

**2010 Eeyou Istchee Family Violence Symposium:  
Discussion Paper**



**SAFE HOMES,  
STRONG COMMUNITIES**

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## SECTION 1.0

# PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

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This paper is the result of a collaborative effort between the Cree Regional Authority Department of Justice and Correctional Services, the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association and the people of the Cree Nation who gave of their time to participate in our research process.

The purpose of this paper is to place the family violence issue in context, present the findings of our research, and summarize key issues that delegates may wish to discuss at the 2010 Eeyou Istchee Family Violence Symposium.

Our research consisted of a review of current family violence issues as well as the creation of an on-line survey to gather opinions of Cree people and the implementation of telephone interviews. The research strategies resulted in more than 375 people offering their opinion for our consideration.

The goal of this document is to therefore stimulate debate and discussion, not offer a specific action plan in respect to addressing family violence. To arrive at an action plan for change will take further effort and the involvement of both Cree people from all walks of life, and the many stakeholders who play an important role in addressing family violence matters. Together, we can ensure safe homes and therefore strong communities.

For all those who participated in this process, we offer a heartfelt expression of gratitude.

## FAMILY VIOLENCE IN CONTEXT

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### 2.1 DEFINING FAMILY VIOLENCE

"Family violence" means different things to different people. However, family violence includes many different forms of abuse that adults or children may experience in their intimate, kinship or dependent relationships. Family violence also includes being mistreated or being neglected by these members. As we gain more understanding about the kinds and amount of violence in close relationships and in dealings with other family members, the definition of family violence will continue to change. However, some common types of family violence are:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse and exploitation
- neglect
- psychological and mental abuse
- financial abuse

Individuals can be abused regardless of their age, gender, cultural background, education, income or place of residence. Family violence can have serious—and sometimes fatal—consequences for victims and for those that see or hear the violence. Consequences include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

- diminished self-esteem and sense of security
- damage to physical and emotional health
- negative impact on children (nurturing a sense of fear and insecurity and the intergenerational perpetuation of the cycle of violence)
- negative impact on financial security
- loss of matrimonial home and sometimes relocation outside the community
- self-blame
- self harm such as substance abuse, suicide
- spill over to the community in terms of other criminal behaviour (e.g., assault, vandalism, bullying) and therefore reduced public safety

A troubling consequence of family violence is that of “lateral violence”, which describes the organized, harmful behaviours that we do to each other collectively within our families, places of work and community. Lateral violence comes from a place of frustration, fear and oppression, and can be stimulated when people face victimization elsewhere, such as in their

own home. Like family violence, lateral violence has many forms including dominating behaviour, internal gossip among co-workers, name-calling, put-downs, rude treatment, job sabotage, blame and more. Lateral violence has also been referred to as “internalized colonialism”, where people who are or were oppressed (which certainly include family violence victims) take their anger and frustration out against their own people rather than their oppressors. Lateral violence begets more violence, therefore perpetuating a cycle of violence that can quickly diminish peace, harmony and safety in a community.

## **2.2 THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Unfortunately, we do not have a clear picture of how much family violence there is in Canada or in the Cree Nation. Because of the fear, shame and humiliation many victims feel when they experience violence in their relationships, in addition to victims’ concerns about how their case may be treated in the criminal justice system or other factors, family violence is often not reported to the authorities and therefore stays hidden. However, studies confirm that there is a higher incidence of family violence in Aboriginal communities than elsewhere.

What we do know in Canada paints a troubling picture. With respect to spousal violence:

- In 2007, nearly 40,200 incidents of spousal violence (i.e., violence against legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners) were reported to police. This represents about 12% of all police-reported violent crime in Canada.
- Overall across the country, police-reported spousal violence has steadily declined over the past 10 years by 15%, however, may be on the rise in some communities.
- The majority of victims of spousal violence continue to be females, accounting for 83% of victims.
- Accounting for nearly two-thirds of offences, common assault was the most frequent type of spousal violence according to police-reported data, followed by major assault, uttering threats and criminal harassment or stalking.
- Half of Canadian women (51%) have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.1
- First Nation and Inuit women in particular experience higher rates of family violence than non-Aboriginal women. In 2004, research showed that Aboriginal women were three and half times more likely to suffer some form of spousal violence than non-Aboriginal women.
- Of the Aboriginal women who have experienced family violence, 87% were victims of physical abuse and 57% were sexually assaulted.

- 21% of Aboriginal people reported that a current or ex-spouse had assaulted them in the past five years, compared to 6% of the non-Aboriginal population

Children, of course, continue to be affected directly and indirectly by family violence. Consider some of these statistics:

- Police-reported data for 2007 indicate that children and youth under the age of 18 were most likely to be physically or sexually assaulted by someone they know (85% of incidents).
- Nearly 53,400 children and youth were the victims of a police-reported assault in 2007, with about 3 in 10 incidents of assaults against children and youth perpetrated by a family member.
- When children and youth were victims of family violence, a parent was identified as the abuser in nearly 6 in 10 incidents.
- Girls under the age of 18 reported higher rates of both physical and sexual assault by a family member than boys. In 2007, the rate of family-perpetrated sexual assault was more than 4 times higher for girls than for boys.
- Male family members were identified as the accused in a sizable majority of family-related sexual (96%) and physical assaults (71%) against children and youth.
- Each year, an estimated 400,000 children in Canada are exposed to family violence of some kind.

Police-reported family violence against older adults is also a concern:

- In 2007, a third of violent incidents affecting the elderly were committed by family members.
- While senior men have a higher overall rate of violent victimization compared to senior women, senior women have higher rates of violent victimization by a family member.
- Spouses and adult children were the most common perpetrators of family violence against senior women.

As noted, the consequences of family violence can be tragic and result in the death of women, children and men.

- Women continue to be more likely than men to be victims of spousal homicide. In 2007, almost 4 times as many women were killed by a current or former spouse as men.
- Spousal homicide rates were highest for persons in the 15 to 24 year-old age group.
- Homicides of children and youth (under the age of 18) represented about 9% of all homicides in 2007. Most child and youth homicide victims were killed by someone they knew. In 2007, 41% of child and youth homicides were committed by a family member,

27% by someone known to the victim but other than a family member, 20% by strangers and the remaining 13% of child and youth homicides were unsolved.

### 2.3 THE PATTERN OF ABUSE

Family violence falls into a common pattern or cycle of violence. Consider domestic violence between two spouses:



- Abuse – An abusive partner lashes out with aggressive, belittling, or violent behaviour. The abuse is a power play designed to show the victim "who is boss."
- Guilt – After the abuse, the perpetrator feels guilt, but can also worry about the possibility of being caught and facing consequences for their abusive behaviour.
- Excuses – Abusers then rationalize what he or she has done. The person may come up with a string of excuses or blame the victim for the abusive behaviour—anything to avoid taking responsibility.
- "Normal" behaviour — The abuser does everything he can to regain control and keep the victim in the relationship. He or she may act as if nothing has happened, or they may turn on the charm. This peaceful phase may give the victim hope that the abuser has really changed this time.

- Fantasy and planning – The abuser begins to fantasize about abusing the victim again. They may spend a lot of time thinking about what the victim has done and how they will pay.
- Set-up – The abuser sets up the victim and puts their plan in motion, creating a situation where they can justify additional abuse.

#### **2.4 A COMMUNITY PROBLEM, A COMMUNITY SOLUTION**

Unfortunately, Aboriginal family violence is not merely a problem affecting certain Aboriginal families within otherwise “normal” communities. A full understanding of family violence demands that we consider that unhealthy community conditions and dynamics are integral to the problem of family violence, so much so that family violence and abuse have become a part of the way of life of many communities. In the past, there were traditional cultural values that were the foundation of indigenous societies across North America. These values included acceptance, protection, support and nurturing, and were the birthright of every Aboriginal person. In exchange for the rights and privileges accorded by community membership, each person owed a debt of respect for the community’s values and traditions, service to its ongoing requirements for well-being and prosperity, and vigilance in protecting the community. But today, this social contract has eroded, leaving us with community behaviours and characteristics that actually nurture, protect, encourage and permit violence and abuse to continue as a community trait. Addressing family violence therefore requires us to look inward to the family, and outward to the community, so that healing can be promoted in both domains.



## FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVIEWS

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As noted earlier, in addition to collecting the opinion of Cree people through an on-line survey (see Section 4 for results), we used a telephone interview process to attempt to gather additional opinion from Cree people throughout Eeyou Istchee.

A standard interview guide was created, with key questions including:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. Are you First Nations?
4. Do you know of anyone (friend, family member, co-worker, etc.) that has been a victim of family violence?
5. In your words, how would you define “Family Violence”?
6. To what extent do you believe that family violence is a serious problem in the Cree Nation? Relative to other problems or challenges faced in the Cree Nation, how does family violence compare in terms of seriousness, frequency, etc?
7. Specifically, in your view which forms of family violence are most prevalent or serious in the Cree Nation?
8. Which group (e.g., men, women, children, elders, all groups) do you believe are at greatest risk of family violence?
9. What do you think are the principal causes of family violence in the Cree Nation?
10. What do you believe are the biggest effects of family violence (e.g., violence in the school, further violence in the community, depression, substance abuse, etc.)
11. What do you think are the key things we can do to prevent or deal with family violence?
12. What do you think are the key barriers or challenges we face in respect to dealing with family violence (e.g., denial of the problem)?

A list of possible interview subjects was compiled from a variety of sources, with calls initiated by the research team requesting individuals to participate in a confidential interview. Email requests included a copy of the research questions to give prospective respondents an idea of the type of questions we would pose. Over 150 people were contacted requesting participation; however, 42 chose to participate with many citing work pressures, lack of knowledge of family violence problem or confidentiality concerns as barriers to their participation in the interview. Of the 42 respondents, 24 were female while 18 were men. The average age of the respondent was 41, with all Cree communities (including Washaw Sibi)

represented in the sample with the exception of Eastmain. All respondents identified themselves as First Nations and Cree Nation beneficiaries.

Findings and commentary are found below and are summarized by key themes. Direct quotations are inset and noted in italicized text.

### **3.1 KNOWLEDGE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMS**

When asked if they knew of someone who has been a victim of family violence, all respondents answered in the affirmative. Approximately a third of the sample admitted to having experienced family violence themselves at some point in the past, with all citing knowledge of a family member, close friend or child who had survived some form of family violence or is experiencing it at the present time. A respondent noted her close personal connection to the issue and how this experience has shaped her parenting:

*As a child, I witnessed my mother being abused by my father. As I got a little older I also became a victim from other family members. I don't want to get into details but it really affected me growing up. Now that I have children, I find it important that I teach them about our culture so that they can grow up the right way.*

Another respondent noted that the problem, even two decades ago, was quite pervasive and that it had become “normalized” in the Cree Nation.

*I thought it was normal when I was growing up. It just happened, and it happened to everyone in one way or another. Whether or not it happened to them or another member of their family, everyone in the home witnesses it and it affects everyone.*

Several respondents offered the view that their experiences also shaped their professional work and their commitment to helping other who had or are experiencing the same thing. For example:

*Yes, I was actually a victim and this helps me to relate to other victims in the community when I work with them. I know what I lived through as a child and I use that to help others.*

Another respondent shared his experiences as being the actual victimizer in his home and how he was able to overcome this terrible phase in his life.

*I was in a bad place in my life; I was struggling with alcoholism and drugs. I was constantly fighting with my family and hurting them both physically and emotionally. Bad thoughts were going through my mind, I even thought about seriously harming them, like murder.*

*That's when I realized that this was a problem in my life so I sought treatment to help me. I've been clean for years and have been a changed man ever since.*

#### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- Interviewees have good understanding of family violence issues.
- Based on sample, family violence is prevalent in Cree Nation.
- Family violence has shaped victims, including in positive ways (e.g., provides experience as a front line service provider).
- Much commentary remarkably frank, suggesting a willingness on the part of Cree people to discuss these issues openly.

### 3.2 DEFINITION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIMS

Many respondents offered the perspective that family violence is abuse directed to family members, which is often fueled by substances (drug and alcohol), frustration, anger and unresolved grief, including their own victimization in the past. Many respondents noted that family violence must be viewed in a broad perspective beyond that of physical assaults against one another, and therefore must include emotional/psychological abuse, bullying, financial abuse and of course, sexual assault.

*Family violence is physical, verbal and mental abuse. It has been happening for generations and has become accepted in the community as normal, people don't like to talk about it but it must stop.*

Several respondents noted that because Cree communities are tight knit and that extended families are large, a proper definition of family violence must include the broader kind of violence directed to many and taking the form of rumours, put downs and attempts by others to diminish the self-concept of other Crees, what several called “lateral violence”. One respondent noted:

*We have to stop thinking that family violence is just when dad beats up mom. Many of us are guilty of another form where we simply put down others in our community through negative comments, innuendo, lies and other means.*

We asked respondents to provide examples of family violence that they have experienced or witnessed in their community. A wide variety of examples were cited including:

- Physical and sexual assaults, including spousal rape.
- Controlling or domineering behaviour (e.g., not allowing spouse to see friends or family members, not permitting spouse to enjoy social activities outside of the home)
- Rumours, falsehoods and other negative information expressed against another person.

- Abandoning a child or forcing him or her to care for him or herself with no parental supervision.
- Neglect of Elders or taking advantage of them (e.g., using their money or resources, forcing them to take care of young children while parents go drinking, not visiting or sharing resources, etc.).
- Financial abuse such as not sharing family resources, using money to support one’s own habit at the expense of meeting basic family needs.
- General emotional abuse directed to family members like put-downs, withholding affection, withholding information, constant criticism, etc.
- “Spiritual abuse”, including threatening someone that they will not go to Heaven because of their actions, criticizing someone who holds a different view of spirituality or preventing a family member from pursuing religious teachings or events.
- School-yard bullying and intimidation.
- Stalking after a break-up of a marriage or common law union.
- “Cultural” abuse, such as not honouring traditions of family.
- Workplace abuse such as withholding support, restricting information, delegating projects that are destined to fail, harsh performance appraisals, etc.

A number of respondents offered deeply personal reflections on what family violence meant to them. For example, one respondent who was a former police officer noted the issue of intimidation and psychological torment that is associated after the act of physical abuse:

*I was an officer and had to deal with this often. Most of the calls that we received had to deal with family violence. So when you ask me to define family violence, I'll give you one that is not mentioned all the time. We know about the different forms of violence such as physical, mental and verbal, but we hardly talk about the intimidation factor. When someone is abused in their home, they become afraid of the person abusing them. That person will use that power to control the victim and make them feel like a prisoner in their own home.*

**WHAT THIS MAY MEAN**

- *Interviewees have an excellent understanding of the many forms of family violence.*
- *The family violence issue is diverse, and therefore may require an equally diverse and approach and set of solutions.*
- *Family violence is seen in a broad context, ranging in a continuum from over physical abuse to covert psychological abuse.*
- *Definitions of family violence suggest that the problem affects all Cree people, from children to Elders.*

### 3.3 SEVERITY OF FAMILY VIOLENCE PROBLEM

Family violence is perceived by the vast majority of respondents as a very serious one and perhaps as problematic as others affecting communities including substance abuse, gambling and poverty, among others. Many respondents noted that in their view, family violence is often the result of or can also be the cause of other social challenges. For example, one respondent noted the interplay of anger, frustration, substance abuse and family violence, which together made the family violence issue so difficult to deal with:

*I know a man who is frustrated and angered by his financial situation and turned to alcohol and drugs to self medicate and heal his pain. But this made the problem worse, so he took it out on his family through abusive behavior. He felt bad and drank again, but the cycle just continued. So, this is what makes family violence such a severe and challenging problem. To stop it, we often need to deal first with the root causes, which can be extremely difficult in itself.*

Some respondents suggested that family violence and its many forms including physical abuse, emotional abuse and child abandonment was indeed the most severe and challenging problem in their community, especially because of the generational impact it has on families. According to many of these respondents, children who grow up in a violent home are much more likely to be violent themselves when they get older, or children may grow up thinking that it is okay to be victimized because that's what they saw as a child.

*This like everything else is like a cycle, I've seen people get off the booze before, but when kids witness this at a young age, they grow up believing that this is ok. Young boys may grown up thinking that it is ok to hit their girlfriends or wives and young girls may grow up thinking that it is ok the be hit. Drugs and booze only fuels fire.*

Respondents also identified other major issues in the community that requires attention such as child neglect (a form of family violence), gambling and loss of culture.

#### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *There is a number of challenging social issues in the communities that people deem serious. Our analysis suggests that issues related to alcohol abuse, in particular, stand at the forefront of the family violence issue both as a fuelling factor as well as outcome.*
- *Family violence does not stand alone and is symptomatic of other issues. Therefore, issues of family violence must be addressed alongside of others, including substance abuse, mental health conditions, poverty, social exclusion, lost of culture, unresolved trauma and historical grief, etc.*
- *Family violence may be becoming a learned behaviour.*

### 3.4 MOST PREVALENT FORMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Most respondents identified physical and sexual violence towards women to be most prevalent form of family violence in their community, followed in turn by neglect of children and lateral violence. As a general proposition, other forms of family violence (including economic abuse, Elder abuse, etc.) were deemed to be substantially less prevalent relative to the three principal forms noted above. While several noted that violence against men is growing, it does not yet nor ever will be as prevalent as violence against women in the home or family setting.

*I am all for being inclusive and I understand that family violence takes many forms – I see it every day in my work. But we cannot deny that violence against women by men is commonplace and most prevalent. Women are the glue of Cree society, yet why do we as men treat them so poorly? All Cree men must reflect on this and ask “why” - why do we not honor women as creators of life and stop this abuse?*

#### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *Great gains against family violence may occur if they are focused towards “big three” of violence against women, child neglect and lateral violence.*
- *Education and engagement of men in the fight against family violence is essential. Men must reflect on the violence caused by other men and take steps to prevent or intervene in family violence.*

### 3.5 GROUP MOST AT RISK OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Consistent with above commentary, women followed by children are deemed most at risk of family violence in the Cree Nation. Several respondents noted the level of risk faced by children, especially those who were involved in the child welfare system. One respondent noted:

*The child welfare system is broken. Many children live in substandard conditions and face abuse and neglect, so they keep getting re-victimized again and again.*

Several respondents noted that while women and children were by far the most at-risk, men were increasingly victimized by others (including by men and women). One respondent noted:

*Men being victimized by women is a growing trend in the community and has been for the past ten years or so. I think women are frustrated and fighting back. Problem is, when a man is a victim he does not come forward, as it is a sign of weakness or he might feel he will be perceived as less of a man. But when he does not address it, things get bottled up and problems such as retaliatory violence or substance abuse come to the surface. We need to make men understand that it is okay to talk about it.*

Another individual noted that boys and young men were the community members that were most often in trouble or in conflict with the law, and that in many cases previous victimization was the root cause of the anti-social and criminal behavior. For example:

*I can't mention names, but there are two young men in my community that are probably responsible for 90% of the youth crime here. Police call them "repeat offenders", and they always seem to be picking them up, locking them up, or sending them to Amos. But many of us know that these young men were sexually assaulted by other family members when they were young. Men damaged the souls of these young men, and now we are paying the price. The problem is that there is so much shame and stigma attached to a young man disclosing what he went through at home in the past. It is probably the biggest taboo we face. So they walk around angry, and harm others to deal with the pain and shame they feel. Violence against women is most common, but maybe violence against men ends up creating the most problems eventually in the community.*

#### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *Great gains against family violence may occur if they are focused towards addressing the problems faced by women and children.*
- *Neglect and non-supervision of children must be seen as an overt form of violence, rather than an indication of "poor parenting".*
- *Violence against men must be addressed, and examined carefully within the context of "downstream" criminal justice problems such as assault, gang activity, other criminal offenses.*

### 3.6 CAUSES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Overwhelmingly, the two principal causes of family violence according to respondents were substance abuse (drugs but particularly alcohol) as well as unresolved anger related to various factors including previous victimization, challenging life circumstances (poverty, overcrowding in the home, underemployment), followed by other addictions (e.g., gambling), mental health issues (including depression, anxiety disorders and FASD) and general societal acceptance of family violence.

Every respondent spoke about the negative impact that alcohol has in the communities and the way it amplifies internal anger, frustration and despair and then leads to violence in the home or in the community in general. Issues related to alcohol abuse, according to many respondents, affect men and women and increasingly, youth under the age of majority, making the issue of alcohol abuse, in the words of one respondent, "*an imperative for the Cree Nation leadership*". Several respondents engaged the research team in broad ranging discussions of alcohol issues including its accessibility, lack of by-law enforcement, the need for prohibition,

the need to end prohibition, the need to aggressively suppress bootleggers, and the value of educating Crees on responsible use of alcohol rather than maintaining a position of abstinence. Indeed, the relationship of alcohol to family violence is an area where there was great emotion and diversity of opinion, as some of the following quotes demonstrate:

*In my community, the liquor store is a twenty minute drive away. So guys will drive out there to stock up for the month. You're allowed to bring back two cases of beer with you, the problem is though, when guys are buying two cases for the month, they end up going through that in a few days and those are the same guys that cause a lot of problems in their homes. They don't know how to control the alcohol, maybe there are times when they don't have it or can't get it and they take it out on their women and kids.*

The notion of prohibition was also addressed by two respondents, as follows:

*In the Cree Nation of Washaw Sibi, I don't think we have as bad a problem with alcohol abuse and therefore of family violence. Alcohol is accessible to us in Amos. We don't have this pent up demand for booze like other "dry" Cree communities do. I think we are more responsible in our use, because it is no big deal.*

*Prohibitions and community by laws against alcohol are a failure. We are supposed to be a dry community, but all that does is gives incentive for bootleggers to supply products at huge profits. This takes food out of the mouths of Cree children, which causes more stress in the home. Maybe it is time we discuss this as a Nation, so that we can have a consistent and intelligent approach to alcohol. What we are doing right now isn't working very well.*

Several respondents placed alcohol as a contributor to family violence, but did not accord it the weight of other causes. For example:

*According to my experience working with the people, I would say the root causes would be seeing violence in your home when you're young and being victimized yourself. I also think identity issues are another cause. People are losing the spiritual part of their culture and it is not being taught to the children in the community. I think if we can do more like have traditional ceremonies with our children and other cultural traditions, this can help us deal with some of the issues.*

Related to this were comments made by several respondents in respect to the experience of the Cree people and the trauma suffered:

*We have suffered so much in the past 100 years. We have lost our land and connection to the land. Many of our people survived residential schools where they were abused and tortured. We are now in communities that are crowded and we are not self-reliant as our*



*Elders once were. We are forgetting our traditions and our values, at a time when our futures actually look very bright. We need to resolve the issues that haunt us first, in order to deal with the violence we see. Violence is just a symptom of unresolved trauma and self-hate.*

#### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *There is no “primary” root cause behind family violence. Many factors contribute to the problem, and causes differ from person to person, family to family, community to community.*
- *Alcohol abuse is a cause, and also an effect, of family violence.*
- *Cree people still need to resolve the issues of the past, and “heal the soul within”.*

### 3.7 EFFECTS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

According to the majority of respondents, the biggest effect of family violence on the community are behavioral issues that affect children who have witnessed or been victim to family violence, which manifests itself in anxiety, depression, poor self esteem, bullying, lateral violence, anti-social or criminal behavior, gang involvement, substance abuse (including drugs, alcohol and huffing) and self-harm including cutting and suicide. The responses clearly suggest children who grow up in an unhealthy environment are more likely to behave in a negative way as they age and enter adulthood. Several noted the idea that we must “break the cycle” of family violence, and restore childhood as a place where children can remain free of violence and develop in a positive way.

Several respondents noted that many of the “youth problems” in their community – including breaking curfews, vandalism, substance abuse, fighting and loitering – were directly result of violence in the home. That is, if the home is viewed by children as unsafe, they will find other places in the community to spend their time or become involved in negative peer groups composed of children experiencing the same. As well, several noted that negative modeling associated with family violence, in that if children see adults consuming alcohol and abusing others, they may conclude that it is okay for them to do the same.

*One of the biggest effects is kids growing up after witnessing violence in the home and then they would also do the same. I find their behaviour on the streets is the exact same at home and if this type of stuff happens at home that too will play out in the streets.*

Other effects of family violence include low self esteem and suicidal ideation among victims of family violence, poor attendance and performance in school among children who have been exposed or subjected to family violence, and a lack of respect towards others in the community

that spills over into the workplace, and lack of care of shared resources (e.g., poor maintenance of homes or public spaces such as schools, youth centres, community centres, arenas, etc.).

*Violence plays out everywhere. It is present in the schools, in the community, on the street and in the homes. You know, even breaking a bottle on the street can be considered a violent act. There are so many excuses as to why this happens and we know the effects that it has on the people and in the community, but many victims just seem to take it and do nothing about it.*

WHAT THIS MAY MEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Other community concerns may be traced back to family violence.</i></li> <li>• <i>The notion that “safe homes means strong communities” has merit when one considers the likely impacts of family violence.</i></li> </ul>

### 3.8 PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING FAMILY VIOLENCE

During our interviews, respondents offered a number of possible solutions in respect to preventing family violence as well as addressing the impact of family violence. The research team summarized these recommendations into common themes, and has presented them in the chart below with the frequency of that recommendation noted in the final column (e.g., n = 9 indicated that 9 respondents offered that recommendation or one largely similar to it). A total of 294 recommendations were made, which have been distilled to the following

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	N =
More counseling and programs for substance and alcohol abuse	22
More individual and family counseling for victims and victimizers	19
Mandated anger management classes for those who have been arrested for family violence	15
More community-based/nation-wide education and awareness programs and materials	15
Inform the community on the types of supports that are available to them	14
Shelters for women and children	14
More restrictions on the consumption of alcohol	13
Greater focus on root causes as family violence a symptom of other problems	13
More aggressive police suppression of bootleggers and drug dealers/organized crime	11
Changes to matrimonial property laws so abused can stay in their home	11
More cultural programs for victims and offenders (bush programs)	10
Address historical trauma and unresolved grief	9
Improved police training - more sensitivity, better investigation skills	9
Legal aid and other specific victims support programs/assistance	8
Zero tolerance policy on family violence	8
Stiffer penalties for those who commit family violence/longer sentences	8

More money to create more program and supports	8
Adults must lead by example and be better role models	8
School based anti-violence programs	7
More involvement of the elders in the community to teach others about our culture and traditional values	7
General programs that teach family values	7
Parenting classes for parents in the community, specifically first time parents	6
Help front-liners heal - many are victims themselves and are not in position to really help	6
Culturally specific lessons for the people to teach them to love their culture and to love one another	5
More spiritual teachings	5
Collaborate with other organizations and share resources and strategies	4
Cree Nation leadership must speak up more on the issue.	4
Greater use of traditional Native healing approaches	4
Improved housing conditions to lessen overcrowding and associated stress	4
Anonymous "crime stoppers" line to report offenders	4
Provide more recreation programs for kids that include their family	3
End alcohol prohibition	3
Improved screening of homes that accept children through child protection	3
Family courts where criminal and civil domestic violence issues can be dealt with at same time.	3
To reach out to those who are victims because in most cases victims do not come forth.	2
Use restorative approaches (mediation, family group conferencing) to deal with cases of family violence	2
Men must start a movement to take responsibility	2
Community must come together to deal with family violence and help parties heal	2
Family sharing circles	1
Less judgmental attitude in regards to victims of family violence	1
Banishment from community for repeat offenders	1
Stop denying problem exists	1

The role of culture in addressing family violence is an important consideration. According to several respondents, traditional life in the bush was highly inter-dependent, where men and women were mutually reliant and respectful of each other's roles. As a result of several factors including relocation to communities, the effects of the Indian Act and residential schools, loss of culture and connection to traditional values of respect and honor, family violence has grown over the years and is not entrenched in society. To deal with family violence, therefore, requires an examination and re-kindling of culture and its healing powers.

*I just want to share that many Crees have lost their family values. People need to be taught the importance of behaviour and culture. I do have hope but sometimes we do feel that we are so far behind. A lot of us that work in the field believe that we're having an identity crisis, we see it everywhere when you look at the young people and their parents; they don't ask themselves who am I or where am I supposed to fit in? The youth really like it when the Elders go into the schools to teach them about traditional culture and we need to do more of that. We need to promote traditions where people have a sense of belonging in the community and to a rich, thousands of year old cultural history.*

WHAT THIS MAY MEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents offered many commonsense recommendations to address and prevent family violence, suggesting that the Cree people are well aware of the many steps that can be taken to address this problem.</li> <li>• There may exist a large gap between the size of the problem and the availability of programs, resources and services that can deal with family violence and its underlying causes.</li> <li>• Education and awareness are key, as are improved criminal justice system responses.</li> </ul>

### 3.9 BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were asked to suggest key barriers associated to addressing family violence. Again, responses were analyzed and grouped, and are reported in the following table along with the frequency of response.

SUMMARY OF BARRIERS	N =
Lack of resources to fund or create programs and services	36
Unavailability of services/lack of service coordination	27
Shame and humiliation/stigma associated with being a victim	27
Lack of confidentiality	19
Violence is normalized in Cree Nation/community attitude that family violence is just part of life	16
Criminal justice system cannot process cases, so victims give up seeking solutions/sanctions	14
Substance abuse prevents true healing	13
People not ready/able to seek help	12
Waiting lists for service	11
Other more pressing problems in the community	7
Lack of respect shown to women, which will take generations to counter	7
Unskilled or "damaged" front line workers who are not really in a position to help	6
Bad habits are hard to change	5
Lack of understanding of the forms and impacts of family violence	4

Lack of people who are willing to volunteer to help victims	3
Community does not want to accept responsibility	3
Patriarchal attitudes	2

As the data demonstrate, the most common barriers faced by the community with respect to dealing with family violence are not enough resources to create the types of programs and services needed (specialized counselling, crisis workers, shelters for victims, etc.). Another common barrier is shame and stigma which prevents people from stepping forward to report or get the help they need. Because Cree communities are small and highly inter-related in respect to family, another key barrier is the perception of lack of confidentiality.

Respondents also suggested that many people do not have the people skills required to seek help. They shared that many people come across as being shy, but they just do not know how to effectively communicate with someone to let them know what is going on their lives and the help they need. This is complicated by the lack of knowledge of the programs and services that may exist in the communities.

*The families who need the services don't go because they are ashamed. The ones that come to the workshops and programs are those who are already involved and active in the community but it's those other disconnected families who we need to engage. People also have a sense of denial and it has also been normalized.*

*We also need to remember that not everybody is ready to be helped. Sometimes people are forced by workers to go to places and they just relapse. This can also make them not want to go to other services. Sometimes they may have had a bad experience with social services or another organization, this will also cause them to think that seeking help is a waste of time.*

Related to lack of services is that of poor service coordination and the inefficiencies related to multiple stakeholders being involved in family violence. The following quote demonstrates this barrier:

*I happen to think there are lots of resources in the Cree Nation. Our problem is that we need to better coordinate response between the players that touch family violence. There are a lot of silos – police, social service, health, justice, local band councils, etc. – we need to sit together and figure out how we can be more efficient. Family violence victims and offenders are usually common clients, so we should find ways to reduce duplication rather than try to find more money.*

#### **WHAT THIS MAY MEAN**

- *Respondents perceive that there are material barriers to addressing family violence.*
- *It may be worthwhile to conduct a gap analysis to determine extent of need and availability of services, so the new programs and services can be prioritized.*
- *Notwithstanding real or perceived challenges in regards to programs and services, the Cree Nation needs to find a way to create an “emotional safe space” for people to disclose and discuss family violence and its personal impacts.*

## SECTION 4.0

# FAMILY VIOLENCE SURVEY RESULTS

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To gather a broad selection of input in respect to the family violence issue, an on-line survey was created by the program partners and hosted online. Through a variety of means (e-mail, Facebook postings, mention in The Nation, etc.), the survey was promoted to people within Eeyou Istchee and beyond. The survey was opened in early September and was official closed on November 5, 2010. To encourage response, respondents were encouraged at the end of the survey to send an email to the Department of Justice to enter a draw for an Apple iPad.

## 4.1 SURVEY ACCURACY

There were a total of 332 respondents to the survey. Assuming a total population of the Cree Nation of 16,000 and an adult composition (over the age of 18) of 60% (or 9600 people), the survey has a very good degree of accuracy (+/- 5.3% 19 times out of 20). However, the survey is limited by the fact that survey response was not uniformly distributed across each Cree community, with one community (Mistissini) delivering over 36% of the response while other larger communities (such as Waswanipi) substantially less. Response by community was as follows:

COMMUNITY	#	%
Chisasibi	52	15.7%
Eastmain	16	4.8%
Mistissini	122	36.7%
Nemaska	24	7.2%
Ouje-Bougoumou	10	3.0%
Waskaganish	50	15.1%
Waswanipi	16	4.8%
Wemindji	20	6.0%
Whapmagoostui	10	3.0%
Washaw Sibi	0	0.0%
Skipped question	12	5.4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100%</b>

### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- Overall, the survey may be considered representative.
- However, it cannot be considered representative on a community by community basis with the exception of Mistissini and to a lesser extent Chisasibi and Waskaganish.

## 4.2 AGE OF RESPONDENTS

As noted, there were a total of 332 respondents ranging in age from 13 to 68; however, only 2 of the respondents were under the age of majority in Quebec (18). The average age and median age of the respondents were 38.1 and 37.0 respectively.

### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *Survey respondents were well distributed across all ages.*
- *Survey respondents were older and therefore likely to have good knowledge or experience with family violence issues.*
- *This therefore strengthens the quality of findings from the survey.*

## 4.3 GENDER OF RESPONDENTS

Of the 332 respondents, 75.3% were female, 23.5% male and 1.2% did not answer.

### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *Survey respondents were disproportionately female.*
- *The survey findings may not necessarily represent the views of men in Eeyou Istchee.*
- *Because of what we generally know about family violence in respect to who is most affected (women), the women of Eeyou Istchee may be more knowledgeable of family violence matters or more motivated to express their opinions.*

## 4.4 FIRST NATIONS STATUS

Respondents were largely First Nations, as shown in the following chart.

FIRST NATIONS STATUS	#	%
Yes	302	91.0%
No	26	7.8%
Did not answer	4	1.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100%</b>

### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *Survey respondents may be considered representative generally of the Cree people.*



#### 4.5 PREVIOUS VICTIMIZATION

Survey respondents were asked whether they were ever a victim of family violence. Findings are as follows:

FAMILY VIOLENCE VICTIM	#	%
Yes	170	51.2%
No	126	38.0%
Not sure	32	9.6%
Did not answer	4	1.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100%</b>

##### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *More than half of respondents have suffered family violence in the past.*
- *Since respondents were mostly female, and if the survey findings are truly representative, then this may suggest that more than 50% of women in Eeyou Istchee have, at some time in their life, experienced family violence.*

#### 4.6 VICTIMIZATION OF OTHERS

Survey respondents were asked whether they had ever committed family violence or abused another person in their families. While a majority disclosed that they had not, over a quarter affirmed that they had. Findings are as follows:

COMMITTED FAMILY VIOLENCE?	#	%
Yes	88	26.5%
No	202	60.8%
Not sure	36	10.8%
Did not answer	6	1.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100%</b>

##### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *From a quarter to likely more than a third of respondents have perpetrated family violence in the past.*
- *This level of disclosure may indicate a great willingness, on the part of Cree people, to confront the family violence issue, either as survivor or previous abuser. This is an important step in understanding all sides of the issue so that healing can begin.*

#### 4.7 KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER VICTIMS

Survey respondents were asked whether they knew of other victims of family violence. Findings demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of respondents knew of a victim of family violence, as follows:

KNOW A VICTIM?	#	%
Yes	312	94.0%
No	4	1.2%
Not sure	10	3.0%
Did not answer	6	1.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100%</b>

##### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *Consistent with previous findings, the incidence of family violence is quite high.*
- *Small size and tight-knit nature of Cree communities likely may increase the chances that someone knows another that has suffered family violence.*
- *It is possible that many respondents were front line workers (such as child protection professionals, social workers, police officers, etc.) and therefore, the chances that they have come into contact with victims are higher. Therefore, the findings may not be representative of the entire Cree Nation.*

#### 4.8 STATUS AS ELDER

Survey respondents were asked whether they were considered an Elder in their community. A small percentage indicated that they indeed were so. As follows:

ELDER IN COMMUNITY	#	%
Yes	18	5.4%
No	284	85.5%
Not sure	26	7.8%
Did not answer	4	1.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>100%</b>

##### WHAT THIS MAY MEAN

- *Greater efforts are required to understand family violence issues from the perspective of Cree Elders.*

#### 4.9 PREVALENCE AND IMPACT OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

The survey instrument present five additional questions that sought to gather opinion in regards to a number of family violence factors.

In all of the questions, a number of statements were provided, and respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement to each statement using either a 5 or 6-item “Likert Scale”, corresponding as follows:

Strongly Agree  
Agree  
Undecided  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree  
Don’t Know

To better analyse findings, each item in the scale corresponded to a number ranking, as follows:

Strongly Agree (5)  
Agree (4)  
Undecided (3)  
Disagree (2)  
Strongly Disagree (1)  
Don’t Know (n/a)

Raw data from these surveys was imported into Microsoft Excel for analysis. For each of the questions, the distribution of responses by scale item are summarized in a table. In addition, these responses were converted to their numerical ranking, summed and divided by the number of responses to that question to render an average score, which is represented in a second table (ordered from highest agreement to lowest). The average score for each question can be thought of as the overall strength of conviction of the respondents to the statement at hand. For example, a score of 4.75 would indicate that the respondents had a strong level of agreement with respect to the statement presented, whereas scores closer to 1.00 would indicate a strong level of disagreement. Some readers may find this format of reporting to be more intuitive than reporting, for instance, that “36.1% of respondents agreed with the statement that the incidence of family violence has increased in the Cree Nation in the past five years”. Question 9 was designed to gather opinion in respect to the **prevalence and impact of family violence** in the Cree Nation. Findings are presented in the charts that follow:

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW
Family violence is a serious issue in the Cree Nation.	72.7%	23.8%	0.7%	1.4%	0.0%	1.4%
There are other issues that are more serious than family violence in the Cree Nation.	25.5%	43.4%	14.5%	13.1%	0.7%	2.8%
Family violence costs the Cree Nation millions of dollars a year in justice system expenditures, lost productivity, health care and other costs.	28.6%	41.4%	8.6%	4.3%	0.0%	17.1%
In the past five years, the incidence of family violence has increased in my community.	29.2%	36.1%	10.4%	1.4%	0.0%	22.9%
In the past five years, the incidence of family violence has increased in the Cree Nation.	36.4%	30.0%	11.4%	1.4%	0.0%	20.7%
In the past five years, the incidence of family violence has increased in my family.	12.1%	17.1%	13.6%	34.3%	19.3%	3.6%
Family violence is responsible for reducing our public safety.	22.1%	42.9%	20.0%	10.0%	1.4%	3.6%
I am personally very concerned about family violence.	55.9%	37.1%	4.9%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
I believe that family violence may one day impact me or my family.	24.1%	36.9%	19.9%	9.9%	4.3%	5.0%
Family violence mostly affects women.	32.2%	37.1%	5.6%	20.3%	3.5%	1.4%
Family violence mostly affects children.	49.3%	31.0%	2.8%	14.1%	2.1%	0.7%
Family violence mostly affects men.	14.8%	31.0%	16.2%	29.6%	4.9%	3.5%
Family violence mostly affects Elders.	23.2%	35.9%	11.3%	19.7%	5.6%	4.2%
Family violence affects us all.	76.9%	18.2%	0.7%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
Family violence happens because one person is "asking for it".	5.0%	5.0%	5.7%	24.3%	53.6%	6.4%
If you grow up with family violence, you are more likely to abuse.	31.2%	39.0%	8.5%	12.8%	4.3%	4.3%
Men are mostly responsible for causing family violence.	12.8%	27.7%	18.4%	27.7%	8.5%	5.0%
Women are mostly responsible for causing family violence.	1.4%	15.9%	29.7%	39.1%	11.6%	2.2%
When children experience family violence at home, it causes behavioural problems in school.	68.8%	29.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Family violence contributes to bullying and other violence in the school.	69.5%	26.2%	2.1%	1.4%	0.7%	0.0%

The statements above have been converted to an overall score and summarized from highest level of agreement to lowest, as follows:

STATEMENT	SCORE
Family violence is a serious issue in the Cree Nation.	4.70
Family violence affects us all.	4.70
When children experience family violence at home, it causes behavioural problems in school.	4.67
Family violence contributes to bullying and other violence in the school.	4.62
I am personally very concerned about family violence.	4.47
In the past five years, the incidence of family violence has increased in the Cree Nation.	4.28
In the past five years, the incidence of family violence has increased in my community.	4.21
Family violence costs the Cree Nation millions of dollars a year in justice system expenditures, lost productivity, health care and other costs.	4.14
Family violence mostly affects children.	4.12
If you grow up with family violence, you are more likely to abuse.	3.84
There are other issues that are more serious than family violence in the Cree Nation.	3.82
Family violence is responsible for reducing our public safety.	3.77
Family violence mostly affects women.	3.75
I believe that family violence may one day impact me or my family.	3.70
Family violence mostly affects Elders.	3.54
Family violence mostly affects men.	3.22
Men are mostly responsible for causing family violence.	3.09
In the past five years, the incidence of family violence has increased in my family.	2.67
Women are mostly responsible for causing family violence.	2.56
Family violence happens because one person is "asking for it".	1.76

WHAT THIS MAY MEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Survey results suggest that family violence is a serious problem that affects all Cree people especially children, and many are concerned.</i></li> <li>• <i>Family violence in home creates behavioural problems at school.</i></li> <li>• <i>Family violence may be on the increase.</i></li> <li>• <i>Family violence is costly.</i></li> <li>• <i>There is not a clear consensus who causes family violence (men versus women).</i></li> </ul>

#### 4.10 RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were presented with a number of statements in regards to how people and communities respond to family violence in the Cree Nation. Findings are as follows:

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW
My community as a whole takes the issue of family violence seriously.	8.6%	28.6%	16.4%	32.1%	6.4%	7.9%
The Cree Nation leadership takes the issue of family violence seriously.	7.1%	27.0%	22.7%	27.0%	5.7%	10.6%
Police service members take the issue of family violence seriously.	13.7%	34.5%	12.9%	24.5%	4.3%	10.1%
Police service members are knowledgeable about how to respond to cases of family violence.	6.4%	24.1%	21.3%	30.5%	3.5%	14.2%
The criminal justice system takes the issue of family violence seriously.	11.4%	37.1%	20.7%	12.1%	3.6%	15.0%
If I suspected someone was a victim of family violence, I would report it to the authorities.	24.8%	44.7%	24.1%	3.5%	0.0%	2.8%
If I suspected that someone in my family was responsible for committing family violence, I would report it to the authorities.	28.8%	46.8%	16.5%	5.8%	0.0%	2.2%
If I suspected that someone in my family was responsible for committing family violence, I would intervene if there was a suitable alternative to the criminal justice system (e.g., healing circle or restorative justice program).	36.2%	39.7%	16.3%	3.5%	0.7%	3.5%
I would know where to turn for help if I was a victim of family violence.	22.3%	46.8%	6.5%	13.7%	5.8%	5.0%
I believe more people would report family violence if more programs, services or shelters were available.	47.1%	42.9%	6.4%	2.1%	0.0%	1.4%
The annual White Ribbon Campaign is an effective way to educate others about family violence.	22.1%	29.3%	18.6%	6.4%	3.6%	20.0%

Again, the statements above have been converted to an overall score and summarized from highest level of agreement to lowest, as follows:

STATEMENT	SCORE
I believe more people would report family violence if more programs, services or shelters were available.	4.37
If I suspected that someone in my family was responsible for committing family violence, I would intervene if there was a suitable alternative to the criminal justice system (e.g., healing circle or restorative justice program).	4.11
If I suspected that someone in my family was responsible for committing family violence, I would report it to the authorities.	4.01
If I suspected someone was a victim of family violence, I would report it to the authorities.	3.93
The annual White Ribbon Campaign is an effective way to educate others about family violence.	3.75
I would know where to turn for help if I was a victim of family violence.	3.70
The criminal justice system takes the issue of family violence seriously.	3.48
Police service members take the issue of family violence seriously.	3.32
The Cree Nation leadership takes the issue of family violence seriously.	3.03
My community as a whole takes the issue of family violence seriously.	3.01
Police service members are knowledgeable about how to respond to cases of family violence.	2.99

WHAT THIS MAY MEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>More resources may improve response to family violence.</i></li> <li>• <i>Alternative intervention approaches may enhance intervention by family members.</i></li> <li>• <i>Degree of potential cooperation with authorities is strong in cases where others are suspected of being a family violence victim or perpetrator.</i></li> <li>• <i>Slight agreement expressed in regards to how seriously family violence is taken by selected stakeholders (community, police, Cree Nation leadership etc.)</i></li> </ul>

#### 4.11 FORMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were presented with a number of statements in regards to various forms of family violence and their prevalence. Findings are as follows:

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW
Physical abuse is the most common form of family violence.	53.5%	34.5%	6.3%	4.9%	0.7%	53.5%
Sexual abuse is the most common form of family violence.	29.6%	43.0%	16.9%	10.6%	0.0%	29.6%
Emotional abuse is the most common form of family violence.	53.9%	37.6%	7.1%	1.4%	0.0%	53.9%
Financial/economic abuse is the most common form of family violence.	31.7%	40.8%	16.9%	8.5%	2.1%	31.7%
Neglect/abandonment abuse is the most common form of family	47.9%	38.6%	10.0%	3.6%	0.0%	47.9%

violence.						
Lateral violence (e.g., rumours, gossip, tearing down other people) is the most common form of family violence.	50.4%	34.0%	8.5%	5.7%	1.4%	50.4%

Statements scored and ordered show the following results:

STATEMENT	SCORE
Emotional abuse is the most common form of family violence.	4.44
Physical abuse is the most common form of family violence.	4.35
Neglect/abandonment abuse is the most common form of family violence.	4.31
Lateral violence (e.g., rumours, gossip, tearing down other people) is the most common form of family violence.	4.26
Sexual abuse is the most common form of family violence.	3.92
Financial/economic abuse is the most common form of family violence.	3.92

WHAT THIS MAY MEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents indicate all forms of family violence are prevalent, especially emotional, physical and neglect/abandonment abuse.</li> </ul>

Respondents were also offered the opportunity to provide written commentary to this question. A summary of commentary follows, edited only for spelling, grammar and clarity:

WRITTEN COMMENTARY
Violence is when leadership abuses their power and authority over the little people in the office. Senior Directors lie to make themselves look good, so the lower people get to be blamed for their mistakes. If one employee is busy with an urgent matter, the manager will demand that her/his request is done right away if it is not that important. When the manager is reported to his manager, nothing is ever done because they work together. In the end, they find ways to get rid of the employee who has made a complaint about her supervisor. That's abuse in the workplace and it is all over the Cree Nation. There is always a bully in an office to tear down an employee for their hard work.
Lateral violence is the worst type of violence in our communities.
Where do we get the resources to deal with family violence!
Verbal abuse is number one form of family violence.
Family breakups, e.g. separation, divorce, adultery, infidelity...etc. are also another cause for family violence and these issues are never brought up or talked about in the community.
Violence is when leadership abuses their power and authority over the little people in the office. Senior Directors lie to make themselves look good, so the lower people get to be blamed for their mistakes. If one employee is busy with an urgent matter, the manager will demand that her/his request is done right away if it is not that important. When the manager is reported to his manager, nothing is ever done because they work together. In the end, they find ways to get rid of the employee who has made a complaint about her supervisor. That's abuse in the workplace and it is all over the Cree Nation. There is always a bully in an office to tear down an employee for their hard work.
Lateral violence is the worst type of violence in our communities.



Where do we get the resources to deal with family violence!
Verbal abuse is number one form of family violence.
Family breakups, e.g. separation, divorce, adultery, infidelity...etc. are also another cause for family violence and these issues are never brought up or talked about in the community.
Whereas, long time ago, elders would intervene if they suspected a marital problem. But, now we don't bother with them, we just let it happen and we expose them to our children, who will in turn think that it is okay to have another family, another husband, another wife, another child and so on. We talk about being traditionalists and are brought up to be native, but I think we are trying to live the non-native way. It has so much influence on us in today's society and it's the children that suffer from this not the husband and wife. The children are hurt and they can't say anything. I, for one, have lived through this, with my Dad flirting around with another woman when I was young and fathered another child. It had a big impact on me, I grew up to be angry, and then when I had my own children, I turned that anger towards them and my husband, not knowing why I was so angry. Now, as of today, my husband left me for another woman and also fathered another child and this was very devastating for me. I don't want to see children suffer anymore, we need to do something about this problem, which I believe is a very heavy topic and I know people don't want to talk about it because they are ashamed of their own behaviours. This is why we also have many suicides within our community because of children being neglected, abandoned by their own parents and they don't know how to deal with it.
THIS HAS GOT TO STOP!!!! We also say that the youth are our leaders....we are the ones that are hurting them and no wonder they can't seem to go anywhere, we have to stop blaming our youth for their actions! ITS US, the parents, they are our actions! And we have to start taking responsibility for ourselves and start growing as responsible adults!! Thank you!!
There is too much Elder abuse - taking advantage of non-lucid elders.
I believe women also take advantage of the justice system. For example, when the woman neglects her children to go partying, she comes home in rage and then calls the police. Of course the police take the husband/boyfriend away! I believe the party animal should be taken away.
Child abandonment is huge and no one talks about it. I am so sad to see children playing outside at midnight with no parents in sight.
If you see or know someone who is a victim of family violence, but neglect to help and report, you are part of the problem. Many may think it's not my problem or not my business or they may be too afraid to do something. I think people's way of thinking should be changed, because family violence affects everyone and in our society.
Rumours and innuendo are everywhere and are very destructive.

#### 4.12 CAUSES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were presented with a number of statements in regards to various causes of family violence. Findings are as follows:

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW
Family violence is caused by addictions (drug and alcohol) issues.	49.6%	29.0%	8.4%	11.5%	1.5%	0.0%
Drug and/or alcohol consumption escalates the occurrence of family violence in my community.	64.1%	35.1%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Family violence is caused by mental health issues (e.g., anxiety disorders, depression, etc.)	23.8%	44.6%	13.8%	13.8%	0.0%	3.8%
Family violence is caused by media portrayals of violence.	19.8%	35.1%	27.5%	13.7%	1.5%	2.3%
Family violence is caused by loss of culture.	23.7%	35.9%	17.6%	16.0%	3.8%	3.1%
Family violence is caused by unresolved historical grief (colonization, impact of residential schools, removal from the land, etc.).	41.2%	38.2%	9.2%	8.4%	2.3%	0.8%
Family violence is caused by economic stress in the family.	24.4%	52.7%	14.5%	6.1%	0.0%	2.3%
Family violence is caused by employment-related stress.	23.3%	45.7%	20.9%	7.8%	0.0%	2.3%
Family violence is caused by marital stress/poor relationships.	35.1%	55.0%	7.6%	1.5%	0.0%	0.8%
Family violence is caused by overcrowding in the home.	27.5%	40.5%	18.3%	10.7%	0.0%	3.1%
Family violence is caused by loss/lack of values.	38.5%	45.4%	8.5%	3.8%	0.0%	3.8%
Family violence is caused by family history with violence.	39.7%	47.3%	6.9%	5.3%	0.8%	0.0%
Family violence is caused by ignorance.	26.9%	43.8%	18.5%	10.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Family violence is caused by male acceptance of violence.	20.6%	44.3%	26.0%	6.9%	0.8%	1.5%
Family violence is caused by lack of education.	17.6%	42.0%	19.1%	17.6%	3.1%	0.8%
Family violence is caused by societal acceptance of family violence.	25.2%	45.8%	20.6%	6.9%	0.8%	0.8%
Family violence is caused by teen parenthood.	15.3%	29.0%	32.1%	16.0%	4.6%	3.1%
Family violence is caused by previous sexual assault/victimization.	33.6%	48.4%	13.3%	3.1%	0.0%	1.6%

STATEMENT	SCORE
Drug and/or alcohol consumption escalates the occurrence of family violence in my community.	4.63
Family violence is caused by marital stress/poor relationships.	4.25
Family violence is caused by loss/lack of values.	4.23
Family violence is caused by family history with violence.	4.20
Family violence is caused by previous sexual assault/victimization.	4.14
Family violence is caused by addictions (drug and alcohol) issues.	4.14
Family violence is caused by unresolved historical grief (colonization, impact of residential schools, removal from the land, etc.).	4.08
Family violence is caused by economic stress in the family.	3.98
Family violence is caused by societal acceptance of family violence.	3.88
Family violence is caused by overcrowding in the home.	3.87
Family violence is caused by ignorance.	3.87
Family violence is caused by employment-related stress.	3.87
Family violence is caused by mental health issues (e.g., anxiety disorders, depression, etc.)	3.82
Family violence is caused by male acceptance of violence.	3.78
Family violence is caused by loss of culture.	3.61
Family violence is caused by media portrayals of violence.	3.59
Family violence is caused by lack of education.	3.54
Family violence is caused by teen parenthood.	3.35

WHAT THIS MAY MEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Substance abuse is considered a primary cause of family violence and therefore substance abuse issues must be addressed as part of any response to family violence.</i></li> <li>• <i>Poor domestic relationships, as well as loss of values, previous victimization and unresolved historical grief are also considered prime causes.</i></li> <li>• <i>Slight agreement expressed in regards to causes such as teen parenthood, lack of education, media influences, loss of traditional culture.</i></li> </ul>

A summary of written commentary is as follows:

WRITTEN COMMENTARY
Family violence is caused by lack of spiritual connectivity.
We have to start focusing on ourselves, as individuals, and start taking ownership of all our faults and not blame others for our own actions. We also have to start at home, not on the outside; this is the only way we will be able to acknowledge each other if we start working on our problems at home. I know this will be a long process but we have to start somewhere. People who have already worked on themselves, as individuals, these are the people we need that are able to talk about their lives history. Talking about your own experience and not about anyone else's will surely help others who are trying to walk the good life.
I wouldn't say "caused" I think there is an association linked to many of the above mentioned issues ... but all can play a part in triggering violence ... addictions are usually the symptom of the actual problem Any root of a problem is determined by the individual causing or experiencing violence
Lack of communication with spouse or family members.

Family violence is caused by neglect, abandonment and rejection.
Violence is ongoing when people do not admit there are problems in the family. Today's young mothers get very violent towards their partners/boyfriends and expect social services to be on their side and lie about what they do to instigate violence.
Loss of identity, disagreements between religion vs. native spirituality, media influences, lack of boundaries.
Abused children are robbed of their childhood and it makes it more difficult to regain self-esteem and faith in others as child abusers rob children of their innocence, faith in others and childhood altogether.
Family violence is caused by lack of spiritual connectivity.
We have to start focusing on ourselves, as individuals, and start taking ownership of all our faults and not blame others for our own actions. We also have to start at home, not on the outside; this is the only way we will be able to acknowledge each other if we start working on our problems at home. I know this will be a long process but we have to start somewhere. People who have already worked on themselves, as individuals, these are the people we need that are able to talk about their lives history. Talking about your own experience and not about anyone else's will surely help others who are trying to walk the good life.
I wouldn't say "caused" I think there is an association linked to many of the above mentioned issues ... but all can play a part in triggering violence ... addictions are usually the symptom of the actual problem Any root of a problem is determined by the individual causing or experiencing violence
Lack of communication with spouse or family members.
Family violence is caused by neglect, abandonment and rejection.
Violence is ongoing when people do not admit there are problems in the family. Today's young mothers get very violent towards their partners/boyfriends and expect social services to be on their side and lie about what they do to instigate violence.
Loss of identity, disagreements between religion vs. native spirituality, media influences, lack of boundaries.
Abused children are robbed of their childhood and it makes it more difficult to regain self-esteem and faith in others as child abusers rob children of their innocence, faith in others and childhood altogether.

#### 4.13 SOLUTIONS TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were presented with a number of statements in regards to various possible solutions to family violence. Findings are as follows:

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
More education/awareness programs for the entire community.	66.9%	31.6%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%
More education or awareness programs in schools addressing family violence and bullying.	69.7%	29.5%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%
More serious criminal justice system sanctions/penalties for those who commit family violence.	58.3%	31.8%	7.6%	2.3%	0.0%
Provide alternative means outside criminal justice system to address family violence (e.g., healing circles, restorative justice)	62.9%	28.0%	6.1%	0.8%	2.3%
Improve resources for people who have suffered family violence (e.g., shelters, legal aid, etc.).	70.5%	28.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
More services such as counselling, anger management and addictions support for those who have committed or are at risk of committing family violence.	78.0%	22.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Perpetrators of family violence should be forced to leave the home.	33.3%	25.8%	28.0%	12.1%	0.8%
Changes to matrimonial property laws to allow female victims of family violence to remain in their homes.	45.5%	34.8%	15.2%	3.0%	1.5%
Banishment from community.	10.6%	12.1%	34.8%	32.6%	9.8%
More programs to help connect people to the culture and traditional Cree values.	61.5%	34.6%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Prohibition of alcohol in my community.	30.3%	20.5%	28.0%	18.2%	3.0%
More aggressive law enforcement against bootleggers.	66.2%	22.3%	6.9%	3.8%	0.8%

STATEMENT	SCORE
More services such as counselling, anger management and addictions support for those who have committed or are at risk of committing family violence.	4.78
Improve resources for people who have suffered family violence (e.g., shelters, legal aid, etc.).	4.70
More education or awareness programs in schools addressing family violence and bullying.	4.68
More education/awareness programs for the entire community.	4.65
More programs to help connect people to the culture and traditional Cree values.	4.58
More aggressive law enforcement against bootleggers.	4.49
Provide alternative means outside criminal justice system to address family violence (e.g.,	4.48

healing circles, restorative justice)	
More serious criminal justice system sanctions/penalties for those who commit family violence.	4.46
Changes to matrimonial property laws to allow female victims of family violence to remain in their homes.	4.20
Perpetrators of family violence should be forced to leave the home.	3.79
Prohibition of alcohol in my community.	3.57
Banishment from community.	2.81

WHAT THIS MAY MEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents strongly agree that more services for both victims and perpetrators are required to address family violence, in addition to that of more public awareness and education.</li> <li>• In addition, respondents advocate for additional investments in re-connecting people to culture, more aggressive suppression against bootleggers, alternative means to address family violence and more serious criminal justice system sanctions.</li> <li>• Slight agreement expressed for alcohol prohibition, whereas slight disagreement in respect to banishment of offenders from the community.</li> </ul>

A summary of written commentary is as follows:

WRITTEN COMMENTARY
The prohibition of alcohol creates more problems like bootlegging, lying, cheating, sneakiness...people will do anything to get alcohol, no matter what.
Open culture camps for community to connect to ancestral values and beliefs. Support groups for community to connect spiritually against family violence
We need changes to matrimonial property...victims should remain in their homes. Should also include legislation that ensures any financial bills that are left behind when the partner leaves are shared and not left for the victim to worry about, in addition to child support.
Communities need to know who the pedophiles are in their community...it should no longer be taboo.
To have a woman shelter in one of the communities.
Spiritual awareness (reconnect with God and his principles) will eliminate most of these, if not all these negative acts and restore positive ones.
Helpline for violence abuse, etc... workshops for different age groups.
Rules and laws must be applied
Perpetrators should temporarily leave the home while getting help for his problem. Suggestion to take steps on family group conferencing to try and solve problem.
Police need training on how to deal with family violence.

#### 4.15 BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Respondents were presented with a number of statements in regards to possible barriers that would stand in the way of addressing family violence. Findings are as follows:

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Lack of money/resources.	37.6%	32.3%	13.5%	13.5%	3.0%
Denial of the problem.	60.6%	34.8%	3.0%	0.8%	0.8%
Lack of willingness to address the problem.	58.6%	35.3%	3.8%	2.3%	0.0%
Lack of awareness of the problem.	47.0%	44.7%	4.5%	3.8%	0.0%
Lack of understanding of how best to address the problem.	53.4%	42.1%	3.0%	1.5%	0.0%
Existence of other, more important priorities.	33.3%	43.9%	13.6%	6.8%	2.3%
Lack of willingness of victims to step forward because of shame, embarrassment, humiliation.	69.9%	25.6%	3.0%	0.8%	0.8%
Fear of victims to step forward and report family violence.	68.4%	27.1%	3.8%	0.0%	0.8%
Lack of willingness of police service to investigate cases and lay charges.	46.2%	28.0%	17.4%	7.6%	0.8%
Criminal Justice system delays in processing cases of family violence.	48.1%	29.0%	20.6%	0.8%	1.5%

STATEMENT	SCORE
Lack of willingness of victims to step forward because of shame, embarrassment, humiliation.	4.63
Fear of victims to step forward and report family violence.	4.62
Denial of the problem.	4.54
Lack of willingness to address the problem.	4.50
Lack of understanding of how best to address the problem.	4.47
Lack of awareness of the problem.	4.35
Criminal Justice system delays in processing cases of family violence.	4.21
Lack of willingness of police service to investigate cases and lay charges.	4.11
Existence of other, more important priorities.	3.99
Lack of money/resources.	3.88

WHAT THIS MAY MEAN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There is still significant stigma and fear attached to being a victim of family violence, which limits disclosure.</i></li> <li>• <i>Respondents suggest that denial, lack of understanding and willingness are barriers to addressing family violence.</i></li> <li>• <i>There are a host of other barriers including lack of awareness and criminal justice system inefficiencies in process cases of family violence.</i></li> </ul>

A summary of written commentary is as follows:

WRITTEN COMMENTARY
Lack of qualified workers to administer/facilitate support. Physical setting - isolated communities reduce opportunities to address family violence.
Whenever a spouse decides to leave the relationship, he/she never files for a legal separation or divorce. They just go ahead and start another family with another person, while they are still legally married; something should be done about this too! They just don't want to take the responsibility. I mean I find it very dishonourable for the one that's left behind, while the spouse is making another family and having more babies and sometimes they continue making more families, when they leave previous relationships. We are confusing our own children by doing this, like they don't have a sense of belonging. I will tell you a story of children of what I overheard them saying to another child. This happened over 10 years ago and it has never left my mind, this is what one child said to another. "This is my brother, first he was my cousin, now he is my brother." See what I mean, they don't know what is their relationship status to another. It almost brought me to tears when I overheard them say that and at the same time I was feeling angry. The one that's left behind doesn't know what to think, meaning that they don't know how to move on with their lives and they are stuck. We have to start sharing these problems and the truth has to come out. Although the truth hurts, a lie is worse!! But, this is the only way we can grow healthy!
Lack of spiritual mentors
Lack of willingness of victims to step forward because of isolation, no help from authorities, and lack of recognition of the importance of the problem
The victims are also afraid of their lives and children when the abuser threatens them. Statements such as: "if you tell, I'm going to kill you or kill your loved ones". A cousin of mine was once forced to sleep with this man, beat up physically, otherwise, he would kill her loved one. She never reported it.
Sometimes when the police are faced with family violence or spousal abuse they arrive when the victim has decided to retaliate and picks them up instead.
The justice system needs to be able to support victims 100% and the victims themselves need to have the strength to denounce the abuser.
Victims fear reporting the abuser. They always drop the charges when it's time for them to testify. I believe they are controlled by the abuser.

#### 4.16 FINAL THOUGHTS AND COMMENTARY

Respondents were presented with the opportunity to express their final thoughts and commentary on family violence, which is summarized below:

WRITTEN COMMENTARY
Family violence is usually passed on from one generation to another without someone even noticing it and addressing the problem at hand. Someone has to break the silence in order to make a better world for yourself and your love ones.
Congratulations for your leadership on this issue...we need more discussion on family violence. This is an important first step. Men of Eeyou Istchee need to do more to prevent it and take responsibility.
It has to stop!



<p>There is so much jealousy in the Cree Nation called cultural self-hate. We see cultural self hate manifested through how we put down other people within our own culture. We seem unable to celebrate the success of our own people (we become suspicious of them) and there is too much gossiping and blaming. We are willing to pay members of other cultures a higher rate for a particular service while there is an unwillingness to pay our people the same rate. The lower rate usually goes to our people, and yet many of the times, the Native person will provide a better quality of service. This is because he fully understands his own culture. We are responsible for the oppression of our own people by maligning and slandering them and working to destroy their reputation and credibility. The source of these actions often comes from jealousy, and power and control issues.</p>
<p>People need to stand against violence. The Justice System needs to improve and I believe it will.</p>
<p>Put money in the local Churches so they can do their part too; that way they will have more resources (invited guest from outside the community) to help the family victims. Bible helps.</p>
<p>Family violence is also a cultural factor - whereas Crees were victimized in a historic sense thus carry a victimized perception. I do know of individuals and families who have come from an abusive environment and live violence-free lives and have managed to establish a loving and stable home for themselves. I suggest they be provided opportunities to share their stories first-hand of their experience.</p>
<p>There were a few occasions where I was involved with family violence with my partner. I have tried many years to hide it, then when I had enough I had made a call to the police. No answer because the police were playing ice hockey. Then, with panic, I called the nurse on call, and they had a problem connecting with the police also. I then ran out with my three small children and then social services got involved and said they would solve my problems, but only met with me once and did nothing. I thought I would get help, but NO! So, I don't have confidence in the policing and social services in my community. Police and the social services should have more training on family violence. I have now since left my partner but whenever he sees our children, he abuses me emotionally. I have learned to block and ignore them but we need more help, resources for the Cree Women!</p>
<p>Introduce more traditional healing methods to address issues of family violence, and incorporate the importance of Cree values and practices and communal ceremonies to instil pride in our nation.</p>
<p>Family violence is a serious matter which cannot be resolved in simple black and white surveys; however, as a 'community' we stand a better chance at resolving issues as such.</p>
<p>This issue is what I have been long waiting for, I am truly blessed and honored that something will be done about this issue. I sincerely hope it's not just talk and certainly hope that we will walk the talk, finally!! THANKS A MILLION TO ALL WHO ARE ON THIS TRAIL. MAY OUR CREATOR BLESS YOU ALL ABUNDANTLY IN WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO PERSEVERE WITHIN THE CREE NATION AND TO START THINKING ABOUT OUR YOUTH, OUR FUTURE!</p>
<p>One of the biggest problems is lack of self-esteem. People think that they have no choice but to stay with their partner, that nobody else will love them. There should be a program for the victims to help them realize their own potential to move on and be a stronger person from the experience, and how to recognize the warning signs so they can avoid abuse in the future.</p>
<p>Infidelity and changing partners is extremely high in native communities and it is one of the many causes of family violence amongst others. Drugs, alcohol, especially cocaine has also taken control over lives, families, homes and has crept into our schools today. I have much to say about this topic, but so little time to write... want to say this though...it takes Jesus to make a house a home.</p>
<p>Violence of any sort affects everyone, not necessarily just victims, but witnesses as well who do not know how to handle the situation(s) they witnessed.</p>
<p>I wish it was taken more seriously in previous years. If the communities have addressed the issue of family violence years ago, maybe it wouldn't be escalating as it did in the past few years.</p>

Sometimes men are falsely accused; the system should consider the lifestyles of some of the so called female victims too... Some of the female victims are the ones abusing their husbands and neglecting their children while the husband can't do anything about it because the female "threatens" that she can only make one phone call to the police! The female then goes out and does whatever she wants. They shouldn't just take the man away on any spousal dispute, take BOTH and find out the real story before they put the man in jail!

I am glad a comprehensive study is being done and this conference on family violence in our Cree communities will help our people.

My hope and prayers are, to see the family violence solved in our communities. Our children and grandchildren are our future.

Education and awareness of this "societal disease" is the only way to first attack this. Once exposed and surfaced, then and only then can we teach our people, our youth that this is not the norm. We can teach our people how to handle pressure, stress and other problems which seem to trigger the violent acts or acts that lead up to violence (e.g, alcohol/drug abuse). We need to teach our youth in the schools, on the streets, at the arenas wherever we can reach them what family violence is and that it isn't acceptable under any circumstance. It's time to start teaching our young men to grow to be strong proud Cree men, it's time to start teaching our young women to grow to be strong proud Cree women...it's our obligation to them and to our future generations. This is especially important to teach before they have families of their own.

My family has a long history of family violence in all forms (sexual, emotional, financial, lateral) and it has created a distance between certain members of my family.

Family violence is definitely increasing in our homes and communities. The more we push, it just seems to fade away only to come back exploding. And where do we go from there, after the violence has happened.

I believe family violence affects the whole community and the Cree Nation. This is a very serious and touchy issue that needs to be addressed. I'm happy that they have this Family Violence Symposium. This is a step to a positive change in all aspects, e.g. school, organizations, streets, etc.

I have been a victim of Family Violence and when it happened there was no place for me my family to go and get counselling after it happened. There was more help being offered for the person that commits the crime. There should be a women's shelter instead of seeking help in the south. I wish there was place where we can heal and talk about it in healing circles in the communities. Our children are the ones who are helpless and see the violence, but we have nothing to help these children. I just wish there was more awareness of this issue and places where people can go to seek help without leaving our communities.

I think our concentration is too much on the symptoms rather than the source and has become very costly for our Nation. Maybe, we should teach our Nation to gear our people to the basics of being responsible in bringing up a child and everything else it entails to be a good citizen.

Family Violence Awareness Week should be implemented.

Family violence sucks! No men, woman, children or elder to should to go through that. It's true, we need a lot of resources.

Everyone has the right to freedom, happiness and peace. To enjoy the life God has created for them. No one deserves to be hurt, especially children! When a child is hurt in the early years of their life, they are more likely to hurt others in their adult life and can be carried on from generation to generation. **STOP FAMILY VIOLENCE NOW!!**

I wish more could be done about these abuses, nothing is being done about these and it's about time we did something to take care of all these problems we have in the communities. I strongly agree that something be done, almost each day we hear things about suicides. I'm not a social worker but I help

<p>people sometimes overcome their addictions or abuse, they listen to me I always ask first them first if I can call social services or police but somehow they're scared and I tell them everything is going to be okay. I like helping people but the police or social workers they just don't know how to help people. It's time they listen to others. It's getting worse and out of hand now. So do something about it.</p>
<p>As teachers, we are in contact everyday with kids who are victims of family violence. We feel we have not much power to make things change, not much support. Even if we report it to the DPJ, the results are really poor at the end. Social services should work hand in hand with school, but it doesn't happen that much right now. And for sure, it's a really delicate situation.</p>
<p>Being a victim of family violence has made me a stronger person today. I think the most important thing that I learned was I was not alone. I think that it is harder for victims to seek help because of the isolation, both individually and the communities themselves.</p>
<p>I think violence is so commonplace in my community that people are desensitized to it and fail to react or address the issues. It is an acceptable way of life for many people. They may not like it, but they feel powerless to change it. Without full time counsellors present, people don't even have someone to talk to, to help them work out their challenges. It is time to stop blaming the past and lack of culture and face the realities of the communities today.</p>
<p>Dealing with family violence starts with the leadership of each community. The leaders must adopt a zero tolerance for family violence; pass by laws to stop it and enforce those by laws, only then will violence in the communities start to deteriorate.</p>
<p>I have had a sister in law who was constantly abused by her spouse; she never had the support of the police or family members; eventually she left her husband but the abuse continued; the family members constantly harassed her and blamed her. She could not leave her husband while her parents were alive because they discouraged it. She eventually moved away and found a job; but even then her children were turned against her. There was never any support for her rather she was convicted of abandoning her children, etc. To this day my sister in law continues to seek help for all the abuse she encountered; now her children have a lot of problems; always getting into trouble with the law, etc. I wonder how many other women face similarities. There is so much to say about the situation she faced, eventually she became involved with drugs and alcohol, found another partner who was involved with drugs. As a friend I did not know how to help her. I became like everyone else and criticized. I became judgemental of her. Now that I am writing this I realize this would not have had happened if the right people were in place in our communities and if the police had the right training to know how to handle these types of situations.</p>
<p>Violence on children, women, elders need to be stopped. I believe we can do a major impact if we work together. Keep up the excellent work!</p>
<p>Solution for better housing standards in the communities to prevent overcrowding of families. Start with this and you will see a progression of better relations amongst families. HOUSING - HOUSING - HOUSING! Next, go back to our traditional roots of the drum, dance, and sweat lodges, etc.</p>
<p>More awareness of family violence in each community (not just a once a year thing, maybe have some kind of awareness/workshops/healing circles/ once a month. A good, clear explanation of the different forms of family violence would be helpful.</p>
<p>This should be priority in our communities; the Cree nation as a whole taking a stand on this issue</p>
<p>I think that each community should have a women shelter for women and their children. These women have nowhere to turn to when they are being physically abused.</p>
<p>More education and history should be given... I was victim of violence in many forms. I think we all were, but it's up to us to break the cycle.</p>
<p>I think that we don't talk about it. We are afraid. We don't know where to go to, to report violence in the family. People just hide in their homes and the children are the ones who get affected by the</p>

violence in the home. The children are the ones who go out and get mad out there, they get drunk, they are hurting. Family violence is a big issue to deal with, but we also need to look into the children who are affected by this and find help for them too. We always say "our youth are the future generation". Look at them now...our future generation needs healing.

Honestly I am a woman who's been pushed to her acceptable limits to believe "I was loved" in any means with hope and trust of change in my ex-partner's "promises" of change. When the abuse got down to him using my children to hurt me, I said that's it, am done, am through. I allowed him to hurt me because I believed his love was real. Having been a single mother of two wonderful blessings and only wanting to be loved and belong and be a complete family, I've allowed the abuse, emotional, spiritual, financial and physical. Yes I retaliated on a few occasion and yes I believed, believed it was ok as long as he didn't hurt my cubs. But I woke up. Now he has an arrest warrant on him, I did press charges - is this wrong because I retaliated? I'll never know until he is found and brought to court. It's been over a year now and my nightmares are haunted by him from time to time I wake in sweat and am scared to go back to sleep, fearing seeing him in there again. I still manage to see the innocence behind his actions yet do believe in karma.

I believe that more education on the subject of family violence may actually be beneficial to some victims. I don't believe that all victims can be helped but at least if some are helped it would already be a big step forward. We have a colleague at work who shows up at work with signs of a beating (bruises on her face etc.) on a regular basis. We all feel helpless as she obviously needs to have the means to get help for herself.

Just want to say that there are roots to all problems; it's just a matter of searching, understanding and hopefully, we will have answers to all. Learn to forgive and accept and move forward. I am true believer in our Cree ways, traditional, culture and spiritual teachings.

I experienced recurring sexual abuse by a family member as a child but it had nothing to do with being aboriginal, which I am not, nor with living in Mistissini, where I did not live as a child. Family violence, in my case, was a result of a family member having power over me and taking advantage of his superior age and my naiveté. I moved on a long time ago and have not let the past dictate my present or my future. The incident certainly affected the way I grew up but I feel at peace with it now.

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

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From our research, we have attempted to distil key items around which further discussion may be required or prove most productive. It is our hope that the examination of some of these issues will begin at our Symposium, and carry forward into 2011 and beyond.

THEME/SUMMARY #1	UNDERSTANDING OF PROBLEM
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we have sufficient understanding of the scope and extent of family violence to ensure an effective response?</li> <li>• Are additional information gathering efforts required to inform an effective response?</li> <li>• What additional education and awareness efforts are required to mobilize community members to join the fight against family violence?</li> </ul>

THEME/SUMMARY #2	CAPACITY TO RESPOND
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there sufficient resources – financial and human – to adequately address the problem of family violence?</li> <li>• Should these resources be deployed against family violence, or other social issues that impact the Cree Nation?</li> <li>• Who (e.g., which departments or other entities) should provide these resources to address family violence?</li> <li>• Should we mobilize others (e.g., other levels of government, citizens groups, local community leadership, corporations, the media, faith groups, etc.) to assist in our fight against family violence?</li> <li>• What resources are required to develop and sustain an effective response?</li> </ul>

THEME/SUMMARY #3	WILLINGNESS TO RESPOND
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is Cree Nation specifically, and Cree people generally, willing to take more concerted action to address family violence?</li> <li>• Will all sectors of Cree society take responsibility for the family violence problem and engage in combating the problem?</li> <li>• Will the stigma, shame and humiliation associated with family</li> </ul>

	<p>violence prevent a more concerted effort against family violence? What can be done to mitigate these problems and provide people with the emotional safe space they need to confront family violence?</p>
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THEME/SUMMARY #4	PRIORITY OF RESPONSE
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should response to family violence be primarily directed to outcomes of family violence, root causes of family violence, or both? Which issues deserve the greatest attention?</li> <li>• Should response to family violence be primarily directed to women and children, or all people affected by family violence?</li> <li>• Should response to family violence be primarily directed to victims or perpetrators, or both?</li> <li>• Are there other social issues which must be addressed prior to focusing on family violence?</li> </ul>

THEME/SUMMARY #5	ISSUE LEADERSHIP
Key Discussion Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which department, entity or organization should take the lead on the issue of family violence?</li> <li>• Is an alternative structure, such as a multi-stakeholder family violence taskforce, required to ensure a more effective response to family violence?</li> <li>• Whole role(s) should stakeholder groups assume – including youth, women, men, and Elders – on the issue?</li> <li>• What form should an action plan against family violence take?</li> </ul>

THEME/SUMMARY #6	LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What changes are required, if any, in federal, provincial or local legislation to improve the manner in which we respond to family violence?</li> <li>• Which department, entity or organization should take the lead in advocating for legislative amendments?</li> </ul>

THEME/SUMMARY #7	ROLE OF CULTURE
Key Discussion Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What role should culture and traditional ways and practices play in addressing family violence?</li> <li>• How best can the Cree Nation leverage the wisdom, experience and guidance of Elders to address family violence?</li> </ul>

THEME/SUMMARY #8	SYSTEMIC TRANSFORMATION
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How must the <i>system</i> change in order to improve response to family violence?</li> <li>• What transformation must take place in respect to policing, criminal justice, social services, health care, child protection or other systems players to improve the manner in which we respond to family violence?</li> <li>• Will stakeholders be open to changing their processes to improve their response to family violence?</li> <li>• Will stakeholders be open to reducing duplication, enhancing service coordination, and co-financing efforts to address family violence?</li> <li>• Who will lead the process of systemic transformation?</li> </ul>

THEME/SUMMARY #9	MONITORING AND MEASURING OUTCOMES
KEY DISCUSSION POINTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What systems and processes must be established to allow us to monitor and measure whether the family violence problem is improving?</li> <li>• What indicators are most important when evaluating the success of our family violence prevention and response efforts? How will we know when we are making positive change and progress?</li> <li>• Who will be responsible for evaluating the success of our efforts in respect to family violence?</li> </ul>

