



Our recommendations for caring collaboration in actioning outcomes

The Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories recognizes that no single entity, group, or individual can alone improve the services available to women experiencing intimate partner violence nor reduce the stigma.

There are many service providers involved across the intimate partner violence service continuum including:

- Health care workers, counsellors, social workers, and mental health workers
- RCMP, victim services, shelters, and other women's organizations
- Housing and income support

We know that caring collaboration cannot merely be a tagline or a dream; instead, it must become the reality in the Northwest Territories. To make this a reality, here are twenty-one (21) recommendations for everyone to consider.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Encourage government leaders and policy-makers in the Northwest Territories to identify intimate partner violence as a public health issue and adopt a public health approach to address, reduce, and prevent intimate partner violence in the territory.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Encourage government leaders and policy-makers, in collaboration with relevant partners and stakeholders, including the women's organizations, to develop and implement a family violence strategy and action plan for the Northwest Territories.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Encourage the Government of the Northwest Territories to establish a multi-sectoral working group, consisting of relevant service providers, women's organizations, government and community representatives and decision-makers, and Elders, to review practices and models from other jurisdictions that could be adopted and adapted to the Northwest Territories to reduce the stigma and improve intimate partner violence services.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Encourage the service providers, who are involved across the intimate partner violence service continuum, to adopt a collaborative, long-term, holistic approach to the provision of services to women experiencing intimate partner violence and their children.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Encourage relevant stakeholders, partners, women's organizations, and governments to adopt a collaborative, inter-agency approach to ensure that women experiencing intimate partner violence have timely access to safety resources. These resources should include safe phones, safe transportation, and safe homes or family violence shelters in all communities in the territory. These efforts should also ensure that women and their male children aged fifteen (15) or older have access to safe shelter when leaving a violent home.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Encourage governments to increase the availability of second stage housing, public housing, and affordable housing so that women (and their children) are not forced to return to their abuser out of the necessity for shelter.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Encourage relevant service providers and women's organizations to collaborate to improve the accuracy, timeliness, as well as the safe and discrete accessibility of safety planning information. This information should include, but should not be limited to, information that helps to improve the safety of women and their children in their home, when they are planning to leave their home, and once they have left their home. Consideration should also be given to piloting a Circles of Safety and Support approach to safety planning for women who are at a high risk of intimate partner violence.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Encourage stakeholders and partner organizations to work together to provide consistent and coordinated intimate partner violence training and trauma- and violence-informed training to service providers. Consistent and coordinated training supports a comprehensive and similar understanding of intimate partner violence and the consistent and informed use of trauma- and violence-informed approaches when interacting with women (and their children) experiencing intimate partner violence. This training should impress upon the service providers the need to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the women they are helping, and support providing services in a non-judgmental manner. This training must be complemented by community-based cultural safety and cultural competency training to reflect the diverse cultures, cultural practices, and norms of those living in the Northwest Territories.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Pilot collaborative, inter-agency response teams to intimate partner violence and to intimate partner violence involving children in the territory's larger centres. The proposed inter-agency response teams could involve RCMP and Victim Services responding jointly to intimate partner violence or RCMP, Social Services, and Victim Services responding jointly to intimate partner violence involving children. Alternatively, consideration should be given as to whether a Specialized Response Unit to domestic violence, sexual violence, and child welfare might be a better fit with the resources and needs of the Northwest Territories. The Yukon RCMP has effectively used this type of mobile response unit since 2013 and it continues to operate with four (4) plain-clothed police officers who have received specialized training.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Provide specialized services to women who have experienced intimate partner violence; services that are women-centred, trauma- and violence-informed, and holistic. These services should include access to specialized counsellors/mental health professionals. Consideration should also be given to incorporating navigational and advocacy services to negotiate the various government systems including justice, securing housing, income support, education and training, as well as access to childcare to support these efforts. Women may also require long-term, wrap-around services and support to aid their healing and ability to lead full and productive lives.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Mitigate the effects of exposure to intimate partner violence and/or experiencing family violence on children and youth, and help children and youth heal, to lead full and productive lives, and to end the cycle of violence by:

- Identifying, implementing, and evaluating early intervention activities to prevent and/or mitigate trauma to children and youth.
- Providing specialized, trauma- and violence-informed counselling/mental health services to children and youth to support healing and breaking the cycle of violence.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Ensure families who have experienced family violence have access to specialized family counselling/mental health services so that they can heal as a family unit.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Encourage the Government of the Northwest Territories to establish an independent, non-partisan Child and Youth Advocate Office to support and protect our young people, to ensure their voices are heard, and to promote the rights of our young people especially in relation to government programs, services, and legislation.

RECOMMENDATION 14:

Enhance intimate partner violence awareness, education, and prevention efforts across the territory to be undertaken at the local and territorial level by community partners, service providers, and government entities. These efforts should include, but are not limited to:

- Awareness and education activities to address victim blaming, shaming, and to counter the normalization of intimate partner violence.
- Engaging with the general public, including men and boys, and decision-makers to create greater awareness and understanding of intimate partner violence, its causes, and the solutions as a means of creating individual and social change to reduce violence and create equality.
- Providing healthy relationship, conflict resolution, and violence awareness and prevention education to children and youth within the education system and through other community-determined means to empower them to live violence free and healthy lifestyles and in doing so, to break the cycle of violence.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

Encourage the following activities to mitigate the fear of losing one's child or children as a barrier to leaving a violent relationship:

- The development and implementation of pre-charging police interventions.
- The development and implementation of primary aggressor policies to help police identify the primary offender.
- Factoring in which parent is the primary offender and the actual intimate partner violence into child custody and visitation decisions.

RECOMMENDATION 16:

Conduct further research to identify what the justice system can do to provide supports and services to woman who have experienced intimate partner violence with the intent of meeting their needs and to balance the supports and services offered to the offender

RECOMMENDATION 17:

Conduct further research and related efforts focused on improving the coordination of the criminal, family, and child protection systems.

RECOMMENDATION 18:

Conduct further research to evaluate the effects of the current justice system on the victim* and the efficacy of the justice system from the perspective of the victim. (*Please note that the use of the term victim is used here to reflect the terminology of our laws and the justice system.)

RECOMMENDATION 19:

Conduct further research conducted with women who have experienced intimate partner violence and the justice system continuum to identify the specific gaps in the continuum, to determine how to address these gaps and improve services and how best to factor in relationships dynamics and coercive control in separation, divorce, and custody proceedings.

We recommend that a gender lens, a trauma- and violence-informed lens, and an Indigenous lens are incorporated into all research efforts, and especially those identified in Recommendations 16, 17, 18, and 19.

RECOMMENDATION 20:

Encourage a collective effort to build the body of knowledge regarding intimate partner violence in the Northwest Territories through data collection and dissemination, and further research through the following activities:

- Data collection and dissemination of relevant statistics to an agreed to group of government and non-government entities, including women's organizations, to increase awareness and understanding, to improve relevant programs, services, and strategies, and to engage decision-makers.
- Conduct further research in the Northwest Territories with women who have experienced intimate partner violence, but at the five (5) year or ten (10) year mark from when they escaped their violent situation. Such research could provide valuable information about the gaps and challenges along the service continuum as it relates to helping women lead whole and independent lives and identify necessary changes to legislation, policies, and procedures.

RECOMMENDATION 21:

Collectively explore, develop, and continue to offer opportunities, support, and activities that promote the social, political, and economic empowerment of women and girls – to address root causes and prevent violence in the Northwest Territories.

