



Violence Against Aboriginal Women

Rates of Violence Against Aboriginal Women:

Ontario's Aboriginal female population is significantly over-represented as victims of violence.

- Aboriginal women are approximately 3 times more likely to experience spousal violence than non-Aboriginal women (Brennan, S., 2011).
- Sexual assaults accounted for more than one-third of violent incidents involving an Aboriginal victim and were reported at a rate of 70 incidents per 1000 Aboriginal people versus 23 per 1000 people (non-Aboriginals) (Perreault, S., 2011).
- Aboriginal female youth/younger women (aged 15-34) are over-represented as the victims of violence and crime.
- Aboriginal women are 7 times more likely than the non-Aboriginal population to be homicide victims (8.8 versus 1.3 per 100,000 population) (Health Canada, 2009).
- 8 out of 10 Aboriginal women have experienced some form of violence (Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989).
- Aboriginal women are more likely to be overpoliced in regards to arrests and detainment and underpoliced in regards to preventative and support police services (Elizabeth Fry).

Contributing Factors of Violence:

- Residential schools and the cycle of intergenerational trauma occurring as the result of a cultural legacy of mistreatment and abuse
- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Addictions/alcoholism
- Shortage of affordable housing
- Limited access to treatment programs/supports within remote/rural communities
- A significant lack of data focusing on violence occurring within Aboriginal communities
- Childhood exposure to family violence (perpetuation of cycle of violence) (National Clearinghouse on Violence, 2008)
- Negative ideologies about Aboriginal women

Impacts of Violence for Aboriginal Women:

- Diminished self-esteem and sense of security (National Clearinghouse on Violence, 2008).
- Children witness more than half of the violence that occurs between the adults in the home, and are often victims of abuse, themselves (Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres & The Ontario Native Women's Association, 2007).
- Violence is the leading cause of women's homelessness.
- Violence is related to mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder etc (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009).

Recommendations:

- An integrated, holistic-based approach developed by Aboriginal women must be implemented
- Examine the socio-economic and structural determinants that contribute to the high rates of violence occurring within Aboriginal communities.
- Provide violence counseling programs within rural and remote Aboriginal communities (focus on preserving the unity of the family, providing care for children while mothers are seeking counseling etc.)
- Involve the community in the healing process (through pow-wows, ceremonies etc), recognize that victims of violence have a connection to their community and culture.
- Provide 'after-care,' on-going support for Aboriginal victims of violence, recognizing that healing occurs over a long period of time.
- Culturally-relevant gender-based analysis must underlie all work involved in the development of strategies to address violence against Aboriginal women (Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres & Ontario Native Women's Association, 2007).
- Strategies created to address the issue of violence against Aboriginal women, must be informed by and developed around existing Aboriginal conceptual frameworks (ie. Strategic Framework to End Violence against Aboriginal Women).

References

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