Listening to the Voices and Stories of Northern Manitoba Aboriginal Survivors of Spousal Violence:

A Case Study of the Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Cross Lake, Northern Manitoba

by

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READING APPROVAL

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Abstract

"Listening to the Voices and Stories of Northern Manitoba Aboriginal Survivors of Spousal Violence:

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Eva Therese Goulet
Brandon University, 2019

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Dr. Emma Varley
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Based on individually conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews, this study examines spousal violence in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation of Cross Lake. This is a Northern Manitoba First Nation community of 4,384 (official Canadian government number) or 8,380 inhabitants (Cross Lake Band of Indians membership office number) located 520 kilometres (by air) north of Winnipeg. This study situates spousal violence within the broader context of family and societal violence and employs an integrated approach including Structural Violence Theory and a Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing (TAKH) framework. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that spousal violence is a serious problem facing Canadian families and particularly Aboriginal families. Women are by far the main victims of this problem. Considering that no studies had been published previously about spousal violence in the

community, this study became, by default, exploratory, with the following three crucial questions: (a) what are the social factors shaping spousal violence in the Cross Lake community? (b) how does spousal violence affect the lives of victims/survivors? and (c) how is the Cross Lake community responding to the problem? The main findings of this study are as follow: (a) spousal violence is a systemic problem in the community of Cross Lake; (b) women suffer more serious and repeated spousal violence than do men in the Cross Lake community; (c) despite community efforts to address spousal violence, underfunded, underrepresented, and inadequate prevention and intervention programs have further compounded the problem; and (d) survivors of spousal violence demonstrated a high level of resilience in the face of pain and suffering; that, is, the survivors possessed a set of personality characteristics, as well as skills and cultural competences, which helped them to cope with stress, trauma, and suffering. Spousal violence in Cross Lake has been compounded by the intergenerational effects of systemic (structural) poverty and the Indian Residential School experience. The interplay of these factors and processes has negatively affected individual, family, and community relationships and well-being. This unfortunate situation has led to serious negative consequences for Aboriginal women: it has had a traumatic effect on their self-esteem, loss of self-identity, as well as on their socio-economic and physical and spiritual well-being. The Aboriginal community of Cross Lake has insufficient human and material resources to address spousal violence. The study proposes four fundamental principles for organizing culturally contextualized community-based responses to spousal violence. Active community participation is

fundamental in this process. Within this context, it is critically important to listen to the real voices of the victims and survivors of spousal violence.

Dedication

To my beautiful family

Dedicating my thesis to my family is most enriching for me. My son Darcy; daughters Tracy and Lisa; my grandchildren: Mercy, Sara, Sonny, Devon, and my little travelling companion, Treyden; my great grandchildren: Leonard and Isabella; my sister Dean; and my dearest Auntie Thelma. My son, who calls me faithfully to ask, "how are you, mom?" Always concerned for my well-being; Tracy's words echo "keep reading Mom, work hard"; Lisa, "I am very proud of you Momma"; my caring sister Dean for being there at every turn ready to catch me; my other siblings; and my dearest Auntie Thelma. You have all been with me throughout my endeavor. I thank you all. And so very near and dear to me, my family who have gone before us: my son Claude, my parents, and grandparents. Each has left me with great life teachings and rich gifts. They enriched my life to do my best in whatever I did, as education was the ultimate.

This pathway to higher learning has been difficult for me. Even though I knew it would be a difficult journey, it has been a rocky road. As I travelled this rocky road, winding and narrowing at times with many pebbles and some sharp stepping stones along the way, my Auntie's enchanting words would ring forth: "if the mountain was smooth you couldn't get to the top; it's rocky but you will eventually get to the top and you cannot get to the top if you keep looking back." How profound. My family, their warm, comforting and encouraging words gave me life and enormous strength in

this scientific academic world. How could I not move forward? Most of all—I could not let me down. Letting me down would admit doubt, defeat, and failure—I could not do that to me.

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Completing this thesis would not have been possible without the tremendous support from Chief Cathy Merrick of the Pimicikamak Cree Nation, the research participants, and community representatives who volunteered their invaluable time and assistance collaborating toward community wellness. I thank my scholarship sponsors: Canada Graduate Scholarship-Master's Program (CGS-M) and Brandon University Manitoba Graduate Scholarships (MGS). These scholarships greatly helped me to complete the Master of Rural Development (MRD) program. Most important, my sponsoring Opaskwayak Cree Nation (OCN), Post-Secondary Student Counsellor Supervisor, Marlene Head from the Opaskwayak Education Authority (OEA), was always available to listen to my struggles and challenges. Opaskwayak Education Authority believes in its students. It is through their support and understanding that we succeed. I remain a proud Ambassador of the Opaskwayak Education Authority. I express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Wilder Robles, a great mentor and dedicated teacher. He was truly an impeccable supporter of my work. He challenged and encouraged me to complete my thesis with genuine patience and superb guidance. I still remember the day he agreed to supervise my work. "Eva", he said, "I am on this one to learn together and walk together with you. If you agree to do your best, I'll do my best to help you to achieve your objectives." Without any doubt, I responded: "I agree, Dr. Robles". I knew commitment, perseverance, self-discipline, and fortitude were key factors in completing this thesis even in periods of doubt. While I often asked myself, "is this all worth it?" Well, would it have been worth it if it was not difficult?

Self-determination and self-discipline are rich and rewarding. My enormous gratitude also goes to my other thesis committee members, Dr. Emma Varley and Dr. Serena Petrella, who provided me with incredible support and guidance in difficult times. When there was an obstacle, they were there for me! They gave me greater strength, courage, and determination. I am also grateful to Dr. Lorraine Mayer (External Committee Member) for her superb reading of the final draft of my thesis. Fortitude is indeed grandeur. I am grateful to each of them for their professionalism, expertise, friendship, and support. They understood my passion and dedication to my research study. They believed in me. I thank the Brandon University library staff, student services, registration and financial services, and faculty staff, who helped me through my research journey. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the many wonderful Brandon University students who have come and gone; many became good friends and of course, the many laughs we shared to get us through "the struggles". And especially to Stacy, thank you for your tremendous support, encouragement, and understanding during the last two years of my graduate studies; I thank you. I thank each and every one as you all have left a special gift with me. I thank you and I will remember my studies at "BU". Finally, I thank Dr. Gary McNeely for his superb proof-reading assistance.

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Introduction

The objectives, importance, and structure of the study

Objectives and scope of the study

According to Statistics Canada (2015), Manitoba is Canada's fifth most populous province (1.3 million) with a significant Aboriginal population (195,900). Manitoba is home to sixty-three First Nations communities, including six of the twenty largest bands in Canada. Many of these communities are located in remote areas of Northern Manitoba and face systemic problems. Structural poverty and spousal violence are two of them. Based on individually conducted in-depth interviews, this study examines spousal violence in a Manitoba First Nation community within the broader context of family and societal violence. Specifically, this study examines the factors, processes, and consequences of spousal violence. It does so by employing an integrated approach including Structural Violence Theory and a Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing (TAKH) framework. The study takes as a point of reference the community of Cross Lake, a Northern Manitoba First Nation community that represents the Pimicikamak Cree Nation. The rural community of Cross Lake is located 520 kilometres north of Winnipeg and has a population of 4,384 (official Canadian government number) or 8,380 inhabitants (Cross Lake Band of Indians membership office number). Like any other Aboriginal community in Canada, Cross Lake suffers from systemic poverty, unemployment, hunger, violence, and suicide (Assembly of

First Nations, 2011; MacKinnon, 2013; Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, 2012). Spousal violence has exacerbated this unfortunate situation.

In Aboriginal communities, which include First Nation communities, spousal violence has had negative consequences for both men and women: it has had a traumatic effect on their self-esteem, loss of self-identity, and socio-economic, physical, and spiritual well-being (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane 2003; National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008; Kwan, 2015). The intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School experience have further compounded these problems (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011; Blacksmith, 2011; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Spousal violence harms relationships, which in turn undermines the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Notably, spousal violence negatively affects the human development of children (Kashani, & Allan, 1998; Howell, 2011). Aboriginal men and women survivors of spousal violence need to be heard and listened to and their experience documented. Regrettably, the study of spousal violence in Cross Lake has not received the necessary attention it requires from the Family Violence Research community: there are no published studies on spousal violence in this community. As such, obtaining and collecting reliable qualitative and quantitative data on spousal violence in this community is a complex task, because of the very hidden and unreported nature of the problem. Spousal violence takes place in private/intimate contexts in which this violence cannot be directly observed. Additionally, victims and survivors of spousal violence have a difficult time finding helpful support venues to openly report and share their

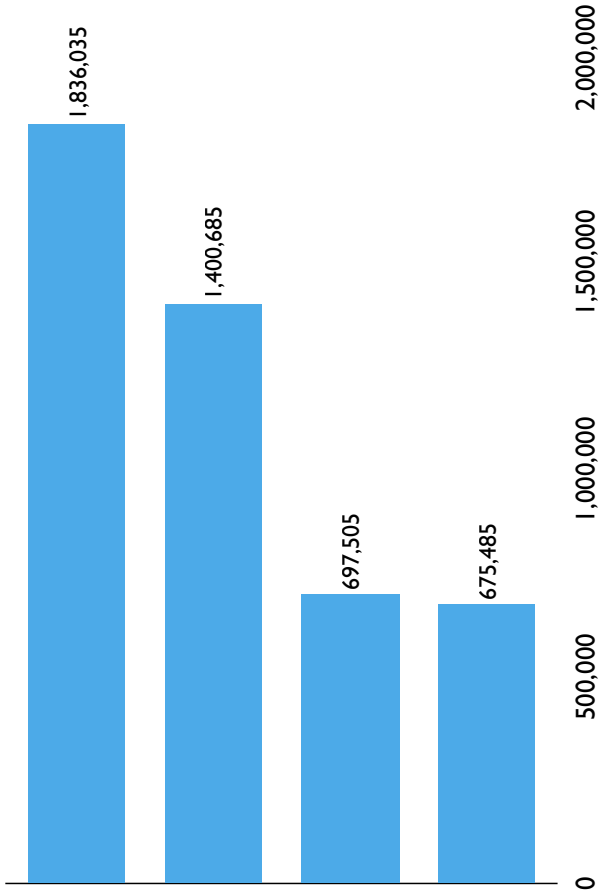
experiences. For this reason, listening to the victims and survivors of spousal violence is critically important. Thus, this study offers a small contribution to the understanding of how the legacy of colonial structures and systems have worked not only to incite spousal violence, but also to silence the voices of victims and survivors in Aboriginal communities.

Importance of the study

This study is especially important because the Canadian Aboriginal population has continued to experience steady growth over the last decade. In 2011, there were 1.8 million Canadians of Aboriginal ancestry (Graph 1 and Graph 2). Moreover, "the Aboriginal population increased by 232,385 people, or 20% between 2006 and 2011, compared with 5% for the non-Aboriginal population" (Statistics Canada, 2015:7; Graph 3). The largest number of Aboriginal people lived in Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (Graph 4). If the Aboriginal population continues to grow and spousal violence in Aboriginal communities is not reduced or contained, how then are governments and communities to address the violence in the face of constant funding limitations? The problem is likely to get worse, not better, and its impact on Aboriginal communities will be exponentially greater. Thus, it is important to address spousal violence. Unfortunately, the prevalence of structural poverty, violence, and exclusion in Aboriginal communities are not conducive to the healthy development of social and family relationships. For

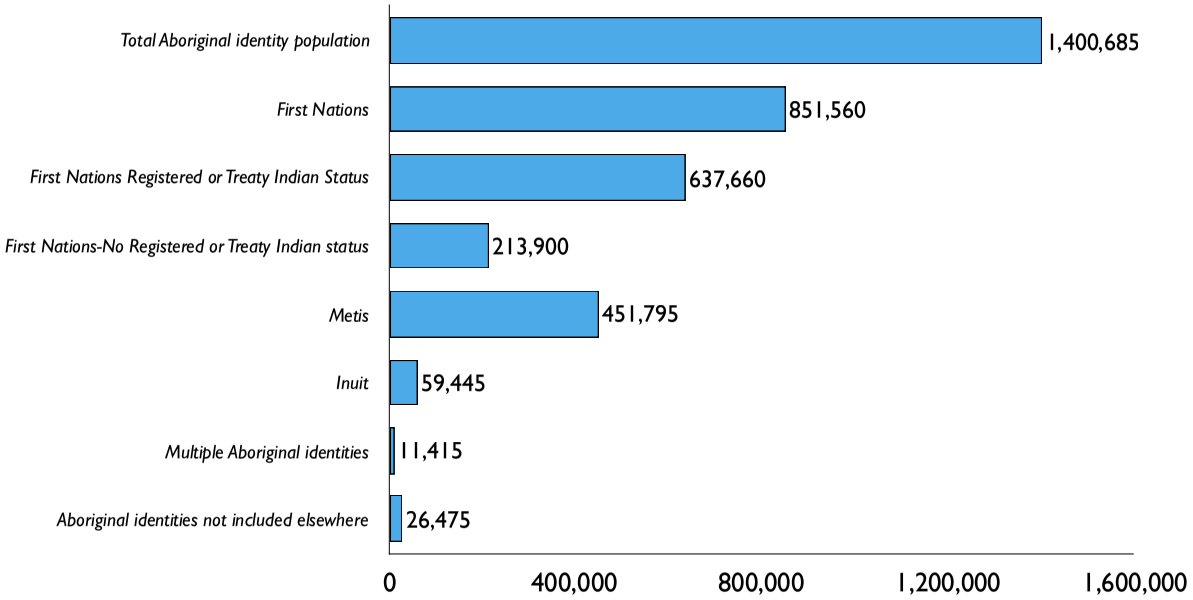
Aboriginal Canadians, breaking the structural "poverty-violence-exclusion" cycle is critically important to improving their overall well-being. Moreover, sustainable and

Graph 1
Aboriginal Population by concept, Canada, 2011
(Thousands)



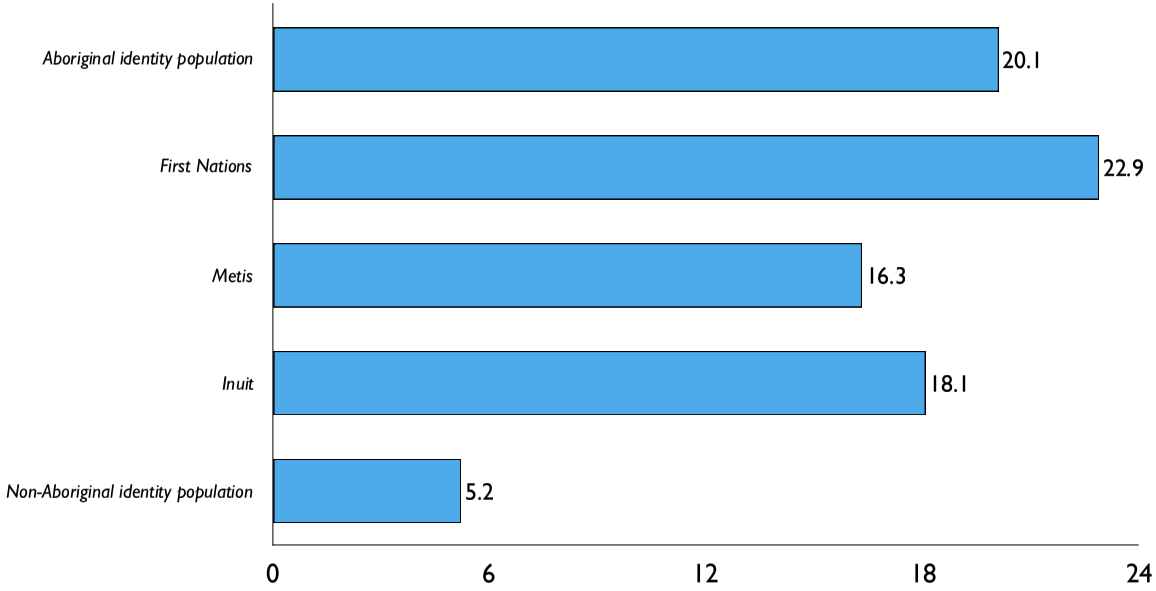
Source: Statistics Canada (2015). *Aboriginal Statistics at a Glance: 2nd Edition*. Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, Chart 1, p.5.

Graph 2
Population counts, by Aboriginal identity and Registered or Treaty Indian status, Canada, 2011
(Thousands)



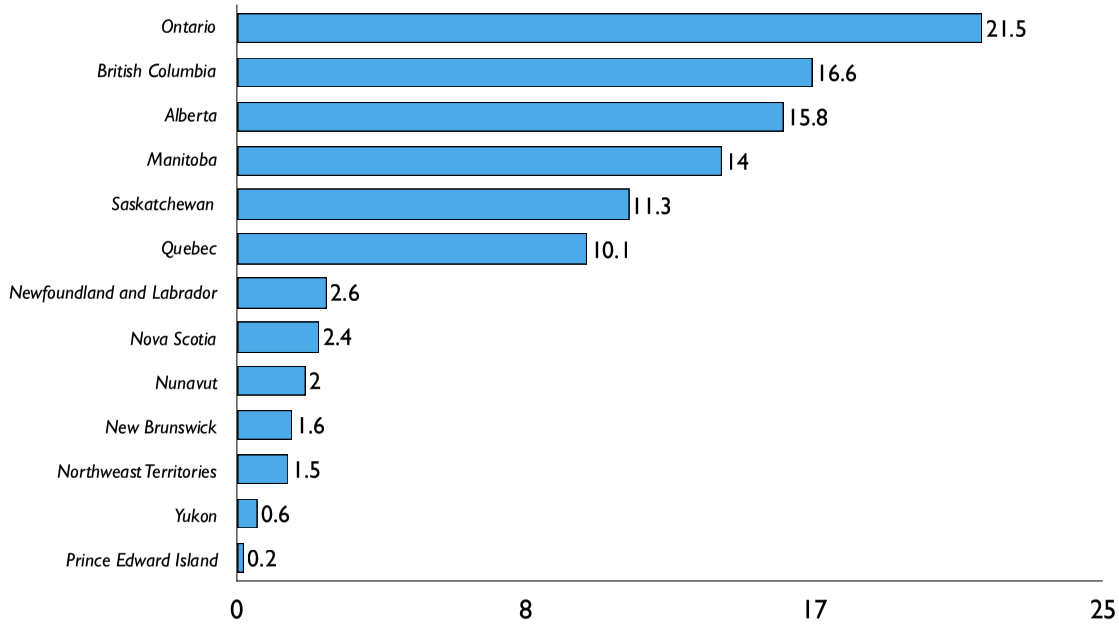
Source: Statistics Canada (2015). *Aboriginal Statistics at a Glance: 2nd Edition*. Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, Chart 2, p.6.

Graph 3
Population Increase, by Aboriginal identity, Canada, 2006-2011
(Percentage)



Source: Statistics Canada (2015). *Aboriginal Statistics at a Glance: 2nd Edition*. Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, Chart 3, p.7.

Graph 4
Provincial/territorial distribution of Aboriginal identity population, Canada, 2011
(Percentage)



Source: Statistics Canada (2015). *Aboriginal Statistics at a Glance: 2nd Edition*. Ottawa: Ministry of Industry, Chart 4, p.8.

meaningful rural development cannot be achieved without productive and healthy family and social relationships. How can we promote effective community economic development in the presence of widespread personal pain and suffering? Within this context, breaking the cycle of spousal violence is fundamental to rebuilding broken or dysfunctional social relationships at the family, community, and societal levels. It is therefore important to examine spousal violence from a broader socioeconomic and cultural perspective in order to propose appropriate responses. Achieving this objective requires promoting effective holistic community-based research, teaching, and extension services. As such, the researcher hopes that this study can instigate further research work on spousal violence in Cross Lake and surrounding Northern Manitoba communities. The researcher also sincerely hopes that this study can enable the community of Cross Lake, organizations, and agencies to develop culturally sensitive and gender-specific policies and programs dealing with spousal violence.

Terminology issues

Selecting the most meaningful, accurate, and helpful term to describe the research participants was not an easy task. This was a tricky sea to navigate. Are the terms Aboriginal, Natives, Indians, or First Nations appropriate designations to describe the participants? For instance, Brandon University has a Native Studies Department and the University of Winnipeg has an Indigenous Studies Department. Both of these departments are dedicated to the study of Native or Indigenous peoples and cultures of Canada and beyond. Moreover, the above-mentioned terminologies correspond to

historical designations and relationships between the Canadian state and Aboriginal people (first inhabitants of Canada), including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. The term Aboriginal is also very popular because of Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, which recognizes and affirms Aboriginal rights. In sum, there is no consensus in the academic community about the most appropriate term to describe the early inhabitants of Canada and their descendants. In this study, the Aboriginal, Indigenous, and First Nations terminology are used interchangeably without any pejorative meaning or bias.

Structure of the study

This study is organized as follows: the introduction provides a rationale for the objectives, importance, and scope of the study. Chapter One provides a critical reading of the spousal violence literature from an Aboriginal perspective. This chapter focusses first on the problems of understanding spousal violence in general and Aboriginal contexts in particular, along with the difficulties in assessing the magnitude of the spousal violence problem in Aboriginal communities. Chapter Two describes the theoretical and methodological approaches used in the study. This chapter recognizes the weaknesses and limitations of conventional theoretical and methodological approaches to spousal violence as related to Aboriginal communities. This chapter also stresses the importance of integrating TAKH into rural development programs. Chapter Three deals with the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data in the Cross Lake community. This is accomplished through the voices of the Aboriginal

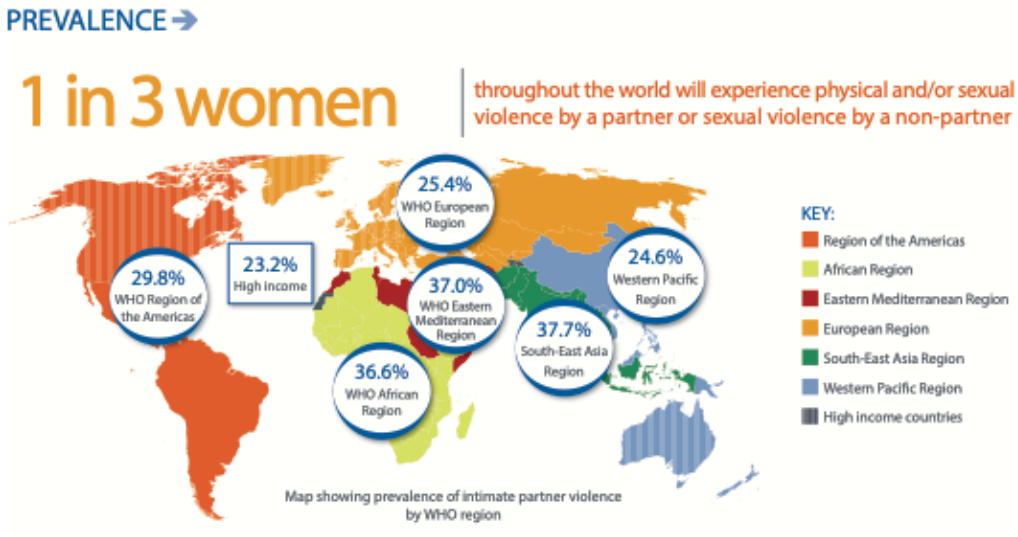
men and women survivors of spousal violence. The voices, the stories of the survivors reveal the complexity of the problem, and how they struggled to deal with the physical and emotional pain caused by spousal violence. The stories provide crucial insights into how the Cross Lake community can better respond to these acts of violence, and thus lead the way to develop appropriate community-based prevention and intervention programs to improve the well-being of all its community members. Chapter Four is an exercise in policy recommendations. Several principles and guidelines for effective design, implementation, and management of community-based spousal violence prevention polices and wellness strategies are discussed and proposed. Finally, the conclusion is a reflection of the lessons learned from this study; and how these lessons can be applied to more extensive studies of spousal violence in Aboriginal communities.

Chapter One

Background and Literature Review

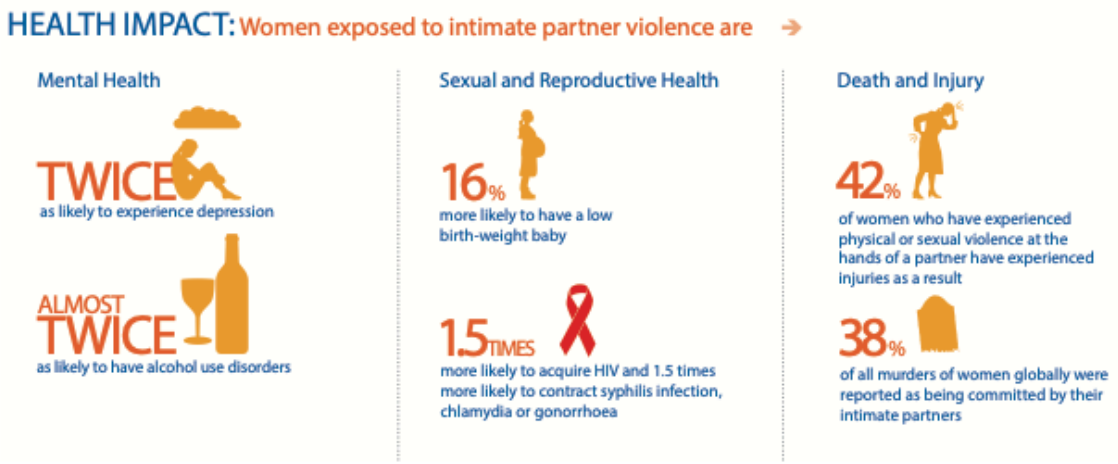
Spousal violence is a global phenomenon (Graph 5) with severe impacts, particularly for women (Graph 6). It crosses social and economic classes as well as cultural, and religious backgrounds, and identities (Horton & Williamson, 1988; Watts, & Zimmerman, 2002; Bhattacharya, 2004; World Health Organization, 2013; Asay, 2014; Fulu & Miedema, 2016). Spousal violence is embedded within the broader context of family and societal violence (Graph 7). Confronting spousal violence is a serious challenge for families, communities, organizations, and governments (United Nations, 1993). It is no longer possible to ignore the plea of the victims. As such, it is necessary to critically examine spousal violence and find suitable community-based strategies to overcome it. Within the context of Aboriginal communities, the concerted and active participation of academic researchers, community activists, service providers, and spousal violence victims and survivors is fundamental to design, implement, and manage effective prevention and intervention programs.

Graph 5
Spousal Violence: A Global Problem



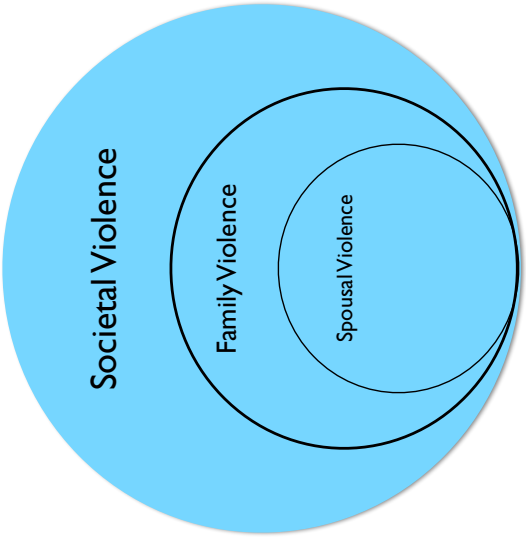
Source: WHO (2015). *Violence Against Women: Global Picture Health Response.* Washington D.C.: World Health Organization. p. 1. Infographics.

Graph 6
Impact of Spousal Violence



Source: WHO (2015). *Violence Against Women: Global Picture Health Response.* Washington D.C.: World Health Organization. p. 1. Infographics.

Graph 7
The Context of Spousal Violence



Studying spousal/family violence

Studying spousal/family violence is important in order to understand its impact on social development, especially in Aboriginal communities. The well-being of individuals, families, and communities are intrinsically linked to the quality of their social environment. Children, for instance, who are exposed to spousal/family violence are likely to experience emotional and mental traumas that can affect their developmental growth. They may lose the ability to feel empathy for others. Some children may feel socially isolated or unable to make friends, while others may underperform in school. These problems may be compounded by parents' attempts to blame their children for the conflicts and aggression among family members. Without a positive environment at home, family members struggle to overcome the challenges or difficulties of becoming responsible and productive citizens in their communities. Therefore, studying the factors, processes, and consequences of spousal/family violence is relevant to the rural development field. As articulated in the introduction of this study, rural development cannot take strong roots in the midst of pervasive personal pain and suffering (Afolabi, 2015; World Health Organization, 2014).

Spousal violence, family violence, and societal violence

Spousal violence or Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) most often refers to violence between married or cohabiting couples. It involves the emotional, sexual, physical, verbal, psychological, and financial abuse, mistreatment, and coercion of a partner by the other (World Health Organization, 2013). Spousal violence is used to intimidate,

humiliate, subjugate, or frighten a wife, husband, or partner to make them feel helpless, hopeless, and powerless (Alaggia, & Vine, 2006). As such, spousal violence has a negative and harmful impact on the mental, physical and social health of both male and female victims. It also negatively affects children. Spousal violence is often not restricted to current husbands/partners but may also extend to boy-friends, and former husbands/partners (Afolabi, 2015).

Family, or domestic, violence is a broader definition of spousal violence. That is, family violence refers not only to violence between married or cohabitating couples, but also violence between close family members: children, siblings, parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. The physical, psychological, and emotional abuse, neglect, and coercion of children, siblings, parents, and great-grandparents by a person with whom they have a relationship of trust assumes a wide range of presentations and has a long-lasting negative impact on a victim (Adam, Hoyt, & Duncan, 2011). A family environment where interpersonal tension, conflict, and violence prevail undermines the human and emotional development of the family members. This is particularly the case with children (Kashani & Allan, 1998; Wathen, 2012). Family violence exacerbates children's emotional responses to stress, which in turn, causes long-term adverse effects on their mental health (World Health Organization, 2014; Afolabi, 2015; Morrissette, 1994).

Societal, or structural, violence refers to the systematic ways in which institutions, classes, groups, and organizations prevent vulnerable people from meeting their basic needs and achieving their full potential (Galtung, 1996). It is a fundamental violation of

human rights because structural violence maintains oppressive and exploitive socioeconomic relationships. Systemic poverty, hunger, discrimination, subjugation, and repression are prime examples of structural violence. Structural violence not only infringes on human rights but also adversely affects social cohesion and, consequently, hampers human and social development (Ho, 2007).

The interplay of spousal, family, and societal violence constantly shapes and reshapes human and social relationships in all spheres of human life. As such, it is necessary to examine spousal violence within its broader context in order to achieve a more nuanced understanding of its manifestations and impacts on families and communities (Hattery & Smith, 2016). Due to the scope and limitations of this study, the examination of family/ societal violence is beyond the parameters of this research.

Spousal violence in Canada

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that spousal violence is a serious problem facing Canadian families. According to the most recent data gathered by the Canadian Center for Justice (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2016), out of 19.2 million households surveyed, 759,665 Canadians self-reported (3.9%) spousal violence in current or previous relationships (Table 1).

Table 1

Family Violence in Canada: Victims of self-reported spousal violence

	2004		2009		2014	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Newfoundland and Labrador	15,865	5.1	12,712	4.1	6,403	2.1
Prince Edward Island	4,109	5.1	5,750	7.0	4,487	5.3
Nova Scotia	40,597	7.5	30,979	5.5	24,920	4.6
New Brunswick	28,743	6.5	24,913	5.5	19,914	4.5
Quebec	238,337	5.4	242,403	5.3	159,804	3.5
Ontario	441,696	6.4	452,661	6.2	275,663	3.7
Manitoba	45,768	7.3	48,383	7.4	21,914	3.3
Saskatchewan	45,568	8.4	47,075	8.3	29,379	4.9
Alberta	155,871	8.7	153,336	7.6	106,902	4.7
British Columbia	183,167	7.5	167,495	6.5	110,278	4.2
Provincial Total	**1,199,721**	**6.6**	**1,185,707**	**6.2**	**759,665**	**3.9**

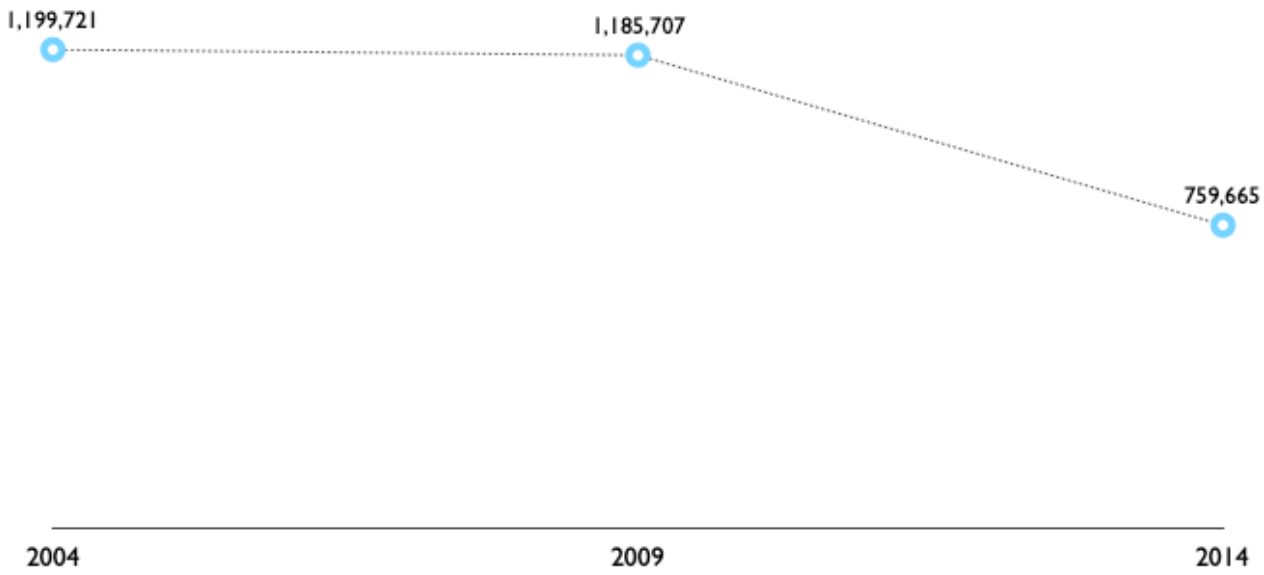
Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016). *Family violence in Canada: a statistical profile*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Table 1.4, p. 34.

Provincially, the prevalence of spousal violence generally reflects regional variations in overall spousal violence. Alberta (8.7%), Saskatchewan (8.4%), British Columbia (7.5%), Nova Scotia (7.5%), and Manitoba (7.3%) are the provinces with above average rates of spousal violence. The report also indicates that women are the main victims of spousal violence in all Canadian provinces. Although there has been a decline of spousal violence since 2004, the problem continues to persist in Canada (Graph 8 and Graph 9). In Manitoba, there has also been a declining trend (Graph 10 and Graph 11). Several combined or non-combined factors could explain the decline of spousal violence in Canada: effective prevention and intervention programs, better access to family counselling programs, and stronger law-enforcement and court-sentence mechanisms. It could be also the case that victims of spousal violence, mainly women, are not reporting. Wife-beating, or physical maltreatment, is a very common occurrence in many Canadian homes. Despite its widespread prevalence, spousal violence is not openly acknowledged and has remained invisible in many Canadian families. For this reason, it is difficult to fully grasp spousal violence in Canada because it often remains hidden within the home. The complexities of reporting spousal violence are also another reason for non-reporting. As Johnson and Dawson (2011) stated:

> In early 1980, pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies were introduced in Canada. Policies stating that—where there are reasonable and probable grounds to be believe an offence occurred; police and prosecutors must charge and prosecute all cases of intimate partner violence. Policies were to encourage reporting, offer victim protection and assistance, and to reduce incidents. However, this was not always

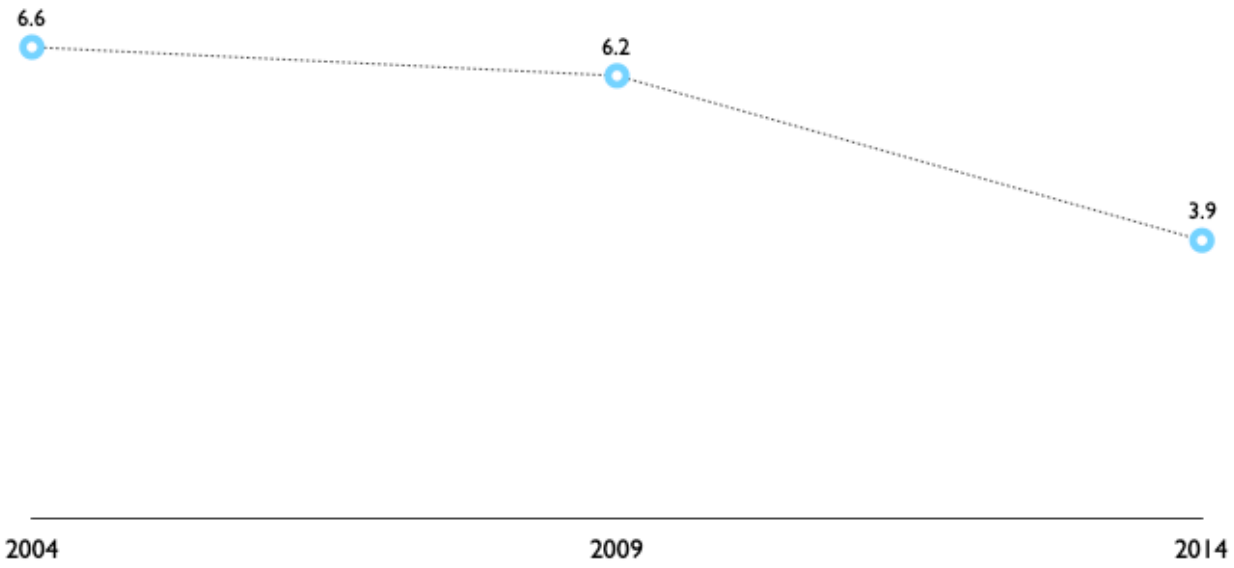
the case. Charges were often dropped if the victim failed to testify because victim testimony was the only evidence available, and which more often led to re-victimization due to abuser retaliation. Prior to this, it was the victim to bring charges against their abuser or, charges were dropped if the victim decided not to proceed with the charges which again could lead to escalating or retaliatory violence (p. 88).

Graph 8
Family Violence in Canada: Victims of self-reported spousal violence
(Numbers)



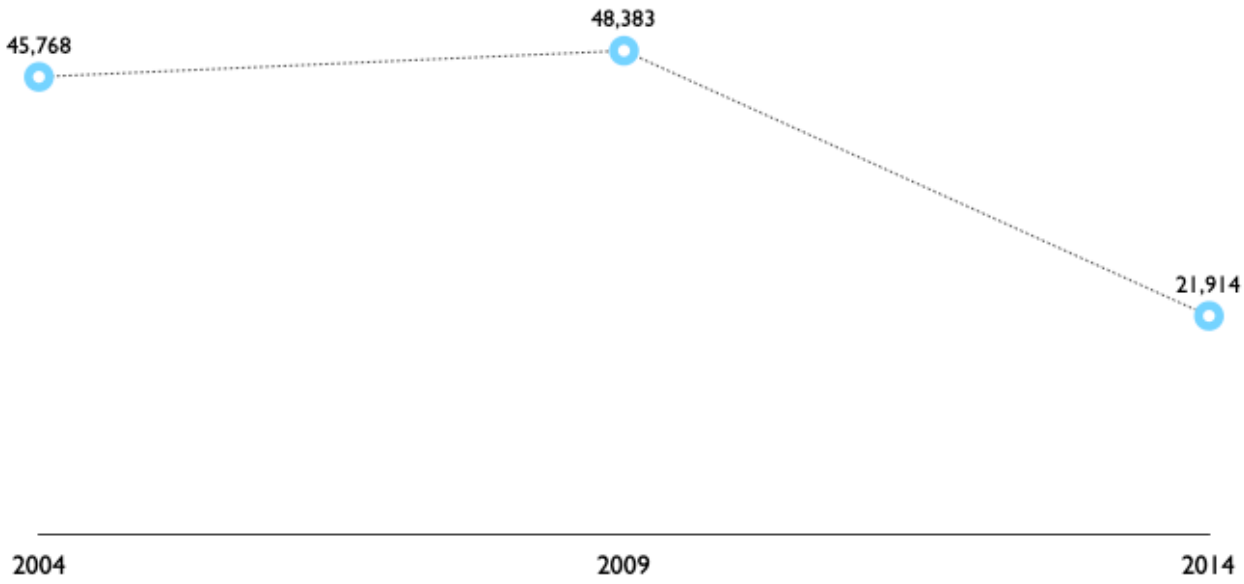
Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016). *Family violence in Canada: a statistical profile*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Table 1.1, p. 32.

Graph 9
Family Violence in Canada: Victims of self-reported spousal violence
(Percentage)



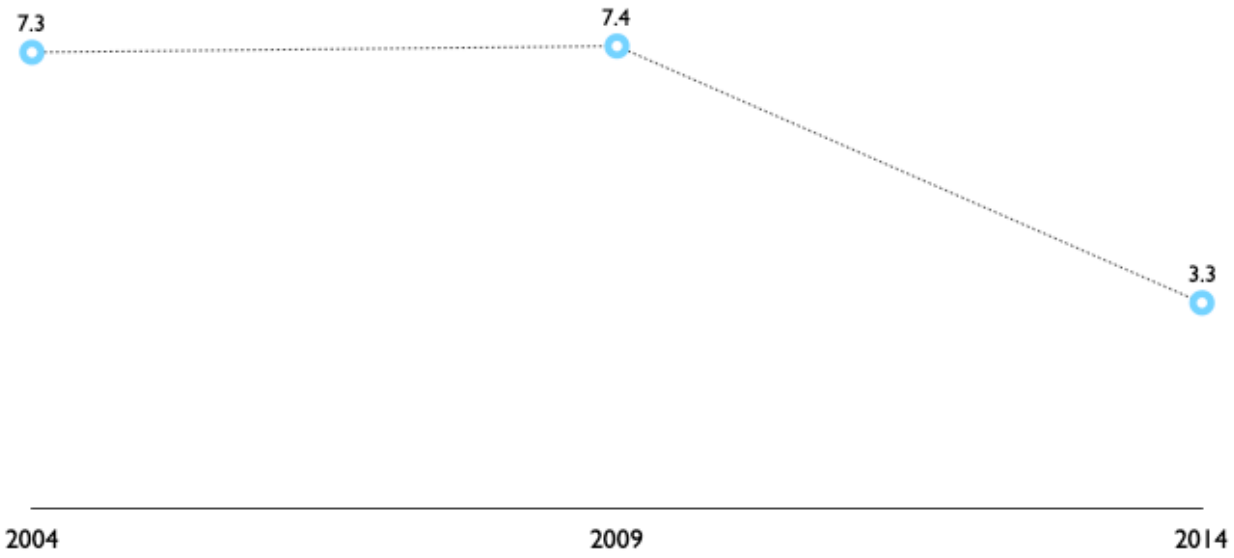
Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016). *Family violence in Canada: a statistical profile*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Table 1.1, p. 32.

Graph 10
Family Violence in Manitoba: Victims of self-reported spousal violence
(Numbers)



Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016). *Family violence in Canada: a statistical profile*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Table 1.4, p. 34.

Graph 11
Family Violence in Manitoba: Victims of self-reported spousal violence
(Percentage)



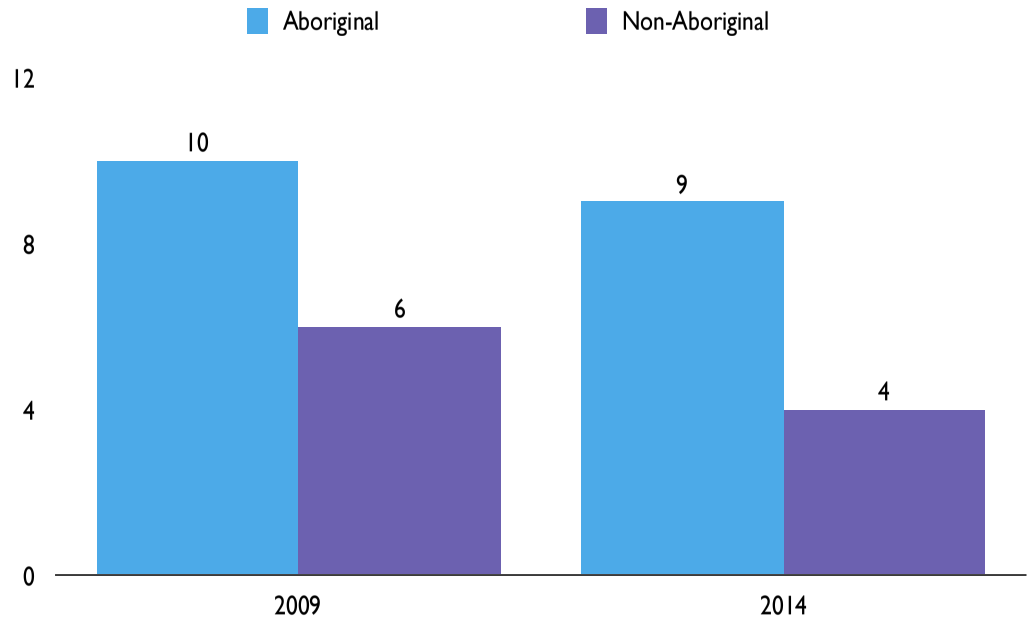
Source: Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016). *Family violence in Canada: a statistical profile*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Table 1.4, p. 34.

Spousal violence in Canadian Aboriginal communities

Women are the main victims of spousal violence in Aboriginal communities (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane 2003; Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, 2012; Kwan, 2015). Spousal violence in these communities has not significantly changed from 2004. Aboriginal women are much more likely to experience spousal violence than non-Aboriginal peoples. According to Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016), 9% of people who identified themselves as Aboriginal peoples reported experiencing spousal violence in the previous five years compared to 4% of non-Aboriginal peoples (Graph 12). This study indicates that Aboriginal women were more likely to be victimized by current or former partners, compared with non-Aboriginal women. In Aboriginal communities, spousal violence has been compounded by the intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School experience, which have negatively affected family and community relationships (Blacksmith, 2011; Bombay *et al*, 2011). Spousal violence has had negative consequences for Aboriginal women: it has had a traumatic effect on their self-esteem, loss of self-identity, socio-economic, physical, and spiritual well-being (Bopp *et al*, 2003; Brennan, 2011). They often blame themselves for their situation and conceal abuse from others to avoid the shame of being a victim of spousal violence. Aboriginal women victims of spousal violence experience an enormous sense of personal failure with feelings of hopelessness and helplessness especially when they face continuous violence in their relationships (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008). However, the negative consequences previously described of family violence on women are not well documented. This is the case in the Pimicikamak Cree

Nation community of Cross Lake. Spousal violence harms family relationships, which in turn undermines the social well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Aboriginal women victims of spousal violence from the Pimicikamak community need to be heard and listened to and their experiences documented. After all, the formulation, implementation, and managing of effective community-based prevention and intervention programs requires integrating the experiences of the victims and survivors of spousal violence. In the Pimicikamak community, there is an urgent need today to conceptualize and operationalize such programs.

Graph 12
Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victims of Self-reported Spousal Violence, 2009 and 2014



Source: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016). *Family violence in Canada: a statistical profile*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Chart 1.5, p. 16.

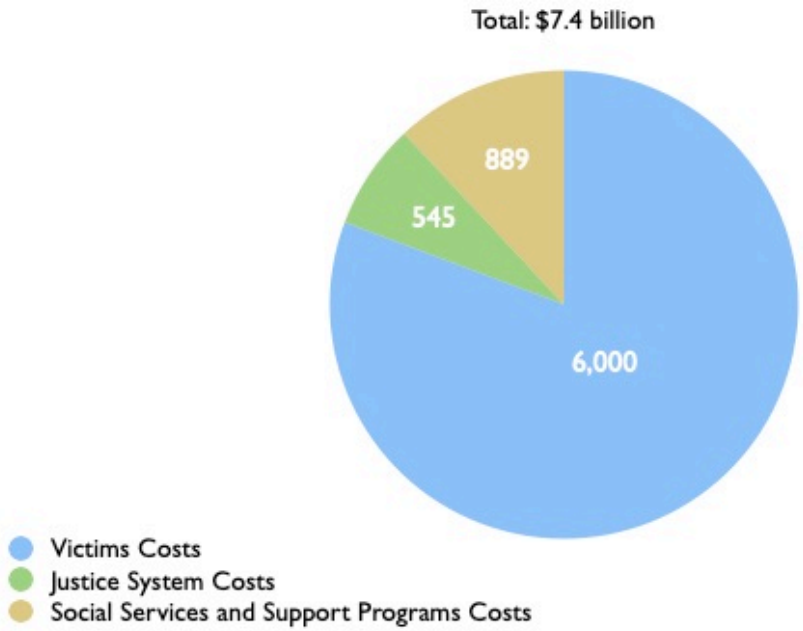
The effects and costs of spousal violence

At the individual level, spousal violence has a profound effect on its victims: it robs them of opportunities to build healthy family relationships and enjoy productive social lives. That is, spousal violence robs victims of their fundamental right to have control over their own lives. Whether the abuse is frequent or less frequent, spousal violence has long-term effects on the mind, body and spirit of its victims (Ho, 2007; Healey, 2014). This is particularly the case with women and children who suffer the most from spousal violence (Kashani & Allan, 1998; Jones, *et al* 2001; Alaggia & Vine, 2006; Howell, K., 2011). Women victims of spousal violence tend to isolate themselves from family members, close friends, and neighbors. They also live in constant fear in their own home and experience a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and unworthiness. Eventually, they lose their network of social support, and in many cases, their own lives.

At the societal level, the financial and economic cost of spousal violence is long-lasting and detrimental to all parties. Couples share complex relationships, which are further complicated by their participation, or lack of participation, in the economy and society. Spousal violence disrupts family and community relationships, which, in turn, undermines the social and economic fabric of society. Spousal violence not only stretches the limited resources of the health, educational, and welfare systems; but it also undermines the present and future economic well-being of Canadian society. In 2009, the total economic impact of spousal violence in Canada was estimated at $7.4 billion or $220 per Canadian (Zhang *et al*, 2012). The largest portion of this total was

victim costs ($6 billion), which included costs related to medical attention, hospitalization, lost wages, and missed school days. The justice system costs ($545 million) included expenses for police, court, prosecution, legal aid, correctional services, protection orders, divorce and separation, and child protection. Finally, third-party costs ($889 million) included expenses related to social service and support programs for victims of spousal violence (Graph 13). Thus, the effects of spousal violence are highly detrimental to Canadian society: it harms family and community structures, which, in turn, weakens the foundation of healthy human and social development. Canadians need to understand that spousal violence is costly and affects all of them, directly and indirectly. It is imperative that society continues efforts to prevent spousal violence, to protect and assist victims, to hold perpetrators accountable, and to take measures to break the cycle of spousal violence to ensure that it does not persist for future generations. In sum, addressing spousal violence is vital to promoting healthy families and prosperous communities. This task is even more important in Northern Manitoba communities, which already suffer from systemic socio-economic violence.

Graph 13
The Economic Cost of Spousal Violence, 2009
(Millions)



Source: Zhang, T., Hoddenbagh, J., McDonald, S. & Scrim, K. (2012). An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Spousal Violence in Canada, 2009. Department of Justice Canada.

Women's movements and spousal violence

Since the 1970s, Women's Movements in developed and developing countries have played a critical role in raising their voices against women violence in many forms and contexts (Asay, 2014). However, confronting violence against women has been a difficult journey. This has certainly been the case with spousal violence that is deeply engrained in harmful societal traditions, norms, and values. During the 1970s, for example, in the United States, wife physical abuse was an accepted custom and often advertised as 'humor' (Graph 14). Behind this humor, however, there was a long-history of women's pain and suffering that no longer could be tolerated. As a result, women started banding together to confront violence in the private and public spheres of human life (Graph 15 and Graph 16). Within the context of the women's movements of the 1970s, the 'battered women's movement', as it was labelled, exposed the failures of the law, poverty, inequality, machismo, and discrimination as the main root causes of spousal violence. The movement also provided support to the victims and survivors of spousal violence by providing them shelter, food, counselling, and health care. More importantly, the battered women's movement actively advocated for widespread societal changes. They combined both reflection and action in order to advance a political agenda that called for substantial changes to the way women were treated in American society. The activism of the battered women's movement caught the attention of academic researchers and policy-makers (Graph 17). Eventually, the interplay of activism and research placed the issue of violence against women at the center of the debate. What followed were changes in law, social and health services,

and women's status in society. The promotion of women's rights and educational awareness programs became important tools to reinforce these changes (Graph 18). Despite these actions, however, spousal violence has remained a serious problem in the United States (Hattery & Smith 2016).

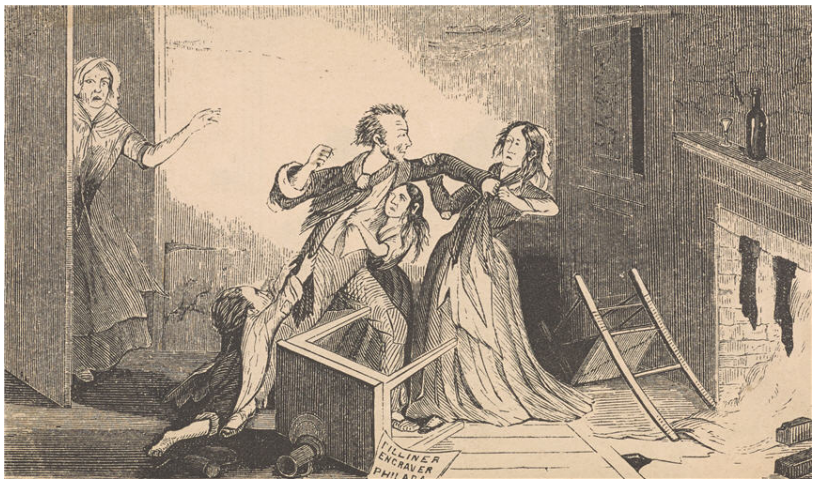
Graph 14

Source: United States Library of Medicine

Graph 15

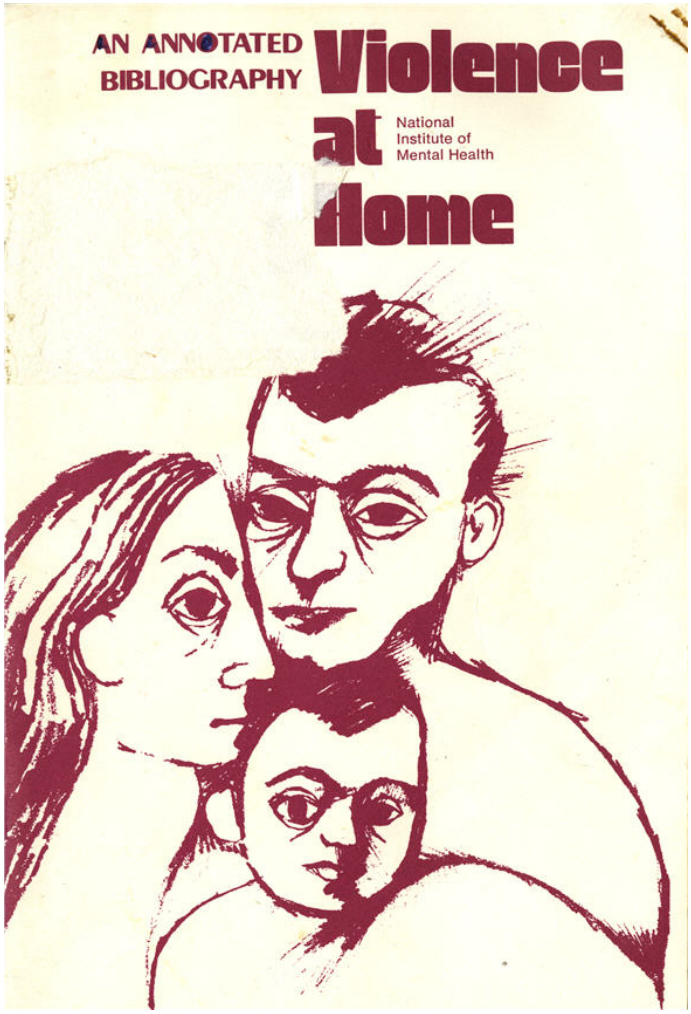
Source: United States Library of Medicine

Graph 16



Source: United States Library of Medicine

Graph 17



Source: United States Library of Medicine

Graph 18

Source: United States Library of Medicine

Canadian women's movements and spousal violence

According to Fraser (2014), the history of Canadian grassroots women's movements against violence has been extensive and influential. These movements played a fundamental role in conceptualizing and presenting spousal violence as a societal problem that was very harmful to women. Challenges to confronting spousal violence were many, including recognition of women's equality under the law and the opposition from male-dominated institutions and organizations that opposed social justice and equality initiatives. In response to entrenched opposition, women's movements weaved together partnerships, coalitions, and alliances in order to advance common, or complementary, agendas to deal with violence against women in all its forms. Ultimately, the widespread and intense involvement of women's movements moved the discussion on spousal violence from the private to the public realm.

Despite some progress, violence against women remains a stubborn problem in Canadian society. This became evident in 1989 with the 'Montréal Massacre'—the brutal murder of 14 women at the École Polytechnique. This was a large-scale and public act of violence targeted specifically at women. The 14 victims became tragic representations of how the hatred and violence against women is deeply ingrained in Canadian society (Graph 19). The aftershocks of these murders challenged the new generation of women's movements to revise their objectives and strategies of confronting violence against women. These movements, however, have continued to encounter difficulties confronting violence against women due primarily to the persistence of unjust societal structures and relations that still denigrate and subjugate

Canadian women. Confronting the stubborn problem of violence against women requires devising new forms of organizing and mobilizing men and women (the primary victims of violence) through community-based conscious-raising efforts. In Aboriginal Canadian communities, this approach is fundamental to effectively confront spousal/family violence.

Graph 19

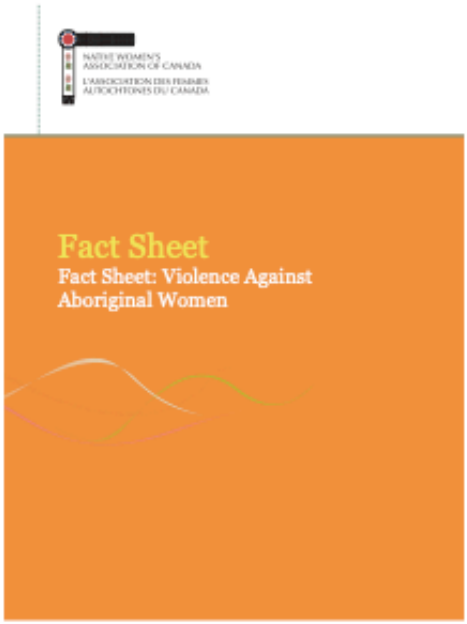
Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia

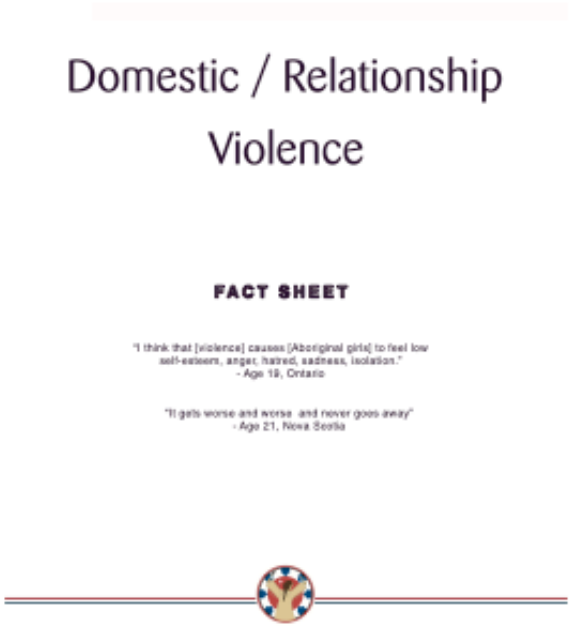
Aboriginal women's movements and spousal violence

Over the last decades, Canadian Indigenous women have become more politically visible and vocal through women's movements and organizations at the local, provincial, and federal levels. They have established grassroots organizations with the objectives of ending widespread violence, rampant discrimination, inadequate access to social and educational services, and widespread racism. Established in 1974, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has played a key role in advocating for and inspiring Aboriginal women and families of diverse Indigenous backgrounds. Since its beginning, the NWAC has advocated for concrete actions and activities to end the cycle of violence against Aboriginal women in all its forms (Bourgeois et al., 2014). Specifically, the NWAC, through its Sisters in Spirit (SIS) initiative, has promoted four key thematic activity areas to end violence against women: 1) education, 2) tools for communities, 3) partnerships, and 4) community responsiveness (NWAC, 2018). The NWAC has also promoted research in these areas in order to better inform and promote its key objectives (Graph 20). Without a doubt, the work of the NWAC has empowered Aboriginal women: it has empowered them to reassert their fundamental human rights by confronting the Canadian state (Desmarais, 1998). More importantly, the NWAC has taught Aboriginal women that fighting for their rights is a difficult struggle that requires continuous organization and mobilization at the local, provincial, and national levels. Moreover, Canada's current changing socioeconomic landscape makes the struggle for Aboriginal women's rights even more difficult. Growing poverty and inequality in Canada negatively affects Aboriginal peoples, and

women and children in particular. This situation is further accentuated by the constant occupation and exploitation of Aboriginal lands and resources by large corporations with the blessings of provincial and federal governments.

Graph 20





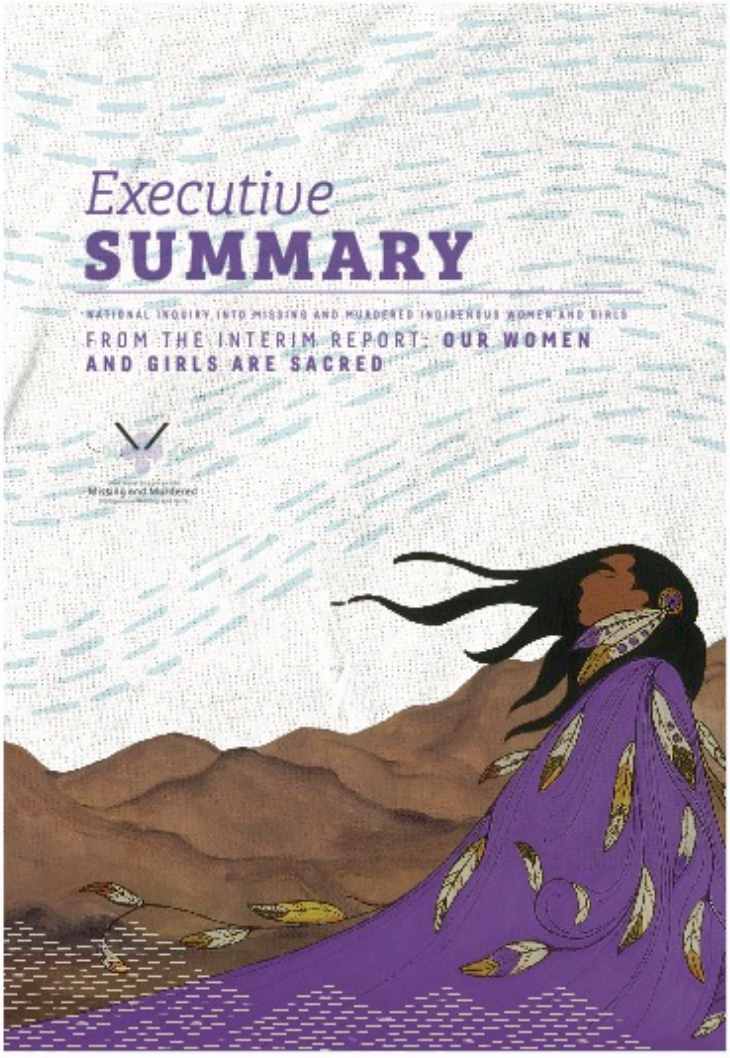
Source: Native Women's Association of Canada

Despite steady women's movements activism, violence against Aboriginal women living in urban and rural communities remains a serious problem. The hundreds of murdered and missing Aboriginal/Indigenous women illustrate this sad state of affairs. In response to the call for action from the families and communities of the victims, the Canadian government established an independent National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2016. The mandate of this inquiry was to examine and report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Aboriginal/Indigenous women and girls (Graph 21). Although the final report has not yet been issued, the main conclusion is already self-evident. The main factors behind the tragedy of hundreds of missing and murdered women and girls are the destructive legacies of Canada's colonial policies and practices that have destroyed traditional Aboriginal family and community structures and relationships.

To summarize: Aboriginal/Indigenous women's movements have continued to play a vital role in confronting violence against women in all its forms. However, these movements have a main shortcoming: they are national movements, funded, staffed, and located in big urban centres such as in Ottawa, Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver. The presence of these movements in isolated Aboriginal/Indigenous communities, such as in Cross Lake, is minimal or non-existent. The weak linkages with these isolated communities hinder the ability of national women's movements to inform and engage with women living in these communities. As a result, the 'trickle down' benefits from the activism of these national movements do not quite reach these smaller, isolated communities. Changing this situation requires redesigning and

reinforcing local-provincial-national linkages and networks between national women's movements and rural Aboriginal/Indigenous communities.

Graph 21



Source: National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Chapter Two

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations for the Study of Spousal/Family Violence

Theorizing spousal/family violence

What causes spousal/family violence? This is certainly a complex issue because spousal/family violence can take many forms—physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, and more. Despite its complexity, understanding the underlying causes of spousal/family violence are fundamental to proposing effective intervention strategies. Scholars of spousal/family violence tend to disagree as to what the causes are. Not surprisingly, they have put forward several different, and at times overlapping, theories of causation. Despite their differences, these theories recognize that spousal/family violence is about power and control. Thus, it is important to understand the power and control dynamics of spousal/family violence. This helps us to contextualize the problem and to propose effective intervention strategies. In other words, spousal/family violence intervention strategies must include a critical, contextualized understanding of the underlying causes of spousal/family violence as well as a clear community-based vision of what constitutes a healthy, prosperous, and nonviolent family.

The study of spousal/family violence in Canadian Aboriginal communities is best understood by examining the violent historical process of colonization: the

systematic invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of Aboriginal people. With the blessings of European secular and religious powers, colonizers aggressively took traditional lands from Aboriginal people and over time displaced and subjugated them. The colonization of Aboriginal people left a sad legacy: the loss of land, culture, religion, language, and economy. In Manitoba, Aboriginal people believed that, because they entered into treaties with the Crown, they were "allowed to retain part of their land, their identities, cultures, languages, religions, traditional ways of life, their laws and systems of government. Those things have been denied to them" (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p. 117). The long-term result of colonization was family dysfunction manifested in institutionalized violence, poverty, inequality, and racism. Even today, the legacy of colonization continues to have a disastrous impact on Aboriginal families and communities (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Colonization greatly affected the traditional roles of Aboriginal men and women (Allen, 1986). Prior to the arrival of the European colonizers, Aboriginal men and women performed functions vital to the survival of their communities and both enjoyed a high degree of personal autonomy (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991). They were both equal providers and managers of the household. Elders and parents taught husbands and wives to respect and honour one another, and to care for one another in good and bad times. Aboriginal men and women played active roles in the social and economic life of their communities and enjoyed respect inside and outside their home.

Aboriginal women held a special place in the family and community. In addition to their traditional roles as wives, mothers, grandmothers, and caregivers,

Aboriginal women actively engaged in small animal hunting, fishing, gathering, and horticulture (Bourgeault, 1991). Colonization changed all of this. In Aboriginal communities where patriarchal relations prevailed, colonization not only intensified the subjugation of women to men, but also restricted the role of women to household chores. In Aboriginal communities where matriarchal relations existed, colonization subjugated women to men according to Western patriarchal norms, values, and practices that were alien to the communities (Allen, 1986). Patriarchy reshaped and limited the personal autonomy of Aboriginal women inside and outside the household. As a result, Aboriginal women lost their role as relatively equal partners, providers, and managers in the household. Aboriginal family systems became dysfunctional and problematic. This situation was severely exacerbated by the separation of parents and children, intra-generationally, by residential schools, and the Sixties-Scoop, a practice that sadly continues in current fostering practices. Spousal/family violence in Aboriginal communities is a manifestation of these tragic historical events. Therefore, the proper and nuanced examination of spousal/family violence in Aboriginal communities must take into consideration this sad legacy of colonization.

Theories of spousal/family violence

Scholars have studied spousal/family violence from different disciplinary perspectives and levels of analysis (Levinson, 1989; Malley-Morris & Hines, 2004; McKie, 2005; Hattery & Smith, 2016). Some of these theories are: Biological Theory, Individual Psychopathology Theory, Ecological Theory, Social Learning Theory, Feminist Theory, and Structural Violence Theory. These theories, however, have strengths and

weaknesses in explaining spousal/family violence. They are also complementary rather than stand-alone theories and can be grouped into three main models of analysis: (a) the intra-individual model of analysis; (b) the social-psychological model of analysis, and (c) the social-structural-cultural model of analysis.

Biological Theory and Individual Psychopathology Theory

Biological Theory and Individual Psychopathology Theory fall into the intra-individual model of analysis. These theories focus on the offender's personal characteristics that trigger spousal/family violence and abuse. That is, these theories link personality disorders, trauma experiences, mental illness/injury, alcohol and drug/substance abuse, poor self-control, and other personal characteristics to acts of spouse/family violence. These theories are deterministic as they focus on the genetics and physiology debate: Spousal/family violence behaviour is explained in terms of genetic, organic, or chemical disorders or imbalances. These theories do not take into account the view that humans are unique. Spousal/family violence is not completely genetic; rather, it is heterogenous in nature and the social environment plays a part in it. Regrettably, the Biological Theory and Individual Psychopathology Theory tend to overlook the social environments and structural factors conducive to spousal/family violence such as systemic poverty, marginalization, racism, and sexism. There is also the danger that the uncritical use of these theories can link spousal/family violence to a particular group of people based on its genetic background. Are Aboriginal/Indigenous Canadians or Afro-Canadians more prone to spousal/family violence than compared to Euro-Canadians based on their genes alone? A recent study

conducted in the United States, for instance, sparked controversy by claiming that Afro-Americans possesses 'violent genes' (Beaver et al., 2013). There must be a great deal of caution when using these theories.

Despite their shortcomings, the Biological Theory and Individual Psychopathology Theory have persisted, in part because they were the first conceptualizations of spousal/family violence, which eventually, encouraged scholars to explore spousal/family violence from new directions. Indeed, Biological and Individual Psychopathology theories were put forward by the medical profession in the early 1960s (Malley-Morris & Hines, 2004; Hattery & Smith, 2016).

Within the context of Aboriginal peoples, the Biological and Individual Psychopathology theories are inadequate theoretical tools to explain spousal/family violence because this problem is not rooted in mere personality or behaviour disorders. For instance, alcoholism and drug abuse, which certainly contribute to spousal/family violence, is a manifestation of a bigger social problem within Aboriginal communities. The appalling social conditions and family dysfunctions in these communities have created a predisposition to alcohol and drug abuse that has, sadly, continued to incite many forms of violence. Unfortunately, biological and psychological reductionism has unfairly been used to popularize the racist view that Aboriginal peoples are physiologically prone to the uncontrolled consumption of alcohol. Alcoholism is a symptom, not the cause of spousal/family violence. As Kwan (2015) demonstrated, spousal/family violence is intrinsically linked to the destructive historical experience of colonization, which severely undermined traditional family

structures and relationships. Alcohol and substance abuse, transient lifestyle, homelessness, poverty, displacement, gender inequality and violence are manifestations of this sad historical legacy. All of them have contributed to the increase risk of spousal/family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Ecological Theory and Social Learning Theory

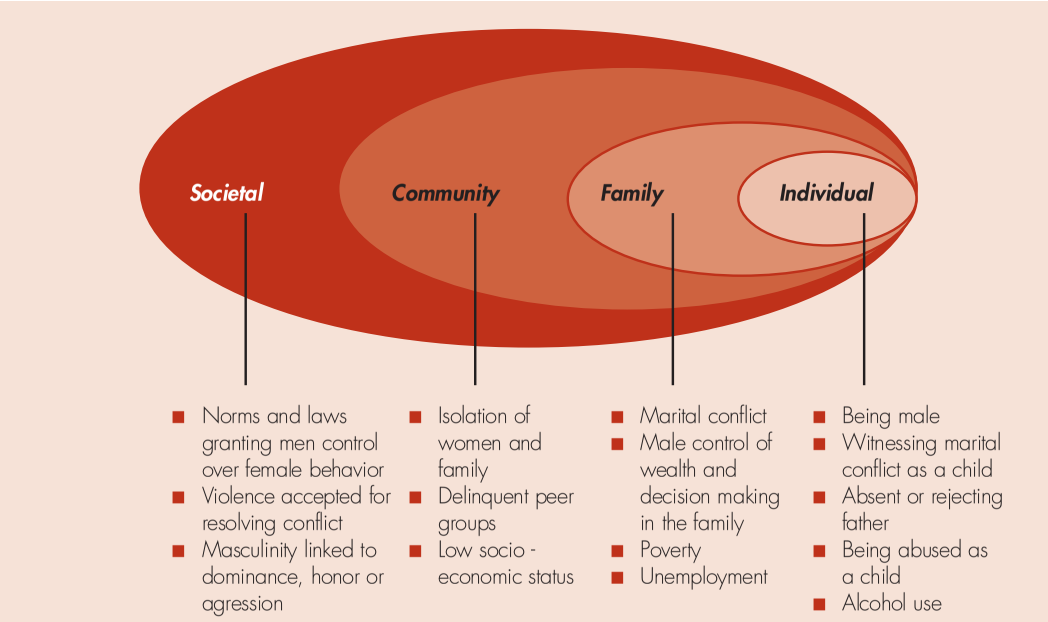
Ecological Theory and Social Learning Theory fall into the social-psychological model of analysis. These theories stress the view that spousal/family violence and abuse can best be explained by taking into consideration the external and learned social, environmental factors that influence family relationship, organization, and structure (Malley-Morris & Hines, 2004; Hattery & Smith, 2016). Ecological Theory, for instance, links spousal/violence to the broader social environment. Put forward by Urie Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist, during the mid-1960s, Ecological Theory has remained influential in the spousal/family violence field. This theory incorporated and expanded the Biological and Individual-Psychopathology theories to examine violence across all stages of life (Graph 22). Bronfenbrenner argues that human development is composed of several nested layers of influences. Within this context, spousal/family violence is perceived as the outcome of interactions among many interrelated factors situated at four different levels—the individual, family, community, and society (Carlson, 1984; Reilly & Gravdal, 2012).

At the individual level, Ecological Theory pays close attention to the personal history and biological factors of the perpetuator, or the victim, of spousal/family violence. Among some of these factors are early childhood experiences of neglect and

abuse, psychological or personality disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse, and experiences of violent traumas (Bimm, 1998; Yuen & Skibinski, 2012). At the family level, Ecology Theory argues that family members, intimate partners, friends, and peers may influence an individual becoming a perpetuator or victim of violence. For instance, pressure from violent friends, or gang members, may influence whether a young person engages in or becomes a victim of violence. In 1988, DeKeseredy popularized this notion when he argued that certain all-male peer groups encourage, justify, and support the abuse of women (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013).

At the community level, Ecological Theory recognizes that schools, neighbourhoods and workplaces may also influence violence. For instance, schools situated in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty, unemployment, poor housing, street prostitution, and the existence of a local drug or gun trade are likely to be risk places for students learning violent behaviour. At the societal level, Ecological Theory looks at the social factors that influence or inhibit violence. Some of these factors include economic and social policies that generate socioeconomic inequalities between classes or groups, the prevalence of social, cultural, and religious values and practices that legitimize male dominance over women, parental abuse over children, and the endorsement of violence as an acceptable method to resolve conflicts (Bimm, 1998; Carlson, 1984; Reilly & Gravdal, 2012).

Graph 22
Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory Framework



Source: WHO (2005). Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists. Washington, DC: World Health Organization and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health. Figure 1.6. p. 26

Social Learning Theory popularized explanatory perspectives of spousal/family violence as 'cycles of violence' and 'intergenerational violence'. Formulated by development psychologist Albert Bandura during the mid-1970s, Social Learning Theory contends that people model behavior that they have learned from others. It also states that not only external reinforcement or factors can affect learning and behavior, but there are also intrinsic reinforcements, or internal rewards, that shape and motivate behaviour. These include a sense of accomplishment, confidence, control, satisfaction, and power. In sum, spousal/family violence is a behaviour learned from parents, siblings, relatives, friends, and boyfriends/girlfriends, either directly (i.e. participating in violence) or indirectly (i.e., witnessing violence). Violent behaviour is learned and reinforced in childhood and continues in adulthood as a coping response to stress or as a method of resolving conflict. In his early analysis of family violence in the United States, Gelles (1972) states that ''not only does the family expose individuals to violence and techniques of violence, the family teaches approval for the use of violence'' (p. 171). Thus, children learn from parents or extended family members that violence is an acceptable behaviour within the home. At the same time, children learn that violence is an effective method for changing behavior of others or resolving personal problems.

Within the context of Aboriginal peoples, Ecological Theory is inadequate to explain spousal/family violence. Although Ecological Theory provides a holistic or integrated perspective on spousal/family violence, it gives too much importance to the child's biological and psychological development, at the expense of later-life adult

socialization experiences. It also overemphasizes internal and linear family relationship dynamics at the expense of broader social, political, economic, and cultural conditions and processes. Aboriginal children, for instance, certainly come to learn and accept the 'values', 'norms', and 'worldviews' of their parents, siblings, and extended family members. However, in most cases, these values, norms, and worldviews are borrowed, fragmented, and alien ones. That is, Aboriginal children are being socialized within colonized and colonizer social and cultural norms, values, and practices. This conflictual and dualistic environment is the product of the historical experience of colonization, and it has impacted Aboriginal children's ability to construct traditional meanings and understandings of family, community, and society. In everyday life, this detrimental experience has blurred Aboriginal peoples' formerly clear distinction of what is right and wrong. Spousal/family violence is clearly wrong in Aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. Thus, Aboriginal people need to confront spousal/family violence in all its forms in order to reconstruct their lives, families, and communities.

Social Learning Theory is also inadequate to explain systemic spousal/family violence in Aboriginal communities. This theory emphasizes the principle that the behaviour of individuals, especially children, is fundamentally shaped by their social environment through learning processes. Namely, children learn to become aggressive towards others by experiencing or observing violent behaviour from others, especially parents and siblings. Certainly, children who experience ongoing punishment or observe violent parental infighting may develop physical aggressiveness, antisocial behavior, criminal behavior, mental health problems, and spousal abuse behaviour

during adulthood. This also could lead to intergenerational transmission of violence. Despite its strengths, however, Social Learning Theory is insufficient to explain pervasive spousal/family violence in Aboriginal communities. The origin of the intergeneration transmission of family violence in these communities are not located in the inner-workings of the traditional Aboriginal family structure, but in the cruel implementation of colonial structures, especially the educational system that legitimized violence against aboriginal peoples in all its forms. Specifically, the Indian Residential School system was the main venue of transmission of institutionalized violence against Aboriginal peoples. More than 150,000 Aboriginal children were separated from their families and communities from 1876 to 1996 with the explicit purpose of removing them from the influence of their Aboriginal culture, language, norms, values, and religious beliefs and practices (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Indian Residential School system sought to 'kill the Indian in the child' and did so very effectively. Colonial administrators conceived Aboriginal peoples as 'savages' and 'backwards', who needed to incorporate into their mindsets the 'civilized' and 'superior' European culture. Aboriginal children became, by default, objects of social experimentation on a grand-scale through the Indian Residential School (Milloy, 2017; Miller, 2017). Contradictorily, the civilized and superior European culture was implemented through uncivilized and inferior methods: systemic and brutal violence. Aboriginal traditions, languages, and knowledges were lost during this historically disastrous colonial policy of cultural assimilation. Over the last century, the generations of children who participated in this social experiment

have suffered from the traumatic intergenerational effects of physical, emotional, mental, and sexual abuse. Eventually, most of these children grew up and became struggling parents because the trauma they experienced did not help them to develop trusting relationships, strong self-esteem, and good parental skills. If, nowadays, Aboriginal men abuse their spouse/partner or their children, it is in great part due to the traumatic intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School experience (Ball & Moselle, 2015; Blacksmith, 2011; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; Morrissette, 1994).

Feminist Theory and Structural Violence Theory

Feminist Theory and Structural Violence Theory fall into the social-structural-cultural model of analysis. These theories explain best the complex problem of spousal/family violence in Aboriginal communities because they examine the problem within the broader context of societal violence. These theories take into consideration the social, economic, and cultural factors that legitimize individual and collective violence. Intra-individual and social-structural cultural models of spousal/family violence are deeply intertwined in Aboriginal communities. Spousal/family violence has both micro and macro dimensions, which have been shaped by historical processes of social domination and cultural discrimination.

Feminist Theory has played an important role in bringing spousal/family violence into the public arena. Its central thesis is that violence toward women is rooted in patriarchal (male-dominated) power relations. Patriarchy is the amalgamation of Judeo-Christian religious ideas, Greek philosophy, and Western legal

code that has over the centuries promoted the rationalization and legitimization of male dominance over women and children in both the family and in society. Patriarchy relies not only on socially and culturally constructed norms and practices, but also on legal and civic institutions that covertly and overtly sanction the subordination of women to men. In a patriarchal society, women are taught to believe and accept the view that men are superior to women, and that this is the normal and natural practice. From this perspective, Feminist Theory argues that spousal/family violence is entrenched in social, economic, political, and cultural power relations that sanctions the systemic subordination of women to men in the home and in society (Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004; Alaggia & Vine, 2006; Chan, 2012; Hattery and Smith, 2016).

Since the mid-1960s, women's movements in many parts of the world have challenged patriarchy to tackle violence against women in both the private and public spheres of human life (Alaggia & Vine, 2006; Chan, 2012). They have established public education programs, advocated new legislations and policies, organized shelters for women victims of violence, and promoted changes in the law-enforcement agencies and health care systems. Certainly, much progress has been achieved, but a great deal more needs to be done. In Canada, for instance, the Parliament of Canada has changed the Criminal Code to better protect women and children from many forms of physical and psychological violence. Provincial and Territorial governments have also passed family violence legislation that further protect women and children. Even so, violence against women has continued to persist across Canada. Legislation alone will not solve

this problem because violence against women is shaped by complex societal and cultural factors.

While Feminist Theory has greatly advanced the study of spousal/family violence by highlighting the ways in which patriarchy has historically spawned violence against women, this theory has some limitations. Specifically, there are problems with viewing patriarchy as the ultimate cause of spousal/family violence. First, Feminist Theory cannot adequately explain violence in same-sex relationships (Lawson, 2003). Spousal/family violence in same-sex couples requires a more comprehensive analysis and theoretical explanation that goes beyond patriarchal relations. Secondly, Feminist Theory is also limited to explain spousal/family violence perpetrated by women. Although this theory usually explains women's use of violence in the context of self-defence and retaliation for previous abuse, it does not explain why women commit violence outside of their spousal and family relationships. Feminist theorists acknowledge that women can also be violent in their intimate relationships with men; however, they simply do not see the issue of women abusing men as a widespread, serious social problem. This is certainly the case in Aboriginal communities, where women, and not men, suffer the most from spousal/family violence. Finally, Feminist Theory tends to focus more on the victims rather than the perpetrators of violence. This tendency obscures the widespread, complex, and dynamic nature of spousal/family violence in society (Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004; Alaggia & Vine, 2006; Hattery & Smith, 2016). Aboriginal men and women need to understand that both are victims of violence, that violence is manifested in many forms

and shapes, that violence shatters their lives and relationships, and that women and men need to work together to solve the problem.

The origin of Structural Violence Theory can be traced to the European and North American peace movements of the 1960s. This theory posits the view that spousal/family violence is a manifestation of structural and institutional violence in society (Moyo, 2008; Hattery & Smith, 2016). Structural violence is the most basic form of violence. It is embedded in unjust and uneven social, economic, political, and cultural relationships that harm vulnerable people (Galtung, 1996). Structural violence is indirect, often invisible, or impersonal, and often has no one specific person/agency who can be held responsible. Such violence is accomplished in part through formal and informal social policies and practices that deny people of their fundamental human rights. A common example of structural violence is the maintenance of systemic poverty, inequality, and marginalization that negatively affects vulnerable people. In the context of Aboriginal people, spousal/family violence is a manifestation of a structurally violent and unjust social environment rooted in unequal power relations. Structural violence facilitates the institutionalization of spousal/family violence—the processes by which society and institutions perpetuate or, at least, tolerate spousal/family violence. Patriarchy is a form of institutionalized violence that has socially, politically, and economically disadvantaged women in both developed and developing countries (Carter, 2015; Frias, 2010; Ghanim, 2009; Matern, 2013).

Within the context of Aboriginal communities, Feminist Theory and Structural Violence Theory are two important and complementary theories that best

explain the complex problem of spousal/family violence. From Feminist Theory, Aboriginal people can learn how European imperialism and colonialism brought about the imposition of patriarchal social structures that has negatively affected Aboriginal women. The institutionalization of Western gender roles and patriarchal norms and practices through the Indian Residential School system fundamentally transformed Aboriginal communities (Barnes et al, 2006; Kwan, 2015). Aboriginal women lost their autonomy, power, status, and control over their own bodies. Children learned to internalize vertical forms of power relationships and social behaviours that legitimize violence against women in all its forms. Patriarchy sanctioned gender and power inequality in family relationships. It also sanctioned males' use of violence and aggression in the private and public realms of human life (Jamieson, 1987). In the private realm, patriarchy dictated how Aboriginal men and women should behave in their roles as husbands and wives. Western patriarchal family norms and practices condoned aggressive behaviours perpetrated by men, while teaching women to be submissive and passive toward their husbands. Ultimately, patriarchal norms and practices became deeply engrained in Aboriginal communities. These harmful norms and practices are manifested in sexism, misogyny, spousal/family violence, and violence against children (CampBell, 2012). Thus, confronting patriarchy in Aboriginal communities through conscious-raising educational efforts is essential to overcome spousal/family violence in all its forms.

From the perspective of Structural Violence Theory, Indigenous peoples can learn how the establishment of colonial structures and systems has systemically

perpetuated social, economic, political, and cultural exclusion and marginalization in Indigenous communities. Structural violence has denied Aboriginal peoples their fundamental human rights. Displaced from their lands, deprived of their livelihoods, and robbed of their languages and cultures, Aboriginal peoples have come to depend almost entirely on state agencies for their very survival. For Aboriginal women, this systemic dependency has disempowered them by silencing their voices and restricting their participation in the family, community, and society. Faced with pervasive poverty, unemployment, low educational levels, lack of self-steam, discrimination, racism, and sexism, Aboriginal women have had little choice but to live under unequal, unhealthy, and risky intimate partner relationships (CampBell, 2012).

In sum, spousal/family violence in Aboriginal communities is a systemic and multidimensional problem that no single theory can adequately explain. Its root causes, however, can be traced to a concrete historical experience: the subjugation and subordination of Aboriginal communities to European colonial masters. The colonization has resulted in profound harm to Aboriginal individuals, families, and communities. The social, economic, cultural, and psychological impacts of colonization have given rise to structurally conditioned problems in Aboriginal communities, such as high rates of poverty, unemployment, child abuse and neglect, school dropout, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, health problems, and spousal/family violence. Confronting these problems requires integrative and transformative community-based prevention and intervention approaches that, genuinely and seriously, take into consideration the real voices and experiences of Aboriginal peoples.

In the specific case of spousal/family violence, it is critically important to listen to the stories of women who have experienced violence and abuse. Certainly, it may be very difficult for many of them to talk openly about their experiences because spousal/family violence leaves deep wounds that are difficult to heal. Nonetheless, the victims of spousal/family violence need to understand that healing is a step-by-step process and that sharing their stories is the first step in the long healing journey.

Listening to the stories of victims of spousal/family violence is also critically important for Aboriginal and non-aboriginal first responders and service providers to better prepare themselves to respond to the needs of the victims. Likewise, community-based researchers, social activists, and policy-makers need to listen to the voices and stories of the victims to grasp better the complex and multidimensional root causes and consequences of spousal/family violence on Aboriginal communities. By working *with*, and not *for*, these communities, they will be in a better position to advance progressive tools to decolonize oppressive conceptualizations of family, community, and society. Specifically, they will be in a better position to reframe spousal/family violence within an Aboriginal worldview and propose culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive strategies for Aboriginal organizations and agencies working to end spousal/family violence.

Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing

Definition

What is Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing (TAKH) or Traditional Aboriginal/Indigenous Knowledge and Healing? According to the United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group (2014):

> Traditional knowledge refers to the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world. Developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment, traditional knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation. It tends to be collectively owned and takes the form of stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language, and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds (p. 3).

This straightforward definition summarizes TAKH well. However, it misses an important truth: for Aboriginal peoples, traditional knowledge and healing is a way of life with a set of principles, teachings, and experiences that guide their interactions with their families, their communities, and nature. Historically, TAKH has helped Aboriginal people to adapt to social, economic, environmental, spiritual and political change. In fact, in times of individual and collective pain and suffering, TAKH has helped Aboriginal peoples to grieve and heal (Hill, 2008). Thus, integrating Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing into Rural Development Studies is indispensable for exploring and proposing contextualized and culturally and spiritually sensitive solutions to structural violence in Aboriginal communities.

Integrating TAKH into rural development

Despite its importance to advance community development in Aboriginal communities, Rural Development Studies remains largely ethnocentric. The dominant

theories and practices that define this discipline are still intellectual constructs coming mostly from Europe and North America (Martinussen, 1997; Peet, 2009). These theories and practices are in most cases depoliticized, deculturalized, homogenized, and westernized. Aboriginal students are educated and trained using theories and practices derived from European and North American understandings of 'development', 'poverty', 'inequality', 'prosperity', 'sustainability', and 'participation'. Not surprisingly, Aboriginal students find these concepts abstract and difficult to apply to their social existence and reality. Changing this unfortunate situation requires Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers and practitioners to engage in open dialogue in order to exchange perspectives, share experiences, and correct shortcomings. Within the context of Aboriginal communities, European and North American development theories and practices are important but incomplete tools of reflection and action: they cannot alone adequately explain, let alone propose solutions for the multifaceted and widespread socioeconomic problems in Aboriginal communities. The circumstances of the large proportion of Aboriginal people living in rural areas, particularly on reserves, are very different and of an entirely greater magnitude than those of any other segment of Canadian society (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991, p.11). Filling this gap requires integrating Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing into mainstream rural development discourses and practices. For Aboriginal development researchers and practitioners, the integration of Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing into Rural Development Studies is critically important to make the discipline relevant to Aboriginal communities. Rural Development Studies

must be contextualized to the realities of Aboriginal communities, so it can become a powerful tool for transformative social change.

Fortunately, there is growing recognition, both inside and outside of academia, of the importance of TAKH for understanding sustainable social, economic, and ecological relationships as well as alternative holistic health and wellness therapies (Briggs, J. 2005; Pisupati, B., & Subramanian, 2010; Fenelon, Trafzer, & Popova, 2014). In Environmental Studies, for instance, TAKH is an important part of project planning, implementation, and management. TAKH is an immensely valuable resource that provides environmental researchers and practitioners with insights on how Aboriginal peoples and communities have organized and interacted with their environment to meet their needs in a sustainable manner. In Health Studies, TAKH provides a valuable framework for promoting alternative and holistic approaches to healing that enable people to increase control over, and improve, their health.

Healing through TAKH

Aboriginal peoples use TAKH practices to promote the re-establishment of injured personal, family, and community traumas and relationships. The restoration of these relationships through alternative medicine practices, self-meditation, healing circles, sweat lodges, smudging, and healthy eating promotes a better balance of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a human being (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Audlin, 2005; McCaslin, 2005; Ross, 2014). Thus, Aboriginal

healing is a liberating journey for Aboriginal peoples and communities. According to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2008):

> The healing movement among Aboriginal people in Canada is perhaps the most profound example of social reformation since Confederation. The potential impact of the movement—for all Canadians and especially Aboriginal people—is profound. The efforts to restabilize Aboriginal societies after centuries of damaging government policies continue to revitalize individuals and communities that, in turn, contribute to a healthy and vibrant future. The work of the AHF in this regard has been extraordinary and an example of an effective partnership between Aboriginal people and government. It is our hope that this publication will contribute to the profound legacy that is the AHF and the Aboriginal healing movement in Canada (p. 7).

Effective community-based responses to Aboriginal spousal/family violence require incorporating Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing perspectives. Outreach programs that promote public awareness campaigns, prevention and intervention services, and follow-up services for victims and perpetrators of spousal/family violence need to integrate Aboriginal worldviews, spiritual beliefs, cultural teachings, and Elders' wisdom into the healing process. Without this approach, it will be very difficult for Aboriginal communities to effectively respond to the historical traumas of enforced assimilation policies that have caused so much pain in Aboriginal families and communities. Thus, understanding trauma, healing, and resiliency from an Aboriginal perspective is vital to proposing and establishing community-based programs that effectively tackle widespread spousal/family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal peoples need to reflect individually and collectively on the why, how, and what of structural violence, and spousal/family violence in particular. Why

is structural violence detrimental to Aboriginal families and communities? How is spousal/family violence linked to patriarchy, racism, sexism, and other forms of social pathology? And what can be done to mitigate or end the human suffering effects of structural violence in Aboriginal communities? Within the context of these questions, Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing can serve as a crucial driver of critical reflection and action. Aboriginal people will not achieve their full potential without genuine efforts to effectively overcome the historical chains of subjugation and subordination. Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing plays a key role in this process. Aboriginal people must rediscover and embrace their traditional knowledges and spiritual practices and make of them instruments of real empowerment and transformation.

Reframing conceptualizations and responses to spousal/family violence by rediscovering, sharing, and using Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and Healing is also a first step in rebuilding and healing Aboriginal family relationships shattered by the violent impact of colonialism and the Indian Residential School system. Unlike the patriarchal Euro-Western model of the nuclear family, the Aboriginal family is based on a complex and extended kinship system, where everyone is related to everyone else. That is, the Aboriginal family is composed of mothers, fathers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, uncles, aunties, brothers, sisters, cousins and so on. This extended family relationship system provides care, affection, support, and protection to family members in good and bad times. Regrettably, the Aboriginal family system is

currently dysfunctional. Even so, it remains pivotal to the well-being of Aboriginal communities.

Rebuilding and healing Aboriginal family relationships is also vital to advance long-term prevention and intervention strategies to effectively tackle the socioeconomic problems currently affecting Aboriginal communities. Within the context of these communities, the promotion of healthy children, healthy families, and healthy communities requires rebuilding and reconnecting Aboriginal people to their own intricate and unique spiritual connection with the land. Despite centuries of forced displacement, Aboriginal people remain deeply attached to the land. For Aboriginal people, living off the land is socially, economically, culturally, and spiritually important (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Foley, 2004; McGregor, 2009; Menzies, 2006). Sadly, colonialism has also seriously disrupted Aboriginal peoples' relationship with the land.

In sum, Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge and Healing is essential to heal the deep wounds suffered by Aboriginal people due to the violent colonial process of subjugation and subordination. Spousal/family violence is a manifestation of this intergenerational trauma that continues to affect Aboriginal individuals, families, and communities. Without healing the mind, body, and spirit, Aboriginal people will be unable to overcome this historical trauma. Within this context, Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge is vital to promote health and wellness through a 'fully ecological' and holistic approach. A traditional and culturally appropriate provision of prevention, treatment, and restorative programs for victims and perpetuators of spousal/family

violence and abuse is therefore critically important to restore broken personal, family, and community relationships (Walls, Hautala, & Hurley, 2014). As Hamilton and Sinclair (1991) state:

> Culture is more than values, traditions or customary practices...it is the right of Aboriginal people to control their own pace and direction of development" (p. 264). The Aboriginal family and the role of Aboriginal Elders transmitting knowledge are the social and cultural institutions that will be the proper road to recovery and development to deal with the impact of the past human experiences of Aboriginal people (p. 264).

Methodological Framework

Just as theories provide the frameworks for examining and understanding spousal/family violence, research methodologies provide the frameworks for collecting and interpreting spousal/family violence data. Social scientists have studied spousal/family violence from various theoretical perspectives, using different research methodologies (Conway, 2008; Chan, 2012; Martin, 2014; Hattery & Smith, 2016). Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are commonly used to study spousal/family violence. Each of these methodologies, however, has strengths and weaknesses, and each of them is best suited to specific social and cultural situations. In many cases, social scientists have used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to have a better picture of spousal/family violence.

Chitashvili, Javakhishvili, Arutiunov, Tsuladze, and Chachanidze (2010), for instance, used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to study spousal/family violence in Georgia. The researchers used government population data to design

quantitative survey questionnaires in order to collect reliable numerical data about the magnitude, frequency, and forms of spousal/family violence nation-wide. The researchers used both qualitative semi-structured and structured questions to interview victims and non-victims of spousal/family violence. They also used focus groups in selected regions of the country. These qualitative techniques allowed the researchers to gather first-hand information about men's and women's understandings of, experiences of, and responses to spousal/family violence. This data also assisted the researchers in identifying and suggesting suitable policies, programs, and services required for tackling spousal/family violence and abuse.

Despite its advantages, the use of integrated quantitative and qualitative methodologies in the study of spousal/family violence requires considerable human and financial resources that, in most cases, are beyond the reach of Aboriginal researchers and marginalized rural communities. This was certainly the case for this researcher: there was not enough available resources to conduct a comprehensive examination of spousal/family violence in the Cross Lake community. In the face of limited available resources, qualitative methodologies are very useful to conceptually map and identify key factors or variables that explain spousal/family violence in particular communities. Listening to the voices of the victims and survivors of spousal/family violence must be the starting point in any qualitative study of this issue.

Community-based research

Since its inception, this study was a community-based and community-driven research with the explicit purpose of developing local human capacity building in the Cross Lake community. In consultation with the main researcher, community representatives identified, prioritized, and approved the research topic. This was a genuine collaborative and time-consuming process that followed strict community and academic principles, policies, and procedures. Thus, Cross Lake community representatives played an active role in the formulation and implementation of the study by taking into consideration the community's traditional knowledge, values practices, and protocols, including community empowerment, respect for diversity, and promotion of healthy and supportive relationships. Notably, the researcher and community representatives committed themselves to: (a) make the research results accessible and understandable to the wider community; and (b) respect the anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of the research participants. Finally, the researcher and community representatives understood that the end result of the research agenda was to assist in the formulation and implementation of culturally sensitive and effective community-based responses to spousal violence.

Research method

This study employed a qualitative methodology. Specifically, it employed individually conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews to collect data on spousal violence in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Cross Lake, Northern Manitoba. This methodological approach was suitable for this study for three main reasons. First, there was a clear

need to learn how spousal violence survivors have experienced and coped with the consequences. Therefore, listening to the voices and stories of the survivors in their own words became central to this objective. Second, there was a need to gain a better understanding of societal forces that shape and reshape spousal violence in the Cross Lake community. Specifically, there was a clear need to learn how spousal violence is linked to broader processes, including: structural social and economic inequalities; and unresolved historical legacies of colonization and Indian Residential School. Third, there was a need to advance engaged spousal violence research practices that promote capacity building within the Pimicikamak community. That is, there was a need to promote a truly collaborative approach to spousal violence research that puts forward practical solutions to the problem. Qualitative research provided the tools to facilitate these three key research objectives.

Qualitative research

Within the field of research methods, qualitative research is a powerful tool. It is widely used to dive deeper into a specific problem. Qualitative research is a broad term that describes many research methodologies (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, interpretive description). These methodologies draw on data collection techniques such as focus groups (group discussions), face-to-face interviews, and participation/observation (Bernard, 2011; Gray 2003; Schensul & LeCompte, 2012). Indeed, there is a long tradition of qualitative methods in the fields of Anthropology, Criminology, Cultural Studies, Health Studies, Women's Studies,

International Development Studies, Social Work, and Native Studies (Taylor, 2002). In Cultural Anthropology, for instance, the ethnographic qualitative method is perhaps the oldest and most frequently used to study Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples (Bernard, 2000). Indeed, ethnographic research has allowed cultural anthropologists to gain an in-depth understanding of everyday phenomena from the Aboriginal or Indigenous' perspective. Ethnographers believed that researchers should immerse themselves in the life of the people/community they are studying, and even learning their languages and traditions. This process allows ethnographers to come up with more detailed, in-depth results. One of the main drawbacks of this approach, however, is that it requires a substantial amount of time: the ethnographer has to build first rapport with the people/community that it is studying and make them comfortable around him/her. Only after a comfortable rapport has been established can the ethnographer have the necessary conditions to study his/her subject with well-informed understanding of the local culture, norms, and traditions.

Aware that any qualitative methodology is time and labour intensive, and considering limited financial resources available for this research, this researcher opted for in-depth face-to-face interviews as the main means of collecting data on spousal violence in the Cross Lake community. One crucial element that facilitated this research was the fact that this researcher was a member of the wider Cree Aboriginal community, with an excellent command of the language spoken in the Cree community of Cross Lake.

Ethical research framework

Since colonial times, Aboriginal peoples have been researched to death: they have become victims of insensitive and exploitative research projects that served the narrow interests of researchers and collaborators outside the Aboriginal communities (Castellano, 2004). Traditional colonial approaches to knowledge formation not only ignored Aboriginal peoples' perceptions of realities and knowledge systems, but also treated them as mere passive objects of research. Non-aboriginal researchers have often collected datasets, artifacts, and specimens without prior consultation and informed consent from Aboriginal peoples and communities. In other cases, Aboriginal peoples were used as guinea pigs for nefarious research experiments. The Canadian government's sponsored nutritional research project conducted in Northern Manitoba rural communities from 1942 to 1952 is perhaps the best sample of this type of unethical research experimentation. In this research project, nutritionists isolated hungry Aboriginal adults and children to test the effectiveness of different nutritional diets based on the combination of vitamin supplements (Mosby, 2013). Unwittingly, Aboriginal peoples became main participants in a sort of 'Hunger Games' drama.

Without clear Aboriginal-focussed epistemological and ethical frameworks, the use and abuse of public and private research within Aboriginal communities have caused irreparable harm to Aboriginal people. By ignoring Aboriginal knowledge systems, cultural traditions, authority protocols, and research ownership issues, traditional colonial approaches to research disempowered Aboriginal peoples: they became victims of a research system that further contributed to the intergenerational trauma

within Aboriginal communities. The use and abuse of externally-driven research became a tool to exploit and exert control over Aboriginal peoples and communities. The lack of proper consultation contributed to a situation of serious distrust between non-aboriginal researchers and Aboriginal peoples and communities (Kowalsky *et al*., 1996; Piquemal, 2000). This view was clearly stated in *The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996):

> [I]n the past, Aboriginal people have not been consulted about what information should be collected, who should gather that information, who should maintain it, and who should have access to it (p. 4).

Aboriginal people understand that research is critically important to promote the human welfare of individual, families, and communities. They also understand that inherently biased and purely investigator-driven research is highly inappropriate and disempowering to Aboriginal communities, because it reinforces old colonial patterns and practices of subjugation and subordination (Kovach, 2009; Lambert, 2014). In response to this objectionable situation, Aboriginal researchers have engaged with research communities and funders to seek to improve all forms of research methodologies and practices involving Aboriginal peoples and communities. They have also advanced Aboriginal-led research methodologies and frameworks, established research networks, and developed research protocols that are more suitable to their needs (Brown, Strega & Strega, 2005; Mertens, Cram & Chilisa, 2013). These initiatives have fundamentally changed the traditional research practices that frequently devalued, exposed, used, and abused Aboriginal culture, knowledge, and resources. Research for research sake is no longer acceptable in Aboriginal communities. Also, Aboriginal

peoples are no longer perceived by the non-Aboriginal research community as mere passive objects of research in need of external help to solve their problems.

This research was conducted in partnership with the Pimicikamak community of Cross Lake and based on current sanctioned research ethics protocols that guides culturally sensitive and appropriate research with Aboriginal peoples and communities. It employed a qualitative research methodology contextualized to the cultural context of the Pimicikamak community. Because externally-driven research projects have not always reflected the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples and communities, the active participation of the Pimicikamak community in this study was critically important to demonstrate the importance of promoting Aboriginal-focussed and designed community-based research projects that bring betterment to Aboriginal communities. Within a framework that promotes the mutual respect, consent, trust, and cooperation among the leading researcher, participants, and other stakeholders, it was expected that this research project can benefit Cross Lake community members. Ultimately, the ownership, control, access, and possession of this research study belong to the Pimicikamak Aboriginal community of Cross Lake.

Research design

Study aims

The main objectives and research questions of this study were:

i. to examine the main causes of spousal violence in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation community. What internal and external forces are at play? How

does the interplay of external (social exclusion, institutionalized racism, state dependence) and internal (child abuse, school failure, family dysfunction) forces shape and reshape the social context of spousal violence in the community?

ii. to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of victims of spousal violence in the community. How do they cope with physical abuse, psychological and emotional abuse, sexual abuse or economic coercion? What challenges do the victims and community face in confronting spousal violence?

iii. to discover and evaluate the strategies the Pimicikamak community use to manage the issues and challenges of spousal violence. What, if any, spousal violence prevention and intervention programs are in place in the community? How are these programs designed, staffed, and managed?

iv. to explore how spousal violence undermines social development in the Pimicikamak community. What are the negative socioeconomic consequences of spousal violence in the community? How can this situation be addressed? How sort of capacity building is required to improve the welfare of individuals and families in the community?

Research setting

This research was conducted in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation in Cross Lake, Northern Manitoba located 520 kilometres (by air) north of Winnipeg, Manitoba. This is a historical community with a limited rural economy and high levels of social, economic, educational, and health inequalities.

Research source materials

This research used available primary (interviews, official government reports, local community documents, and unpublished manuscripts) and secondary (books, journal articles, theses, major papers, conference proceedings, documentaries) sources.

Recruitment of research participants

The target population for this research study were survivors of spousal violence in the Pimicikamak community as well as community representatives and other stakeholders. The Cross Lake community established a spousal violence research study committee whose responsibility was to ensure that the research causes no harm to the participants and was conducted according to the Pimicikamak community's ethical guidelines, principles, protocols, and cultural values and traditions. The committee encouraged the active participation of community members in all stages of the research study.

Description of research participants

Participants were survivors of spousal violence who were eighteen years of age and over. There were no children involved. In consultation with the Pimicikamak community research committee, the principal investigator of the study generated a confidential list of selected research participants and other stakeholders.

Informed consent

Informed Consent is a voluntary agreement to participate in research. Voluntary informed consent was a prerequisite for participation in this research study. The researcher of this study obtained the informed consent from all the participants by fully informing them about his or her rights, the purpose of the study, the interview processes, and the potential risks and benefits of participation. Because the main participants in this study were Aboriginal, who are considered a vulnerable population, this research was structured with extra protection for the participants. The legal rights of the participants were not waived in any stage of this research. The participants had the option of signing the Consent Form or agreeing to the Oral Consent Form prior to their participation. The researcher informed the participants of their right to withdraw from participation at any stage of the research process.

Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality

Gaining the trust of all participants was of paramount importance in this research study. As such, assuring the participants of the privacy, anonymity, and confidential nature of the study was critical. Given this imperative, the researcher provided all participants with a Confidentiality Form, which outlined the steps taken to protect the anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the participants in all stages of the research process. The Confidentially Form clearly stated that the information collected during the interviews process was to be safely secured by the researcher for a maximum period of five (5) years beginning from the first day of the interviews. After this date,

data collected was to be completed destroyed. Participants were also informed of the possible dissemination of the research results via peer-review articles, short non-academic articles, or book manuscripts. In this case, the anonymity, privacy and confidentiality agreement remained in force.

Data collection

Interviews are an important element of data collection in this research. For the benefit of capturing important data and information during the interview processes, the researcher used a tape recorder. The participants were asked if they agreed to tape the interview. Also, the participants were asked if they wished to have a professional counsellor present during the interview process in order to protect them from harm or discomfort during the interview process. A local Elder was readily available during the full course of all the interviews in the event that a participant needed to be comforted and assisted.

The local Elder was invited to share an opening prayer at the beginning of the research study. The Elder received a small honorarium for his service. The participants also received a small honorarium for their participation during the interview process.

The interview process

Because of the oral tradition in Aboriginal communities, face-to-face interviews were the most appropriate way to gather data from both participants and other community stakeholders for this research study. Indeed, Aboriginal research participants do not respond well to the use of other alternative methods of gathering data, notably survey

questionnaires, because they feel intimidated and restricted by them (Ball & Moselle, 2015). Individual interviews were designed around semi-structured (for victims of spousal violence), structured (for other community stakeholders), and open-ended (for all participants) questions to facilitate the flow of the research participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and challenges confronting spousal violence. Unlike in a collective interview, where they may feel uneasy sharing their experiences and perspectives directly to others, research participants felt comfortable during the individual interview process. Indeed, they were frank and reflective in the interviews, without the fear of revealing difficult aspects of their lives. The unhindered individual interview process allowed the participants an opportunity to share their stories, voice their feelings, and express their concerns. The researcher kept a fieldwork log to track research notes, observations, reflections, interpretations, and other research-related issues.

Some of the questions for the survivors of spousal violence were:

i. Can you please tell me about yourself? Did you attend school? Are you currently in a relationship?
ii. Did you or any member of your family attend the Indian Residential School?
iii. Please tell me about your experience with spousal violence?
iv. In what ways did spousal violence affect your life? How do you feel about yourself now?

v. Did you ever talk with your family or friend or anyone about the abuse? Did you seek support in the community?

vi. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Some of the questions for the community representatives were:

i. What is your responsibility in the community? What is your educational level and training? Do you work formally with victims/survivors of spousal violence?

ii. Does the community provide prevention and intervention programs for victims of spousal violence? Does the community run emergency shelters? How are funded these programs?

iii. Do you know of any other community-based organization that works on spousal violence issues in the community? Are you in touch with this organization?

iv. What does the community do to assist victims of spousal violence?

v. What changes in staffing, and funding would facilitate the work of your organization?

vi. Would you like to share any other idea or concern?

Data analysis

The data collected was transcribed and analyzed several times for clarity and accuracy. The following step involved transforming the comments into themes that captured

succinctly and accurately the content of the transcripts. Subsequently, the researcher identified connectors embedded in the transcripts that, in turn, helped to develop a coherent and organized thematic narrative account of the case. Finally, the various narrative accounts were blended into a general narrative account that outlined, exemplified, illustrated, and validated the main research findings.

Sharing the findings with the community

Because of the collaborative community-based nature of the study, the main research findings of this study were shared with the Pimicikamak community, including research participants and other stakeholders. Sharing the findings was critically important to move beyond research for the sake of research, that has continued to harm Aboriginal communities. The research findings will contribute to enhancing culturally sensitive and appropriate prevention and interventions spousal violence programs in the community. This researcher will write a special report of the findings to the community.

Limitations of the research

Like any study of this complexity, this research study was subject to many logistical and methodological limitations. The qualitative methodology to this case study was essential to understanding, reflecting, getting access and learning other ways of responding to spousal violence. This study took every precaution to avoid deceit and inaccuracy in all stages of the research process.

Challenges of the research

This research study had its challenges. The most difficult one was obtaining the ethics approval from the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC). Despite this researcher's interest in conducting community-based research with the steady support of the Cross Lake Pimicikamak Cree Nation, the ethics research application became a difficult and sensitive process for BUREC. The main concern of the BUREC Chair was that the process of collecting data from a vulnerable population required a high level of training of the research applicant to avoid potential harm to the research participants. A 'high level' of training meant many things and restricted most graduate students from conducting the type of research proposed in Aboriginal communities. As a mature First Nations Cree speaking woman, a survivor of spousal abuse, born and raised in an Aboriginal community, this researcher was aware and is aware that sharing stories of traumatic life experiences is a sensitive issue and process. Listening to and giving voice to survivor life experiences and respecting survivors' lives is critically important as they are knowledge keepers of their own life experiences. Knowing that listening, sharing, and interpreting painful stories take great courage on the part of survivors and community members, this researcher honoured the commitment made to the Cross Lake community and addressed BUREC's concerns in order to properly carry out the research. With the firm support of the thesis committee and the leadership of the Cross Lake community, BUREC eventually issued the ethics certificate. It took almost seven to eight months to obtain such certificate. The entire BUREC process took its financial and emotional toll on this researcher. Despite the

difficulties, this researcher maintained the commitment to work with the Cross Lake community to accurately and unbiasedly collect, analyze, and interpret the stories of the spousal violence survivors as they were meant to be told. Following a fundamental Aboriginal tradition, this researcher listened to the survivors with compassion, empathy, and understanding. Most importantly, this researcher honored the three principles of conducting research with Aboriginal people: "Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice" as stated in the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2, (2010). The researcher hopes that in the future BUREC can be more culturally sensitive to the needs of Aboriginal graduate students to conduct research in their own community without the unfounded fear of harming research participants. After all, how can Aboriginal researchers harm Aboriginal participants if they follow basic Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal research protocols?

Chapter Three

Research Findings:

The Complexities of Spousal Violence in Cross Lake

As affirmed in the previous chapters, spousal violence is an endemic problem affecting individuals, families, and communities all over the world. Spousal violence has touched the lives of many Canadians, particularly in Aboriginal communities. Regrettably, spousal violence remains a hidden and persistent problem because of issues inherent in Canadian society: misogyny, sexism, racism, poverty, and discrimination. Empirical evidence demonstrates that women are the main victims of spousal violence (Kwan, 2015; Lawson, 2003; Moyo, 2008). Spousal violence is hazardous to survivors' health; that is, the health consequences of spousal violence are severe, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, phobias, panic, alcoholism, and substance addiction (Emery, & Laumann-Billings, 1998; Shipway, 2013). Given the factors leading to spousal violence and resulting impacts, the study of spousal violence must be oriented toward finding appropriate community-based responses to the problem. This was the main purpose of this study. This Aboriginal researcher was not interested in doing research for the sake of research. Likewise, the Cross Lake community, which actively supported this study, advocated strongly for the need of advancing evidence-based solutions to the problem of spousal violence in the community. Spousal violence is a serious problem in the community. According to the local Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) office, there were 503 reported cases of 'spousal assault' (i.e.

spousal violence) in Cross Lake from 2013 to 2018, or around 100 cases per year. Because most victims, particularly women, do not report abuse, it is most likely that this figure is much higher. In any case, the number of reported cases is high for a rural community such as Cross Lake.[1]

Considering that no studies had been published previously about spousal violence in the community, this study became, by default, exploratory, with the following three crucial questions: (a) what are the social factors shaping spousal violence in the Cross Lake community? (b) how does spousal violence affect the lives of victims/survivors? and (c) how is the Cross Lake community responding to the problem? To find answers to these questions, this researcher conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews with survivors of spousal violence in the community as well as community representatives and other stakeholders.

Sociodemographic background of the research participants

A total of fifteen voluntary participants were interviewed over a period of seven months. All of them were current residents of Cross Lake. The participants were recruited and interviewed by this researcher with the assistance of the Pimicikamak Community Health Department. Out of the fifteen participants, only one withdrew from the study for personal reasons. The remaining fourteen participants included nine victims/survivors of spousal violence and five community representatives and service providers. The majority of the participants were women, employed, with

[1] Data provided by local RCMP detachment on June 20, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

complete or incomplete technical, college, or university education. The age of the participants ranged from mid-forties to mid-sixties (Table 2).

Table 2

Socioeconomic background of research participants

Participant	*Age*	*Occupation*	*Education*
Margaret	56	employed	Technical school/incomplete university
José	48	employed	Technical school
Josefina	56	employed	Technical school
Juana	47	employed	University degree
Mikisew Kapit	53	employed	Incomplete middle school
Elder Paul	n/a	employed	Technical school/incomplete university
Mariana	54	employed	Technical school/incomplete university
Sofia	42	employed	Technical school
Muriel	45	employed	Incomplete university
Camila	53	employed	Incomplete elementary school
Mario	67	employed	Incomplete university
Alejandra	47	employed	University
Estela	59	employed	University
Tania	45	employed	University

As explained in the Methods chapter, the main data was gained through face-to-face interviews that lasted between two to three hours each. This researcher also kept a reflective diary, fieldnotes, and other research related information notes. Confidentiality of information was assured and strictly maintained during the whole research process. Prior to each face-to-face-interview session, this researcher allocated adequate time to establish trust and rapport with the participants following Cree cultural and spiritual traditions. Upon completion of each face-to-face interview

session, the participant received a small honorarium. Given that confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy were paramount in the conduction of this research work, this researcher, in consultation with the thesis supervisor, decided to use Spanish pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the participants. However, there were some exceptions because some participants requested their real names cited.

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and checked four times for accuracy and then reviewed by participants. After carefully reading and re-reading each transcript, this researcher constructed a coding frame of common themes contained in all the transcripts. The participants reviewed their transcripts and reviewed the analysis and interpretation of the transcripts for accuracy and confirmation. Then, the analytic themes were discussed with the thesis supervisor and developed further by this researcher. Ultimately, the data collected generated the following three main themes: (a) spousal violence as an 'everyday' form of violence in the family and community; (b) spousal violence as a consequence of intergenerational abuse and trauma; and (c) confronting spousal violence in the face of dysfunctional family, community, and societal relationships (Table 3). These three main themes are linked to historical events and processes of colonization, social marginalization, gender discrimination, and educational and health inequities. All of these factors have contributed to systemic spousal violence in the community. This unfortunate situation has led to negative consequences for Aboriginal women in particular: it has had a traumatic effect on their self-esteem, loss of self-identity, as well as on their socio-economic and physical and

spiritual well-being. Regrettably, the Cross Lake community has insufficient human and material resources to effectively address spousal violence.

Table 3

Main themes, sub-themes, and connectors that shape and define spousal violence in Cross Lake

Main Themes	*Sub-themes*	*Connectors*
• Spousal violence as 'everyday' form of violence	▪ Systemic physical and emotional abuse in the family and community ▪ Widespread poverty and unemployment ▪ Discrimination, racism, and sexism ▪ Government and community neglect	o Loss of identity o Isolation, fear, depression, shame, embarrassment, and humiliation o Low self-esteem o Power and control o Poor and crowded housing o Low socio-economic and educational status o Lack of shelter and support programs for victims of spousal violence
• Spousal violence as consequence of intergenerational abuse and trauma	▪ Colonization ▪ Legacies of Indian Residential School ▪ Social isolation and lack of community connection ▪ Family disfunction	o Loss of language, culture, traditions, livelihoods o Hopelessness and helplessness, o Lack of parental skills o Exposure to child maltreatment and sexual abuse o Alcohol and substance abuse o Suicidal ideation
• Confronting spousal violence in face of dysfunctional family, community, and societal relationships	▪ Inadequate government educational and health funding ▪ Inadequate spousal violence prevention and intervention programs ▪ Limited community capacity building	o Victim/survivor resilience o Providing safe environment for victims/survivors of spousal violence based on TAKH o Strengthening positive community-family relations and networks o Promoting adaptive coping skills and well-being through TAKH

Results

The main results of this study are as follow: (a) spousal violence is a systemic problem in the community of Cross Lake; (b) women suffer more serious and repeated spousal violence than do men in the Cross Lake community; (c) despite community efforts to address spousal violence, underfunded, underrepresented, and inadequate prevention and intervention programs have further compounded the problem; and (d) survivors of spousal violence demonstrated a high level of resilience in the face of pain and suffering; that, is, the survivors possessed a set of personality characteristics, as well as skills and cultural competences, which helped them to cope with stress, trauma, and suffering.

Based on the findings, this study recommends that to effectively prevent, resist, and overcome spousal violence, the Cross Lake community requires promoting new forms of community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs with the strong participation of victims/survivors. If these programs are to develop and effectively meet the needs of victims/survivors of spousal violence, then the voices of those who are supposed to use the programs need to be listened to and acted on. This must be the first step in developing effective community-based responses to spousal violence that are also culturally and spiritually sensitive. With this main objective, the Cross Lake community must make efforts to mobilize human and material resources in order to effectively tackle spousal violence in all its forms. Achieving this objective is perhaps the best response to transform one of the most destructive legacies of colonialism and the Indian Residential School system.

Addressing personal pain and suffering caused by widespread spousal violence will enable the Cross Lake community to effectively advance social development programs oriented toward building a healthy, caring, and inclusive community. Aboriginal women believe in treating the whole family (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991). In the absence of adequate human and financial resources, only genuinely inclusive and participatory community-based prevention and intervention programs can empower men and women to prevent, resist, and overcome spousal violence in the Cross Lake community.

Thematic Analysis and Interpretation

Based on the comparative thematic analysis and interpretation of the main research findings, this researcher identified spousal violence within the broader concept of structural violence, as defined by Galtung (1996). Structural violence manifests itself in many latent or non-latent forms in all spheres of human social life. According to Galtung, structural violence embodied in social structures—economic, political, legal, religious, and cultural—stops individuals, families, and communities from reaching their full potential. From the structural violence perspective, spousal violence cannot ignore the roles of larger social systems and institutions in the production and reproduction of interpersonal and collective violence. Spousal violence is a significant health concern, as it negatively affects the physical and emotional well-being of the victim/survivor. Indeed, spousal violence can have a lifelong negative impact on the social and economic outcomes of the victims/survivors as well as have a negative

impact on the social development of families and communities. What is even more troubling is the fact that spousal violence often occurs within the family home. This unfortunate situation exposes children to the negative consequences of spousal violence: they are unnecessarily exposed to the forceful physical, emotional, or verbal abuse inflicted by one parent on another parent. Thus, children who witness domestic violence are at serious risk of experiencing long-term physical and mental health problems (Adam et al, 2011; Kashani, & Allan,1998). Mikisew Kapit's story is particularly telling on this issue:

> I went through a lot of pain as a minor. Spousal violence hurts me. I saw it when I was growing up. My mom never drank at all, but my dad did. My dad was a big man. When he drank, he was violent. He used to come home in the middle of the night and start beating up my mom for nothing. When he did that, I would take my siblings down the river bank and go home when I thought the fighting had stopped. Sometimes I would go and hide in the bush. Sometimes my mom would manage to get away. I don't know where she used to go. Seeing my mom like that angered me. She was home all the time looking after us. Seeing her go through that as a woman, made me angry. I would think "one of these days when I get bigger, I will protect my mom".[2]

In the community of Cross Lake, spousal violence is intrinsically linked to cultural dispossession, breakdown of traditional family and community relationships, systemic racism and sexism vilification, entrenched social and economic exclusion, problematic substance use, and inherited grief and trauma. The origins of these destructive social forces can be traced to the colonial and residential school experiences. Spousal violence is one of the harmful legacies of the past that even today

[2] Interview with Mikisew Kapit (actual name) on June 14 and October 18, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

continues to impair healthy family and community relationships in Cross Lake (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991).

Spousal violence as an 'everyday' form of violence

Spousal violence is a serious problem in the community of Cross Lake. It is an everyday form of violence that touches the lives of most members of the community. Spousal violence is also a greatly under-reported problem. Why would victims of spousal violence report their cases to police authorities that they do not trust? Why would these victims report spousal violence when they feel that it is a 'normal' occurrence in the community? Why would spousal violence victims think that anyone cares or believe them if they did report it?

Out of the nine spousal violence survivors interviewed, only one of them reported her case to the local police authority. The rest of the survivors gave different (but complementary) reasons for avoiding reporting their cases to the police. Some of these reasons included: personal embarrassment; fear of retaliation; economic dependency on the abuser; ineffective police intervention; wanting to maintain the privacy of the family; victim-blaming attitudes; and lack of understanding from support services. Even the survivor who took the courage to report spousal violence to the police did so reluctantly and as a last resort when she felt her life was at high risk from the abusive partner. This is Camila's story:

> I was trapped in a horrible physically and emotionally abusive relationship that lasted many, many years. I tried several times to get away from this situation, but I simply could not do it. Each time I tried to run away from home, my former partner would find me and bring

> me back home and hit me and beat me. Over and over again this abuse happened. He would say "you will not do that again". He implied by this that I could not run away from him. The way I was treated by him was very cruel. How could he love me? That is not love for me. He tormented me and abused me all the time. He broke my heart. One day, he beat me and hit me in the chest so hard. I thought I was going to die. I couldn't catch my breath. I couldn't breathe at all. I think he almost killed me. I could no longer stay in this relationship. I could no longer believe in his 'love' towards me. I had had enough of the abuse. I was seriously abused and tormented. I had had enough. I had to stop this relationship. One day when I ran away from him, he came to find me at my mom's home. He wanted me to go back with him, and I would not go. He pushed me to the ground and dragged me. This is when I decided to quit my drinking and my relationship. I had had enough. I went to report him abusing me. He was charged and went to jail.[3]

Stories such as Camilla's are not uncommon in the community of Cross Lake. Spousal violence is a manifestation of a much larger and deep-rooted problem facing the community: structural violence. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire says that structural violence condemns poor people to live under the 'Culture of Silence'—the condition in which they are powerless to reflect and act on their social situation (Freire, 1998; Robles, 2018). Likewise, internalized spousal violence condemns the victim to live under the culture of silence. Internalized violence infuses within the victim a submissive, suppressed, and dominated self-image. The victim perceives violence as a 'normal' occurrence in the private and public realms. This condition makes the victim incapable of understanding and changing his/her situation.

Internalized violence is a consequence of several factors: entrenched economic conditions (widespread poverty and unemployment); poor housing conditions (living in unsafe and overcrowding conditions); traumatic childhood upbringing (witnessing

[3] Interview with Camila on June 12 and October 11, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

domestic violence and experiencing physical and emotional abuse); dysfunctional family relationships (marital conflict or discord in the relationship); educational and health problems (low educational level of husband/wife and consumption of alcohol and drugs); restricted community life (lack of social and employment opportunities); and traumatic school experience (Indian Residential School). All these factors play major roles in the long-term process of internalization of spousal violence. Overcoming internalized spousal violence is a difficult process that requires personal and community transformation. That is, it requires unearthing, exposing, and ultimately changing the root causes of spousal violence. Reflection and action oriented toward understanding and changing spousal violence is the first step in this process. Mario and Alejandra's stories illustrate the conditions conducive to internalizing spousal violence. This is Mario's story:

> I was raised by my grandparents. My mother died when I was born. This was a sad event for my family My father was absent most of my childhood. He was an alcoholic. When I was a boy, I witnessed my family and extended family drink, get drunk and fight at the house when they visited us. I witnessed a lot of violence in my home and the community. Violence was everywhere and every day. It was sort of a 'normal' occurrence for me. I attended the Indian Residential School and I experienced physical and mental abuse and trauma there. I became indifferent and numb to all forms of violence by suppressing my feelings. I felt loneliness, sadness, anger, fear, hurt, pain, hunger, and poverty. I drank alcohol to numb the hurt and pain of all that I witnessed. After the passing of my grandparents, I felt alone and abandoned. I had few friends. I was in so much pain I felt like I didn't want to live anymore. I became an alcoholic and abusive to my wife and others. The only love and caring I experienced was from my granny and my wife. My granny truly loved me.[4]

This is Alejandra's story:

[4] Interview with Mario on June 14 and October 24, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> When I was a teenager, I met my husband. I think we were both troubled teenagers and we kind of got along and started going out from there. I got pregnant a year later. During the mid-1980s, there were a lot of suicides in Cross Lake. This affected both of us, as we lost some dear friends. My husband drank a lot and used drugs. I was not aware of his drug abuse. As a result of his drinking, he could never stay permanently employed. I worked all the time. I always worked to provide for my children, for my family. When he lost his job, he stayed home with the children. It was at this time, I went to school, while the children were small. I was looking ahead for the future. That's the way I looked at it. Spousal abuse began about three years into the relationship. It lasted for several years. I was physically and mentally abused by my husband. I was traumatized with all the emotional, mental, and physical abuse I went through with him. I felt helpless, and useless because I felt like nobody cared about me. I never really shared anything with anybody or talked to anybody about my situation because whom was going to care about me? Nobody cared. I was alone. I had nobody to talk to, nobody to turn to. I lived with my pain silently. It was at times like this, I felt like I didn't want to live because of what was happening. I dealt with it on my own, by myself. I told my family about it and they despised him. This complicated relations with my family. My husband did not participate in any family outings or gatherings. Only I went with my kids to family events. The spousal abuse slowed down when my sons became older and protective of their mother. I also started fighting back. I tried to leave him a few times, but he forced himself into my life, over and over again. One day, when I was on my own with my children, he broke the windows to get into our home. I was so scared. I couldn't let him come into the house. I called the police. He was charged for this. I did let him back into my life. But I started to get confident. I kept fighting back. Eventually, my husband left me and my children. He had no more control over me. He lost control of me and my children. He lost control of everything.[5]

These heartbreaking stories clearly illustrate the deep-rooted causes of spousal violence in the community of Cross Lake. As indicated by interviewed survivors, the problem of spousal violence is further compounded by the effects of systemic social and economic discrimination, and government and community neglect. It is true that spousal violence can be perpetrated against anyone, regardless of race, age, sex,

[5] Interview with Alejandra on June 26, and October 24, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

religion, and social and cultural status. However, it is also true that Aboriginal peoples in Canada suffer the most from spousal violence (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2016). The community of Cross Lake is not immune to this problem. The community suffers from the lack of social and economic opportunities and support programs for victims of spousal violence. For these victims, this situation creates serious obstacles to escaping abusive relationships. In the community of Cross Lake, there is not a single safe house or short-term accommodation for women and children escaping spousal violence. In this context, how would they be free to decide whether they want to report incidents of spousal violence or move completely away from abusive relationships? Estela's story illustrates this situation:

> I was a single mother with two children when I met my husband in the late 1970s. We married two years after we met. I didn't have any children with my husband. He also didn't accept my children. It's a fact that I started to realize after fifteen years that I was physically and emotionally abused by my husband. The abuse started during our wedding night. He got drunk and beat me up. From this day on, my relationship with him became unhealthy. He was very jealous and did not want me to go anywhere at all. He resented visits with my family and even resented my visit with his own sister! I could not go anywhere or visit anybody! He didn't provide anything for the house or for me, so I worked. I worked all the time. I didn't have a safe place to go! Where would I go anyway? Physical and emotional abuse became part of my daily life for several years. My relatives and friends told me to leave my husband. I started school again to improve my employment skills. I missed many classes because of the beatings and embarrassment of my black eyes. One day, he came home and beat me up so badly that I ended up in the hospital. I couldn't even open my eyes. The cops were there because the nurse had called them. The cops took pictures of me. I was bruised up all over my body. I had to lift my eye lid to try to see. This was the time when I really started to think about what I was going through. One of the nurses said to me, "you should leave him, he's going to kill you". I thought about it. I tried to go to my parents but each time I went back to him. Finally, I started fighting back to protect myself. He would be okay for a while and then the same thing, over and

> over again. The abuse continued. One day, I was badly beaten. That was it. I left him after fifteen years of abuse.[6]

Tania's story also illustrates the difficulties spousal violence victims face when escaping abusive relationships:

> I grew up in a single parent family, which was difficult. My grandparents both attended Indian Residential School that affected their parenting skills with stern discipline. My mother raised us with this same parenting and stern discipline, the only way she knew how. As I know it today, her discipline was abusive. The abuse in my relationship started when I first met my partner. I was in a very unhealthy relationship, thinking it was a normal relationship. The physical, mental, and psychological abuse got worse when I became pregnant. There was a time when I became extremely depressed. There was a time when I would have more than one mental breakdown because I could no longer cope with the abuse and my situation. I was struggling as a single parent on social assistance, and homeless. I tried to get help but there was no support in the community. I didn't have a place to go! I needed help, but I couldn't get help due to lateral violence. This situation caused more problems for me. I felt helplessness and I hit rock bottom. My situation was like my mom's situation. This explains why I was in and out of the relationship with my partner. I didn't know what a healthy relationship was because I never saw my mother in a relationship. I did not want to live like this, in an unhealthy situation. I knew there was a way out, and that was getting my education. I decided to leave my community and my partner. I left with my children. I went back to school and completed post-secondary education. This was the beginning of my own journey to healing.[7]

Spousal violence as consequence of intergenerational abuse and trauma

Spousal violence in Cross Lake is also affected by intergenerational abuse and trauma. Intergenerational trauma, or transgenerational trauma, is the process by which untreated trauma-related stress experienced by survivors is passed on to second and

[6] Interview with Estela on June 27 and October 9, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[7] Interview with Tania on June 28 and October 24, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

subsequent generations. This is how Evans-Campbell (2008) defines intergenerational or transgenerational trauma:

> A collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation—ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation. It is the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events (p. 320).

As argued in Chapters One and Two, intergenerational trauma is a consequence of Canada's past injustices against Aboriginal people. Canada's cultural genocidal policies and practices such as the Indian Act, Indian Residential School, and the Sixties-Scoop collectively harmed Aboriginal people. Systemic and continuing discrimination and stereotypes have further compounded intergenerational abuse and trauma experienced by Aboriginal people (Voyageur, 1994). The consequences have been clear: loss of language, culture, and livelihoods; breakdown of traditional family and community structures and relationships; widespread cases of physical, sexual and psychological abuse and trauma; loss of traditional parenting and socializing skills; persistent poverty and alcohol abuse; and systemic violence in all its forms. The abuse and trauma inflicted upon Aboriginal peoples were significant and continue to have an impact on individuals, families and communities. That is, the cumulative effects of abuse and trauma have continued to pass down along Aboriginal generations and often amplified or caused other impacts (Sotero, 2006; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Systemic spousal violence is one manifestation of these extended effects. Mario's story illustrates the sad legacy of the colonial and Indian Residential School:

> My father forced me to attend residential school. He was not a good role model for me. When my father was drinking, he was violent and used to beat up his relatives and others. I was afraid of him. At the residential school, I experienced physical, sexual, mental, and emotional abuse. This is still vivid in my memory. The brother [priest], this tall man with thick glasses and a pipe, started coming around me. He would buy me drinks, candy, and other stuff. I didn't know why he was doing that until one day in the gym I discovered his bad intentions. He sexually molested me. I didn't know how to react; I didn't know what to do; I did not know what to think about it. Even though, I knew it was wrong. I wanted to tell my dad what happened, but he wouldn't believe me. He'd say to me "you just don't want to stay in school". I was ashamed; I was embarrassed. I suppressed all these emotions. I started drinking. I used alcohol to numb the hurt and pain. The physical and sexual experience at the school was a bad experience that is hard to forget.[8]

It is a sad, pathetic irony of history that Canada's 1867 assimilation policy designed to transform Aboriginal peoples from "savage" to "civilized" required savage and uncivilized methods to achieve its objectives. Canada's assimilation policy forced Aboriginal parents to send their children to the residential schools, where they were prohibited to speak their language or observe and practice their spiritual and cultural traditions, teachings, and customs. Aboriginal children did not see their parents and siblings for months and even years at a time. In Cross Lake, the St. Joseph's Residential School (Graph 23 and Graph 24), a Roman Catholic residential school that operated in the community from 1908 to 1948, left a tragic and lasting legacy for the Pimicikamak Cree people.

[8] Interview with Mario on June 14 and October 24, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

Graph 23

Source: St. Joseph's Residential School in Cross Lake Manitoba. Library and Archives Canada

Graph 24

Source: Library and Archives Canada

Although only three of the research participants attended residential school, the impacts of the residential school experience are clearly marked in the lives of all of the research participants in one way or another. The impacts were unconsciously passed

on from generation to generation. Parents who were forced to send their children to the residential schools faced the devastating consequences of separation. Many of the children, such as Mario, suffered physical and sexual mistreatment. Abuse was compounded by a school curriculum that denied the children of their Aboriginal languages and culture. All of this exacerbated the anger, shame, and alienation that were passed down to their children and grandchildren (Kolahdooz et al., 2015; Sotero, 2006; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Elder Paul's story illustrates how the effects of the Indian Residential School continues to permeate Aboriginal communities even today:

> I witnessed and experienced physical and mental abuse at home and at school. I witnessed my mom being abused at home. I thought abuse was 'normal' in many circumstances. I had a lot of anger and shame because of what I witnessed and experienced at the residential school. I felt unwanted in my home. I felt unwanted in my community. I used to come home for my holidays in the summer and Christmas and I'd do nothing but drink a lot. One day I saw my stepdad beat up my mother. I couldn't understand all the abuse. And I told my stepdad at the time, "one of these days, I'm going to beat you up, when I'm all grown up, I'm going to beat you up". This eventually happened when I turned fifteen years old. He was beating up my mom. I grabbed him. I grabbed him and knocked him down. My mom pulled me away from him. I couldn't understand why my mom was defending him. I left my community when I turned eighteen years old. Soon after, I was in an abusive relationship with my wife.[9]

Confronting spousal violence in face of dysfunctional family, community, and societal relationships

Although the Cross Lake leadership is aware of the seriousness and persistence of spousal violence in the community, it has faced enormous difficulties in dealing with

[9] Interview with Elder Paul (real name) on June 24 and November 16, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

the problem due to several factors beyond the control of the community. Some of these factors include limited human and material resources to develop and promote coordinated responses to spousal violence. Like most other Aboriginal communities in Canada, the community of Cross Lake does not have full autonomy to run its own affairs. Self-government is critically important for communities that want to contribute to and participate in the decisions that affect their lives. The absence of self-government restricts the capacity of Aboriginal communities to make their own decisions on how to effectively respond to the intergenerational effects of abuse and trauma. The community of Cross Lake is one example of this depressed state of affairs. Current responses to spousal violence from agencies and services providers are inadequate and ineffective: prevention and intervention programs suffer from limited and uncertain federal government funding, shortage of locally trained and experienced counsellors, and underutilized Aboriginal healing traditions and practices. In order to prevent spousal violence, it is vital to mobilize community resources. Only community-based programs are likely to have a positive impact on both the perception and the prevention of spousal violence. Fortunately, there is a growing awareness in the Cross Lake community that the problem of spousal violence is complex and requires coordinated responses that involve the active participation of the community as a whole. This is the story of José:

> Spousal violence in the community is a serious and widespread problem. There's a broad aspect of family violence in the community. Actually, the whole household is involved in violence. I've seen husbands beating up wives and grown up children assaulting their mothers or grandmothers. Physical violence is not just between husband and wife. Not at all. It can get really distressing, responding to calls for

> intervention coming from homes in the community. Sometimes, I would say to myself "we need to address spousal violence, particularly violence against women". I see a lot of big men, bigger than me, getting violent in their homes, abusing their partners, and traumatizing their children. I don't think there's a place for that in our lives and this is the reason why we remove abusers from homes. Abusers are violent because of their past. A point in question: why did this person do this to this person? Either stemming from the past, learned social experience, or because they do not know how to deal with anger. Abusers tend to consume too much alcohol. In fact, excessive alcohol consumption is the major cause of all sorts of violence in the community. Regrettably, we have limited funding to deal with the problem. If the government could provide more funding for programs, it would certainly help a lot to assist with the victims and abusers. Right now, many victims and abusers seek treatment outside the community in places like Norway House, Thompson, or Winnipeg because we do not have locally based programs to assist them. Thus, the community has a lot of work to do, especially for our youth. Unemployment is 85 percent in our community and our youth do not see a future here. We need to start working on coordinated solutions right now. Education is key in this process. The battle is hard, but I think the more the people are educated the more they can help themselves.[10]

Margaret's story illustrates the importance of working with the whole family in order to rebuilt broken relationships in the community:

> I work with youth who want to go to an alcohol treatment centre. I also work with children and families. I do a lot of community volunteer work because I care about my community. I bring the family together through family gatherings and family feasts. These are important activities for the whole family. They bring the family together; they strengthen family bonds. Many of our families in the community do not have strong family bonds anymore. The community offers some programs to deal with family violence. However, they are limited programs because of limited financial resources. It's always the cost, cost, you know, but we always try to help the victims as much as we can.[11]

[10] Interview with José on June 11 and October 12, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[11] Interview with Margaret (real name) on June 8 and October 12, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

In Cross Lake, the uncoordinated delivery of spousal violence prevention and intervention programs is evident in Josefina's story:

> I deal with a variety of violence cases, including spousal violence. Spousal violence is among the variety of violence cases in the community. Although I grew up with spousal violence at home, I don't accept it, because it destroys relationships. It's hard to live with spousal violence. My own daughter got married and she suffered from spousal violence. It almost killed her. Spousal violence ended her marriage. There's just too much spousal violence in the community. There are a few programs for victims of spousal violence in the community. However, I'm not sure who does what. The community justice office provides some support program for the victims. I made a module specific to spousal violence and we used it. I created the module because I didn't get any help from anyone. The justice office does not run emergency shelters for victims. Maybe the Health Services Department runs shelters, but I'm not sure. I also don't know what sort of programs or shelters the Health Services Department provides for spousal violence victims. There is no interagency coordination for sure.[12]

Juana's story also illustrates the lack of support for victims of spousal violence in the Cross Lake community:

> I do not work in any way with victims of spousal violence. However, I am aware of the harmful consequences of it, because I experienced spousal violence in my own life. For me, it was hard to get out of that abusive relationship, because there was no support within the community. There was no safe place go. And because it was a small community, my partner would soon know where and with whom I was. Of course, my partner would come and find me, talk to me, and express remorse and apologize. I'd go back with him again. My relationship with my partner would be good for a while and then it would go back to that abusive relationship once again. It was hard to get away from this situation. I went through this sad experience for many, many years because there was simply no support for me in the community. Soon, I was tired of this situation. My family was tired. My friends were tired of my situation and they would say, "she's going to go back to him anyway". I just stayed in that abusive relationship for a long time because there was nowhere to go, no one helped me, no one

[12] Interview with Josefina on June 11 and October 12, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> supported me. So, I just stayed there and took the abuse. Even today, I am not sure if there is any support for spousal violence victims. There is not even a shelter for them in the community. There is no funding for this.[13]

Other similar stories reinforce the view that the community of Cross Lake is ill-prepared to deal with systemic spousal violence in the community. This is Sofia's story:

> Spousal, domestic, or family violence is a community issue. It is a widespread problem. Families that experience violence come to the child protection office for help and, in many cases, we don't have the resources to help all of them due to funding issues. Because we don't have shelters in the community, we refer serious cases to Norway House, Thompson, or Winnipeg. This is stressful, particularly for women and children. For male victims of spousal violence, the situation is difficult, or even worse: they do not receive any support at all. We tried referring them to shelters outside the community and we've been told many times that they don't take dads and their children in. Sometimes a hotel room is paid for so that the dad and the children are safe. However, this is a short term, temporary measure. Dads are left with the responsibility of finding another safe place to go. They seek safety in extended families, but it is difficult because a lot of the extended family homes are overcrowded. At times, there are three or four families living in a one- or two-bedroom house. This situation is unsafe specially for children. The community is always trying to find ways to tap into other resources within and outside the community to help the families, but it is often too difficult.[14]

This is Mariana's story:

> We have no shelters, no shelters for victims to go to. If a woman is a victim of violence and she wants to go to a shelter, she has to call Norway House. And I've seen this: victims don't want to go to Norway House because they know their men know they are in Norway House; the family knows that they are in Norway House and it's easier for them to reach the victims there. If there is abuse in the Norway House shelter, the victim would say: "that's why I asked to go to Winnipeg, not Thompson or Norway House, it's too close to come and find us. In

[13] Interview with Juana on June 16 and October 24, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[14] Interview with Sofia on June 25 and October 11, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> Winnipeg I could have a chance to get out". So, I thought, we have the proof that if there's distance or if we have some way to keep the husbands, the spouses, the families from reaching them, will that make a difference? I'm not sure. Do we have safe space here? If we had a safe shelter right here for the victims, where they could come and be safe, and they could have access to professional staff to talk to them, to let them know about their options, would they get to stay here and not have to go to Winnipeg? Is this a viable option to help our women? [15]

Perhaps the most telling case of the crisis situation of spousal prevention and intervention programs in the community of Cross Lake is describe by a health worker. This is Muriel's story:

> At a recent youth and Elder community conference on healing and wellness, many participants came with black eyes and bruises on their faces. There was this one young girl at the conference that did not take off her sunglasses the whole time we were there. It was as if she was saying that she was being abused by her spouse. There were other similar situations. We thought to ourselves, "is that a picture speaking, that they wanted some help, that they had bruises on their faces, that they wanted help, but it was the wrong gathering that they came to?" Perhaps they felt that there was something going on in the community; that there was still something going on in the community that was not being told. I became convinced that they came to the gathering to get help! They didn't hide that. The sad truth is there is no support for them in the community. They don't tell anyone, they keep silent. In fact, I don't think there's any prevention or intervention programs in the community. I don't think there's any at all. Nothing. As you have seen, there is a 1-800 number only. That's all I've seen too. Nothing else, nothing about spousal violence prevention or intervention programs. We do not have any safe shelters for victims. No, we don't. There is none at all. I haven't seen any. I haven't heard anything at all. We badly need shelters and programs to help the victims in the community.[16]

Despite the lack of support programs in the community, spousal violence victims do not easily succumb to their suffering: they often find creative social,

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[15] Interview with Mariana on August 28 and October 18, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[16] Interview with Muriel (real name) on October 23 and October 24, 2018 in Cross Lake Manitoba.

cultural, and spiritual ways to recover from abusive relationships. Somehow, they find each other and learn to help each other. In most cases, victims begin their recovery process when their aggressor attempts to kill them or when they can no longer cope with the pain and suffering. The threat to their lives jolts them out of the state of immobility and propels them to search for help in informal social support networks. By individually and collectively reflecting and acting upon their lives, victims are capable of gaining the necessary inner force to overcome the culture of silence. This is the first step in their healing journey. However, the road to resilience—the ability to successfully cope with spousal violence trauma—is not an easy one. In the absence of support programs, spousal violence victims face difficult challenges in their healing journey. This is Camila's story toward the journey of recovery and survival:

> I have shared my story with others many times. Sharing my story with other women victims has helped me. Women should get together to talk about their experiences; to talk about the abuse they have gone through; how they felt in abusive relationships. As I said, I was treated with such cruelty by my partner. He constantly beat me and abused me. One day he beat me up so bad that I thought I was going to die. I had had enough. When he pushed me to the ground and dragged me, this is when, I thought to quit, to quit what I was doing, to stop, to end my relationship with him. I had to end it. I also quit drinking. Today, I don't drink anymore. I have a different life. I made mistakes in the past and suffered from the consequences. My life was so pitiful. Today, I go to church. I didn't grow up in a Christian home. I decided to go to church on my own. I read the Bible and I learn a lot from it. Discovering Christian spirituality has helped me a lot. I pray every day. I offer my help to anyone wanting to share their stories. I live peacefully now. I like who I am. I am happy now.[17]

This is Alejandra's story:

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[17] Interview with Camila on June 12 and October 11, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> There is a history of the intergenerational impact of residential school in my family. I was involved in an abusive relationship that lasted many, many years. I wanted a love relationship. I got into an abusive relationship because of love. I suffered a lot. One day my husband violently wanted to get into the house where I was with my children. I wouldn't let him in. He started breaking all the windows. He tried to come in. I thought to myself "what am I going to do now, I can't let him come in. I can't let him come inside. I can't let him come inside. I have to do something". I ran to the kitchen and grabbed a knife. He was already half way into the house through the window. I knew what was going to happen if he came in. I grabbed the knife and stabbed him in the arm. He tried to hold me. I pulled out. I managed to phone the police. They came and took him away. From this time, I started fighting back. I started to get back my confidence. I didn't want to be in this relationship anymore. I was fighting back. Reflecting and acting on my situation helped me a lot to move on with my life. My education helped me with this.[18]

Many abusers also come to the realization that spousal violence is destructive of family and community. As such, many of them consciously join the healing journey by connecting to available informal and formal support networks. They want to change their lives; they want to leave their past behind; and they want to discover their culture, traditions, and spirituality. This is Mario's story:

> I abused my wife, physically, emotionally, and sexually. I regret this now. I didn't' know how to be a good husband. One day, I had come from drinking and my wife wasn't home. I asked the kids "where's mom?" "I think she went drinking with some women". They replied. I went to look for my wife, but I didn't find her. She was out all night. I was sitting on the recliner, waiting for her to come in. That's when I did what I did. I grabbed my wife by her hair; I slapped her around until my oldest son stopped me and said, "dad, you're hurting her". Then something happened to me. I suddenly stopped. I totally lost it, that jealousy. I froze. I didn't move. The next day, the cops came and arrested me, I got thrown in jail. I stayed there three days. When I went back home, my wife was sitting there. Then I asked her, "Are you okay?" She said nothing. That's when I knew my marriage was over.

[18] Interview with Alejandra on June 26, and October 24, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> After this, I was lost. I didn't care about anyone or anything anymore. All the anger was coming out now. I hated everything. I hated the white man; I hated the system. I was ashamed to be an Indian. I didn't even know my culture, my language. I did not know even who I was. I didn't know anything. I had so much anger and bitterness. I was at university at the time. I dropped out of school. Even though I did not complete my university, I learned a lot during the time I was there. Eventually, I quit drinking and started working in the community. I began my rehabilitation. I asked the Master [Creator] for help and that's when my healing journey started. I began with the twelve-step program. I discovered my culture, my roots, that's where I found myself. I found myself in my culture; who I was, a Cree Man, a native man. For the first time in my life I was proud of who I was. The drum, the beat of the drum, the heart and I danced. My body felt good, my mind, my spirit, everything. I wanted this life, I want this good life. I have worked on my issues; my childhood, my anger, shame, rejection, and alcoholism. I am on good terms with my former wife and children. I know I've made a difference in my community already, but I want to do more. I love myself, I love me. I am humbled and now a positive person. I am not rich, but I'm happy, I'm a very happy person, I love my family dearly; I love my co-workers, I love my bosses, but most of all, I love my community and my people.[19]

Deep wounds need to be healed. The first step in this process is to educate the Cross Lake community about spousal violence. In this respect, it is necessary to confront the prevalent view among many community members that women's actions are to blame for the problem. Mariana's story describes this sad perception:

> I have been working with women in the community for a long time and I've seen first-hand the problem of spousal violence against women. What I've come to see is this: we are still blaming women for being abused; that it's always their fault; that they did deserve it. This is one of the biggest problems that prevents women from coming forward, because they know they are going to be blamed for the abuse; that they did something to deserve it; that what happened to them was their own fault; that they shouldn't have been there; that they shouldn't have done that; that they shouldn't have drank; that they should have stayed home and it wouldn't have happened. No one ever talks about that the abuser had no right to violate the victim in any way. Some of the young ladies

[19] Interview with Mario on June 14 and October 24, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> that I've worked with, they've come to see it as "oh! it's just part of the relationship". They've told me that it's normal and attempting to break the cycle of abuse is hard. Because how do you change the mindset of family members, who since nineteen hundred, have been taught in residential school that the man rules the household; that the house is his kingdom and, therefore, what he says goes? Women are men's property. We're property of men. And you know the other thing is when women are repeatedly beaten, and I've seen this time and time again, they will leave, they will go to a shelter and they eventually come back home! And it is usually pressure from their own families, from the women of their own families, and another thing "your children need their dad", and "you have to work it out, you have to stay". If the family is Christian, the victims are told that the bible says, "till death do us part". In those cases, some of them have been beaten to a pulp where "till death" almost came true. That becomes part of it; it's that, the guilt of this book that holds them and it's been since residential school, the fact that the residential school was here, I think, has had more impact than other communities that didn't have a residential school in their communities.[20]

Thus, the road toward the healing and recovery journey is paved with challenges and opportunities. The Cross Lake community leadership has now the difficult task of developing effective spousal violence prevention and intervention programs by challenging the whole community to take part in the process. These programs must mobilize available human and material resources within and outside the community to promote coordinated responses to spousal and family violence that meet the cultural, gender, and spiritual needs of victims, survivors, and abusers. Working in partnership with outside institutions and organizations, the Cross Lake community has the potential to finding long-term human and material resources to address spousal and family violence in all their forms. Encouraging the community to rediscover their culture, identity, and ceremonies are important elements in this

[20] Interview with Mariana on August 28 and October 18, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

process. Community members need to hear Mikisew Kapit's story to understand the power of rediscovering one's culture in the healing process:

> When I was young, I spent a lot of time alone. I always thought that if one day an old man [traditional healer] came here, I would live with him so he could teach me who I am. So, a few years went by, I think I was sixteen or seventeen, an old man came to Cross Lake, he was an Ojibway, a traditional healer. I asked my mom and dad: "I want to live with that old man, I want to go and live with him". They talked with me and said, "go ahead, you'll be in good hands". So, I went. I learned about our culture, our traditional teachings, and our ceremonies. When the traditional healer passed away, I was lost. I started drinking to deal with my loss. I got married and I abused my ex-wife. Spousal violence hurts me because I saw my mom being beaten and I did that to my ex-wife. I am not a violent person, but when I used to get drunk that's when I would become violent because I'd seen that when I was growing up. That's what drinking did to me. I'm sober now. I know who I am. I found me in my culture and ceremonies. I learned from the healer and I found my culture here in the community like the healer said I would. I am happy, I am happy where I am. I am healing.[21]

This is also Elder Paul's story:

> For many years I struggled suppressing my anger and emotions. The hurt and pain I suppressed from the abuse in my home, in the Residential School, and with my ex-wife all turned into anger. I suppressed my anger. I internalized that hurt and pain. When I tried to talk to someone about the abuse I witnessed at home, they would say "cheskawpitama" (wait a minute). I felt isolated. I didn't know what to do. I eventually quit drinking. I was sober. I had that. But I had nothing. My kids were gone. I had no relationship. I lost everything. I took a hard look of where I'd come. I didn't know who Paul was. I didn't know what Paul's purpose was in life. I was planning suicide. I went behind the lagoon by the lake. I sat for an hour looking for a sign of why I was so angry, what God wanted me to do and, "what was my purpose in life?" and nothing. For over an hour I lay there. I was going to take my life. "I'm going to ask one more time". I was looking for a sign. Show me something. Tell me something. I looked at everything. This is why I went to the land. The land had energy; where there were medicines, rocks, water, nature's energy. I had sat for hours thinking,

[21] Interview with Mikisew Kapit on June 14 and October 18, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

listening to the wind, the trees, watching and listening to the water. Then I saw a duck in the water. I watched it. What was it doing? It would dive and come up with seeds and let them go and he'd go back in again. What was it doing? Then it came to me. I understood what this duck was doing. He was repacking seeds. He was picking up seeds from under water and spreading them, letting them go when he came up. Spreading more seeds. Then it hit me. "that was my purpose, to spread my love, to spread my love unconditionally." I understood this message. That duck saved my life. This was the start of my being me, of who I was, of what I wanted to do. Because of the witchcraft stories there were instilled in me in the residential school scared me, I started going to sweats with my late grandpa, Johnston Blacksmith. He taught me about the sweat ceremony, his cultural teachings and my grandmother's teachings. One teaching I remember most that she taught me, when I was a small child was "always be humble" and to respect "a woman". This is why I did not fight back when my ex-wife physically and emotionally abused me. I trusted my grandmother, she taught me many teachings before I was eight years old. I was sent to the Indian Residential School when I was eight years old and stayed there until I was eighteen years old. I knew then, to that end, to finally accept who Paul was. The only thing I wanted for Paul back then was—that hard thing of who I am, to be able to change him now. The abuse, I made changes for my personal life, not to repeat it again. That will be the abuse I did, I don't have to do that anymore. The abuse I got, I don't have to accept it. I don't have to answer to anybody, like I did before. The negative words people say are coming from their mouth, not mine. I found healing in my culture, cultural ceremony and traditional teachings. This is what I share, our cultural teachings. Now, I continue to share with everybody what happened. I have come to a point in my life today, that every day is a celebration. I go home and I've done my job well. I feel good about where I am, about who I am. We can heal ourselves through our belief in our culture and accepting who we are. Through my university counselling skills and my culture. I became a helper, then a trainer, now, helping people who come to me for help.[22]

[22] Interview with Elder Paul on June 24 and November 16, 2018 in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

Chapter Four

Research Recommendations:

Principles for Community-based Spousal Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs in Cross Lake

As affirmed in the previous chapter, spousal violence in the community of Cross Lake is an extreme manifestation of Canada's unjust colonial legacy against Aboriginal people. Spousal violence needs to be addressed urgently because of its negative impact on the community's present and future generations. In fact, improving the well-being of victims and survivors of spousal violence is likely to be, in the long term, a key intervention in building a healthy and prosperous Cross Lake community. Based on in-depth face-to-face interviews with spousal violence survivors, community representatives and other stakeholders, it is clear that there is a consensus within the community to advance more effective spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. The community leadership is aware that current programs are fragmented and inadequate to meet the needs of the victims and survivors of spousal violence. Indeed, the stories shared by the research participants overwhelmingly confirm this particularly unfortunate situation. As such, there is an urgent need to address spousal violence by redesigning and implementing new community-based prevention and intervention programs (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991).

The Cross Lake community leadership must commit itself to make efforts to reduce spousal violence. This is a serious and pervasive social problem in the community

with devastating physical, psychological, and economic consequences for victims. Thus, the promotion of effective spousal violence prevention and intervention programs must rank high on the community's agenda. This requires the firm commitment of the community leadership and the active participation of the whole community. Without this, efforts to address spousal violence in the community are not likely to succeed.

Based on research data collected and analyzed, this study recommends a conceptual framework consisting of four key principles for building effective community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs (Table 4). Considering the unique context of the Cross Lake community, the conceptual framework must accord with Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing (TAKH) beliefs, knowledge, and practices. TAKH is an important element in the promotion of the social, cultural, emotional, and spiritual well-being of victims and survivors of spousal violence. Indeed, TAKH is central to the goal of helping the victims and survivors to break the culture of silence and culture of violence that have caused so much harm to their lives. Cross Lake Aboriginal leaders, as well as Elders, must play a pivotal role in the provision of such support programs. The community of Cross Lake must make efforts to promote comprehensive and long-term programs that empower its members to engage in community reflection and action. That is, spousal violence prevention and intervention programs must be oriented toward transforming dysfunctional family, community, and societal relationships. Certainly, the appropriate design, implementation, and management of such programs require extensive participatory consultation with community members and other stakeholders interested

in addressing spousal violence in Cross Lake. Therefore, it is hoped that the conceptual framework proposed in this study can help the Cross Lake community to advance culturally contextualized and gender-inclusive prevention and intervention programs for victims and survivors of spousal violence.

Table 4

Principles for Community-based Spousal Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs in Cross Lake

Main Principles	*Purpose*	*Expected Outcomes*
• Community Consultation	▪ Mobilize the community for addressing spousal violence ▪ Listen to the stories of victims and survivors ▪ Engage government and nongovernment agencies	o Recognize the importance of the extended family o Recognize the importance of community-based programs
▪ Community Planning	▪ Organize the community to develop spousal violence prevention and intervention programs ▪ Decolonize community planning ▪ Map up assets and resources in the community	o Recognize the importance of community planning o Recognize the importance of Aboriginal-led coalition building
▪ Community Capacity Building	▪ Encourage former victims and survivors of spousal violence to actively participate in prevention and intervention programs ▪ Enable community members to engage effectively in transformative community-based programs ▪ Enhance the delivery of community-based programs	o Propose a transitional safe house for victims of spousal violence o Reduce cost of delivering community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs
▪ Community Healing and Wellness	▪ Incorporate TAKH in community-based programs ▪ Equipped spousal violence workers, counsellors, and managers with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to effectively perform their tasks	o Provide culturally appropriate community-based programs o Employ culturally competent and empathetic staff

First principle: mobilizing the community through consultation

As described and analyzed in the previous chapter, spousal violence is a manifestation of a broader problem affecting the Cross Lake community: the problem of structural violence. The large-scale social forces —poverty, unemployment, poor-housing, sexism, racism, and subjugation—that have for long conditioned structural violence in the community cannot be overcome without concerted community-based responses. In the specific case of spousal violence, the Cross Lake community must respond to this problem by promoting effective prevention and intervention programs based on existing community strengths, capacities, and resources. Special attention should be paid to the needs of Aboriginal children whose well-being is jeopardized by their exposure to spousal violence. Community consultation is the first step in this process.

The importance of the extended family

The dominant Western concept of the family—a social unit comprising of a husband and wife living together with their children—is quite different from the concept of the family system prevalent in Canadian Aboriginal communities. As such, this nuclear family system is not a socially and culturally appropriate way of understanding family relationships in these communities. The concept of family has a special meaning in Aboriginal communities: it is a supportive social network of related people ('kinship'), in which a member's identity, rights, and responsibilities are defined and given meaning. The Aboriginal family encompasses an extensive and inclusive relationship system that links household members to grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins

and so on. Family and kinship obligations are atypical of non-Aboriginal families. However, for Aboriginal peoples, family and kinship relations provide social, cultural, and emotional supports in all stages of their lives. Historically, families or kindship groups determined ownership of territories, defined local economies, and provided access to local culture and knowledge traditions. As Emberley (2001) and Sinha and Kozlowski (2013) argue, British-Canadian colonial policies seriously undermined this complex and extensive system of family and kinship relationships. Indeed, the forced imposition of Western nuclear family traditions and practices on Aboriginal communities through British-Canadian colonial policies and laws, Indian Residential Schools, and Sixties Scoop practices caused much harm to the families in these communities. Systemic spousal violence is one manifestation of this painful legacy.

Despite its troubles and difficulties, the Aboriginal family continues to play an important role in maintaining the well-being of Canadian Aboriginal communities. Regardless of their financial situations, extended family members continue to care for one another and uphold reciprocal responsibilities through kinship networks. The joy and suffering of Aboriginal families are also the joy and suffering of the Aboriginal communities. Consequently, when Aboriginal family relationships break down, the effects for its members can be far more painful and widespread than might otherwise be anticipated in non-Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal children suffer the most from the breakdown of the family. Many of them end up living in scarce socio-economic and emotionally unsupportive family environments that are not conducive to a positive social, cultural, and educational upbringing (Ball & Wilson, 2012; McKay et al., 2009).

Because of centuries of destructive colonial and neo-colonial policies and laws, the present Aboriginal family structure is dysfunctional, conflictual, and tenuous. Many of the social problems affecting Aboriginal families today can only be resolved by healing, rebuilding, and strengthening family and kinship relationships. Considering the long-term intergenerational impacts of colonial and neo-colonial polices and laws on Aboriginal families and communities, the healing, rebuilding, and strengthening of Aboriginal family and kinship relationships will be a long, arduous, and complicated process. Even so, the Cross Lake community must rise to the challenge: it must make great efforts to restore broken family and kinship relationships. This is the fundamental first step to reconnect community members to the traditional social, economic, cultural, and spiritual beliefs, values, and practices of their ancestors. Without promoting healthy Aboriginal family and kinship relationships, the Cross Lake community cannot effectively overcome spousal, family, and community violence in all its forms.

The importance of community-based programs

A community in motion is a community in transformation. Participatory community-based programs play an important role in engaging members to become active agents of community transformation. In socially and economically disadvantaged communities, well-organized and focused community-based programs are important vehicles for promoting and enhancing healthy individual, family and community relationships (Ball & Wilson, 2012; Pancer et al., 2013; Ruiz-Casares et al., 2015). In Canada and the United States, community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs have

rapidly expanded since their emergence in the mid-1970s (Cannon et al., 2016; Saathoff & Stoffel, 1999). Programs include crisis-oriented services, such as telephone hotlines and temporary shelter, legal, emotional and vocational support services, and assistance in finding long-term affordable and safe housing. There are also community-based programs that promote more holistic approaches to addressing families in need of long-term support for coping with violence. Regrettably, marginalized Aboriginal families and communities have not always benefited from such programs nor even been adequately included as active collaborators (Bird-Naytowhow et al., 2017). Despite the significant growth in community-based service providers in urban and rural Canada, substantial segments of the Aboriginal population still are not reached, and most service providers organizations do not offer comprehensive support services to meet Aboriginal communities' diverse needs. The community of Cross Lake is only one of many: community-based programs for families suffering from spousal violence are inadequate primarily due to limited human and financial resources.

By their very nature, the design, implementation, and management of community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs are not easy tasks left to the community leadership alone. If these programs are to be effective, community members, government representatives, and other interested stakeholders (i.e. NGOs and research institutions) must engage in an open, participatory, and democratic consultation process. Victims and survivors of spousal violence must play a key role in the consultative process by sharing their experiences in their own words. As the experts of their own stories, they are in the best position to identify what types of

programs, services, and support will be most beneficial and effective for healing the wounds of spousal violence.

Despite their importance, the promotion of community-based programs requires a word of caution. In the absence of active outside support, primarily government funding, community-based programs will face limitations in overcoming structural problems affecting socially marginalized communities such as Cross Lake. For this reason, community-based programs require careful and pragmatic planning. This is important so as to avoid potential difficulties and disillusionment with the implementation and outcome of such programs in the community.

The community of Cross Lake must collaboratively develop a clear vision about the goals, objectives, and strategies of such programs. These programs must be embedded with a transformative vision. Community-based programs are noted for their contribution to individual and collective engagement, de-stigmatization, empathy, and, most importantly, empowerment (Crowley & Jones, 2017). These programs are about bringing community leadership and membership together in order to weave appropriate responses to structural problems affecting the community. Within this context, the ultimate objectives of the community-based program must be the reasserting and exercising of the fundamental human rights of community members.

Spousal violence prevents family members from enjoying healthy and productive social lives free of physical, phycological, and emotional abuse. Spousal violence is a violation of fundamental human rights (Morgaine, 2011). Therefore, community-based spousal prevention and intervention programs cannot be socially, culturally, and

politically depoliticized nor, as is often the case, seen as palliative responses to violations of human rights. The community of Cross Lake must become a place where its members can come together in order to advance new visions and strategies of overcoming spousal violence in all its forms. That is, the community must become a place where its members come together to rediscover new forms of learning from and respecting each other, taking control of their lives, governing their organizations, reorganizing their livelihoods, and reasserting control of their resources. Conducting a genuinely participatory community consultation process is the first step in laying the ground for transformative community-based projects. Through this consultation, it is also critically important to identify factors that enable or hinder the needs and wishes of the local community. Successful participatory community consultation initiatives not only prepare community members for reflection and action but also initiate important collaborative relationships with diverse agencies and organizations interested in promoting progressive community-based programs.

Recommendation No. 1:

That the leadership of the Cross Lake community form an Inter-Agency Committee, made up of local social service agencies, community organizations, and other interested stakeholders, with the mission of engaging the wider community in a comprehensive, inclusive, and participatory consultation process aimed at understanding, reorganizing, and strengthening community-based responses to spousal violence in the community.

Second principle: organizing the community through planning

Community consultation is generally a labour-intensive and time-consuming experience. In many situations, it can be also a frustrating experience, particularly when community members do not attend the consultation gatherings or show little interest in voicing their concerns in the discussions. This is understandable. The lives of socially marginalized people such as Aboriginal Canadians are, in most cases, consumed by a sense of ongoing helplessness and hopelessness. Despite its limitations, there is little doubt that open and inclusive community consultation can help to collect data and insights of great importance to community leaders, community activists, policy-makers, and policy-analysts that are less likely to emerge through other means. For planning, implementing, and managing community-based programs, community consultation is a fundamental principle that cannot be avoided or underestimated. The practical question is how to integrate the data that is collected, filtered, analyzed, and interpreted into community-based programs within the context of limited community resources and capacities. This is the main challenge faced by socially and economically marginalized communities. The outcome of community consultation generally provides valuable insights into concepts, principles, and strategies for community action. However, consultation alone, even if it is successful and provides positive results, will not set community-based programs into motion. There is currently a fatigue syndrome about consultation initiatives in Aboriginal communities. Federal, provincial, and municipal agencies, not to mention universities and research institutions, are constantly inviting Aboriginal communities to participate in consultation initiatives without clear benefits

to these communities. Communities need to take ownership and management of consultation initiatives (Moran, 2004). Without this, communities cannot develop relevant social relationships and human capacities that prepare their members to make, shape, and transform their communities. Community planning and coalition building are critical elements in community-based program initiatives.

The importance of community planning

Community-based agencies and organizations need to work together in coordination in order to maximize resources and promote effective responses to spousal violence. In the context of socially and economically marginalized communities such as Cross Lake, this is the best strategy to follow. However, coordinated action requires careful community planning. This task cannot be left to the community leadership alone, or even worse, outsourced to outside community development professionals with little knowledge of Aboriginal communities.

Community planning by its nature is a collective effort aimed at proposing and organizing proper responses to the range of issues identified in community consultations. That is, community planning is a follow up to the community consultation: it helps to integrate collected, filtered, analyzed, and interpreted data into culturally contextualized and gender-based community-based programs. Community planning also helps to build partnerships with government agencies, private organizations, and community groups in the provision of facilities and amenities that can foster effective community-based social services. For instance, in the case of the

community of Cross Lake, community planning can help to identify public and private sources for financing community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. It can also help to identify knowledge and service providers willing to collaborate with the community in the support of such programs.

Community planning can ensure ongoing attention and consideration to community-based programming through education, information, and advocacy initiatives. Efficient community planning enhances the ability of community members to have their concerns heard and addressed in the decision-making systems (Gullison, 2004; Morton et al., 2012). In the particular context of Aboriginal communities, community planning must take into consideration the intergenerational effects of colonization and the Indian Residential School system to better understand the magnitude of the social problems, such as spousal violence, affecting these communities. Responses to spousal violence must include programs that promote preserving Aboriginal language and culture, rebuilding extended family and kinship relationships, developing self-reliant community economies, and improving community housing, healing, and wellness. Prior to colonization, Aboriginal people managed their land and natural resources base through ecological knowledge practices, resolved family and community conflicts through dialogue and reconciliation, passed on cultural traditions and spiritual practices through oral history and ceremonies, and planned their local economies through sustainable and cooperative work (Karjala, & Dewhurst, 2003: Morgan & Cole-Hawthorne, 2016). The irony is that colonial planning seriously disrupted these old practices. Rediscovering and applying Aboriginal planning can

rebuild these practices (Prusak et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2014). In Cross Lake, Aboriginal planning can empower the community with the necessary theory, skills, knowledge, and practices to support and promote culturally meaningful and socially successful community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. Why then can the community of Cross Lake not rediscover these old practices to heal the social wounds affecting its members? Why can the community not train a new generation of community activists who can assist members to break with the genocidal colonial and Indian Residential School legacies? What are the obstacles to embarking on this journey? Perhaps the biggest factor is fear; the fear of breaking down the culture of silence that has for centuries subjugated Aboriginal minds, thoughts, and bodies to an oppressive Western social order. More specifically, it is the fear of decolonizing or dismantling colonial ideologies that have subverted Indigenous ways of thinking and being. To overcome this challenge, Aboriginal people need to examine and value their own beliefs about themselves and their communities by reflecting and acting collectively (Lynes, 2002; Robinson, 2014; Battiste, 2000; Valaskakis et al., 2009). Aboriginal people must be the central actors in the interrelated struggles of decolonization and indigenization. Aboriginal-led coalition building is a critical element in strengthening these struggles. In the particular case of the community of Cross Lake, the struggle against spousal violence can be the starting point in this process.

The importance of Aboriginal-led community coalition building

Aboriginal communities suffer from systemic government underfunding in health, education, social welfare, and housing programs. By underfunding these programs, the Canadian government control, marginalize, ignore, and suppress the needs of Aboriginal communities (Nesdole et al., 2014; McLean, 2007; Wheeler, 2015). Systemic program underfunding makes the social environment in which Aboriginal families live more difficult to enjoy and manage. The current Aboriginal housing crisis is a clear demonstration of systemic government program underfunding. In many Aboriginal communities such as Cross Lake, it is common to see two or four families sharing a small single home with limited amenities. Housing overcrowding is detrimental to family members, particularly women and children. Children need space to play and develop. They also need privacy especially when going through puberty. Parents also need a private space to foster a healthy relationship, intimacy, and affection with each other. Unhealthy living conditions contribute to tension and conflict among family members (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2012; Tousignant et al., 2013). In a situation of spousal violence, overcrowding complicates the problem as family members, particularly children, are directly exposed to it. Aboriginal communities must thus seek strategies to overcome systemic government program underfunding by fostering, expanding, and strengthening solidarity networks. Without access to support networks, socially and economically marginalized communities cannot fully enable their members to become active agents for social change (Routledge & Cumbers, 2009; O'Donnell, 2010; Schiff & Brunger 2016). In the case of Cross Lake, promoting Aboriginal-led

community coalition building in support of community-based spousal prevention and intervention programs can be an interesting experiment in fostering, expanding, and strengthening solidarity networks.

Because of limited human and financial resources, the community of Cross Lake needs to establish cooperative and participative partnerships with agencies and institutions outside the community that are interested in advancing Aboriginal-led community-based projects. Culturally conscious and respectful Aboriginal-led applied research partnerships can identify needs, gaps, and opportunities for developing community-based programs that effectively promote healing and wellness. Community-based spousal violence and intervention initiatives can benefit greatly from such partnerships. Therefore, Aboriginal communities such as Cross Lake must consider the important role that outside agencies and institutions can play in supporting community-based programs. With the active participation of Aboriginal knowledge keepers, these agencies and institutions can help Aboriginal communities to promote community-based programs that meet their cultural, social, and spiritual needs.

Recommendation No. 2:

That following the community consultation process, the leadership of the Cross Lake community form a Spousal Violence Task Force, made up of key representatives of social service agencies, community organizations, spousal violence victims and survivors, and other interested stakeholders, with the mission of engaging the wider community in a formal planning process aimed

at proposing viable community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs.

Third principle: promoting Aboriginal capacity building

Transformative responses to spousal violence must be multi-sectoral and community-based. Most importantly, transformative spousal violence prevention and intervention programs must incorporate the experiences of victims and survivors. This is critical. How can these programs be transformative if the voices and experiences of victims and survivors are not incorporated? How can these programs have a positive impact on the community if victims and survivors are not encouraged to share their experiences with other members of the community? How can these programs be transformative if victims and survivors are not encouraged to offer support, empathy, and respect to other victims and survivors? Therefore, the active participation of victims and survivors is fundamental in the design, delivery, and management of community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. Considering the underfunded and precarious nature of social programs in Cross Lake, the paid or unpaid participation of victims and survivors becomes more important than ever. In the case of the Cross Lake community, which does not have a single transitional safe house for spousal violence victims, the active participation of former victims and survivors of spousal violence is central to the successful operation of a safe house that enables victims to begin a new life of stability, dignity, and self-sufficiency. To achieve these objectives, the community of Cross Lake must actively promote Aboriginal capacity building.

The importance of a transitional safe house for victims of spousal violence

As noted previously, there is not a transitional safe shelter for victims of spousal violence in the community of Cross Lake. Scarce government funding causes the community to neglect high need services such as building and operating a transitional safe house. Ultimately, the lack of a transitional safe house drains scarce financial resources from the Cross Lake community. In many circumstances, victims and often their dependents must be temporarily sheltered in places far away from the community at a high financial cost to the community. Having a 'Safe Haven' right in the Cross Lake community would eliminate transportation and accommodation costs for victims of spousal violence sheltered far away from the community. A local 'Safe Haven' could also accommodate the needs of victims who do not want to leave or cannot leave the community, because of other family or employment obligations. A 'Safe Haven' would allow victims and survivors to share their stories without fear, shame, or embarrassment. It would be more than just a place to find a safe shelter from spousal violence. A 'Safe Haven' transitional house would provide a spectrum of support services, including educational, health, counselling, and financial services to help the victims of spousal violence to reconstruct their shattered lives.

Even more important, the 'Safe Haven' transitional house can be a place where victims and survivors of spousal violence help each other in order to rediscover and rebuild their true identities, culture, spirituality, and traditions shattered by a long history of structural violence. The 'Safe Haven' house can be a place where unified (rather than fragmented) programs and services are delivered to victims of spousal and

family violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and neglect. It can also be a place where trained and trusted Aboriginal counsellors listen and respond to the stories of the victims with understanding and compassion. It can be a place where Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing prevails, and where Elders offer emotional and spiritual support to victims of spousal violence. Finally, the 'Safe Haven' can be a place that provides genuine community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs that aim to respond to the needs of the community of Cross Lake.

Without proper consultation with and participation of former victims and survivors of spousal violence, community-based spousal violence, and prevention programs delivered from the 'Safe Haven' are unlikely to produce successful outcomes. Because of the shortage of funding and trained Aboriginal counsellors, the community of Cross Lake must enhance local capacity building in the provision of spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. This can be achieved by actively recruiting, training, and supporting the voluntary participation of former spousal violence victims and survivors in the delivery of these programs. The construction and operation of a 'Safe Haven' transitional house in the Cross Lake community with the collaboration of government and non-government sectors is key to starting this process. By encouraging the active voluntary participation of former victims and survivors of spousal violence and the wider community, including Elders and community leaders, the community of Cross Lake can build affordable and sustainable, genuine community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. In the long-run, this approach can build

the capacity and resilience of the Cross Lake community to progressively promote the safety and well-being of their members, particularly women and children.

The importance of promoting local capacity building

In the context of socially and economically marginalized Aboriginal communities such as Cross Lake, the promotion of local capacity building for spousal violence prevention and intervention programs may entail collaboration or partnership with government agencies, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). If properly designed and managed, this collaboration or partnership can assist the Cross Lake community to enhance local capacity building, generate community empowerment and self-reliance, and improve the overall delivery and effectiveness of community-based programs.

Local capacity building is a labour and time-consuming process. Yet, it is essential to develop and strengthen human and community resources (Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Plummer & Heymans, 2002; Eger et al., 2018). That is, local capacity building can play an important role in the process of equipping community members with the understanding, skills, knowledge, and training that enables them to perform effectively in community-based programs (Claussen et al., 2017).

In Cross Lake local capacity building is particularly important to deal with spousal violence. Currently, the Cross Lake community does not have the capacity to engage in long-term primary prevention and intervention spousal violence programs. The community suffers from a critical shortage of locally-based qualified counsellors due

to limited educational and financial resources. The community depends on the assistance of spousal violence counsellor professionals from outside the community. They come to the community with restricted counselling schedules and services that do not meet local needs. They are also hampered by their limited knowledge of the local language, culture, and traditions. As a result, these professional counsellors cannot effectively help spousal violence victims to become survivors. In an emergency situation, such as the loss of life resulting from spousal violence, government agencies tend to response quickly to the situation by sending additional professional counsellors to the community. In most cases, however, these are short-term interventions that do not provide long-term solutions.

Local capacity building tailored to the cultural needs of the Cross Lake community can provide alternative and affordable approaches to promoting spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. Supporting spousal violence victims is challenging work that demands knowledge of physical and emotional abuse in all their forms. Yet, many socially and economically marginalized Aboriginal communities such as Cross Lake do not have the resources to provide adequate spousal violence prevention and intervention activities. Efforts to better collaborate with outside community partners to develop alternative approaches for supporting spousal violence victims are needed. In this respect, local capacity building can play an important role: it can assist former victims and survivors to become spousal violence workers, counsellors, and managers. Because of their past experiences of dealing with physical and emotional abuse, they are in the best position to listen and respond empathetically to victims of

spousal violence. Local capacity building can also benefit other community members interested in actively and effectively participating in community-based programs that make a difference in people's lives. These could include community members who have been impacted by intergenerational violence and trauma, future knowledge and spiritual keepers (Elders), and grandmothers and grandfathers. Local capacity can enable grandfathers, grandmothers, husbands, wives, and children to gain the knowledge and skills to restore and heal family kindship relationships. Once the extended family is healed, the community will be healed, and spousal/family violence will no longer be a systemic problem. Finally, local capacity building will prepare families to better manage family and community relationships.

Recommendation No. 3:

That following the community planning process, the leadership of the Cross Lake community commits itself to build a 'Safe Haven' in collaboration with all levels of government and other community partners. The community leadership must make efforts to include the active participation of former spousal violence victims and survivors in the design, implementation, and operation of community-based programs. Additionally, the leadership must make efforts to include other interested members, including community Elders.

Fourth principle: Aboriginal community healing and wellness

Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing (TAKH) must play a central role in spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. Responding to spousal violence through culturally appropriate community-based programs is the best approach to heal broken family relationships in Aboriginal communities. Healing Aboriginal families will heal Aboriginal communities. Therefore, comprehensive frameworks for prevention and intervention programs that address the root causes of spousal violence in Aboriginal communities must be embedded by TAKH principles and practices. TAKH must orient strategies or lines of action that can be taken by Aboriginal communities and other agencies that work with spousal violence victims. To achieve this objective, spousal violence workers, counsellors, and managers must be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to effectively perform their tasks. That is, they must be properly trained and mentored. Most important, they must be competent in Aboriginal culture and traditions. With this objective, Aboriginal leaders and Elders must play major roles in allocating and managing resources and teaching and sharing traditional knowledge and practices. In the long-term, developing and implementing culturally appropriate training and mentoring programs for front line spousal violence workers, counsellors, and managers will enable Aboriginal communities to provide effective community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. This, in turn, will help to break the cycle of intergenerational violence and trauma that have undermined Aboriginal families and communities for very long.

The importance of providing culturally-centered community-based programs

Integrating Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing into community-based responses to spousal violence is fundamental to heal intergenerational violence and trauma in all their forms. TAKH is a powerful healing tool that must be at the centre of genuine Aboriginal community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. Healing the mind, body, and spirit through TAKH principles and practices will restore broken family and community relationships. This objective is foremost the responsibility of Aboriginal communities. State-based solutions "will not and cannot provide long-term change" (Holmes & Hunt, 2017: p. 34). How can the Canadian state solve the problem of institutionalized oppression, racism, and discrimination that the state itself created? How can the Canadian state solve intergenerational violence and trauma that the state itself caused? Thus, the task of solving structural violence and intergenerational violence and trauma healing in Aboriginal communities must be the responsibility of Aboriginal people themselves. Aboriginal communities must face this challenge by collectively reconstructing their traditional cultural identities and reasserting their fundamental human rights.

The community of Cross Lake must provide spousal violence prevention and intervention programs centered on Aboriginal traditional knowledge, beliefs, and values. These culturally appropriate programs must be designed, implemented, and delivered by Aboriginal communities themselves. These programs must explicitly reflect Aboriginal understandings of health and wellness, which include mental, physical,

cultural and spiritual health. With the guidance of trusted Elders and counsellors, the teachings and practices of Aboriginal sweat lodge ceremonies, pow-wows, traditional dancing and singing will contribute effectively to the healing of the mind, body, and spirit. Ultimately, culturally-centered community-based spousal violence and prevention programs must have, as expected outcomes, the restoration of dysfunctional family and community bonds. They must also cultivate an interest within the wider community in examining and responding to broader social problems confronting the community.

The importance of maintaining a culturally competent and properly trained staff

Victims of spousal violence must have access to culturally adequate or appropriate counselling and support services that help them to deal with physical and emotional trauma. Yet, Aboriginal communities face considerable barriers to provide adequate spousal violence counselling and support services due to limited financial and human resources. Limited resources downgrade the quality of services provided to victims. It also contributes to 'burn out' amongst staff, caused by dealing with constant, stress-inducing occurrences of spousal violence in the community. Because workplace burnout can be chronic in nature, it eventually affects both the health and performance of all frontline spousal violence prevention and intervention workers. If they are not culturally prepared and emotionally supported, Aboriginal communities cannot provide effective counselling and support services to victims of spousal violence. For community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs be successful,

Aboriginal communities must culturally and appropriately train, mentor, guide, and support frontline spousal violence workers, counsellors, and managers.

If the community of Cross Lake chooses to provide an Aboriginal holistic, family-based and community-based approach to dealing with spousal and family violence in the community, it must do so by employing culturally competent and properly trained frontline spousal violence workers. Frontline workers must be able to listen to the victims with composure and empathy. They must be able to recognize the structural factors and conditions that foster spousal violence in Aboriginal communities. Capable, committed, and well-trained and resilient frontline workers will help to ensure low staff turnover, as well as strengthen the effectiveness of community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs. A culturally competent and adequately trained frontline spousal violence workers will certainly require constant professional development, proper orientation and supervision, clear roles and responsibilities, and spiritual guidance and support. Finally, the effective delivery of spousal violence prevention and intervention programs requires the active support of the whole community. Cross Lake Aboriginal leaders and Elders must openly lead and actively support community-based efforts that effectively deals with spousal/family violence in all its forms.

Recommendation No. 4:

That following the implementation of community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs, the leadership of the Cross Lake

community commits itself to openly and actively lead and support these programs in collaboration with all levels of government and other community partners. The community leadership and Elders must make efforts to support the provision of culturally competent and properly trained spousal violence frontline workers.

Conclusion

Based on individually conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews, this study examined spousal violence in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation of Cross Lake, Northern Manitoba. This study examined spousal violence within the broader context of family and societal violence and employed Structural Violence Theory and a Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing (TAKH) as frameworks of analysis. The key findings of this study reinforce historical evidence that the negative effects of colonialism, racism, discrimination, and sexism have severely undermined the social, cultural, economic, and spiritual fabric of Aboriginal communities. These issues have been compounded by the intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School experience. The appalling social conditions and family dysfunctions in these communities have created a predisposition to alcohol and drug abuse that has, sadly, continued to incite many forms of violence. The appalling consequences of the Indian Residential School experience continue to reverberate in the life of Aboriginal families and communities. The intergenerational effects of violence and trauma have negatively affected Aboriginal family and community relationships. Alcohol and substance abuse, transient lifestyle, homelessness, child abuse and neglect, poverty, unemployment, health inequalities, and gender violence are manifestations of this sad historical legacy. These factors continue to exacerbate spousal violence in Aboriginal communities. This is particularly the case in the community of Cross Lake. Systemic spousal violence in the community is a clear manifestation of the effects of intergenerational trauma. Aboriginal women suffer the most from spousal violence. That is, the health consequences of spousal violence are

severe for women, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, phobias, panic, alcoholism, and substance addiction. Recent government statistical evidence documents high rates of spousal violence and abuse on Aboriginal women in Canada.

Despite countless government promises over the last decades to tackle spousal violence in Aboriginal communities, the problem continues to persist today. In Cross Lake, spousal violence is one of the most serious issues affecting the community. Spousal violence has had a devastating impact on the physical and phycological health and well-being of the victims: it has had a traumatic effect on their self-esteem, loss of self-identity, and socio-economic well-being. Spousal violence has been compounded in the community by inadequate, underfunded, and underrepresented prevention and intervention programs. Current 'programs' are not meeting the basic needs of the victims and their dependents. The community does not have the financial and human resources to provide the victims with adequate services like transitional housing, trauma counseling, legal assistance, and coping skills.

Resilience is the ability to cope with and rise to the inevitable challenges, problems, and setbacks people experience in the course of their life. This study demonstrates that survivors of spousal violence possess a high level of resilience in the face of pain and suffering. They acquire through their own efforts survival skills and attitudes that help them to cope with stress, trauma, and suffering. In the long-run, they adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, and stress. By developing their own survival skills and attitudes, spousal violence survivors are capable of 'bouncing back' from difficult and painful experiences. Yet, the path to resilience is often paved with

physical pain and emotional grief. Spousal violence leaves deep wounds in the body, soul, and spirit of the victims.

Finally, this study explored potential community-based approaches to addressing holistically spousal violence in the community. The study recommended the promotion of transformative community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs based on the principles and practices of Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Healing (TAKH). There is strong support for developing and implementing such programs in the community. The community of Cross Lake must become a place where its members come together to weave together transformative responses to spousal violence. The community must become a place where its members can take control of their lives and reconstruct family and community relationships. Only when broken family and community relationships are repaired and healed will spousal violence cease to be a systemic problem in the community of Cross Lake.

Transformative community-based spousal violence prevention and intervention programs must be based on four fundamental principles: (a) Community Consultation; (b) Community Planning; (c) Community Capacity Building; and (d) Community Healing and Wellness. These four fundamental principles emphasize the active participation of community members in the design, implementation, and management of spousal violence and prevention programs. Specifically, they emphasize the importance of integrating into the programs the voices and experiences of spousal violence victims and survivors. Without the active participation of victims and

survivors, transformative approaches to spousal violence will unlikely have the expected impact.

The study identified a high priority need for the community of Cross Lake: the immediate construction of a 'Safe Haven' for victims of spousal violence. At the present time, spousal violence victims do not have a safe place to seek refuge. In the absence of safe transitional housing, victims of spousal violence are at high risk of becoming homeless. As this study demonstrates, without access to safe transitional housing, victims of spousal violence are often forced to stay or return to an abusive partner or live in unsafe conditions. The dynamics of spousal violence in Aboriginal communities often leave victims isolated from friends or extended family. Without support from family or community members, spousal violence victims can struggle with isolation, anxiety, fear, depression, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts. This is why safe transitional housing is critically important for spousal violence victims. A 'Safe Haven' transitional shelter can provide victims temporary relief and safety from an immediate crisis situation. If properly equipped and staffed, the 'Safe Haven' can play a critical role in providing victims with the necessary programs and services that can help them to reconstruct their shattered lives. The 'Safe Haven' can become a healing place where Aboriginal healing traditions are honoured, respected, and practiced. A place where victims support victims by sharing their stories the way they want and, in the process, where all can contribute to healing broken family and community relationships. As McGuire states:

> When you heal, you help others too. You show that some things are just not worth carrying anymore. These things lose their power when they

> are confronted and spoken about. As Anishinaabekwe, we have a responsibility to make our stories heard. Our stories are about how we are viewed in our societies. It is up to us to ensure that these stories are told the way that we want them told (p. 221).

Cross Lake Aboriginal leaders and Elders must take the lead in mobilizing, organizing, and preparing the community to the challenge of spousal violence. Without their active and committed leadership, the community will continue to suffer from the physical pain and emotional strain caused by systemic spousal violence. The promotion of a 'Safe Haven' is both a challenge and opportunity for the Cross Lake Aboriginal leaders and Elders to work together in tandem with the community to pave the way for progressively transforming systemic spousal violence.

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