

Summary Interim Evaluation Report

Responding to and Preventing Sexual Violence in Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation

This is a summary of the interim evaluation report for the project, *Responding to and Preventing Sexual Violence in Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation*. This project is funded through Status of Women Canada. Project goals include:

1. Establish collaborative relationships with Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation community leaders, Band staff/service providers, First Nations partners, and local community organizations working in the field of violence against women and girls.
2. Engage the community and partners in planning and assessing community needs;
3. Engage the community in violence prevention and response strategies;
4. Share project results and lessons learned with the network of partners and First Nation communities.

During the first year, project activities focused on the first two goals, planning and implementing the needs assessment and bringing partners together to guide and support the project. Overall, it is evident that the project has achieved these goals. An Advisory Committee, made up of Paqtnkek community members and external partners, was established and met regularly. The project has engaged both partners and the community in planning and assessing community needs. Participation in activities was tracked and evaluation was undertaken as planned.

The needs assessment plan was carried out between December 2014 and April 2015 with a total participation of 137, 99 females and 38 males. Activities included two (2) community forums, 12 focus groups, a community safety audit, and an open house and survey for service providers. Focus groups were held for residential school survivors, men's wellness, young women, young men, open community sessions, Chief and Council, band staff, health centre staff, and directors. Care was taken to provide support to anyone who might be triggered by the discussion by having an Elder and/or a counsellor available. Resources, such as definitions of violence and consent, were provided for participants.

The needs assessment results and evaluation by participants and Advisory Committee members show that Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation has embarked on a collaborative journey of sharing, open dialogue and learning. Community members identified factors that contribute to violence and the various challenges associated with disclosing and reporting sexual violence. They identified that culture is significant (language and ceremony) in addressing violence and sexual violence through healing and forgiveness. They made recommendations for response to and prevention of sexual violence. They recommended that this work must be community member-led and community-wide with all community members working together including leadership, women, men, elders, youth, survivors and perpetrators. By building on their assets and working with partners, the community is committed to building the community capacity to address violence and sexual violence in order to create and sustain change.

When asked what was most helpful about the focus group, participants said people's input and ideas, the interaction, open dialogue, sharing, courage to speak out, learning, support information, and facilitation. They also talked about hope for change and a promising future. The following comments were made by youth, males and females across the range of focus groups.

- *That it could potentially be something big and help a bigger picture (youth).*
- *Everything was really helpful. I've learned things that I didn't know before (youth).*
- *Good conversation from the heart (male).*
- *The interaction amongst us as a group and the understanding that we are not alone and we can heal in ways that help us all (female).*
- *People sharing their stories of what happened to them and their ways of dealing (with it) (female).*
- *Being able to or to have the courage to talk (female).*
- *Talking about the issues that relate to our community (male).*
- *Having a counsellor available (female).*
- *I like the way this session was facilitated. It provided an excellent venue to share and talk and to suggest solutions. It was great to have an Elder present as well (male).*
- *The consent and sexual assault legal definitions were great resources (female).*
- *This is a good start and makes the future look promising in developing a safe community (male).*
- *The whole session was very helpful in identifying all factors of violence and how we can make a change to be more proactive in educating our people about the different ways to prevent violence (female).*
- *This initiative promises a sign of hope for change for an improved future. I look forward to what emerges from this and I think it is important to share the results with those that participated. Thank you so very much (male).*

In their year-end reflection, Advisory Committee members were generally positive about their role in the project, the collaboration of community and external organizations, and what they have learned from each other and from their involvement. A number particularly noted they appreciated being inspired by the commitment and motivation of members and the approach to the research as community led action research.

While evaluation respondents were generally positive about the needs assessment process and activities, there were some challenges identified through the evaluation. These included gender differences in response to some topics; the need to continue to clarify how community members understand and define violence and sexual violence; and, the need to reach out to, involve and inform more community members. The evaluation has put forward several recommendations related to continuing with what has worked well with the process and community engagement while, at the same time, addressing some of the challenges that surfaced.