



Kanawayimik's Counselling Corner

T h e K a n a w e y i m i k C o m m u n i c a t o r

Happy Spring everyone! We have made a change to the Anger Management Program at Kanawayimik. This program is now called the Kanawayimik Family Violence Treatment Program (KFVTP).

This is a 25 week program & we now have a continuous Intake Process.

Women's KFVTP Group will be every Tuesday from 9:30AM to 12:30PM unless otherwise stated. Sweats for Women are planned for every month and the dates are dependent on the group.

Men's KFVTP Group will be every Monday from 9:30AM to 12:30PM unless otherwise stated. If the Monday is a STAT Holiday Men's group will be moved to the following Wednesday.

W h y w e c h a n g e d t h e P r o g r a m

We believe consequences and effects of family violence touch the entire family system. To simply stop the behaviour does not eliminate the effects and attitudes which were present prior, during, and after the abuse. Providing therapy to only selected individuals in the family often does not meet the needs of the family unit. If therapy/counselling ignores the problems that exist within the family system it may make their circumstances worse.

It is our belief that the children who are directly affected by family violence need therapy. Because of their situation, they may have experienced conditions such as, "role reversal"; the impact and effect of verbal, emotional, psychological, and physical violence. There are many reasons for the children to enter treatment in order to promote their own healing. In our program children are an important part of the (family) healing process. As indicated earlier, family violence occurs in families that are unhealthy. Both parents need to resolve issues in respect to their own relationship, the relationship between themselves and their children, and between themselves and their own parents and siblings.

Family violence has no boundaries, it affects all social, economic, religious, racial and cultural backgrounds. The impact of family violence affects not only the immediate and extended family structure, but the community, and society as a whole.

The Kanawayimik Family Violence Program (KFVTP) for Men and Women

In respect to our program KFVTP, we view the family as a system in which individuals strive to maintain some type of balance. Any change in one part of this system has implications for every other member. In First Nations communities the immediate family, extended family, and community as a whole are included in this system. Although the family is viewed as a system, it is composed of individuals whose personal treatment needs are attended to before they start family therapy. Because parents and other family related caregivers lay the foundation of the family system, the health of their relationship with other family members has strong implications for the functioning of the family as a whole. The residential school system has for example disrupted the foundation of First Nations families, and this disruption continues when we see parents and caregivers going to jail and leaving the family feeling abandoned and fragmented.

Disturbances within the family system manifest themselves in a variety of ways, one of which can be family violence. This can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental abuse, spiritual abuse, spousal abuse, alcoholism and drug addiction. Acts of violence within the family are committed by people with an unhealthy self-concept and poor self-esteem (to name only a few). To successfully treat such individuals, efforts are made to help them understand their past, resolve issues, and accept personal responsibility and accountability for their actions. Providing only a punitive approach to the problem serves to intensify the negative self-image, and reduce personal motivation to their own healing, thus increasing the likelihood that the violent behaviour will continue. This is not to say that offenders should not be charged, but that they need to be held accountable and take responsibility for their actions. The foundation of our treatment approach believes that human beings are basically good, and given the opportunity and proper support and direction, will strive toward that end. The human tendency toward growth and self-actualization is a normal process that, at times, needs assistance.

Just as Our Counselling Program, The KFVTP focuses on four main aspects of the individual: the mind (psychological self), the body (physical self), the emotions (emotional self), and spirit (spiritual self). This is explained in detail in Volume 1, Issue 1 of this newsletter (can be accessed at www.kanawayimik.com).

Family violence includes many different forms of abuse that adults or children may experience in their intimate, kinship or dependent relationships. Family violence also includes being mistreated or being neglected by these members.

Some common types of family violence are:

- ◆ physical abuse
- ◆ sexual abuse and exploitation (being used for a sexual purpose)
 - ◆ neglect
- ◆ psychological or emotional abuse
- ◆ economic or financial abuse
- ◆ spiritual abuse

The (KFVTP) Program Description

In alarming numbers, the family which is supposed to be the cradle of nurturance, is actually a cradle of violence. Family violence is a symptom of a greater problem and is part of a cyclical pattern. We can break the cycle of violence through identifying the issues, talking, understanding, resolving and then healing. Education, training, and support are essential to the healing process. By building a safe caring environment in our society and within the family, victims of violence will be able to express their thoughts and feelings. They will feel and believe they are a valuable and an intricate part of their family and community.

Treating the Family Where Violence Has Occurred

Treatment services are provided to both individuals and families through our program. Prior to the provision of these services, each person is interviewed in order to determine if our program can provide the service which best meet their treatment needs. Not every person or family applying is accepted into our program. The reasons for denial into the program are wide and varied, however, the two most common are, the program is filled to capacity, or the families' needs require a process not available through our program. When the initial interview is completed we ask the person to think about what we've reviewed and then conclude if they still wish to enter a process of therapy. When interviewing the person/family we review with them the therapeutic process, and inform them about things they can expect to experience and/or encounter in the treatment process. We seek to provide an accurate picture of what therapy is like and not one that gives false hope and unrealistic expectations.

When people enter the process of therapy, they are often in a crisis state and the family system is often fragmented. The fundamental concerns we have at the start of therapy is to ensure the safety and well-being of those involved. If people don't feel safe, they will likely not engage themselves in the healing process and may feel a lack of trust and disloyalty by the very system there to help them. Our program believes that individuals and families have their own personal and collective needs, and therefore, it is important that an individualized treatment plan be developed for each person, and that plan be dovetailed together with the overall plan for the family. We develop a process to fit their specific treatment needs.

Our therapeutic model employs a systemic, holistic, eclectic approach to healing. Although our program provides services most often to families, we also have many individuals/people working through their own issues with no other family members involved. It should be noted that the decision to incorporate family members into the treatment process is the decision of the individual and not that of the program. Children and other family members are never placed in a position to accept anyone, including the offender, back into their life. If, however, they desire to explore their relationship with certain people, including the offender, and want to resolve the past issues/abuse, the program has the mechanisms to clinically evaluate and assist them.



The Referral Process to the KVVTP

Individuals are referred to the KVVTP by way of two methods; unofficial referrals and official referrals. An unofficial referral which comes from a self referral or a community agency and the official referral comes from the Battlefords Domestic Violence Treatment Options Court (DVTO). The DVTO process is a special court for domestic violence charges and is held every second Thursday and persons charged with assault have the option of pleading guilty to charges, then are ordered by the judge to complete the KVVTP and then this is factored into their sentencing which is adjourned until they complete the program.

The KVVTP Counsellor provides progress reports to the court every second Thursday on all court ordered referrals and the KVVTP Counsellor works with "The Working Group" which includes personnel from Victim Services, Probation, Legal Aid, The Crown Attorney's Office, and Mental Health. The offender also meets with personnel from the working group when deemed necessary. The Working Group meets every second Friday to discuss client progress and provide updates.

Before starting therapy, all individuals go through a series of interviews and assessments (if required) to determine treatment suitability in this program. We do not assume that our program has the answers for all people. The initial interviews help us to determine whether or not the client will benefit from our program.

STOP THE CYCLE OF
VIOLENCE



Family violence tends to be a self-perpetuating problem unless the cycle is broken by a therapeutic intervention. Most offenders suffer from low self-esteem and many come from a background where family violence has occurred within their own families; most have, themselves, been abused at some level. Acting in the way they have been taught, they tend to enter into unhealthy adult relationships which reflect and perpetuate the cycle of abuse. Role reversal, for example, is a recurring pattern. In a family where family violence has occurred, the child victim often ends up "parenting" the parents.

Many unhealthy spouses enter marriage hoping their spouse will provide them with the nurturance and security that was lacking in their family of origin. Yet, without realizing it, they often seek a partner who has some of the same attributes and qualities as their non-nurturing and absent caretakers or parents. Thus, when they fail to receive the emotional support they need from their spouses, they turn to their children for support, just as their own parents may have done with them. For similar reasons the offender may also seek "parenting" from their child. For the child, the inappropriate responsibilities and experiences with adults, serve to exacerbate the role confusion, and it promotes a "pseudo-maturity". Without therapeutic help for the individuals involved, the conditions are set for a multi-generational cycle of role reversal and abuse. The goals of therapy are to break the cycle and assist all the family members to relate to each other in a healthy manner.