

At Grass Level



Neighbours, Friends & Families

Implementing the Campaign

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Executive Summary

This report is the result of 25 interviews conducted in February and March 2008 with the community coordinators of the provincial Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign. The purpose was to create a qualitative report that would, through the stories and voices of those involved, provide a sense of how the campaign is working at a grassroots level. The result is a rich tapestry of hope and struggle, innovation and community collaboration.

Many people are affected by domestic violence, whether directly or indirectly. The neighbours, friends and families, living and working as closely to abused women as they do, often hear and see things that others miss. But they may not understand what they're seeing, or the significance and potential danger. And they often don't know what to do with the information. It's a place of tremendous powerlessness.

This campaign, more than anything else, has provided hope and the tools to support women when they are most vulnerable. It's facilitated discussion and brought disparate communities together, building bridges of compassion, and stimulating a passionate commitment and a deep collective sense of responsibility to end woman abuse. It is a testament not only to the extraordinary dedication and creativity of the coordinators in facilitating community growth and development, but also to the strong local leadership and enthusiasm of individual champions who have heard the call and stepped up to the plate to carry the message. It is their story too.

The Neighbours, Friends and Families project continues to grow with new communities becoming involved all the time. In some cases, the coordinators that I spoke with are just beginning their campaigns in their respective communities. While in others, there's a second generation of coordination, with the foundation already having been laid. Examining the strategies implemented, reception in various sectors, the strengths and challenges, as well as the possibility of sustainability through the strength-based interdependence of community partners, the coordinators' stories illustrate that everyone has a role to play in preventing woman abuse. It's a call to action that both professionals and the general public have answered with enthusiasm, courage and a wholehearted dedication to making a difference in their communities.

When community members step forth and really make a choice to end violence against women; that contributes to the healing of the whole community, because then it's not isolated. That's what this whole campaign is about. Abuse is not just in the house of the man beating up the woman, especially in smaller communities, it affects all members.

Project Growth & Development

The Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign sprang from a seed of hope that was planted five years ago. In its infancy, it was a project conceived within the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, with Changing Ways, an organization that counsels men who are abusive, as the lead agency. With a small grant from the Ontario Victim Services Secretariat (OVSS), the committee began a local project with material from Neighbour to Neighbour, a family violence prevention initiative in San Francisco. As Tim Kelly, Chair of the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, Chair of the Expert Panel for NFF, and the Executive Director of Changing Ways says:

Our mission was to work in neighbourhoods to educate people about woman abuse. Our tagline was a neighbourhood safe for women is a neighbourhood safe for everyone.

The advisory committee, comprised of a wide range of community representatives including Neighbourhood Watch, London Police Services, Women's Community House and London Abused Women's Centre, among others, chose three target groups in London in which to pilot the material. In a timely coincidence, and illustrative of the collective groundswell that was growing, the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) published a report recommending broad-based public education for the neighbours, friends, and families of women who were experiencing abuse. The groundwork was then laid for the campaign to flourish.

The fledgling success of the project was evident to many, including the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD), who approached the committee offering to translate the Neighbour to Neighbour material into other languages. In addition, the provincial government, through the OWD, established an expert panel to examine elements of the DVDRC's report, and to develop new materials in keeping with the Neighbour to Neighbour model.

The committee began to promote the materials and to encourage communities to apply for funding through the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). About 15 Coordinating Committees across the province were successful in getting funding and began to implement the campaign in their communities.

The London Coordinating Committee received a grant to produce a supporting video. It featured Sandra Schott, who was murdered by her estranged husband on October 27, 2005. It also included interviews with her family and friends, who, aware of the abuse, didn't recognize the danger she was in or how to help. The video was intended to be used only locally, but in its moving power, has become a central feature of the campaign.

On June 22, 2006, the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign was officially launched at Queen's Park by the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, Sandra Pupatello. The campaign was a partnership between the Ontario government, the Expert Panel on Neighbours, Friends and Families, and the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children. The commitment to funding, announced at the launch, was part of the Liberal government's Domestic Violence Action Plan.

The flame had been kindled. And it quickly grew, fanning to communities across the province, initiated through coordinating committees and individual organizations and agencies. But rather than a remote or official campaign, it was very personal. We're all neighbours, friends and families, and through the power of word of mouth, the message of hope began to grow, one person at a time.

Organizational Framework

We won't make a dent in domestic violence unless we work together.

One of the apparent strengths of the campaign is the willingness of diverse and disparate groups to come together to build relationships, and work in solidarity for the increased safety of women. In many communities across the province, the instigation of Neighbours, Friends and Families occurred through coordinating committees. These groups are unique to each community and are comprised of a wide range of service providers including police services, crown attorneys, probation and parole offices, women's shelters, health units, counseling and violence prevention services, as well as domestic violence assault review teams. In many cases, the community coordinators for the campaign work through the macrocosm of the larger committees, as well as through the microcosm of their lead agency. It is a lens that reveals both the larger needs of the community and the more specific demands.

In some areas, coordinating committees' membership is as high as 60 agencies, organizations, and private citizens; a considerable network that has the potential of impacting a huge number of people in advocacy and education. Adopting a two-tiered *train-the-trainer* system in many communities, coordinating committee members were trained in the campaign program. They, in turn, worked with their front line workers in their respective agencies, disseminating the information and incorporating it into their established programming.

In other municipalities, with less formal organizational coalitions, a more piecemeal and intuitive approach has been adopted. NFF Community Coordinators have made in-service presentations to individual organizations who had expressed an interest and commitment to the work of preventing violence against women.

There are distinct advantages to the two-tiered educational transfer. It's like a waterfall, with cascading information that flows down from committee, to agency, to individuals. In addition, it helps to provide a common base of knowledge. As one coordinator says:

All the Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee members, which is more than 30 agencies, all helped with the distribution of

Neighbours, Friends and Families materials, and allowed me to train their staff. The DVDRRC says that we need to offer tools to the public to prevent violence against women. But they also say that agencies need to be more consistent in their message. This campaign helps to do both.

While many communities used coordinating committees as the organizational foundation for the campaign, others, especially those of ethnic and linguistic minorities, drew on the established and deep rooted relationships already present. In a Spanish speaking immigrant section of Ottawa, the coordinator recognized the inherent opportunities:

We have a strong network within the community. We are connected because we're a different ethnic group. We organize as a community because we come from another culture. For us, we know where we are so that's such a strength.

And in others, especially in multi-lingual communities, there was a natural and harmonious point of focus:

In York region we're lucky because we have a huge multi-cultural community and communication vehicles in 14 languages. We're using all of them and implementing all of them. We keep our ear to the ground and as other languages are needed, like Italian right now, we work with the Neighbours, Friends and Families head office translating them into what we need.

By capitalizing on strong and unique strength-based combinations that support the special needs of the linguistic and ethnic minority communities, there is an inherent foundation:

Our team is very qualified. Some of them are, in fact, overqualified with impressive credentials from their countries. There's a lot of experience. So we have a lot of expertise working with abuse and women and our culture. It's not just that they speak Spanish. So it's a good combination in education and communication. They're working with their strengths.

While many communities relied on champions, and their gifts and connections to spread the NFF message, for some areas, most notably Grey Bruce, the idea of the community champion became an integral model of organization. Including Bruce Power workers, OPP, nurses, United Church ministers, a retired teacher and social work couple, among others, the goal was to enable and encourage this diverse group to implement the campaign in their respective communities of interest.

We've used a community champion approach. We were interested in engaging men as champions. We have seventeen community champions who were recruited. We chose people who are not already in the field of VAW, but in sectors in the community that we wanted to engage in this subject.

Both formal and informal, the ways in which Neighbours, Friends and Families has been organized are as varied and diverse as the populations that it serves. One of the advantages of the campaign is the freedom and power for the coordinators to organize and develop the project in the way that best suits their respective neighbourhoods. It's the ability to identify what the strengths of their communities are, and to capitalize on them that has allowed the coordinators to really meet people where they are.

Defining Community

In addition to establishing an organizational platform in which to roll out the campaign, one of the most important initial steps for the coordinators was to determine and define the communities that they hoped to reach.

This would seem to be a simple task. And yet, in areas of great diversity with multiple layers of need, it's not always easy to determine how best to reach different populations.

We often consider community to be the people who live closest to us. But in the broader sense, it can also include those who share our faith, livelihood, language, culture, or who live within a particular area. And often there is more than one community. In regions comprised of both urban and rural populations, or in large geographic municipalities without

a common connector of a newspaper or radio station, it can be challenging to both define and meet the needs of the disparate population.

Talking with people and finding out where and how they meet and build a sense of connectedness has been vital in determining where the coordinators have needed to put their energies. In one area, three very distinct community leaders were hired expressly because they could identify the key communities as they lived, worked and worshipped in them:

All the individuals are from the municipalities that they're working in, so they know everyone and are very well connected. They literally are neighbours, friends and family, and especially in rural settings, that is important. In our campaign we emphasize rural, so we hired three women, all very different but all great public speakers and very involved in their communities. We have a young mom who knows every parent on the school council, everyone in minor hockey, and all the playgroups. So we got our foot in the door. Another is retired, in the choir, director of amateur theatre and knows everything about the senior's retired group. The last one is a farm woman who knows every Dutch farmer and their wife, and is involved in church. They're amazing! They've been able to really draw on their personal contacts as they're very well connected.

In many cases like this, coordinators have creatively drawn from the wealth of established relationships, empowering people to work with, and within the strengths of their respective communities in order to leverage the impact and resources of the program. It's been the ability to recognize the grassroots connections and their tremendous power in spreading the message that is one of the reasons that the campaign has been so successful.

Reception

General Public:

As the campaign was rolled out, it was met in the general public with a lot of enthusiasm, some concerns and ideological differences, and a need to understand its longevity. Coordinators were often confronted as well with the question of why information about violence against women was privileged over that of women as perpetrators. Those questions opened up the space to begin to really talk about the issue, even when it was difficult and uncomfortable.

It makes sense to give information, skills and tools to address a tough issue in the community. It makes complete sense. This is a very conservative community. But the materials have really resonated because they're approaching the issue. People understand that very well. In rural communities you are dependent on one another so you have to move people along.

I haven't had any real negative responses. It's received really well because people consider it important. The worst people say, and it's rare, but is this going to go away after a year? People want to know that this will continue before they invest their energies.

You still have some people blaming but most want information and are embracing it.

I found it easy to describe how it's a workplace health issue so it was just a matter of connecting the dots in terms of risk factors and warning signs.

People are relieved that there's someone there to talk to. It takes the pressure off people to solve the problem. We say we're not looking for you to rescue this person but to direct them to professionals so that they can get the help that they need. It's not just on their shoulders anymore so there's some relief there.

It's often personal too, as many people have been directly impacted by domestic violence:

People are really responsive. We've had two cases of domestic homicide and because it's a small community, even if they didn't know the victim, they knew of them. So it really engages people. It's an issue that's particularly sensitive here because they know it's real and has happened here.

It's been received positively. Everyone has been open and supportive. We did have a domestic violence related death in our community a few years ago. So even though we're a small community, we've had a few so it's not out of the realm of reality for people. It's not like it couldn't happen here in this small community in the middle of the bush.

One of the interesting things is that I'm a therapist by training and have a private practice. I have had disclosures from people at the presentations that have ended up being one-on-one conversations and they've called me back later. They wanted to bare their souls about someone who is in trouble, whether themselves or their daughter, so it's ended up having a real personal touch in that sense.

Lots of women cry in service provider training. And men show up. It's been great.

It's been very well received. People seem to accept it. I've been on both sides, also as a survivor so I can come from all different directions. That's where you're at and how you look at it. It's important that you have your own personal approach.

And the campaign, and its materials, has been tangible, filling a strong need in communities to have the power to help:

I have been very surprised by how excited people are about this campaign. It strikes a chord of everyday working out of those relationships and gives a sense of hope about what to do.

They're excited about it. And they're pleased to have something concrete to do. One of the things that I want to do is to develop an organizational checklist so that people can see what's possible.

Professionals in the Violence Against Women Sector:

While all VAW professionals have a firm commitment to eradicating woman abuse, the ways in which they attempt to do that, as well as their ideological thresholds, can vary considerably. In many regions the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign has enriched and supported already existing programs:

They've been very supportive. But then the VAW sector was involved from the beginning with our domestic violence report card. So it was something that we already knew we wanted to do. It's been a community response for a long time.

People are open to the information and the program. I've worked in VAW before so you're preaching to the converted. We all get it.

The shelter is not on our working team, so it's been difficult to work around that. The focus of the group is humanist, and the shelter is more feminist. But I got the information into the shelters. They welcomed it.

The biggest draw is the safety planning with agencies, so it's going from the shelter on. It helps to know where to get the information so you can support women. It's helping to demystify the reasons that women might stay.

Women's services has been doing community education work for the last 15 years but Neighbours, Friends and Families has given us a real focus.

It's been received really well. I partnered with the First Nations shelter and they've been great, very supportive of me and respectful. Women's Resources is another group who've partnered up and put their name on stickers for local contacts. It's been really good. There have been problems, but it's all working out. The front line contacts are amazing.

And in smaller communities there are many crossovers, with less rigid distinctions between those who work within and outside of the VAW sector:

I'd say it's been received positively. The VAW group in my community isn't huge. There aren't a lot who work directly in that field. The lines are very blurred. Just before I began, the community did a newspaper insert to address woman abuse. Many professionals like police officers and crown attorneys came together, so everyone really works well together.

However while, for the most part, the campaign was received, supported and incorporated in an affirming manner by many VAW professionals, there were concerns among others.

One of the challenges had to do with one of the member agencies of our coordinating committee. They said that there was the potential with the campaign to blame the families for not doing enough to support the victim, even though many neighbours, friends and families do lots to help. Their point was, in terms of preventing woman abuse, that the only person who could prevent it would be the person doing the abuse or killing.

There has been some concern over the yellow pamphlet [How to Talk to Men Who Are Abusive]. The information has been seen as potentially dangerous if left unsupported. If someone picks it up and then takes it as a guide it could be really dangerous. Some chose not to use that brochure at all, or people altered it with a sticker warning or qualifier, like "not intended for women who are experiencing violence".

I think it's done pretty well. Their response when they've seen the documentary is to think that it's pretty powerful. There was really only one concern with one agency who didn't understand what the campaign was about and they were saying that they believed that the materials could be dangerous in putting women at risk, as well as opening your home. We try to explain that it's not a stranger; it's your neighbour, friend or family.

I've been challenged a number of times about safety for women but mostly I've experienced strong support for the campaign.

There was negative talk in Kingston with one organization and women doing front line services. They didn't trust this particular initiative, thought I was repetitive, like they'd already taken care of women, and that they didn't like the thought of talking to me.

I had the shelter home director as part of my support committee that was going. She did try, and she tried to stay open about what we were doing, but I didn't get the support that I needed. Our agency provides counseling to women in abusive relationships, but there's politics and competition, but also lots of respect. Though there was still that little bit of edge that was already there.

Some of the counselors were hesitant about giving that information to people and asking them to do that, or that it's a man's issue, asking men to take a larger role in it. They work out of the shelter and they protect women so it's asking them to go out of their comfort zone.

Some of the concerns were about the suggestions like, as a safety plan, that you open your home up to a woman. Part of the material and how it needs to be used in communities is realizing that's what people are already doing as a practice, so the question is how do you do that with more safety.

The reality too, and many coordinators spoke of this, is that there is too much work in the VAW sector for too few people, and resources are stretched thin. In some communities the support has been present but mitigated by the reality of the workload:

It's been received with some enthusiasm by the VAW professionals, however, it's been perceived as more work but recognized as necessary and a very good resource especially the brochure kit, which is appreciated and endorsed.

We give basic information but the VAW professionals are not prepared to take it on. They don't have the manpower.

People already in the work are burned out. They can't take on another level.

But listening to the concerns, and openly dialoguing with VAW professionals, many of the coordinators revised their programs to address the perceived gaps. As such, the presentations, and the NFF message, remained dynamic rather than static, a living blueprint of the hopes and concerns of each community.

There were some concerns about non-VAW people carrying the message. They also had concerns about exposure. But we worked through the training material and so people are more comfortable with it now.

The biggest concern that I've heard is around the brochure in talking to abusive men. So in our presentations we've incorporated and addressed some of those concerns in saying that it is just information and that we're not encouraging people to confront men.

It's been received well in Oxford County, and it's been well received at the women's shelter. They've been very supportive, and it's been integral for the organizing committee. But I've taken some flack from colleagues in the shelter system about the project. When the project was rolled out they said it encouraged neighbours to meddle, so we've had to be careful. We've said we don't expect you to run out and break up a fight. We're just asking you to be watchful, know what's out there. We're not asking you to put yourself at risk.

Professionals and Service Providers outside of the VAW Sector:

Part of the success of the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign has been due to the dedication and vision of many professionals including those not normally associated with the Violence Against Women sector. Encompassing a broad spectrum of organizations and individuals from police, faith leaders, mayors, Block Parent captains, paramedics, landlords, and media, among others, many have gone above and beyond their official roles to support and promote the campaign in their communities. Rather than one voice in the wilderness there have been many, influencing, through their presence and visibility, the importance of the project and their commitment to it. Many coordinators spoke of the ways in which they were sustained in their efforts to impact the greatest number of people in their communities.

Among their comments:

The mayor of Wasaga Beach was extremely supportive and put in writing his support for the campaign. Also the local newspaper that would print the stories.

We initially started with a launch and that included getting a quote and participation from each mayor in the seven municipalities. They came together for the launch and afterwards we used their comments to tie into each of their communities. It's one of the ways in which we've tried to personalize it for each of their municipalities.

The thing I did was to go to the municipal council of every community that we service to tell them what we do. We're small enough up here so it's easier as everyone knows each other so we can really get people together.

Some professionals, recognizing the potential, began to incorporate not only the material but the message of Neighbours, Friends and Families into their client relationships.

The crown's office has also been using the video to show when a woman is being interviewed. They're showing the documentary hoping that it hits home to the family members who are bringing them there.

There has been so much support from a wide range of professionals. With the landlord's association, I wrote an article for their newsletter with the information about NFF. So even if nothing else, 600 landlords and superintendents got the risk factors and warning signs.

People really want to become involved and they have begun to recognize the opportunities within their organizations and businesses to make an impact. In London, for example, Scotiabank made a firm commitment:

They sent ten managers along with the VP of the region. I met with them to talk about how the bank will participate in this region. The majority of people knew someone who was abused. So it's very personal. It's about establishing the structure about how they can participate and coming up with ideas to make it fit to their own existing structures. It's an opportunity for them to engage with community resources and offer support.

In smaller communities as well, schools, through principals and parent councils, have been integral in spreading the message:

I make presentations to the principals and staff and the parent groups. They're the heart of the community. They talk to everyone and know everything.

Principals get it and have been very supportive. Out of 30 schools, I'm in 20, had two no's because they're new, and I have eight waiting. So they've been very receptive

Mostly they will open the door wide and allow me to be put on their agenda for parent night or school council. So they've been very receptive. For some, the door opens only a little and for other's it's wide open. The bigger part is to get them onside so that they'll present the material.

They're a really keen group. I got the sense that they even want to be in a think tank. They really energize me.

I've given all the principals the information and offered to help in relationship classes or community class involvement. For kids who live in those relationships, violence is normalized. Their boundaries are already violated so it's really important to reach them. The police officer said that they're starting in kindergarten now beginning to talk about healthy boundaries and what's acceptable and what's not.

Faith communities of all descriptions have also welcomed the campaign, and taken a larger role in educating the supporting their parishioners:

I've just started with the faith community on a ministerial level. A United Church minister is meeting with the faith leaders in the area. That's a place that we're looking at making inroads in. This minister will put one of our brochures in his newsletter each month in order to keep it going.

The ministerial community has been very important. In a rural community, the church is a big deal. It's the social club and the centre of activity. People said when I moved here, if you want to get involved in the community then just join your church.

Law enforcement at all levels has also embraced the campaign. In many cases, the Neighbours, Friends and Families Campaign, and its material,

has significantly enhanced existing woman abuse educational programs within police services. Both professionally, and on a personal level, officers have provided strong support to coordinators across the province.

The OPP officer from the rural area, who is the domestic violence liaison officer from Frontenac division was very open in the community, as well as several others, who didn't go with the politics but were very focused in advocating and doing whatever they could. That's great! The OPP officer was wonderful. She went to the dumpsites [to hand out brochures] with me, and I rode around with her and we talked about incidents she was involved with and what it was like for her.

The OPP have been especially supportive. They've been open to distributing information and material, as well as being very frank about how to handle increased calls, and what they can and can't do.

There have been two amazing police officers who have been great and very supportive and wonderful with suggestions and helpful when people called with family and friends who couldn't get help. They've advocated and, without that, people wouldn't have gone back for help.

Our Justice for Women Review Team especially have been helpful, and also the OPP, two detachments, one in each county. Both the sergeants and others sit on the coordinating committee and have been really involved in the radio campaign.

There are police officers on board. We are in a very good position. Once a week now, and for 10 months, we'll be training officers in the York region, 1500 officers in all. They need to retrain every year for certain aspects of their positions. And they'll be doing a short blurb about the program so that when the information gets out in the community, people will be seeing it and asking for help. The police will have the heads up about the information.

We've partnered with organizations working with people in the law system who are mandated to do community service hours. They've agreed to supply some clients to do some of our volunteer work with administration and organizing the pamphlets. It's 'Random Acts of Kindness Week' and they feel strongly enough about the program that they want to do it for free. Usually they charge.

And vital to the success of the campaign in many regions has been the support of local libraries, often crucial meeting places especially in rural communities:

The library has been good in distributing more than 2400 brochures and safety cards in branches.

I have a friend who works for Random House and he donated fifteen copies of Black and Blue to local libraries. One selected it for their book club. I put together a kit with resources to go with the book, with the questions that you could use if you were discussing the book. I'm hoping the other libraries will take us up on the offer to use it in the same way.

And it's been a campaign that has a huge potential to raise awareness for established professionals to do their job in a very different manner, especially those who are in a position to notice abuse due to the intimacy of their treatment and relationship with their clients.

When training dental people we've handed them the brochures. It's good material. It's user friendly and audiences respond to it.

For students as well, just entering the workforce, planting the seed of responsibility and compassion, ensures that a new generation within helping professions will be knowledgeable and aware of the risks and warning signs of abuse:

The college students have been very committed. The campaign is very empowering for them. In lots of agencies, they know what to do but the students are just learning. They can now implement and share this information.

I also went to St. Lawrence College and talked to one hundred students in two classes. The response was tremendous; they were open and asked lots of questions especially about their mothers being in abusive relationships.

But not all professionals embrace the campaign with the same enthusiasm. One coordinator notes:

There's been no group or sector being resistant and negative, but the level of agreeability has varied. Some will display the brochures but not do the workshops, but mostly people have been open.

While many professionals may not be part of what is often considered the VAW sector, many of them, in the context of their work, encounter, in a very immediate way, the painful reality of woman abuse. And unlike their VAW counterparts, they have often been overwhelmed and uncertain about what to do. Neighbours, Friends and Families has, in many cases, given them confidence to do their jobs more effectively and to become a stronger voice for those who have none.

Working Differently: Collaborative Community Relationships

In smaller communities, organizations supporting women need to align themselves to forge stronger bonds in order to leverage the impact of their services. Many coordinators spoke of the generative partnerships and reciprocity between community organizations, relationships that have laid the groundwork for a sustainability based on collaboration and creativity:

Sarnia is a small community. If someone is abused they would either go to the shelter or come here for counseling so there are lots of crossovers. We try to make it a win-win proposition and we try to make twice the amount of progress by pooling our resources.

The Indian Friendship Centres were good for us too about getting the information out on the reserves. They were wonderful about getting us what we needed. They paid to have some banners made for the launch in English, French and First Nations languages. They were good at getting exactly what we needed.

The real measure of success in other communities has been the ways in which Neighbours, Friends and Families has been embraced and incorporated into advocacy and educational awareness events:

In London for example, we brought the NFF material together with Changing Ways and the Missed Opportunities Play, about talking to abusive men, which was sponsored by the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse. Or the CAW working with the Walk A Mile In Her Shoes campaign. In this way, professionals came together and were able to really evaluate their communities and do the work the way they needed to

But while there has sometimes been a willingness to collaborate, it's not always been completely successful:

The campaign has been received relatively well. It's difficult though. There's a big difference between the two shelters in our community. One is going through a big expansion and doing enormous fundraising. We tried to piggyback our information with their fundraising requests but it quickly became apparent that it wasn't going to work. There was too much saturation.

Part of the reason for the power and success of these partnerships is that, even though people are working in a professional capacity, they've often made an intensely personal connection not only to the work, but also, and particularly because of the personal nature of the material, a profound connection to each other.

Implementation:

One Size Doesn't Fit All:

The campaign has been rolled out in regions across the province with as much variation in strategies and activities as there are communities. Using the Community Action Kit, and the basic training as a launching pad, coordinators capitalized on the freedom they'd been given by the province to really scrutinize their communities and determine the most effective means of impacting the people with whom they lived and worked. It's been the flexibility that has appealed to coordinators:

You have the basic materials but they're not structured in how you need to follow things, so you have freedom. It needs to fit a variety of communities. It would shut down if we didn't have that freedom. Some people might need the A,B,C,D approach but the lack of it was great for us.

You need to think outside the box and to look for innovative ways to get the message out to people. I used the Community Action Kit to get me started and go beyond that because there are lots of opportunities to get the message out. I like a lot of the ideas in the kit and they really sparked other ideas.

And many people were able to identify their biggest strength, that is, that the people living in their communities know it best. By mobilizing that knowledge and natural expertise, coordinators were able to harness and utilize existing connections:

The campaign doesn't give strategies. The strategy is that these people know their communities. These are the leaders. They know the best way to pull their communities together. I'm really just trying to facilitate things so that we get this whole community that wants to do it. And that's my community strategy. People that can make the change are already there. I can educate them and give them the tools.

We rely on the expertise of cultural community leaders or religious leaders. These are sensitive topics especially depending on culture, and we're trying to connect with, and build relationships with newcomers clubs and associations. We depend on them for translating the message, and to answer questions about partnering. We're not assuming that we know everything.

Many coordinators have also drawn on the personal experience and presence of particular individuals to touch and inspire others to get involved:

We're going to have Deborah Fowler speak about her personal experiences of domestic violence. She's been doing a lot of that for Windsor. She talks about when she did choose to end the relationship and how things got really rough.

Meeting People Where They Live, Work & Play:

Part of determining the most effective means of reaching people, is to discover where they gather. From libraries to community centres, in launching their campaigns and doing educational sessions, coordinators met people where they were in both a physical and emotional sense:

We did a large public launch at the mall in North Bay. We also let people know that there would be trainings coming in the community. The mall is busiest on Saturdays with a lot of people coming from the outlying areas. So we targeted those people from throughout the district.

We've been trying to stay in high profile places like the two malls so that we're visible, as well as health units and libraries, places like that.

One sector that's been especially important and allowed us to hold public forums is the social housing department of the city, who has partnered with me. I've done Neighbours, Friends and Families presentations to all the tenants, people who are still too scared to come out to discuss these issues, or to come out and say my friend's going through this. With the tenant meetings, I'm going to them so they don't need to come to me and risk anything. That's a really big thing.

Community Coordinators have also taken advantage of gathering events to piggyback their information in order to maximize the impact. One person says:

We've gone to as many events as possible, like a large trauma conference recently. We got our information in their take-home bags, and had book marks on the book table for anyone who bought a book.

And especially in rural communities, where transportation, weather and distance can be impediments to reaching people, coordinators met them wherever they gathered. In addition to having many community members in one place, it was a natural fit, a way of taking some of the pressure off presenting the information because it was in the context of recreational or faith-based activities:

I think we've done a great job of distributing the materials through arenas, swimming pools, libraries, wherever people are gathering. There have been many public speaking engagements, and the faith communities have really picked it up. So there have been lots of luncheons, study and couples groups. It has a real country feel to it all.

Schools are meeting places, for staff meetings, PD days, home school or school council. Then from there, depending on how keen the principals are, we look at parent education nights, where we're slotted in with things like Internet safety or cyber bullying.

We've been creative about how we've delivered the materials and taken advantage of community activities. We've done displays at outdoor farm shows, hockey tournaments, all strategies of asking where do neighbours, friends and families go?

In immigrant communities as well, where many women can be especially isolated and vulnerable to abuse by their partners, making contact can be challenging. One coordinator, knowing that ESL classes, in some cases, are the only place that immigrant women are allowed by their partners to go, subversively took advantage of the opportunity to spread the message. She comments:

The other strategy is working with ESL. We've been approved to go to every school that has a LINK program. We get Spanish people together and talk for an hour. What happens is that often abused immigrant women don't have contact with the community except through their English classes. So we go to where they are. We know that there is a lot of work to be done with these students. They're at a higher risk because they don't know the language, their rights or the law.

Spreading the Message:

Beyond the public presentations, the materials, or the accompanying video, the most powerful means of not only connecting people, but also of spreading the message of the campaign, has been through word of mouth. Through individuals using personal connections, the word has traveled at a grassroots level, from one neighbour, friend or family member to another. It is a potent illustration of the power of relationship and community. Time and time again, coordinators spoke of this:

I've talked to many individuals, at information fairs and places like that. I talk to people individually. Word of mouth is the best way. I've been talking to them and they've been talking to their contacts so the word is spreading. I've had people come up and ask if I could come and speak if they get a group of people together. So there's a lot of enthusiasm in the community.

It's really based on the Breck effect. You know that old Breck shampoo commercial? I told two friends, and they told two friends...and so it goes. It assumes that everyone has an important role to play. It's in the power and potential of everyday relationships that the campaign has its best chance of spreading.

As I do presentations, people are impressed and they talk it up to other people. The more people that see it, the more people get excited. It's a ripple effect.

I really do believe in the power of word of mouth. My background is in marketing and communications. I'd been looking for a way to do that and NFF gave me a model to be able to easily engage people through word of mouth marketing and spreading the information through a more person-to-person communication.

It's often also been a matter of actively asking others to carry the message, of inviting and encouraging dialogue: One coordinator notes:

There are people, for different reasons, who are keen so I have identified them as champions and I'm asking them to bring other people to the table to build this critical mass of people. I'm asking them to get men involved, so they do. That's a critical part of the project. I'm asking those who are keen if they know of a man who might be interested in taking this on as a champion. I'm creating the space for them to be a part of it.

Making it Personal:

In order to really meet people where they are, many coordinators adapted part or all of the materials in order to fit with their specific population base. Whether to be culturally specific, to maneuver around distrust, or to more effectively utilize the Neighbours, Friends and Families

message in particular workplaces, the adaptations made it personal to individuals and communities.

There have been a lot of positive comments and a lot of organizations adapting the material to their own work. For example, in London, the Abused Women's Helpline workers were able to adapt the material about how to talk to men with people that called in crisis.

I'm working with high school area youth, adapting the material to make it more youth friendly. We had a presentation and a round table discussion to see what is needed for youth.

What I value most is the ability to be creative and local, to manage the project with a very familiar and local flavour. We can tweak it to where we live.

We've had good support from a broad sector of organizations. One of the things that have helped is that the Lori Dupont story is so compelling. It's about workplace safety. People still have fears and concerns. So in Windsor, that's big. People are tightening up workplace safety and this is seen as a crucial part. We reference the recommendations that were in the paper and everyone knows. It's just part of what happened here.

Thinking In and Outside of the Box: Strategies & Activities

The myriad of ways that the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign as been implemented are as diverse as the community populations. Often coordinators have employed a combination of methods: traditional and innovative, large scale and intimate, depending on the personality of the community and the most effective means of people receiving the message.

Employing the materials from the provincial campaign, many coordinators did at least one conventional launch with the official or adapted PowerPoint presentation, the DVD featuring the Sandra Schott murder and the impact on her neighbours, family and friends, and the

Public Service Announcements, shown both at the presentations and run by various media channels. In addition, they ran information booths at libraries, or women's groups and colleges, and workshops with agencies, businesses and industry. And using various media channels including radio, television, billboards, newspapers, the coordinators tried, in varying degrees, to leverage their message through a number of means.

On the Margins: The Immigrant and Rural Connections

But in addition to the more formal presentations, many coordinators, particularly those in rural areas or who serve immigrant and linguistic minority populations, encountered special challenges that required a great deal of creativity and forward thinking. That grassroots activism, meeting people exactly where they are, has been a flexible and powerful means of touching lives in the most intimate ways. One of the most personal has been the kitchen table talks in the Spanish, new immigrant community.

We're doing kitchen tables. There is a stigma to talk about abuse. We've organized workshops but we don't know if people will come. Any group with a minimum of 5 people, we go to their place. We go for coffee. We even take the snack, and we sit down and chat. And out of those we try and get 4 or 5 more small groups to speak with.

The effectiveness of this kind of strategy is important in a community where there is a lot of distrust for official figures, especially police, in addition to a very different understanding of women's rights and the law. Targeting the women in the small kitchen table discussions, the coordination team also worked directly with the men in their community. Doing focus groups with men they discovered that many interpreted the brochures as very aggressive against them. A coordinator shares:

They feel shock about how to talk to men who are abusive. It might be a cultural thing. The police take men away and they're seen as the bad ones. The campaign is oriented to women but the focus groups suggested that it should be focused on the abuse within the couple. It's hiding the real issue. The information is true but if you put it that way they reject it right away. We're pushing them away, they feel judged. So we don't begin with that. We talk about the stress of immigration. And when

men get together they can talk about that. Then in the course of conversation, we can then speak about abuse without driving them away.

There are different things to explain in Spanish, especially the criminal code. People don't know, for example, that for pulling hair they could go to jail. People are afraid of institutions because of our home countries. People are afraid of police because they feel they can't be trusted so they don't call and report abuse. So we try and educate people about how the police can help.

Outside of specific cultural communities as well, the power of personal connection is very evident. It is a belief that we can make a difference, one person at a time.

We have a woman in Tobermory who wants to have a potluck supper and invite her friends and neighbours. It's isolated and there's no anonymity, so she wanted just to invite friends and people she knows.

As well, there's also been a very strong concern to ensure that the materials are appropriate for the linguistic and cultural communities that they serve:

Because of all the languages there's been lots of time reviewing the existing documents, making sure that they're translated correctly and that the cultural inferences are clear, making sure that it's politically correct and not insulting any cultures or practices. Sometimes there are cultural subtleties that another culture doesn't necessarily grasp. It's a difficult subject so we don't want to close any doors before we've begun.

These community leaders have also seen the potential in partnering with cultural groups, both in the places where people gather, and especially the ways in which those within the cultural group identify with one another and their traditions. One woman notes:

We want to do outreach. We contacted our associations like those of music and dance, which are very important to our culture. We've explained the campaign to them and asked them to have their groups in for a workshop. We also have associations from each Spanish speaking company and we approach every president and every board and ask them to put information on their website. We also did a newsletter to

inform and educate people, and they spread the information through their websites and their network.

We've worked with people throughout the community including cultural groups, any place where our people meet. Everyone has been open and receptive to the information, partly because we've really adapted it to fit the Spanish speaking community.

And in rural pockets as well, coordinators had to employ unique strategies to counter some of the realities of rural living like distrust of outsiders and geographic isolation. In many communities a local radio station was the only connector.

We've been able to create a radio ad so that's new and innovative.

Especially in the country, there's the importance of connecting with one or two media. We've done pieces on the radio. We paid for 80 and they gave us 80 for free. And they put any story of ours on their website as a news story not just a community event. That was wonderful. It brings an air of legitimacy to the community. At Christmas we focused on a media campaign with the PSA, newspapers, radio. We got better rates, and the kids coming home from college got to see things that they might not usually see.

We don't have a television station here so a lot of people tune into the radio. Many people heard the live radio show and it had a big response.

On our local web based news site, Sootoday.com, we've rented a banner on their homepage and we ran that for the months of November and February, and we're going to re-run it for April. It has a direct link to the NFF website. We were able to provide people with the snapshot of local numbers. Sootoday is a very popular site and lots of people access it.

Making An Impact:

Another strategy employed by a number of coordinators was The Clothesline Project. Begun in Cape Cod in 1990, to address the issue of

violence against women, the project is a vehicle for women affected by violence to express their emotions by decorating a t-shirt. It's then hung on a clothesline as a testament not only to the issue but also to the courage of the survivors.

We've also used the Clothesline Project, using powerful visuals to bring attention to a particular location that's working with the Neighbours, Friends and Families program. It draws people in then you get to speak with survivors.

We've worked with Women's Interval Home and set up our Clothesline Project. We help them set it up in different communities. The visual impact really grabs people's attention. They tend to come up and read the shirts.

There's been a lot of response from the Clothesline Project. To give you just one example, at a community centre, I was standing by the display and a young guy came up. He asked if I worked for the Women's Interval Home. I told him what my role was. He said "my mom stayed at that shelter and you saved my life and my mom's". It brought tears to his eyes. He made the sign of the cross on his chest, flashed the peace sign and then walked away. I said thank you for sharing your story. It was just so from the heart.

In addition, some of the most innovative strategies have come out of the recognition and understanding of the intimate relationships that women often forge within their community, both professionally and personally. One person spoke of working with massage therapy students:

We tried to go with different groups too like massage therapy students because people trust them. They're naked under a blanket so a lot of people share information with them. There's already a level of trust there, and they're going to be the one to see bruises and scars. So we need to educate them and give them information to share with people if they are being abused. Women trust them so it's a very hands-on thing.

Another saw a need and opportunity when a young woman, who worked as a hairdresser, was murdered by her boyfriend. It really touched and motivated the coordinator, and, as it was a natural fit, she contacted more than 85 hairstylists in Kingston.

I put the challenge forth to them as hairstylists. They're mostly women, and up close and personal with their clients so that they may hear things that no one else does. Most women trust their hairstylist and feel comfortable with them. The stylists are at a level that they can see things like bruises. Or they get to know a woman well enough to know when something is going on. And they know when to listen and when to talk.

But it hasn't been limited to simply educating women, and really meeting them where they are. Some coordinators have worked specifically with men, recognizing the need for them to take ownership, not only of their own relationships with women, but also of their responsibility to both support and challenge their male neighbours, friends and families to end their own abusive patterns. Knowing her community and where men gathered, one woman spent time at the local dump.

I also went to the local dumpsite to hand out material specifically geared to men. We did one weekend. You never know what you're going to come across and you have to be prepared for people not wanting to talk about it. Mostly they were open and took the material, saying that they'd give it to their buddy. I also had men volunteer to hand out material at hardware stores, and they were really proud because it was the men who were doing it.

Drawing on the power of community to exert a positive public pressure for change and solidarity, other coordinators used different creative means to reach and motivate a large number of people. One person describes her experience:

We did a button campaign and that was different for people. We wanted to get the average people in our community involved. How could we do that? We got information from 'Step It Up' but I was hesitant about whether people would wear them. But they did, and they passed them along to their friends. It works in a smaller community because everyone knows everyone else. Everyone was wearing them, especially the men. We had a bunch of men from the senior's club, at the mill, and at the mine. We handed out more than 300 of them.

Another project really capitalized on, and took advantage of, a special day to spread the message. In one community, one coordinator

contacted all the area florists to talk about the campaign, do training, and to propose including healthy relationships cards and safety information in the many bouquets of flowers delivered on Valentine's Day. It also underscored the reality, in the cycle of violence, of men attempting to assuage their guilt by making peace offerings of things like flowers.

I offered to do training with their staff. I trained nine florists and it's amazing what came out of that training. They asked what to do in certain situations. They talked about men calling and placing orders and them wanting to have something written on the card that was actually threatening or explicit. Or they pay in cash so there was no trace. I asked if I could attach the information to the bouquets. Some were ok with that and some not so. I modified the information so that when someone calls to purchase flowers, the florist will ask if they can attach a card on healthy relationships as well as safety tips. It works here.

Champions

The work of spreading the Neighbours, Friends and Families message would be impossible without the multitude of men and women who have volunteered their time and energy to make their communities safer for women. Both the ones who took a public role, and those who preferred to work quietly in the background, there are many unsung heroes who have been instrumental in the success of the campaign. From police and justice officers, grocery stores workers that put brochures in bags, to ordinary individuals who have taken part, there's been a huge continuum of support. It's been the courage to step forward and offer their voices, presence and caring, more than anything else, that has defined the champions:

The innovative side of this is largely shaped by the people who are your champions. That's the model. To do a good job of training a small core group and then let them, with some support, engage more champions. It's a ripple effect. And we're focusing on engaging as many men as possible

A champion doesn't necessarily have to be someone who gets out there and speaks to the public. That can mean lots of things, inviting me to meetings, allowing the Neighbours, Friends and Families material to be included in their mailings. They've been great.

There are a lot of champions. But then that's how our community works. We spread the word. But if I think about champions doing presentations that may be service providers. But if we're talking about spreading the word and connecting, then everyone does that.

There's a long list. I did a presentation at Fanshawe College in the fall. The teacher is a long time VAW advocate. She challenged her class to develop projects around the campaign and the issue. So they did t-shirts, brochures, and developed a radio spot, that kind of thing. A presentation can set off all kinds of activity.

All those people who wore buttons, and many others who have pitched in. The principals of the schools have been great, the elementary school organization have materials as well. It's a different kind of family but they impact a lot of people. The whole community has embraced it. People have gone above and beyond. Our outreach people even do things on their own time in the evening. They recognize that we're working on something important and everyone's just helping out.

There have been certain higher profile individuals, like Deb Ashbee, Sandra Schott's best friend, who is featured in the DVD, who have done numerous public presentations. She's been an integral part of the campaign, continuing to personalize not only the reality of domestic violence, but especially the pain and guilt of having been so close to her friend and yet not knowing what to do to help her or keep her safe.

Deb Ashbee has been very helpful. She spoke at our official launch; she's done public speaking, letter writing to the newspaper, we've asked her to be a speaker at a group coming up. She's lovely and committed but I try not to ask too much but she does live here and is very aware of using her image in that video. She's absolutely been a tremendous help to us locally.

Many coordinators have recognized the impact and significance of men taking on the cause and taking responsibility for ending violence against women. They have come from many sectors, walking together, both literally and metaphorically, to spread the message of Neighbours, Friends and Families:

We had a float in the Santa Claus parade and handed out safety cards there. It was actually kind of neat because a lot of our staff was

involved and they brought their husbands and boyfriends so the men were showing that they supported it too.

I went to a social service health fair for military personnel and the public. There were lots of soldiers coming through, including those just back from Afghanistan. A man started talking to me. He was very open and not intimidated about the subject. I made the comment about the hair stylists taking the campaign on. He said his wife was a hair stylist and she talks about that all the time. He said to me "So give me what you've got because if I'm going to go overseas to stop violence and abuse there, I should be willing to do that in my own community too".

Others have suggested the necessity of implementing some kind of recognition for champions who take up the cause, both as an incentive and a means of valuing their efforts and commitment. Says one coordinator:

We want formal recognition for all people participating and we want to lift it to a provincial level. The provincial government recognizes interministerial awards of excellence. It's important as it allows organizations that are involved to really celebrate their efforts. We're trying to help people see themselves as part of something much bigger than themselves. Domestic violence requires isolation so anything that breaks down that isolation whether with the victim, abuser, or people around is an effective intervention in the whole system of abuse.

And many have shown great courage in stepping forward to take responsibility in the absence of support from their cultural groups. For example, in Ottawa, a man within the Sikh community, having been presented with Neighbours, Friends and Families in an interfaith community meeting, chose to take a leadership role in spite of the lack of enthusiasm in his community. The coordinator says:

I told him, frankly, that I was surprised that I hadn't heard from him because the group had been so curious and engaged. He told me that he personally supported me but that he didn't have the support of his community. So I asked, what's stopping that? And how can we work to get by this? I'm working with him this week. He's doing a radio show and of all the things he could have, has chosen the topic of domestic violence. He's asked me to come up with questions and answers because he's not comfortable enough with that yet.

Strengths

Reaching Out:

One of the biggest strengths identified by the coordinators of the project is the fact that Neighbours, Friends and Families is a very practical and broadly accessible campaign that has engaged people at every level, giving them the strategies they need and want in order to help vulnerable women:

The campaign is reaching out to the victim's neighbours, friends and families. These are people she's in contact with on a daily basis. They want to help but they don't know how. So we give these people tools to help her in a positive way so they're not endangering her further or putting themselves at risk. A lot of people want to help but they don't know how. It also gives neighbours, friends and families some perspective about what a woman is going through. We tell people, support her, be there for her, and let her decide when she's ready to deal with it. And hopefully that means they'll be talking about it amongst themselves. They become her network and are working together to support her.

This campaign allows people to have conversations in an open forum. We have reach but we also have some depth. The open forums have been powerful in the social responsibility part of things, and feeling the responsibility to get involved. It takes time but it happens in those really small forums.

It's very positive. It doesn't cause a lot of backlash or defensiveness from the male population. And it empowers communities that everyone has a responsibility not just the professionals. It's so hard to engage men and I think this campaign will do that more readily especially the piece around men talking to men.

The campaign's approach is dead on. It's a really good and helpful approach for a public education campaign. It really resonates at the community level and that's critical. It's worth resourcing and continuing.

The focus on the community is so important. We haven't done anything in public education with them for over a decade. And from the ground I'm stunned when I do focus groups and a thirty year old woman

says that she didn't know that what she was experiencing was abuse and that there are resources. Women are isolated and just may not know. The people around here have not had any information unless they happen to be in the business.

The most important point is that there's finally someone there for the victim's neighbours, friends and families. There's support for the supporter and I think that it's extremely vital. That's the passion that I have for it because it gives them direction and support. There's now someone they can talk to. It teaches them safety planning and how to help her.

One strength is that the campaign provides an avenue for engaging the general public in a way that we haven't done before, providing them with ideas that they can do.

People are relieved that there's someone there to talk to. It takes the pressure off people to solve the problem. We say we're not looking for you to rescue this person but to direct them to professionals so that they can get the help they need. It's not just on their shoulders anymore so there's some relief there.

Linking with other agencies is a really good component of this program because it takes a village really. Domestic violence is all about isolation so if someone presents the information and lets them know that it's not their fault it opens the door for people to come forward and not feel like they're being judged.

Another strength that coordinators identified was the consistent message that the campaign engenders, one that provides a huge potential for dialogue. Often the conversations are difficult and yet it's a place to work from. It is in that space, and commitment to honest dialogue, that communities really find their roots, both professionally and personally.

The dialogue about talking about men wouldn't have been there. There wouldn't have been articles in the paper. Maybe there are disagreements but it's important that we address men and I think that is happening.

The fact that it's a province wide movement and that there's a consistent message throughout the province is important. If something is done provincially and fits with public health, here at the Unit you can just take the resources and run with it. That works really well for folks in public health. The resources are excellent so why redesign the wheel?

The strengths of the campaign, I believe, are getting a variety of sectors talking together in how to best support neighbours, friends and families in this work. Also the clear need of those working both in, and, outside, the sector of coming to a common understanding of what that support needs to look like.

This works primarily because it's grassroots and so there's more flexibility. The large scale service providers don't know what the indicators are for safety planning, so the campaign is important in its consistent message.

It's an approach that gives people some options. They can talk to her or him. Groups find that with at least one of these they can find some way to connect. I like that part of the project. That approach has a little more diversity. We don't say just talk to the women. It's more complicated. The material is accessible for folks to identify with and for the first time in an organized way start to talk to community members.

The part with talking to men is so important because it's opened up the dialogue which is really needed. The community needs to talk about this. Also, it's really timely and was on the air on CBC recently. There's a need to talk to neighbours, friends and families even according to Stats Canada. I think they've got that right.

This campaign is also a really good resource for workplaces. Here at the Health Unit, we're developing our violence prevention policies. So the NFF stuff is now on our information page to try and help people who are affected by domestic violence

There's also safety in the material and resulting discussion because everyone is a neighbour, friend or part of a family. Not only women-at-risk, but even others who may not want to flag themselves for scrutiny can receive information and talk about the issue.

It's friendly and takes the pressure off. If you're supporting a friend or a loved one, a woman can ask questions without them thinking that we're assuming it's them. It's not always safe to go to the shelter because everyone is related here. There's no anonymity.

It's a community problem requiring a community response. It focuses on reaching out to not only the victims but people who know the victims. Having information that's targeted to neighbours, friends and

families too is good so people can come up without feeling as though they're too obvious. Also we're not asking people to put themselves at risk. We give them a variety of strategies that don't put them at risk.

And specifically for women, the campaign provides practical information but without any agenda. It's an important element in empowering them and providing information and support.

They consistently want more information and we're invited to help them where they're working. People can hit a dead end and they're not sure where to go for help. But we're not instructing people to save others. It's an educational program. We identify the issues and let a woman decide. We give her options.

Even if someone isn't ready to receive the information, it's there. It can plant seeds until they are ready to receive help. A lot of times people are in denial about how much domestic violence affects their children. I try to really talk about that so sometimes even if a woman isn't ready to leave for herself, she'll think about doing it for her children.

Materials:

Without question, the biggest strength identified by the coordinators has been the quality of the materials and the way in which they can be used and adapted to fit specific situations and needs. They have been foundational for the work. The response has been tremendous:

One of the strengths is the good visuals. They're well written and have an attractive logo. It really does draw people. This is the response that needs to be taken because prevention is the only way that we're going to make a difference and that comes out clearly in the materials and hopefully what most people are saying in their presentations. After all, as they say, an ounce of prevention for a pound of cure.

For me the biggest strength is the wording of the material. It's simple and straightforward and gets everyone in the community talking. Everyone can pick up a brochure and get the gist of what we're talking about.

The support in the materials has been key.

The material is great and can be manipulated for different situations. Twenty minutes or a whole morning...it fits into a lot of different contexts.

One of the reasons that the job is so enjoyable is the material. It's so easy to use, and the presentation is to the point and easy to deliver. So that makes my job very easy.

The brochures are great because they're concrete. Even if someone isn't ready to receive the information it's there, it can plant seeds until they're ready to receive help.

The material is extraordinary. The brochures are well presented and succinct. The approach to information on safety planning is very practical too.

The way the material is laid out is nice and clear for people who know nothing about the issue. I like the idea of three brochures. People can take all or just the one that applies. I also really like, with the PowerPoint package, that it's a local woman, Sandra Schott. People really tear up. It's important to have a story that touches people and makes it real for people. The small cards are great to slip into a wallet because sometimes the brochures are too obvious. Also on the website, there are specific areas for rural communities, so it allows people to read over what's helpful in a smaller community.

I fell in love with the brochures! They're striking and professional, very well thought out and inclusive of so many cultures. It's a real strength.

The different languages of the brochures are good, and the website is great. It's an anonymous place that people can connect with, and receive numbers to call. The documentary is great too because it has a powerful effect on people. If it can happen in a community of 11,000 people it can certainly happen here too. It helps to overcome the hesitation to get involved.

One of the strengths is definitely the resources, and the ability to distribute them to people and they then can decide how and when to use them. I feel differently about these materials because of the topic. If people do take them they're really thinking about using them or giving them to people. Also being able to resource things online, the directions

of covering your tracks. That's really important. That gives people confidence.

The website is very useful for things like the fact that women can cover their tracks so their partners don't know they've visited it. Also, the materials, I always get a good response from people. The documentary too is very powerful as well because every time a new group sees it they're really impacted. It hits close to home with the Windsor nurse who was killed too.

I think the materials are done pretty well. Their response when they've seen the documentary is to think that it's pretty powerful.

In addition to the materials themselves, many coordinators found that the adaptability was very important in order to personalize it for their particular needs, time constraints, and communities.

One of the successes was communities taking the material and adapting it to their specific community.

The focus groups are very committed. The workshops and materials coming from them are going to be different. We asked the men in the focus groups to rate from 1 to 5 what is most important for them to know so that we can focus on that. Many of them want to know more about Canadian law. So we'll tailor it for them.

One really important thing was the Neighbours, Friends and Families translations and that they included that gay and lesbians experience violence too. That allowed me to talk about it. We used NFF as a launch for diversity day training so it's not just coming from the provincial campaign.

The Domestic Violence Community Awareness Project just did training at the university that was open to all service providers. We did have Neighbours, Friends and Families information there and it was received very well. Lots of people want training, like doctors. They like the fact that the material can be adapted to fit into the lunch hour.

In addition to the materials, the simplicity of the campaign itself and the way in which it enables people to think differently is another important strength identified.

It is a simple concept and can easily be introduced to the community with practical suggestions.

I enjoy delivering the campaign because no matter what context, it's applicable. Everyone is a neighbour, friend or family. Even if I'm delivering the message to people who feel that they're not really involved, they go home and think about this differently. It's new. It's not the same presentation about what violence against women is about. This allows people to think critically, and to pay attention to where the resources are in the community and what they should do in this situation.

Fanning the Flames of Activism:

The campaign's simple and empowering message, as well as the fact that so many people have been personally impacted by domestic violence, have engendered a tremendous enthusiasm from a broad spectrum of individuals. As the program suggests, everyone has a role to play in preventing violence against women. And people have responded, mobilizing to work hand-in-hand with others in their communities. The power of the campaign to inspire and engage ordinary people is the strength, many coordinators believe, that will enable it to continue. It also enables communities to begin to define a collective vision of how they want to live, and what values are important.

I have been surprised by how excited people are about this campaign. It strikes a chord of everyday working out of these relationships, and gives a sense of hope about what to do. I'm struck by that again and again and again. I think that's why I'm so invested in the campaign. I see the effect that it's having. Domestic violence is a difficult subject to get people excited about. But people are coming out and are energized about what they can do. They're investing time and energy, so we need to capitalize on that.

The campaign also gives people a reason to look at the bigger issue than domestic violence, and that is how do we create a society that cares about people? Neighbours, Friends and Families is a good way to bring people together. Projects are the engines of change. I talk about NFF and the understanding of how it lines up with the larger issues, the structure of community campaigns, and the consistency from place to place.

Reigniting the Passion:

A number of coordinators spoke of how, in various personal ways, the campaign has renewed them professionally, providing them with renewed energy, and a replenished desire to continue their work within the Violence Against Women sector.

Being involved in the campaign has rejuvenated my passion for doing community education work. After a while you start to feel that you're always giving the same message. But the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign provided a different slant to the work, especially with the materials and the PSAs. So that really rejuvenated not only my own work but the work that's being done in our area.

It has been a great experience for personal growth, making connections in the community, and meeting different leaders. It's been a great learning experience. I'm not that comfortable in public speaking but I got over that really fast.

It's been a grand opportunity to meet an incredible and amazing group of people within the community that I otherwise wouldn't have met. These people are doing incredible work. It's been very inspiring.

Challenges

While the coordinators all expressed great enthusiasm for the campaign, the implementation process was clearly not without its struggles. Resistance in smaller communities, the brevity of time, funding issues, delays, concerns about lack of infrastructure, and working in isolation, have been just a few of the challenges. With varying degrees of success, they negotiated the often tricky path to bringing their respective communities on board.

Back and Beyond: The Rural Question

Rural communities are diverse with not only unique needs but also special challenges. Traditional values, lack of anonymity, transportation and

geographic realities, a belief that what happens in the family stays there, and a reluctance to get involved, are just some of the things facing those working in those communities.

There Are No Strangers in the Country:

The reality in rural communities is that there's no anonymity. They know where the abuse is. The barrier is that it is people they know. They say, "I coach with them, I work with them, I quilt with them."

It's a hard subject in a community that's so small and rural because it's so personal. There is no anonymity. So if someone says I know a woman who's abused then everyone talks. That's a barrier and a challenge. Resistance too. We have the same barriers and then we have others, because it's rural, like access to weapons.

When I go into a community they're really outing themselves about the issue so it's not always safe. It can be threatening to them.

Weather:

Weather is huge especially in rural communities. It's real because that's what we deal with. Cancellations are part of rural communities. Also the distance and feeling disconnected. They feel it.

With the winter we've had it's been really difficult with road closures. It's a reality of doing the work in the country. The campaign materials lend themselves, but it's more the limitations of the communities that I'm presenting to especially in the winter.

The weather and the reality of working in the county. We're in Goderich, which is the biggest town in the area. So getting out to the other communities is a priority but it's been difficult with the weather. It's a huge struggle and hopefully one on which we'll turn the corner soon.

Access issues are challenging. We would hold an event in every community but there are limits because there's no public transportation and it's isolated.

Isolation:

There are two satellite offices here. The people in Delaware don't know the people in Glencoe, even an hour away. People don't travel. So getting the message out is hard. And so is sustainability, isolation, distance and weather.

Community members in rural areas are very isolated. When they come out for the day it can be hours to drive the county, and the roads are not always the best and accessibility to a vehicle is sometimes an impediment.

There are unique issues here because so many rural areas don't have Internet access, so the basic things we're teaching people to use as tools they can't access.

Our geography is a challenge because we're so huge. And I've had some small groups like five or six women and it can be difficult to get discussions going.

It's Not Like That In These Parts:

The criticism has been shelters have been opposed to it, including Perth County. I've taken personal flack from the shelter. When I rolled the project out they said it encouraged neighbours to meddle, so we've been very careful in Woodstock.

The rural aspect is a unique situation. Getting into the smaller places has been challenging because rural communities are not always welcoming to those outside their community. The hirees have been really great to get our foot in the door. Without those contacts it would have been challenging.

It's a huge conservative Christian community, so it's very difficult. We get the support from the United Church and limited support with the Anglican church. But they don't want you in there. The faith communities are not very supportive.

The government strategy was to distribute the materials into the communities without any foundational work being done beforehand with

agencies and organizations. And sometimes this was not well received when we went in to talk to them. That created a distrust of the work.

What I did too was go to rural areas and had conversations with the person who runs a centre there. She was known to be difficult. The response was not positive. "We don't want you because look at the phone numbers on the brochures! They're all out of [the city]. If this is the kind of material you're handing out, we don't want it", she said. But I worked with her and an OPP officer. We put our heads together and got labels with numbers of the OPP, her centre, and [the city], so she thought that was ok.

All the resources of the Neighbours, Friends and Families were provided and we put local numbers on them because people were intimidated that it was a Toronto number.

It's a topic that people don't want to talk about, especially here. There are lots of churches and it's very rural. People say that violence against women isn't a problem here so it's been hard.

Other Hurdles

Talking With Men:

One concern is talking to men who are abusive. We need more training than the brochure says. Having a piece at the library and in the newspaper has given us the opportunity to talk openly. We're not blaming anyone. People can say I saw this in the paper. They're able to talk about it in the third person. So it's very comfortable to men who want to talk.

I guess also the frustration is just not knowing how to get the message across to such a huge industrial sector. A lot of the men really resent the message. In the Commitment to Change group, which is mandated for those who have been violent, we see a lot of that resistance. It's such a huge chunk here. There's lots of resistance with child support and custody issues. Some men really resist child support and alimony. And they work 60-70 hours a week so they're being pushed to the limit and they're stressed out and there is a lot of marital breakdown. I understand their frustrations but violence is never the answer. It's like the old boys club that you're never going to get into. We soften our message

just to get in the door. It's frustrating to see that people don't realize how damaging it is. There's this attitude that if you ignore it, it will go away.

I'm starting the process but the industry sector is a tough one. But it's a good one to reach a lot of people. What I'm trying to do is to make it convenient and attractive to employers so I'm doing lunch hour presentations.

Immigrants and Linguistic Minorities:

60% of Spanish speaking immigrants get divorced because the stress is so high when you're a newcomer. Something has to happen. You're alone in a new country. There's no support for you. So that's the challenge especially when the abuse is not severe. Women do not want to separate because then they're alone. We work with helping the couple to step out of the abuse so we need to include men. We have to manage information with a lot of tact.

Newcomers are very vulnerable. They're isolated. They can't talk to anyone. That puts you at a very high risk. There is a lot of work to be done with all people, not just newcomers. People are sharing all the struggles. They bring abuse from their country. Breaking down those barriers is a challenge.

We do have a large French community, so we've been able to support them. But the other communities have been having trouble with new immigrants like the Asians who are coming in but there are no support networks for them. So there's information at the library but no where for them to go.

Translations:

Some of the more challenging pieces that have come up have to do with how the translations are done. Some felt the translations weren't done through enough of a culturally specific lens.

I have concerns with language and translation relative to cultural sensitivities within the information. It's a handy program but with the mainstream NFF material there is a concern for cultural sensitivity about the translations. Take Chinese for example; some things that dominant

cultures may not have considered are things like the letter four means death, superstitions like number 13 for us.

There should have been more consultation with diverse groups before it was put out. It was translated linguistically but not in a culturally specific way, especially to groups like women of colour. It's a dominant culture program. The consultation was a last minute thing. It's shameful.

Getting And Keeping the Ball Rolling:

I don't know. This is all new to me. It feels like I'm stabbing around in the dark.

One of the challenges has been connecting with the official NFF website. It took us a long time to be put on the website as an NFF community. We were planning to do press releases and stuff and it took three to four months before we finally got on. Also, access to the resources, especially the DVD. We need more copies. I emailed but I never got a response or the DVDs so there's that too.

The funding is a major challenge. The campaign has been so widely received and people are so open that they're just gobbling it up.

We're just trying to get the ball rolling in our community so it's hard.

They've developed a very timely campaign, and the resources are good. But the project funding is an issue; it's only for one year. There's so much to do in so little time that it's hard to implement it with the financial resources we have.

Funding was also a problem, and trying to get the information together to try and look at getting a coordinator in at least part-time.

For us it's been the lack of resources to implement the projects. We wrote a proposal to Victim's Services to implement the program. We did a strategic and communications plan identifying the key message and targets, and applied for funding, but only two in our region got funded. We were ready to go with NFF but couldn't get money to roll it out.

It's been a confusing implementation strategy with no financial support.

There's been a real lack of planning at the higher levels. And a lack of coordination dollars too. If they really want it to be a provincial campaign there needs to be good support for coordination. And I think the real value for the work is recognized in the funding.

There's no coordination with the funding. Everything remains fragmented.

The government's development of an implementation strategy didn't take into account the need for it to be community-based organizing. It's really more about community readiness. The government strategy was to distribute the materials into communities without the foundational work having been done beforehand with agencies and organizations. And sometimes then it was not well received when we went to talk to them. That created distrust in the work. They didn't trust the motives of the government or those running the campaign.

Pinched For Time:

I was talking to the ED about asking that the MAG money continue. The funds came late. We didn't have the full year so we're trying to negotiate for more time. It takes a while to have a work plan and do the training. With everything compressed as it is, we'll just have had seven months instead of the full year.

The biggest challenge has been the time. I'm working too much. It's crazy. Everything is so compressed.

The campaign began and then we had staff changes, and I was doing three jobs for a while. But in the context, the delay at the beginning in getting the training manual held me up a bit. Then it ended up we had to do so much in the last four months of the grant because of it so we've had to really scramble. It made it even more stretched for time. Some of the people who've taken the training have stepped in to help in a coordinator capacity, setting up presentations and making the calls. As a result, we've been able to meet our deliverables.

I really feel that the biggest frustration is that it's such a part time contract and I really want to do more. It builds momentum as it goes. It will continue and then it will end. It's frustrating not just for me but for everyone else too when people are really committed.

I can honestly say I haven't had any challenges except maybe time. The campaign that we thought would take a year; we only have had six or seven months. It doesn't have anything to do with the campaign but the funding.

Challenges? I didn't have enough time or money. I wish we were funded again so that I could do more. It's really hard to lay the groundwork.

Time. There's not enough.

Waiting:

I'm a very independent person. I don't need much. The only time that was really frustrating was the launch. Everything was coming on and I didn't have my materials.

The training piece and manual was a problem. I needed it and it was delayed.

Resources...just because of where we're located. They've been great at trying to get things out to us but it's an ongoing struggle to make sure we have enough materials to do our work.

Bringing People on Board:

It's been difficult getting the people out when doing a general launch rather than just service providers.

One of the biggest challenges has been the difficulty getting into the schools because it's really needed there. It should be mandated in health classes because it's just when the dating is beginning. Even if they just had the warning signs and the red flags before they became really emotionally involved.

Getting folks to squeeze it in. It's viewed as additional work. There have been conversations about something that might be perceived as additional work. People are very experienced, very seasoned in how they work. They don't always appreciate something new. So there's some resistance. And they don't always agree with the information. They've

been doing it and they know that this is the reality on the ground. So there's sometimes differences in opinion and principles

I had been having trouble getting in to talk with the Early Years programs and didn't get far. But I spoke with the public health associate who is on our committee and she really opened the door for me. I guess it was working from the bottom up. She advocated for the campaign and they included it.

My challenges are more about convincing people around me to have patience, that it takes time, and that the little things we do now have to be connected. The long term strategies are essential. Short bits of money don't really help that. So how do you make the little steps that don't always show those immediate results, and to continue to be supportive of it. They're not thinking about community implementation in a long term way, but we're making it up as we go. We're trying to get the messages right. We've come a long way but we're still refining our message.

In some communities they feel that the issue doesn't affect them or that they can't play a role, and so I've tried to make it specific to their interests and needs. Then they can't say that there's nothing they can do. It's making them care about it by giving them some relevant information.

Relationships with the Province

Campaign Executive Assistant:

Almost without exception the coordinators spoke highly of Alfredo Marroquin, who, in his role of Campaign Executive Assistant, was invaluable in his support for them. However, one of the common notes was that Alfredo was stretched far beyond capacity with the workload. And that, while he was doing all that was humanly possible, it was an unrealistic load for any one person to carry. Some of the comments and suggestions were:

Alfredo has done as much as he can. He's running ragged. They need a full time assistant. It's been good to get answers to people, to get

the materials out, but he's overworked so hasn't been able to always help me when I needed it because he was helping others.

He's great, he really is, and his response to my emails has been good. But I do acknowledge though that he's been swamped at times. This has been such a tight timeframe and we're all, including Alfredo, scrambling to get the maximum amount of work done.

He was extremely supportive when I began because I asked him to meet with me. I was lost. We worked on an application for my funding, which was very helpful. When I needed brochures, they sent me the wrong ones in English. I wrote to him and he had them there the next day. He's also very supportive during the teleconference. He's got good ideas.

With the brochures, the boxes weren't labeled, and you had to sort them all out. They were all mixed up, with different languages mixed together. It was a nightmare! He's the only one doing it but it was a total nightmare with the brochures. The only response I got is that we reuse the boxes. In one there were brochures and cards mixed together, and a lot were damaged. If he didn't have enough support then I guess that's what happens.

I asked Alfredo if we were the only ones doing the campaign in Spanish. We're not the only one but the only one funded. He didn't give me contact information with the other group. That was important for me. So in that way it was a lack. That would have been good. I'm missing that piece which would have been great.

Alfredo has been amazing and his passion for the project is a huge part of what keeps it going. He's always there to answer questions and offer support.

Alfredo is always supportive but he's stretched too thin. The campaign probably needs seven or eight regional coordinators working with him to be really effective.

Alfredo has been very supportive. He's very inclusive. We need more men like that. We all need to take it on.

He's lovely and has been very helpful. He gets back really quickly and is very organized. Any questions are answered. We ran completely out of brochures in December. We had six presentations. We got the brochures in 48 hours. So he's been really nice, and very supportive.

Alfredo has been very supportive and helpful. He's very busy but any time I ask, you get the sense that he's listening. The frustrations and questions are always answered. He's open minded and tries his best to do things, and gets back to you with information in a timely manner.

Alfredo has been really supportive of me professionally. Without his support I couldn't do my work.

Alfredo did everything that he could but it was a rocky start.

I sometimes find it hard to connect with Alfredo. Maybe he has too many things on his plate.

Alfredo has been very supportive, and incredibly receptive to feedback...his charm...we met at conferences. He's warm and gracious, giving, passionate, clear and concise.

The only time that was really frustrating was the launch. Everything was coming on and I didn't have my materials. If the program continues, they should split the province into two or three areas and have someone closer. Or have more help for the Executive Assistant.

Support from the Province:

The coordinators had very mixed responses to their perception of having been supported, or not, by the provincial campaign. Some really felt an alliance, and a shared common mission, with the province acting as a valuable resource. Others felt that there wasn't adequate direction or foundational work done; they felt isolated, and sometimes rebuffed.

The Good:

What's been important is that it's a provincial campaign with a common initiative that communities from one end of the province to the other have embraced and are working on.

I'm glad they're there. They're a valuable resource. And their capacity to bridge with OWD is very helpful too.

The support that the provincial group gave sets the tone for collaboration and I really like that. We share the end goals and how we help each other get that out will make it even more effective.

The training has helped me to clarify how the local and provincial campaigns work together. But I certainly like the fact that the work that I'm doing is part of a bigger picture so that it doesn't feel as though you're working in isolation.

I see myself as one part of a bigger picture. They really helped me out especially going to Toronto to meet others working in the field. They answered a lot of questions and I met some great people that I've developed a network with so I didn't feel as though I was alone.

The creativity of the project really does get left at a local level, though we're accountable to the provincial campaign. I see it as directive rather than management. And I don't feel they're managing, they're just there if I need guidance.

The provincial campaign has been a good resource to us. We take the work into our community. It's symbiotic. We feed each other. If there are elements that are not working when we put them on the ground, they're receptive. They help as well as learn. Alfredo and Tim have been especially good in dealing with the issues addressed, explaining what the thinking was about.

I feel the relationship is very separate. I felt part of it all at that training because everyone was there and everyone was down to earth and I could really relate to them. I'd had negative thoughts up to that point, begging for brochures and trying to figure out what I should be doing.

It's a young program in its infancy, so what's happened is that there are a lot of growing pains. We get lots of feedback, all the bits and pieces. But until you take the car out on the road you're not really sure what you've got. They've been receptive to the feedback, and will really consider it for the future in hopes of applying it.

I think one of the strengths is that I'm not isolated but I'm given the ability to make it relevant to my community. I like that common message across the province. But we each know our own community. So the fact that we've been given the flexibility by the province is a real strength.

The Bad And the Ugly:

I felt really connected because of Alfredo as Coordinator. But I don't think OWD was very receptive. I felt that I was on the line but my concerns were not taken seriously. I didn't feel heard by the province.

There hasn't been clear enough direction. Say, if the goal was to create sustainability, then it should have been stated up front. It should have been said more clearly.

It started out supportive but we're still trying to get information from them. We've asked the government representative about the brochures and where they've been sent and no one can tell us. We've added labels to the ones that we've found. We did the labels by hand. They were expensive because there's no local contact numbers that the campaign says we're supposed to have. I have no solution because of the big time and money costs.

Well I always think about the larger project but there's not a lot of support. It's the same thing. They try but it's just not enough. And also the thing about local coordination, you have your head down and are focusing on what's happening before you, so that you don't always have the luxury of looking at the bigger picture.

We received a box of brochures translated in various languages and all not relevant to this community. We have a large Italian population and Finnish, and of course French here. So they're very Toronto based. We sent them all back because I wouldn't have known which language was which. We need Italian and Finnish translations.

The OWD didn't have the funding to do the implementation of the campaign except for supplies. The problem is the government as a whole in terms of rolling things out. It's not enough to have resources: you need an implementation strategy that will enable people to reach out.

While some coordinators didn't receive the support they would have liked, or felt disconnected from the province, they drew strength and resources from each other, through networking and the sharing of ideas. It's the strength of that collaboration that has given them what they needed to work, especially when, occasionally, they felt they were working in a vacuum.

My role is self directed and I volunteer for it because I truly believe in this campaign. I don't feel the support provincially however I do feel it from the NFF campaign members.

I feel that I'm just kind of on my own but I kept in touch with some coordinators especially when I first started.

I would say that I'm feeling pretty isolated. We were supposed to have a regional coordinating meeting that got cancelled because of weather.

For me personally it would have been much more helpful to have a more physical connection, monthly meetings where we could have gone and talked. I didn't feel the sense of connection with the teleconferencing. Isolation was part of the problem. It's been a barrier.

It's been more than just a challenge. It's been a block. But the other coordinators have been great. We learn off each other. Let's not reinvent the wheel, that's how we get good ideas from other people that are doing the work.

We need more access to what's happening across the province both officially and with the coordinators.

Sustainability: Working Towards An Integrated Approach

With the contracts of some coordinators having expired and others due to end in the coming months, there was concern expressed by some about the viability of the campaign expanding without the position of a funded coordinator. Given their dedication to the project, and their deep commitment to the vision of Neighbours, Friends and Families, they unanimously want to see it flourish and grow. Asked if they thought the campaign would continue without official coordination some were not hopeful.

Fearing The End of a Dream:

I don't think so and that's a shame. The only way it might continue is through the service providers

No. One of the things that I've become aware of from the teleconferencing call is that we haven't done as good a job of sustainability as I would have liked. We haven't done enough with the professional communities and therefore we don't have those public champions to take it on and do the public speaking when the funding is finished.

The benefit of this really needs the funding attached to it for at least another year so that sustainability can be created. We haven't stopped the deaths in our community. They're still ongoing and we haven't reached all the people.

It will not.

The contract ends but the community leaders with MAG money continues until June. But they'll be a gap without an official coordinator. I'll stay on in some capacity. I'm that concerned.

I think it will be just another brochure that people won't necessarily pay a lot of attention to. It's key to get out there and provide information to communities. There's got to be more out there, like not driving under the influence campaign. There was a lot of advertising about that. And you don't see a lot of that on woman abuse on TV. So I don't see the government doing enough on their own.

I think steps were missed in laying the foundation. I've loved the education piece and raising awareness. But there needed to be more of global public education on this rather than us coming in and providing information. It's got to be more than us, and I don't think parachuting someone in to do the whole province is the best way to do it. We needed more from the government than we got.

I don't know. I'm really trying to set it up the best I can without one. The materials are out there, something like 12,000 brochures, and they'll be out there for a while. The next year in different communities will be really important to watch. Someone should be watching. If it all starts to fade it would be horrible.

Marshalling the Troops:

But others took a broader view of sustainability, recognizing the wealth of connections that had been forged and strengthened within communities, the networks of support for abused women that continue to be deeply committed to seeing the work continue. Community development and reciprocal interdependence, for many, is the only way that the campaign will continue to be effective and viable.

It depends on how you define sustainability. My vision is that the material will become an integral part of how professionals work in their community, and the NFF materials will be integrated into their practice. Once communities are familiar with the material there are then possibilities for new and innovative campaigns. The material should never be static though but can be used in different kinds of venues. The material has the potential for having a much broader impact.

I think after some time it would. Right now though we need more time. It takes time in some communities to shift attitudes. We offer that support that the materials need. There's a danger in putting the materials out without that support. People do want to champion it and put it out but they want to know how to do that.

You can't have a very narrow view in the sense of a coordinator always being responsible for doing the work. That has a shelf life. If you look at the adaptation of the material in new projects and ideas then it has a much longer life.

I wish I had a bit more time to bring these people together, to bring them into the agency, to keep things going so it's not one person out there pounding on a door. It's those people in the community. And I want to introduce them to each other and bring down those barriers, but that's a larger piece.

We have two workshops, one for Spanish speakers with about 15-20 people representing different agencies and social services. They will continue with the information even though this campaign ends in June. So we have a very short time and to have an impact it will mainly be through the service providers who are going to keep that going.

The key piece is to keep the thrust of the program going. It's about this community...they need to stay involved.

I've been encouraged and bolstered by meeting with the representatives in York region. They're going strong and are feeling passionate. But we still want to do everything to push this to the forefront of the media. There's competition for that spotlight, and I know they won't stop until they're satisfied. People in the industry want the abuse to stop, and I believe that they'll go the extra mile.

I think it will because individuals have the experience, training and information. We created a binder for them so that they have the information. And internally we will make it available as one of our violence prevention strategies. There won't be as much tracking and it will be a little more informal. But the information will still be out there.

I really believe in empowering the community. The answer exists outside the VAW sector and resides in the community. It takes the message out in a really safe, palatable, meaningful way to make a difference. Also there needs to be a celebration of all that's happening, to have that kind of a discussion.

So far everything we've done has been without a funded coordinator. So yes, that was our goal of getting the members of the community involved so that it would be able to carry on.

The strategies are primarily working on a sustainability plan through engagement of businesses in the private sector. This is the time to engage the business world to be good employers. It's an opportunity for them to engage with community resources and offer support.

I think it's the need for long term thinking and support. I've seen such important breakthroughs in engaging people in the issue. We have to think strategically about how we can continue to build on it, and connect everyone in the province, who's working on it, more effectively. It's heartening and inspiring. We need to ask, how can we use that to inspire more and more people? A lot of stars are aligning right now and we need to take advantage of the momentum.

I think there's lots of people who have been educated and who will share the information just because they care and they have a vested interest. What will be difficult is that so many agencies are limited in funding and are trying to stretch their dollars as far as they can. We're definitely pushing the importance so hopefully the general public will know that they can share it as well as professionals.

Getting other agencies on board just multiplies the number of people who can share the information. It would be great if the funding could be continued for another couple of years. I think it really empowers the general public and professionals as well and it will make a big difference.

The NFF campaign will continue in the absence of a coordinator because of the structure of the coordinating committee. We'll continue to train-the-trainer and then bring it to the front line. It won't function as well, but it will continue.

It will continue with a trickle down effect. In part due to what they're doing in train-the-trainer, so there will be some junior gems. I remember the old Breck commercial...they told two friends and then they told two friends...That's the way it will be.

I hope so. We have a few plans. I've developed this little newsletter that will go out 4 times in the next year reminding them about the NFF campaign and asking if they need more materials. We also bought a billboard and got permission to use the NFF logo. It will have the website on. It says that everyone has a role to play in preventing woman abuse. Know the signs and take them seriously. It will be there for 7 years so the website address will be up there for a while.

This campaign reestablishes for me my deep down core beliefs that people don't turn away from domestic violence because they don't care but because they don't know what to do. There are people in the community who do know how to help and support, so just to provide the link for that woman is life saving information for every person to have. I think it's doing great things, and I think it will continue to do so.

The deep personal commitment to the campaign and its continuing impact is evident in the number of coordinators who plan to volunteer their time even when their official role is over. It has inspired and engendered a passionate response and sense of responsibility for continuing to play their role in preventing woman abuse.

I will continue to work at it for a period of time but that will be part of my volunteer work. We're in the middle of things.

I'm committed enough to this project that I'm saving some of my hours so that I can use them through the year so if there's an opportunity

then I can be there to present. Anything that I can do on my own time I'd be interested in doing that for as long as I possibly can.

I'm talking to people to see what they can do to promote the campaign. If someone called me to do a presentation, even after this is finished, I'd go on my own time.

Going Forward: Some Additional Recommendations

Many of the recommendations presented by the coordinators have been captured in this report. But, additionally, in the interests of sharing more of the concerns and suggestions gathered in the interviews, the following are included:

Working More Effectively:

I wish there was more support in the connection of the coordination. It's a huge problem. We're developing a flow of information so people can see who we're talking to. But there's no coordination with the funding. Everything remains fragmented. There is money for coordination committees that may be of some help with some of this. It's funded through MCSS. It would also be good if the relationship with OWD and MCSS was better. If the ministries worked together about how to use those resources, they could do a lot. It's too much for any one ministry.

In communication with the various ministries that are involved with NFF, there's a call to leadership and for each ministry, as they interact with the community leaders presenting NFF, there is an opportunity for team leadership. There is a momentum of interdependence and collaboration that can make a difference. There has been and will continue if funded, strong local leadership development, the exponential power of team work. Leaders are being multiplied through active mentoring that is fostering reciprocal responsibility that can lead to sustainability.

There needs to be more promotion from the province. It's ok to throw out brochures, but there needs to be some more marketing and a

responsibility for that piece and I think that's missing. It needs to be out there for us to get the message out. I haven't seen any campaigns in the print media. You would hope that there would have been more in the community before we were thrown into the mix. The material is outstanding and I like the ability to do the training and even people in the counseling field are still picking up with the warning signs. But there was a step missed in all of this.

OWD needs to think about how implementation would be supported at the community level in a planned way. They're starting now but that would have been nice. We can get a bigger bang for our buck if we work together but we need the ministries on board.

If there was any way to tell provincial offices to include programs to talk to shelter homes and get them on board first, to set the groundwork first, and then we could do our work. Don't be handing out brochures before people really know what's going on! It was the cart before the horse. I was very frustrated about that. It's ok because I hope they're learning. People worked hard and they wanted it to be right.

The program should continue, as it does, but it needs to be more inclusive. The shared information should be made available to all coordinators. And it's important when coordinators are hired to have it clear that they need to be comfortable with advocacy. They need to know the reality because that's going to happen. They will get phone calls and they need to not be scared.

As long as the website is in operation people can get brochures, so in that way, it will continue.

Funding:

They should keep funding it for a couple of years at least to keep these conversations going in the community where we've been actively engaging neighbours, friends and families for over a decade. That's a whole generation of men and women who have missed that discussion.

Funding should continue for at least one more year or two. There are new groups and communities just starting to work with the materials that should be supported as well as more established supports for new initiatives. There is also the need for the reproduction of the materials into

the future. I also think that new more creative work that is proposed should be given consideration by the ministries offering requests for proposals.

I think it's an important message and if we're serious about wanting it to end, it needs to continue. We need people in the community to present the information who have validity. There needs to be long term funding.

Revision or Adaptation of Media and Materials:

There is one component that our team felt was missing from the website and the materials...the safety of NFF people. So we added a full slide about safety for neighbours, friends and families to keep them safe if they were getting involved. They are: building an NFF support team, meeting in a public place, trust your instinct and your own assessment of the risk, call the shelter for a safety plan, call police – 911.

The resources are really good but they don't specifically mention workplaces. If they did, they could be used extensively in that way.

Groups don't love the documentary, at least the round table discussion. It's one thing I've heard a lot. Another thing is the PowerPoint is way too detailed. We never use it. We often have only 30 minutes. Also I'd like to see more creativity about the way we deliver the message. I'd like to see a series of print ads in November, or audio pieces or commercial pieces, something catchier when talking to youth, and some kind of display material that isn't a poster.

I would love to see a youth component, adapted to high schools and college. We need to make it more relevant to youth to stop a generation of violence. Let's give them the truth and give them the tools. I had kids laugh at the video because it wasn't real to them.

We talked to city council and they have a youth advisory committee that works with the mayor's committee trying to find a way to bring it to the youth in the community. There's some movement on the school board to implement something on bullying, relationships, and drugs, and they've met with a person on our panel to see how we can do that together. The kids have been researching to see what's going on in

Australia and places like that. They're very interested and the only way is to get the youth involved.

We need an open source website, but you can't control it from a centre. You have to have local centres connected through regional centres then connected to the province. We're not really good about supporting networks. The challenges are to make visible all that's going on, to see that it's exciting and that we're part of something that's really big, and to draw ideas, courage and support from it. It would need to be a community site.

It's often suddenly, and entirely unexpectedly, that we're presented with opportunities and realizations that dramatically shift our perspective and, ultimately, change our lives. The Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign has done that for many people. It has mobilized professionals and individuals into action in large and small ways, all significant, and engendered a culture of interdependence and collaboration. It's helped people recognize that, while the prospect of eradicating woman abuse can be an overwhelming thought, the idea that we can make a difference one woman at a time is empowering. It's not just anonymous women who are fighting for their lives. It's our neighbours, friends and families. It brings it home in a very potent way. And if the violence is happening in our closest relationships, then it's within them that the solution lies as well.

We all have a role to play in preventing violence against women. And Neighbours, Friends and Families challenges us to have the courage to make our voices heard in order to make our communities safe and respectful for everyone.

Appendix 1

List of Interview Respondents

Melissa Boshart	Perth County
Angela Breton,	Spanish Speaking Community, Ottawa
Pat Breton	Middlesex County
Jancy Brown	Renfrew County
Sue Buckle	Dufferin & Caledon Counties
Robin Cooper	Marathon
Sara Devlaminck	Chatham-Kent
Donna Forget	North Bay
Augustina Harker	Simcoe County
Liza Hancock	Kawartha Lake & Haliburton
Donna Harris,	Northumberland
Kathleen Hatt	Kingston
Karen Hayes,	North Bay
Jennifer Lee Jones	York Region
Tim Kelly	London Chair of the Expert Panel on Neighbours, Friends and Families
Margaret Macpherson	London

Tracey Marshall	Durham
Julie Moore	Oxford County
Colleen Purdon	Grey-Bruce Member of the Expert Panel on Neighbours, Friends and Families
Amanda Ryan	Ottawa
Sandy Taylor	Sarnia-Lambton
Patricia Thomas	Windsor-Essex
Sharon Vanderburg	Algoma
Heidy Van Dyk	Haldimand-Norfolk
Vanessa Yeats	Huron County – Goderich

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

For consistency, each of the respondents was asked the same series of questions, while invited to add anything they felt might be significant to fleshing out their experience. The questions were as follows:

1. Are you working inside of an existing organization? If so, please describe.
2. How have you defined the community(ies) where you're implementing the NFF campaign?
3. Can you list the communities that you're working with?
4. What strategies and activities have you used to implement the NFF campaign in your community(ies)?
5. Has the NFF campaign allowed you to use new and/or innovative strategies to reach out to members of your community? If yes, why do you think the campaign lends itself to innovation? If not, why do you think that the campaign doesn't lend itself to innovation?
6. Are there NFF champions or people in your community who have helped you to spread the word about the campaign?
7. Do you think the NFF campaign will continue without the position of a funded coordinator?
8. How has the NFF campaign been received by Violence Against Women professionals in your community?
9. Have you worked with service providers or professionals that are not usually considered part of the VAW sector? If yes, could you please describe who they are and how you've worked with them?
10. How have these professionals received the NFF campaign?

11. How have the members of the public received the NFF campaign?
12. What do you think are the strengths of the NFF campaign?
13. What have been the biggest challenges for you in implementing the campaign?
14. Has Alfredo, in his role of Campaign Executive Assistant, been supportive and helpful to you in your work in your community? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
15. How do you see your relationship as a Community Coordinator to the provincial campaign?
16. Did you receive the support you hoped for from the provincial NFF campaign? If not, what do you wish had been different?
17. What is the most important point that you would like to make about your experience as an NFF Community Coordinator?