

## **Guidelines for Working with Diverse Communities**

Establishing a Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) Campaign in your community will mean bringing together people with a variety of cultural experiences to address the sensitive topic of woman abuse. Included, as part of this campaign are some guidelines for how to increase understanding, respectful communication, and inclusion of specific communities, wanting to support abused women and their children. This may require, listening to the particular ways each community experiences woman abuse, and being guided by the community in order to develop more relevant and effective supports for women experiencing violence.

Some broad generalizations may be helpful to begin a dialogue about how to support diverse communities to take action on woman abuse, at the local level. The guidelines we have provided are intended to be adapted to fit the needs and assets of each community. As a starting point, we have included some recommendations for working with:

- Immigrant and Refugee Communities
- Rural Communities
- Remote Communities.

These are meant to give an overview of the wider contexts in which the NFF Campaign will be implemented. We recognize that each community has different experiences with woman abuse, and has its own unique features, risk factors and safety issues to be considered. We understand that women and their children face multiple barriers, in relation to their gender, culture, language, geographic location, class, ability, faith/ spirituality, and immigration status, when dealing with violence and accessing supports. As such, implementation of the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign must be rooted in the specific needs and assets of each community.

## Guidelines for working with Immigrant and Refugee Communities

### Background

With the exception of Aboriginal peoples, Canada is a nation of immigrants or descendants of immigrants. On average, 220,000 people have settled in Canada each year, since the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Their backgrounds and personal histories may be widely different. Immigrants come from all over the world: Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America, and Oceania. Among the provinces, Ontario welcomes more than half of all new immigrants coming to Canada each year, roughly 125,000 new immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

People moving to Canada can be divided into two distinct categories: *refugees and immigrants*. Refugees are people who are forced to flee their country because of persecution.<sup>3</sup> Immigrants on the other hand, may choose to move to Canada, with the right to stay permanently, on the basis of labour market contributions or family reunification.<sup>4</sup>

In general, refugees and immigrants share similar experiences in their process of adaptation. The first few years after arrival are particularly stressful as they must find a new home, a job, and familiarize themselves with a different society and culture. They need to establish a new network of friends, a support system and often learn a new language. Some may experience success in the process of resettlement, while many others may experience downward mobility, as their qualifications, education degrees, and overseas experience are often not recognized to meet Canadian standards.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, many immigrants face unemployment and underemployment, resulting in poverty and or financial hardships.

Refugees often face additional challenges in adapting, because their arrival was something they did not plan, but a matter of survival, a way to escape a very

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<sup>1</sup> Fleras, Augie and Elliot, Jean Leonard. 2006. *Unequal Relations: An Introduction to Race, Ethnic, and Aboriginal Dynamics in Canada*. Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Fleras and Elliot, 2006, pg. 359

<sup>4</sup> Fleras and Elliot, 2006, pg. 359

<sup>5</sup> Finnie, Ross and Meng, Ronald. 2002. "Are Immigrants' Human Capital Skills Discounted in Canada?" May, Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Business and Labour Market Analysis Division.

difficult situation. As a result, they may experience a deep sense of loss and trauma, caused by being uprooted and the nature of their past experiences, possibly including witnessing or being victimized by violence, or having to leave behind those they love.

For racialized immigrants and refugees, the trauma of migration is combined with the experience of discrimination in housing, employment, media, education, and social services. The reality of racialized immigrants is one in which the colour of their skin is a key factor in determining life chances, as well as their dignity, identity, and self-esteem.<sup>6</sup>

## **GUIDELINE 1:**

### **Define Immigrant and Refugee Communities**

Immigrant and refugee communities are quite diverse. They arrive from different countries. Some are racialized and others are not. They make up a broad spectrum of ethnicities, genders, languages and accents, literacy levels, cultures, faiths, abilities, families and sexualities. They also come from different socio-economic and political circumstances.

While most immigrants and refugees live in urban and suburban centres, some settle in rural areas. Some ethnic and cultural groups may be located in a geographic community where they make up a high concentration of the local population. Other groups may be dispersed in different locations and may come from various areas outside of a geographic area to receive culturally relevant services.

Depending upon the country of origin, beliefs, personal interests, political inclination, religious affiliation and level of adjustment, immigrants and refugees often gather around faith-based and cultural activities, sports, or to work for political or altruistic causes. Rural areas usually include more traditional neighborhoods, wherein immigrants and refugees tend to gather around schools and places of worship.

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<sup>6</sup> Henry, Frances and Tator, Carol. 2006. *The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) Toronto: Harcourt Brace/Nelson.

### **Recommendations for Guideline 1:**

- Research the community's country of origin in the areas of politics, culture, customs, family values, educational system, language, ways to deal with woman abuse, conflict and losses, and ways to solve crisis.
- Develop a profile of the immigrant and refugee community you are working with, its culture, and historical experiences, by accessing information from ethno-specific Associations, immigrant settlement agencies, and neighbourhood houses.<sup>7</sup>
- Talk with members of the community to find out how people connect and build community or create a sense of neighbourhood.
- Seek out culturally appropriate programs and events that bring the group together and contribute to a sense of belonging and community.
- Be aware of and take into account the diversity within your community. Remember - woman abuse occurs in most cultures. Each individual within any group will vary in what she or he values and how she/he behaves. Factors such as personal histories, family background, educational level, rural vs. urban origins, spiritual or faith orientation, among others, can create an infinite number of individual variations within any community.<sup>8</sup>
- Review the Neighbours, Friends and Families materials for cultural competency and appropriateness. This should include having materials available in the native language of the community.
- Identify local leaders in the community (social, religious, business, government) to seek ideas and support for implementing the NFF campaign.
- Identify all local resources that can participate in the NFF campaign: schools, walk-in clinics, houses of worship, family fairs, sports clubs, culture clubs, support groups, ethno specific associations, physician offices, ESL classes, grocery stores, libraries, women only organizations, anti-violence organizations, hospitals, workplaces, beauty shops, settlement services organizations, crisis centres, day care centres, farms, factories, social assistance and workers compensation offices.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://cp.settlement.org/english>. This site contains cultural profiles that provide an overview of life and customs in various countries.

<sup>8</sup> McDonald, Neil and Hasselfield, Ginny. ND. *The MacDonald Guide to Managing Diversity*. Winnipeg: Cross Cultural Communications International.

## **GUIDELINE 2:**

### **Learn about Woman Abuse in Immigrant and Refugee Communities**

Attitudes towards immigrants and refugees often hold them and their communities responsible for violence against women. This reinforces the stereotype that some cultures are more violent than others. It also deflects attention away from the inequalities that contribute to immigrant women's vulnerabilities to violence.<sup>9</sup>

Woman abuse occurs in most cultures and affects women of all backgrounds. In general, men use violence to exercise control and power over women. Immigrant and refugee women who are new to Canada are particularly vulnerable to abuse by their partners. Through the process of adaptation to Canadian society, immigrant and refugee men may experience a loss of social and economic power. They may feel threatened by Canadian equality laws for women, and may act to reassert their power by using violence against their partners, to control them.

Because most women enter Canada as sponsored spouses, they are financially dependent upon their husbands for periods of 3 to 10 years. This means their access to social assistance; old age security, social housing and job training programs can be restricted by the terms of the sponsorship. For immigrant women this may create a feeling of indebtedness to their abusive partners.<sup>10</sup> This can result in women and children living in abusive situations for fear of being deported, for fear of having their children taken away from them, and for fear of living in poverty.

Immigrant women who are sponsored as mail-order brides and domestic live-in caregivers are also vulnerable to abusive relationships due to fear of losing financial support, fear of being denied landed immigrant status and being deported by their sponsors.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Jiwani, Yasmin. 2001. *Intersecting Inequalities. Immigrant Women of Colour, Violence, and Health Care*. Available at [www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda/articles/hlth04.htm](http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda/articles/hlth04.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Cote, Andree and Kersit Michele, and Cote, Marie-Louise. 2001. *Sponsorship. For Better or for Worse: The Impact of Sponsorship on the Equality Rights of Immigrant Women*. Ottawa: Status of Women Canada.

<sup>11</sup> Macklin, Audrey. 1999. "Women as Migrant: Members in National and Global Communities. Toronto, *Canadian Women's Studies* 19 (3): 24-32

Some immigrant and refugee women stay home and work as unpaid caregivers. They may experience loneliness due to social isolation, and may lack knowledge of English and French, which may prevent them from accessing information about their rights, about Canadian social and legal systems and how they can get help to end the abuse.<sup>12</sup> Isolation and the lack of a social support network can make women more vulnerable to abuse by their partners, as abusers do not have to answer to family members or friends.

Many immigrant and refugee women want the abuse to stop but they do not see separation or divorce as viable options. For these women cultural beliefs about marriage and the family require them to keep the family together. Under these circumstances, immigrant and refugee women may not report abuse or may choose to stay in abusive relationships for fear of rejection by their community, family and friends.

Immigrant women (even those holding education degrees) are less likely to have paid employment than immigrant men and non-immigrant women.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of education, immigrant women earn less than Canadian-born women.<sup>14</sup> In all factors such as poverty, unemployment, underemployment, language barriers, and multiple roles within the family, may reinforce immigrant and refugee women's vulnerability to stay in abusive relationships.

Many immigrant and refugee women, along with their families, have endured great suffering, for numerous years, as a result of political or religious persecution, and war. Some have experienced economic, political and social exclusion, military repression, torture, loss of personal freedoms, loss of family members, detentions, rapes, bombings and massive killings. These experiences can leave immigrant and refugee women with an understanding of abuse in intimate relationships, as a minor manifestation of aggression, in comparison to the other forms of violence they have experienced before coming to Canada.

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<sup>12</sup> Morris, Marika. 2001. *Gender-Sensitive Home and Community Care and Caregiving Research: A Synthesis paper*. Ottawa: Health Canada Women's Health Bureau. pp. 27-30

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada. 2000. *Women in Canada 2000: A Gender-based Statistical Report*. Ottawa: Minister of Industry pp.201-202

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.,pp.204-205

Immigrant and refugee women may feel a very strong bond and loyalty to their partners and families, as a result of having shared long histories of persecution, oppression and violence together. In spite of their own traumatic experiences and suffering, refugee and immigrant women may feel sympathy for the victimization of their partners, and may seek help for their partners and children before seeking support for themselves.

### **Recommendations for Guideline 2:**

- Review the content of the NFF Women Abuse Prevention kit for cultural appropriateness.
- Ensure women with knowledge of the culture and the dynamics of woman abuse are leading the process. To foster equitable participation in the design of the campaign, it is important to involve women from the cultural community in the decision making process, and in the ongoing review of the kit.
- Partner with leaders in the community, and committed organizations, to identify non-threatening activities you can use to implement the Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) campaign. In some cultures, using art, drama, music, cuisine or collective kitchens, or social gatherings to celebrate important dates, will promote a sense of home and belonging.
- Foster opportunities for sharing time to socialize and talk about the process of settlement for members of the community. This is key to any type of community work with newcomer immigrants and refugees. By doing this you will be outreaching and developing supportive networks, while learning about the struggles and strengths of the community.
- Promote an approach that acknowledges the importance of family in some people's lives, putting an emphasis on the strengths, rather than on the deficits, on validation rather than on criticism. Some women may prefer if men are included in the program and the issue is handled sensitively.
- Create opportunities for the family, especially for women, to get to know the different resources and support systems in the community.
- Promote informal groups where women can socialize with each other, share problems and joys and reestablish lost networks.

### **GUIDELINE 3:**

#### **Risk Factors for Women in Immigrant and Refugee Communities**

In order to promote the NFF campaign effectively, it is important to understand the barriers and additional factors faced by immigrant and refugee women, and especially newcomers, which put them at risk for staying or returning to an abusive relationship. In summary, these include:

- Experiences of culture shock, as they adapt and settle in a new country
- Low economic status and financial dependence on their partners
- Lack of knowledge about their rights and not knowing that violence against women is a crime in Canada
- Dependence on their partners for immigration sponsorship and status
- Fear and distrust of the police and court system based on past experiences in their mother countries
- Lack of awareness of local supports and services that are available to help
- Experiences of discrimination and mistreatment in employment, housing, and other services
- Isolation and loneliness due to the lack of a social network of family and friends they can turn to for help
- Inability to speak and communicate in English or French
- Discomfort seeking formal support, for fear of losing children, fear of being judged, and being blamed for exposing family problems to strangers
- Fear of rejection or disapproval from family members, cultural group or religious congregation, if the abuse is reported.

### **Recommendations for Guideline 3:**

- Add any additional risk factors for immigrant and refugee women and children in your community.

### **GUIDELINE 4:**

#### **Engage Immigrant and Refugee Communities to End Woman Abuse**

Since women from immigrant and refugee communities may fear involvement in systems their communities have historically mistrusted or viewed as racist or oppressive, (i.e. law- enforcement, social services, child welfare, and

immigration) they may find the informal support offered by families, extended family, neighbours and the community to be more powerful and helpful.

The cultural and geographic diversity of groups within immigrant and refugee communities poses a real challenge to bringing people together to talk about how to end violence against women and children. Additionally, community attitudes or beliefs about woman abuse may make it difficult to begin talking about the issue. This means that each community will have to decide for itself how best to implement the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign, to suit the local culture and environment.

#### **Recommendations for Guideline 4:**

- Develop a working knowledge of immigrant and refugee experiences by accessing information from lead agencies and be informed about the challenges and the factors that inhibit or enhance their adaptation and integration process.
- Create opportunities for newcomers as individuals, families and communities, to learn their way around the culture of Canadian society, especially as it relates to woman abuse, in a way that is non-judgmental and non-threatening.
- Create opportunities for your community to affirm the positive values inherent in the cultures newcomers bring with them, especially putting emphasis on values that strengthen families.
- Work with a group of community leaders that are concerned about woman abuse, to identify the most appropriate strategies for addressing their experiences with women and children who experience abuse, and/or with men who abuse.
- Organize focus groups with diverse groups of community members to discuss community and cultural norms for dealing with the issue of woman abuse.
- Convene a dialogue with leaders and people of influence in the community who have demonstrated a commitment to end woman abuse, and have expressed an interest in helping to support the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign. These people could include: religious/faith leaders,

- ethnic leaders, community leaders, sports figures, local artists, political leaders, business leaders, professionals, parent advocates, and elders.
- Seek input from these leaders on the appropriate ways to implement the Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) Campaign in their community.
  - It would not be appropriate to involve anyone who is believed to have perpetrated or supported woman abuse in her/his native country in the implementation of any support program.
  - Approach those groups and networks which you had identified earlier and arrange a meeting for people to learn about woman abuse and what steps can be taken in the community, to stop it. These groups could include: school teachers, health care providers, faith congregations, sports groups, ethnic associations, shelter staff, anti-violence workers, settlement workers, ESL tutors, government workers, support group facilitators, parenting groups, barbers and hairdressers.
  - Identify those places that are located in the heart of the community and where members of the community are likely to visit, attend a meeting and/or pick up information. These could include: schools, places of worship, walk-in clinics, community health centres, hospitals, ESL classes, grocery stores, beauty and barber shops, and so on.
  - Consider different ways of spreading information about the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign, taking into consideration, those with low literacy level in their native language. Varied methods of promotion and communication about the NFF Campaign could include: posters, flyers, announcements by faith leaders, ethnic television and radio, local newspapers, and so on.

## **GUIDELINE 5:**

### **Intercultural Communication**

Working with immigrant and refugee communities requires first a commitment to look within ourselves to evaluate the values we hold about other cultures and about woman abuse. This is a useful start to understanding our own culture and its impact on us, while appreciating the importance of culture in people's lives<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Komiotis, Wendy. 2004 *Workers' Self Awareness, Tips for Inclusive Practice in the Workplace*. Toronto: Toronto Hostel Training Centre.

### **Recommendations for guideline 5:**

- Examine your own cultural/racial heritage. What ideas, beliefs and assumptions do you hold about other cultural groups and woman abuse?
- Acknowledge the similarities between your own and others culture. Most cultures have a need to love and care for family and friends. These common basic needs make us all capable of understanding each other.
- Reflect on the differences between your own and others culture. How do these differences bias the way you work with different communities to address the issue of woman abuse?
- Identify any generalizations you may hold about diverse communities, which may block opportunities to develop culture-specific approaches as required.
- Avoid and resist any negative assumptions and stereotypes towards others, which may result in discriminatory practices during the NFF Campaign?
- Be aware of your own social power in relation to class, gender, education, faith, language, race, ability etc.) and establish relationships with community members based on respect and equity.
- Share your position power (i.e. information, skills, knowledge, rank, influence) to support communities in their own empowerment.
- Learn about the histories and cultures of different ethnic groups in order to better understand their beliefs and choices in dealing with the issue of woman abuse.
- Be aware of the differences between the values of people of the same country. Failing to recognize these differences can create misunderstandings and conflict. Woman abuse and violence in the family can be a very touchy issue; one that some communities prefer to deal with in their own way.

### **GUIDELINE 6:**

#### **Cross Cultural Communication**

Interaction with immigrant and refugee communities involves cross-cultural communication and the sending and receiving of messages using verbal and non-verbal means. Immigrant and refugees come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and so do those who work with them to provide services or support.

This is the reason we need to stress the importance of cross-cultural communication.

Having a culture involves having a communication style, an attitude toward conflict, an approach to completing tasks, a decision-making style, an attitude toward disclosure, and an approach to knowing.

#### **Recommendations for Guideline 6:**

- Be aware of your body language; postures that indicate receptivity in one culture might indicate aggressiveness in another.
- Do not interpret the verbal and non-verbal cues of others using the framework of your own culture as a guide.
- Listen actively and empathetically. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Acknowledge historical events that have taken place. Be open to learning more about them. Honest acknowledgment of the mistreatment and oppression that have taken place on the basis of cultural difference is vital for effective communication.
- Maintain confidentiality and be clear about what you plan to do, as this establishes the appropriate conditions for engendering trust.
- Give people time to get to feel comfortable and safe before expecting them to share personal experiences. Do not assume newcomers will quickly share personal stories.
- Make it clear woman abuse is not acceptable without labeling.

#### **GUIDELINE 7:**

##### **Community Collaboration**

**Agencies and organizations are committed to working in coordinated and collaborative ways**

The purpose of the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign is to provide communities with information and strategies to prevent woman abuse by allowing the communities to:

1. Recognize the warning signs of woman abuse

2. Support women and other members of the community who are impacted by woman abuse
3. Locate supportive resources in the community

The degree of community collaboration is paramount to the successful implementation of the Neighbours, Friends and Families initiative.

### **Recommendations for Guideline 7:**

- Get to know the network or the agencies working to end woman abuse in your community. Ideally, staff and volunteers of the NFF initiative should have an opportunity to visit local agencies and learn more about the issue
- Develop cooperative relationships with other agencies, especially agencies serving newcomers to ensure that services related to end women abuse are provided in a more all-encompassing way, and that secondary ongoing consultation and referral protocols are established
- Promote and support programs that address issues of woman abuse, are community-based, strive to be creative, flexible and responsive to the specific needs women in newcomer communities
- Contribute to the strengthening of agencies whose mandate is to serve newcomer populations by advocating the sharing the resources of more established agencies. Sometimes agencies serving newcomers are under funded and have a high demand for services. Agencies should not be expected to provide services to prevent woman abuse with the little resources they have.
- Organize inter-agency training and staff support for both agencies to end woman abuse and agencies serving newcomers, encouraging the sharing of expertise. Agencies focused on ending women abuse can provide training in the area of violence against women, and agencies providing services to newcomers can provide training in the area of Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity. This training will lead to early intervention and prevention and to more effective referrals. It will ensure that the potential for intervention is effective, and will enhance coordination among service providers.
- Promote and allocate resources for the development of community leadership. Focus on agencies who have demonstrated a commitment to end woman abuse and the elimination of service barriers.

## **Guidelines for Working with Rural Communities**

### **Background**

The Neighbours, Friends and Families program is a starting point for a rural community response to woman abuse. The program can be adapted to fit the diverse needs, culture and realities of each rural community. Neighbours, friends and families are critical supports for abused women and their children in rural communities, especially since many services found in urban areas are missing, limited or may not be accessible for women. These guidelines are meant to support important informal helping systems and community networks in rural communities, and help rural people advocate for the resources they need to end woman abuse.

### **GUIDELINE 1:**

#### **Defining Rural Communities**

Rural communities across Ontario are diverse and have specific and locally unique characteristics. A rural community can be defined as geographic area (a place on the map), or as a culture (a way of life). This includes defining by census (people who live in the countryside outside of centres of 1,000 or more in population), by postal code (people who live in areas where 0 is the second character in their postal code) or by their approximation to larger urban centres (people who live in towns or municipalities outside the community zone of an urban centre of 10,000 or more).

#### **Recommendations for Guideline 1:**

- Take some time to talk about the specifics of your rural community, the rural culture in your area, and how your community differs from other rural areas and urban cultures.
- Recognize that issues facing rural women in Canada have been largely invisible to researchers and policy makers. The learning from your work in your community is important, and may be helpful to other rural communities and rural women in Canada.

- Adapt the Neighbours, Friends and Families materials to fit rural realities and issues. Too often rural communities are faced with “made in the city” solutions to the problems facing rural women dealing with abuse.
- Identify opportunities in your rural community to implement Neighbours, Friends and Families. For example: look at the strength of local helping and volunteer networks, the communities ability to mobilize quickly to meet needs, and the important role that family, friends and neighbours play in the community helping system

## **GUIDELINE 2:**

### **Woman Abuse in Rural Communities**

Rural communities pose some unique challenges and opportunities for women and children dealing with abuse. In many rural communities there are rigid traditional values that support the notion of men as the natural “head of the household”, position women as the “caretakers” in the family, and see abuse as a “private family matter”. Rural women can be unequal partners in “traditional” marriages, and although rural neighbours may know everything about everyone in their community, they may be more reluctant to “interfere” by providing help to abused women. Rural women encounter additional barriers and inequalities when they leave their abusive partners and seek employment and economic self sufficiency. Farm women are faced with leaving their career, business, home and identity. Aboriginal women, immigrant women, visible minorities, lesbian and bi sexual women, and poor women report discrimination, language barriers, and the lack of specialized supports in their rural communities. Rural communities need strategies to improve equality for women as well as strategies to hold abusers accountable for changing their behaviour.

### **Recommendations for Guideline 2:**

- Consider the practical things neighbours, friends and family can do to address the rural challenges that abused women and their children face.
- Look at the ways the community has worked to overcome rural barriers to service or to change community attitudes on other issues. How can these methods be used to address woman abuse?

- Identify “champions” in your community on the issue of woman abuse. Who needs to speak out about challenges and who can motivate people to change attitudes?

### **GUIDELINE 3:**

#### **Risk Factors for Women in Rural Communities**

Rural women and their children face some additional risk factors neighbours, friends and family need to be aware of:

- Lack of information about available services, access issues such as lack of transportation, or the lack of needed services in the area.
- Fire arms are more likely to be in the home
- Long response time by police and emergency services
- Poor employment opportunities, low wages and a woman’s economic dependency on her partner may make it difficult to leave an abusive relationship.
- The higher levels of poverty in rural areas may increase risk for women if they cannot afford a telephone or a car, and may force her to return to an abusive partner in order to provide for her children.
- A woman who is a partner in a farm or shared business may risk staying in a violent relationship in order to maintain her assets and income.
- Higher rates of substance abuse for both men and women
- Attitudes within the social service system and general public that hinder identifying abuse, or blame victims and protect perpetrators.
- Personal relationships in small communities that can interfere with a professional response from service providers increase a service user’s sense of shame or decrease their confidence in services.

Neighbours, friends and family should not hesitate to contact police services if they are concerned about risk of harm to women and children dealing with abusive partners.

#### **Recommendations for Guideline 3:**

- Add any additional risk factors for women and children in your rural community.

## **GUIDELINE 4:**

### **Engaging Rural People to End Woman Abuse**

The low population density in rural communities and lack of services and service coordination makes it challenging to get people together in rural communities. Community attitudes or beliefs about woman abuse may make it difficult to get the community conversation started. Every community will need to consider the best way to implement the materials in Neighbours, Friends and Families, and the best way to engage rural people.

#### **Recommendations for Guideline 4:**

- Consult within your community on how best to implement this program.
- Consider the naturally occurring groups or networks in your community that could come together to learn about woman abuse and what we can do to stop it. For example:
  - ü Church groups or faith communities
  - ü Sports groups
  - ü Extended family groups
  - ü Community service clubs
  - ü Parenting groups
  - ü Early Years or Daycare groups
  - ü School groups
  - ü Chamber of Commerce
  - ü Kitchen table groups
- *Identify the leaders and people of influence in our community who could help to bring people together. For example:*
  - ü Local politicians
  - ü Leaders of faith communities
  - ü Elders
  - ü Community professionals and business leaders
  - ü Local sports figures

- *Identify the places that are central, accessible and natural gathering places. For example:*
  - ü *Libraries*
  - ü *Arenas*
  - ü *Agriculture society, OFA, 4H.*
  - ü *Donated space at local businesses*
  - ü *Health care offices or hospitals*
  - ü *Town Halls*
  - ü *Someone's home*
  - ü *Women's Institutes*
  
- *Consider the best way of getting the word out. For example:*
  - ü *Word of mouth (a telephone blitz, community leader contacting people, etc.)*
  - ü *Posters and flyers*
  - ü *Free advertising in local papers (upcoming events) or a press release*
  - ü *Church bulletins, newsletters*

## **Guidelines for Working with Remote and Under-serviced Communities**

### **Background**

A remote community is a community more than 100 km from a physician or another well resourced community. Remote communities often lack basic resources such as a hospital, police and emergency services and may not have direct access to provincial highways, or may be isolated due to the sheer geography of the location of the community and lack of resources. Given the unique attributes of remote communities, the delivery of Neighbour, Friends, and Families must consider these factors in determining how best to facilitate the delivery of this program.

### **GUIDELINE 1:**

#### **Engage Remote Communities to End Woman Abuse**

Every community in Ontario has different and unique attributes specific to its location and culture. People who live in remote communities are the best suited to tell us about their community's culture, diversity, strengths and weaknesses, historical development of structures etc.

#### **Recommendations for Guideline 1:**

- People who live in remote communities should be consulted prior to implementing the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign to determine its appropriateness.
- Engagement of the community must consider what services are available as well as what services it lacks and what impact these gaps have on the community.
- Identification of formal and informal links to other communities, and the ease of access to shared resources are also important considerations.

### **GUIDELINE 2:**

#### **Consider Women's Safety in Remote Communities**

What increases or decreases a woman's safety in a remote community? Some of the issues remote communities face in addition to proximity to services, is limited phone services (including internet), intimate familiarity of people in a remote community, lack of access to transportation and cost of transportation, poorer health and lack of access to health care and related resources, aging populations, increased poverty rates, few if any Violence Against Women resources, and reduced access to the justice system and other social service programs.

**Recommendations for Guideline 2:**

- Identify the particular issues (i.e. similar to those stated above) which decrease a women's safety in a particular community
- Talk with local community members about how the local resources already in place can be further enhanced to assist women.
- Safety planning must take into consideration all of the additional challenges of living in a remote community.

**GUIDELINE 3:**

**Identify the Warning Signs of Woman Abuse Specific to Remote Communities**

1. Ease of access to firearms and the likelihood they will be found within the home and community. (The National Gun Registry shows homes in the rural and remote communities have registered higher numbers of firearms per capita than urban centres).
2. Access to 911 Emergency Services may or may not exist and if they exist the services may serve many communities so a quick response cannot be anticipated.
3. Higher rates of substance use and abuse
4. Access to Transportation and the cost of transportation will hinder the ability of an abused woman from leaving safely.

5. Inability of an abused woman to maintain a low profile because of gossip in remote communities
6. The likelihood an abuser is related or is known to people in positions of power to which the woman needs to rely on increases significantly in remote communities. All these issues could present barriers to an abused women should they encounter bias by police, community resource people etc.
7. Poverty and poor health is more prominent in remote communities.
8. Fear of further abuse and removal from their home and community. (NWAC)
9. More traditional/patriarchal structures are likely to exist in remote communities (i.e., men in positions of power and women as primary care givers)

#### **GUIDELINE 4:**

##### **Connecting people from Remote communities**

There will likely be community leaders (female and male) whose support will be critical to the success of the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign. Seek out the support of these leaders to learn more about connecting people in the community. The campaign will have the best chance at success if community leaders are brought into the implementation strategy early.

##### **Recommendations for Guideline 4:**

- Search out the group or organization working on other social issues, strong role models within the community (male and female), people who have witnessed or lived through Woman Abuse for further guidance about how to best implement the campaign.
- Request input and feedback from community leaders often and defer to the expertise of the community whenever possible.
- Provide information to community often, including:

- posting flyers or posters in local schools, churches, Band Office, nursing station or health facility, local store, airport, etc.
- advertise on local or regional radio/TV/newspaper
- inserts in municipal newsletters, church bulletins, etc.
- word of mouth by enlisting local well known appropriate people to phone or talk to others
- Determine a place to hold a meeting, which is familiar, central and accessible for participants. In a remote site there may only be a few places to choose from, so make sure it is a safe place.

#### **GUIDELINE 5:**

#### **Social Context of Woman Abuse in Remote Communities**

Community beliefs and expectations are also a factor in keeping women in abusive situations. For instance, an Aboriginal woman is expected to resolve her marriage problems within the family and not go to outsiders. Often the woman feels ashamed she cannot solve her own problems. In remote communities women often have nowhere to go, as there are no women's shelters. (NWAC)

There may be similar expectations in non-Aboriginal communities, which prevent women from seeking help. Examples of such as expectations are: women should be independent and self-reliant to make their own decisions, including leaving abusive relationships. These judgments are inappropriate and blame her for the abusive behaviour instead of focusing the responsibility and accountability on the abuser and having the expectation he needs to stop abusing her.

Remote communities are more likely to have stereotypical roles for women given the level of unemployment and resourced based employment. If a woman is on assistance her access to funds is likely dependent on the person who receives the benefits, usually the male. If they live on a farm or tourism based community, they may be an integral part of the operation doing lots of unpaid labour but not having access to funds to leave.

Historical roles in which males are hunters are still a real part of remote community culture. Some males spend time away hunting and then bring home the prize, while the women have the responsibility for maintaining the home and

nurturing the children. These roles and situations support gender inequality which we know is the root cause of woman abuse.