, particularly in communities where shelters and women's organizations have been in existence for a number of years.

The most pressing community need is for short and long-term housing. The problem is particularly acute in terms of the need for second-stage housing for women leaving the shelter. Housing for women and their children is a particularly 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 community research indicated that there are a number of women in special circumstances that make it even more difficult to access shelter services. Elderly women may not report abuse because they are isolated and often are not aware of services available. Women in isolated communities also have special needs in terms of difficulties of, or cost of, transportation to the nearest shelter. It is sometimes a problem to go to a shelter in their own community because of lack of anonymity, safety concerns and community norms of a tolerance of family violence. All of these women are especially vulnerable to abuse because of their circumstances and require special services and programs to meet their needs.

A number of other unmet community needs were also articulated including: 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; training programs to produce Aboriginal professionals to work with women and families experiencing family violence; 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 fully aware of their rights in dealing with agencies and the courts.

7.1.4 Community Impacts

The researchers concluded that, despite the fact that some shelters have been in existence for a short time, shelters are having an important impact on family violence in a number of ways. Although it is difficult to link the amount of family violence in a community directly to the efforts of a shelter, all respondents agreed that the shelters were having a positive impact. There is clearly more awareness of family violence issues in case study 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 raising awareness of the issue. There is a continuing need for public education to maintain the changes, a need which is especially great relative to the high levels of family violence evidenced in many Aboriginal communities.

Shelter programs are reported to have had an impact in changing women's behaviours. Coming to the shelter provides a break in the family violence cycle and an option for women to change their situation. It appears that the shelter is having an impact in enabling women to recognize and leave an abusive situation earlier than was previously the case. They are also more aware of alternatives that are available to them.

Respondents often reported that the shelters have had an important impact on men's behaviour through one-to-one and group counseling and public education. Shelters have frequently assisted women with their dealings with the justice system and made police and justice officials aware of some of the limitations of the system when dealing with victims of family violence.

7.1.5 What Have We Learned From the Case Studies?

A number of important themes have emerged from interviews carried out in the Aboriginal case studies (and in many cases complemented by observations from the non-Aboriginal case studies) which have important implications for the provision of services to women and children experiencing family violence:

Service Models

- that the related processes of Aboriginal self-government and the revitalization of traditional Native culture has resulted in a strengthening of Aboriginal communities' sense of communal responsibility for issues in their communities, including family violence;
- that 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; many of these community oriented approaches were seen by the researchers as suitable for emulation by non-Aboriginal shelters, which could benefit from many of the Aboriginal shelter approaches.
- that a critical component of Aboriginal 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 counseling to meet the needs of women and children experiencing family violence in rural and remote areas; some of these are seen as providing useful models for selected use by Aboriginal shelters serving many communities;
- that while there have been instances of strained relations between shelters, First Nations sponsors, and social service agencies, most of the relationships have been satisfactory and have involved extensive cross-referrals and ongoing efforts to coordinate services.

Community Needs

- that there is a serious problem in all case study communities, but particularly Aboriginal communities, regarding family violence. For many women, in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, abuse has become a "way of life";
- that 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;
- that 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.);

- that 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;
- that 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

- that 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 is 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;
- that many shelters are having a positive impact on changing men's attitudes and behaviour towards family violence.

System Issues

- in case studies in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, the issue of shelters as one key part of the community response to family violence was clear. 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.

7.1.6 Summary of Comparisons of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Shelters

While many similarities were found between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shelters, the differences, particularly in social context and cultural orientation remained substantial. The chart following Section 7 shows key comparisons between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal shelters in such areas as service models, community needs, and community impacts.

7.2 Program Implications

7.2.1 Gaps in Addressing Family Violence in the Community

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 in many Aboriginal communities

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 of 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 (See Section 2, above). 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 (as discussed in Section 3.7 Security of Shelters). 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. As was noted earlier in this report, 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.

7.2.2 Service Gaps/Future Directions

As stated previously, the shelters studied are delivering effective services to women and children experiencing family violence. At the same time, there are areas of need that, if additional resources were available, and could be addressed by shelters and women's organizations. Shelter staff and agency personnel identified a number of specific gaps in the current services delivered by the shelters, and a number of directions for the future.

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 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.

Cultural-Educational Linkages: The central importance of cultural approaches to the work of existing shelters underlines the need for more support for culturally appropriate program initiatives. The researchers noted that such initiatives, particularly in the educational area, might be usefully linked to ongoing work of Indian Cultural Educational Centres serving Canada's First Nations.

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.

Children's Programs: Many shelters, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, suggested that there was a need for additional children's counseling programs to assist children of abused women cope with the effects of violence. While some shelter organizations were found to be providing outstanding programs for children, significant needs for these services were still noted. It was reported that most of the program funding that shelters are able to access is geared to women, and that fewer funding sources for children programs are available.

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.

Programs for Men: Many shelter staff, sponsor groups, agency personnel and community members reported that individual and group counseling programs for abusive men are needed, but are currently not widely available. Many staff argued that "...we should concentrate on treatment, not punishment" for abusive men. One group offers a very successful program which is having an important impact on changing attitudes and behaviour. One shelter on a reserve operates mens' counseling and healing circles in the lower level of the shelter. But such programs, like so many, are vulnerable to financial restraints and short-term funding. If the cycle of abuse is going to be broken, the needs of the abusers must be addressed.

Community Needs

Prevalence of Family Violence

Aboriginal

- o Respondents estimate that approximately 80% of Aboriginal women experience some form of abuse in their communities.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Respondents from all communities viewed family violence as a very serious problem. Many estimated the prevalence as the national average (variously reported as 1 in 8 or 1 in 10) while others noted there is no way to estimate as so much violence is still hidden.

Needs for Family Violence Services

- o Needs assessment undertaken to determine extent of need for family violence services. Assessments determined about 80% of women experienced family violence.

- o Needs assessment done to determine extent of family violence in communities but estimates uncertain. Community members recognized a gap in services for battered women and through formation of women's organizations addressed this service gap.

Clients Targetted by Shelters and Their Umbrella Organizations

- o All shelters attempt to serve any women and their children in the catchment area.

- o All shelters attempt to serve any women and their children in the catchment area: one shelter's criteria is that the women must be in a primary relationship.

- o Clients are mainly Aboriginal.

- o Clients are mainly Status Indians for shelters on reserves.

- o Clients are mainly non-Aboriginal but two shelters provide service to large (30-40%) populations of Aboriginal women.

- o The mandate of some shelters is to provide service to clients from multi-settlement remote northern communities.

- o One shelter provides service to a large population of immigrant women while another provides service to a relatively isolated ethnic population.

- o The mandate of some shelters is to provide service to a large population of rural women.

Community Needs (con't)

Some Reported Root Causes of Abuse

Aboriginal

- o High rates of unemployment.
- o Stereotypical attitudes towards gender roles.
- o Intergenerational cycle of violence.
- o Crowded housing (two or more families in one dwelling).
- o Loss of traditional Aboriginal culture.
- o Abusers lack of self-esteem: no longer know their roles.
- o Alcohol abuse.
- o Some community denial that problem exists.
- o Long-term effects of the residential schools.

Non-Aboriginal

- o High rates of unemployment.
- o Stereotypical attitudes towards gender roles.
- o Intergenerational cycle of violence.
- o Isolation in rural communities.
- o Erosion of family and community values.
- o Less emphasis on alcohol and drug dependency as a factor but regarded as a causal factor by some respondents.
- o Less community denial that problem exists.

Match Between Shelter Project and Community Needs

- o Majority of respondents report shelters providing much needed service.

- o In a few cases, some Aboriginal women prefer to go to non-Aboriginal shelters outside the community for reasons of safety and anonymity.

- o Traditional cultural practices (Healing Circles, Grass Ceremonies) are available to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal clients. Participation is voluntary.

- o Aboriginal shelters report some difficulties in provision of services to clients from northern/remote communities.

- o Respondents report that shame, guilt, and embarrassment deter some women in reserve communities from accessing shelter services.

- o Older women in Aboriginal communities are less likely to access shelter services because of cultural isolation and an ingrained perception that family violence should be dealt with within the family.

- o Majority of respondents report shelters providing much needed service.

- o Generally Aboriginal women are happy to have a safe place to go to in areas without Aboriginal shelters.

- o In the two non-Aboriginal shelters having a substantial number of Aboriginal clients, culturally appropriate services are provided.

- o Non-Aboriginal shelters report some difficulties in provision of services to rural women, immigrant women, and women from ethno-cultural groups.

- o Rural women less likely to access shelter services due to perceived social stigma.

- o Older women in non-Aboriginal communities are less likely to access shelter services because of cultural isolation and an ingrained perception that family violence should be dealt with within the family.

Community Needs

Obstacles to Addressing Family Violence in the Communities

Aboriginal

- o Transportation difficulties encountered by shelters when attempting to transport clients from a distance (e.g., northern/remote communities); high transportation costs are involved.
- o Difficulties some Aboriginal clients face regarding whether children should accompany their mothers to the shelter (e.g., legal, custodial and child welfare).
- o Unwillingness of some Aboriginal women to access shelter in their community because of shame and embarrassment with the result that clients at some shelters are mostly from outlying communities.
- o Shelters have experienced some resistance because of denial of the problem in Aboriginal communities combined with traditional views of the family (e.g., shelters break-up families). Attitudes are slowly changing and becoming more positive towards shelters.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Inaccessibility of shelters to clients from rural outlying areas.
- o Unwillingness of some rural women to access services outside of their own communities.
- o Less denial of the family violence problem than in Aboriginal communities and therefore less resistance to shelters except among certain ethnic groups. Still some segments of the communities practicing the "ostrich effect... that doesn't happen here", but that attitude is slowly changing over time.

Opportunities for Flexibility and Innovation in Project Haven Program to Address Family Violence in the Community

- o Aboriginal clients, in some cases, being more comfortable with accessing the shelter on a drop-in day basis rather than on an overnight basis.

- o Shelters being used for multi-faceted purposes and providing programs for women, children, teenagers, and in some cases, men.

Community Needs

Second-Stage Housing

Aboriginal

- o There is no second-stage housing in the Aboriginal case study communities.
- o Second-stage housing is regarded as a viable alternative in some Aboriginal communities while other communities oppose developing this type of housing as they perceive second-stage housing as contributing to the break-up of families.
- o In one Aboriginal community, the shortage of housing is so acute that second-stage housing is perceived by many to be a luxury.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Two communities have second-stage housing but one project limits the stay to three months and is not available to women with children. The other project allows for stays of up to one year and provides support and counselling to the women and their children staying in the facility.
- o Respondents from all communities would like to see more community-based housing across catchment areas and in particular second-stage housing because of the social support entailed within it.
- o Some respondents recommend longer stays at second-stage housing than the maximum of one year to counteract the disruptive effects of constant moves on their children.

Community Impacts

Impact of Locating Shelter in Community

Aboriginal

- o Visibility of shelter on-reserve confronts community with heightened awareness of family violence issues.
- o Too early in process (Aboriginal shelters established for relatively short period) to identify impacts.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Some shelters in non-Aboriginal communities, particularly ethno-cultural, are less visible to avoid confrontation.
- o Difficult to adequately assess impact as so much violence still accepted as norm.

Impact of Shelter on Changing Community Perceptions

- o Shelters have had a major impact on raising family violence issues in their communities.
- o Some in community perceive presence of shelter as instigating family violence and contributing to breaking up families.
- o Public education by shelters on what is abuse seen as contributing to developing awareness.
- o Denial and resistance continue to exist with some men initially joking about the shelter.

- o Some respondents are of opinion that shelters have raised awareness of family violence issues more than any other organizations.
- o Some in community angry about feminist philosophy and perceive shelters to be breaking up families.
- o Issue has been brought out of closet, reduced shame and lessened victim blaming.
- o Silence and stigma still exist, especially in rural and immigrant communities. Denial slowly being overcome in other communities.

Community Impacts

Impact on Changing Women's Behaviour

Aboriginal

- o Shelters have provided women with an option to break the family violence cycle in their communities.

- o Long-term process "there is a lifetime of learning to be changed" for Aboriginal women.

- o Culturally-based programs developed by shelters for the women impacting on cultural revitalization in communities and the strengthening of the family.

Impact on Changing Men's Behaviour

- o One shelter provides an on-site one-to-one counselling program for abusive men open to the community with plans to evolve into men's talking circles.

- o Other shelters specified counselling important to men but not as part of shelter services.

Community Support for Shelter and Their Services

- o Traditional manner of dealing with family difficulties expects women to return to their families after crisis is over.

- o Women in community slowly establishing alternative support systems, e.g. safe houses.

- o Not all Band Councils are supportive of shelters.

- o Some volunteer activity reported.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Shelters have provided women with an option to break the family violence cycle in their communities.

- o Younger women tend to exercise this option because they are culturally less isolated. Older women and women from rural or ethnic communities less likely to opt for shelter services.

- o One respondent views the shelter's purpose not to be a deterrent but to provide service.

- o One shelter provides an on-site group or one-to-one counselling program for abusive men open to the community.

- o Some shelters indicated abusive men's counselling should only be provided by an outside agency.

- o Community respondents tended to see shelters as effective.

- o Women of the communities are particularly supportive.

- o Community support reflected in contributions and donations.

- o Volunteer training and support an important aspect of many of the shelters and a supportive link with rest of community.

Community Impacts

Extent of Service Networks to Address Family Violence in Communities

Aboriginal

- o Establishment of service networks has been initiated in some Aboriginal communities and are currently at different stages of their development.

- o Some shelters are working in isolation.

Service Links Between Community Agencies and Shelters

- o Relationship satisfactory in most cases with some cross-referrals and ongoing efforts to coordinate services.

- o One urban Aboriginal shelter works in isolation as they perceive non-Aboriginal service agencies unable to meet unique cultural needs of Aboriginal clients.

- o Difficulties with a Band Council contribute to a shelter's isolation from service agencies.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Strong community networks to address family violence in place in communities: other communities are initiating advisory committees.

- o Some shelters working in isolation.

- o Relationship satisfactory in most cases but notable variations occur from community to community regarding agreements for service provision and cross-referrals.

- o One shelter works in comparative isolation as their feminist philosophy is at odds with conventional definitions of family violence.

- o an urban non-Aboriginal shelter providing service to large population of immigrant women keeps a low profile and is not well-known to service agencies in the community.

- o Shelter's confidentiality and security policies sometimes make it difficult for agencies to work with the shelter regarding a specific client.

- o Lack of sensitivity to the special concerns of some immigrant and ethno-cultural clients found in some service agencies.

- o Lack of sensitivity to the special concerns of Aboriginal clients found in some service agencies.

Service Models

Philosophy of Shelters

Aboriginal

- o Emphasis placed on "holistic" service model (i.e., mind, body and spirit) and the treatment of the whole family in addressing family violence.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Emphasis placed, in general, on the rights of women and children irrespective of race, colour, creed, age or disability. Feminist philosophy in some shelters is stressed regarding men/women power relations. Multi-faceted service to entire family offered by one shelter.

Shelter Services Provided Residential

- o Shelters provide emergency housing, food and clothing, crisis line, counselling, advocacy and referrals, transportation if requested, and if possible, assistance in establishing new households.

- o Shelters provide emergency housing, food and clothing, crisis line, counselling, advocacy and referrals, transportation if requested, and if possible, assistance in establishing new households.

Shelter Services Provided Non-Residential

- o All shelters carry out various outreach activities as resources allow: educational workshops on family violence, parenting and childcare courses; anger management; crisis intervention. Drop-in services available in some shelters on non-residential basis. Outreach by telephone (support, follow-up, information, referrals) to outlying areas.

- o Follow-up, support and service arranged on individual basis when women leave shelter. Extensive outreach support and counselling provided to women (e.g., rural) not seeking shelter.

Some shelters have affiliated counselling centres and/or satellite offices offering outreach services to the community. Innovative and comprehensive outreach programs for women, children, young adults and men have been developed by some shelters and made available to the community.

- o Pamphlets, brochures, videos, posters developed to assist in community education. One shelter has developed a newsletter.

- o Pamphlets, brochures, manuals, research projects developed to assist in community education. One shelter continues with a long-established newsletter.

Service Models

Factors Affecting Types of Service

Aboriginal

- o Shelters have developed a community and culturally-based service model (e.g., Elder's counselling, training in traditional culture, healing circles, and spiritual ceremonies such as sweet grass and sweat lodges).
- o Shelters maintain a distinctive "organizational ethos" characterized by distinct physical atmosphere and interpersonal relations, less hierarchy and less specialization of roles.
- o Less emphasis on formal qualification of staff, consensus, decision-making, high degree of team work and an integration of traditional cultural values in counselling.
- o Majority of Aboriginal women prefer services of Aboriginal shelters. In few cases, Aboriginal women prefer non-Aboriginal shelters to guarantee safety and anonymity.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Shelters with significant numbers of Aboriginal clients attempt to provide culturally appropriate services and programs by having Aboriginal volunteers on staff and coordinating services with Aboriginal agencies. Shelters having significant populations of immigrant or ethno-cultural populations also attempt to extend culturally appropriate services through interpreters, special foods and advocacy in the client's language.
- o Organizationally, shelters vary to a large degree being at different stages of their development but all share a common goal to provide shelter and service. Some have high profile in the community, some low. Some offer highly-structured counselling and support, others adopt a "talking it out" model.
- o More emphasis on formal and extensive training of staff. Training in most cases ongoing (university courses and personal/professional development seminars).
- o In many cases, rural women prefer to access services on non-residential basis to avoid perceived social stigma.

Service Models

Service Needs of Communities

Aboriginal

- o Need for children's programs.
- o Programs for men desirable in keeping with holistic model.
- o Additional Aboriginal shelters needed.
- o Elder abuse mentioned as a problem.
- o Additional counselling for adolescent youth to attempt to break the cycle of abuse found to be a need.
- o Need for Aboriginal staff to take counsellor training to complement their life experience.

Non-Aboriginal

- o Need for additional children's programs in some communities, but children's programs well-established by other shelters.
- o Programs for men needed.
- o Elder abuse reported as a problem (that is, for the main part, hidden).
- o Young adults reported to be experiencing dating violence and to be, in some cases, "slipping through the cracks" of service network.
- o Need for special services for immigrant women because of language and cultural factors.