

# SPEAKING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE<sup>1</sup>

Nancy Gibson

This issue of the journal is sponsored by CIET, a nongovernmental agency housed at the University of Ottawa. Please visit the web site to learn more about CIET's research partnerships with Aboriginal and indigenous communities worldwide. [http://www.ciet.org/en/documents/themes\\_docs/200741710158.asp](http://www.ciet.org/en/documents/themes_docs/200741710158.asp)

The words and concepts around violence in the family are still unspoken in many Aboriginal communities, and also in the literature. This special issue adds to the emerging conversation, naming and addressing the various kinds of domestic violence in Aboriginal communities. We chose this as the theme of this special issue because we believe that knowing and facing reality can lead to prevention.

As communities move to define this cluster of behaviours and their effects on families, the term *lateral violence* is being used. Lateral violence refers to bullying, including gossiping, shaming and blaming others, and broken confidences. Lateral violence hurts others within families, organizations, and communities. It occurs in homes, schools, churches, community organizations, and workplaces. This form of oppression gives the aggressor a sense of dominance and power to overcome a lack of personal self-esteem and confidence. The interpersonal harm for victims of lateral violence is very deep rooted and can have subtle yet profound effects on mental health and wellbeing.

The first step towards stopping lateral violence is to recognize when it is happening, and refuse to take part in it. In this issue of *Pimatisiwin* we offer a range of papers describing the situation in Canada, followed by programs and strategies designed to reduce and prevent domestic violence.

---

1. Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Ann Macdonald for her meticulous management of the collection and review of these papers, and to Laura Botsford for her usual careful editing and layout work. We are especially grateful to the anonymous reviewers who contribute their time and expertise to ensure the high quality of *Pimatisiwin*. And finally, thanks to the authors for their contributions, and to CIET for sponsoring this issue.

This collection of papers begins with the words of a song written by a young Tłı̄chq artist in the Northwest Territories. Mason Mantla's lyrics link the pain of people in his community with their experience of violence in residential school. He echoes the memories of his parents and grandparents. Lisa Lambert describes some barriers faced by Aboriginal women in Alberta, with a brief look at the wage gap.

Neil Andersson and Amy Nahwegahbow introduce five planks of a strategy for intervention and prevention of domestic violence. One of those planks is research, which leads to several other papers. Bev Shea provides her literature review of what has been done to prevent domestic violence. Neil Andersson, partnering with twelve women's shelters across Canada, offers a look at their funded research proposal; the team is developing a framework to address the range of domestic violence, including violence against women, children, elderly, and disabled. Research is an important tool because evidence-based programs can be targeted to the priorities, culture, and values of the community. Mary Cameron gives us a critical overview of the epidemiological approach, outlining culturally appropriate and community driven methods that deepen our understanding of domestic violence interventions. Patricia Maguire-Kishebakabaykwe offers an indigenous perspective on research methods. With a resilience-based approach, she examines the value of research by focusing on the experience and ways of knowing of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, specifically, the Anishinaabe of Lake Nipigon in northern Ontario.

This special issue concludes with two practical tools. Mike Patterson's cybercircles paper describes the use of technology in partnership with Elders, while Rob Chase brings us the life story board as an approach to address the mental health of children who have experienced violence by breaking the cycle between victim and villain through a nondisclosure narrative.

We sincerely hope that this brief overview has excited your interest in helping to address domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in Canada.

**Nancy Gibson** is a professor emeritus from the University of Alberta. She currently serves as Special Projects Coordinator for the Tłı̄cho Community Services Agency in the Northwest Territories of Canada. She was instrumental in launching *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health* seven years ago, and is the editor of this issue.