



## Inspired Communities

Informed Leaders Taking Action to  
End Gender Based Violence and Abuse





*We can begin by doing small things at the local level, like planting community gardens or looking out for our neighbors. That is how change takes place in living systems, not from above but from within, from many local actions occurring simultaneously.*

- Grace Lee Boggs (1915 - )

*I have always thought that what is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as developing leaders in others.*

- Ella Baker (1903 - 1986)

*The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say, "What are you going through?"*

- Simone Weil (1909 - 1943)

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of Status of Women Canada.*



**Status of Women    Condition féminine  
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Domestic violence is an epidemic in our country with Alberta having one of the highest rates of domestic violence homicide in Canada. Each year approximately 12,000 women, children and seniors fleeing domestic violence and abuse seek refuge from abuse, pain and fear with one of the 42 Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) member organizations.

In the last decade and a half, prevention has become a central focus of community and government efforts to address violence against women. This reflects the recognition that we must not only respond to the survivors and perpetrators of interpersonal violence, but also work to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. We must address the underlying causes of gendered violence, (physical, sexual, mental, etc.) in order to reduce its frequency and ultimately eliminate it.

Consistent with this recognition, in the late 1990's, ACWS embarked on a long-term violence prevention strategy. Prevention was formally adopted as a key initiative in the ACWS 2005 Strategic Plan. Multiple projects followed, including Breakfast with the Guys (events which gather community leaders to learn how to take action to end violence against women), Playing to Win (engages hockey coaches and players to interrupt negative behaviours), and Domestic Violence and Your Workplace (a programme designed to support workplaces to address the effects of domestic violence).

Building on this history and experience with support from Status of Women Canada, ACWS developed a community-based model for engaging men and boys in ending violence against women and girls. The model will help develop and strengthen the skills and awareness of men and boys, working in partnership with women and girls, to identify and respond to issues of gender-based violence in their communities.

# THE MODEL

The model contains three essential elements:



These elements are integrated and coordinated in a comprehensive, systematic approach that we believe is required to make long-lasting and transformative change. This model represents initial ideas based on a needs assessment, literature review and our experience. Pilot testing of this model over the one year period helped us refine it further and describe it in more detail. While the model elements are discussed separately, they interact with each other and reinforce each other, as illustrated in the graphic on page 14.

## Model Glossary

**Supporting Agency:** group with expertise in the sector who provides leadership to the program and grounds the work in the experiences of women and collaborates with the Key Delivery Group.

**Key Delivery Group:** group within a particular community who makes an ongoing commitment to work in the community to end gender based violence over the long term. Assisted by the Supporting Agency.

**Community Mentors:** members of the Key Delivery Group

**Community:** Specific geographic area or group of people to engage and empower to make change.

**Selected Participants:** Although we hope to impact and work with all individuals and groups of people within the community, the principal audience of the call to action that the programming is directed at, written for, and delivered to. This group will have a detailed demographic profile. (Age, culture, economic considerations, etc.)

**Influencers:** Individuals, organizations, community, and institutions/government all have influence within the community and the power to make change. Based on readiness, they may be engaged by the Community Mentors to identify the Selected Participants. Some may be called upon to use their influence specifically with the Selected Participants through the model's activities.

# THE APPROACH

Our prevention approach reflects the recognition that we must not only respond to the victims and perpetrators of interpersonal violence, but also work to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. Prevention efforts take place before the problem starts and help address the underlying causes of physical and sexual violence, in order to reduce rates of violence and ultimately to eliminate it altogether. Prevention focusing on men and boys is the main approach of the ACWS Leading Change™ Inspired Communities model.

The foundation for involving men and boys in violence prevention is that

- Although most men do not use violence, nor knowingly act to oppress women, nor condone it, domestic and sexual violence is still largely perpetrated by men;
- Constructions of men's identities and masculinity play a crucial role in shaping some men's perpetration of physical and sexual assault;
- Men have a positive role to play in helping to end men's violence - and men and boys shape and send powerful messages about relationships, violence, and power.
- Men often have greater access to resources and opportunities to influence large social structures and institutions and can therefore play a critical role in preventing domestic violence.



The work begins by identifying a **Supporting Agency** with expertise in the area that is prepared and able to take on the task of an active and comprehensive programme over a long-term. The group provides leadership through its community connections, coordination, guidance and support. The group also works towards broad scale uptake and sustainability of the model.

In order for the initiative to be successful given the pervasive shortage of resources, the prevention programme starts with a well-defined group within a community referenced in this model as the **Community Mentors** within the **Key Delivery Group** who seek to engage participants using a variety of tactics and activities over a long period of time, laying the groundwork for a large scale initiative. The **Community Mentors** identify **Selected Participants** based on their knowledge of the community, the willingness of community partners, priority challenges identified with their community partners in addressing gender based violence and the potential of the **Selected Participants** to make change.

# 1 OUR NORMS & VALUES



Establishing a foundation of shared values is essential in any successful collaboration or initiative. They explain why we do what we do and guide every facet of our work. The norms and values described below contextualize and guide our work in engaging men and boys to address violence against women and girls.

## 1.1 Informed by women's organizations and experience

Recognizing and respecting the leadership and expertise of women's groups is crucial to sustaining the work on ending violence against women and girls. Women's groups brought the issue of gender-based violence to the forefront of public health and human rights agendas and have considerable experience in the area of violence against women and girls. Women should be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of model activities to reinforce an ethical, human rights and gendered perspective. This will ensure effective approaches that are empowering to and authentic for women.

to use violence and the impact of that violence may be experienced differently in communities across Canada. For this reason, particular attention should be paid to the impact of social pressures and oppressions and how gender intersects with social differences such as: class, education, language, experiences of immigration, race and ethnicity, sexuality, age and disability. It is imperative that cultural and language diversity and related attitudes, norms and diverse socio-political realities be considered in the planning, delivery and implementation of prevention practices.

It therefore follows that a truly transformative initiative should include a wide cross-section of audiences and participants who differ across gender and age (e.g. men and boys, women and girls), cultures and countries (e.g. multicultural and Aboriginal communities and newcomers to Canada), geographic locations (urban and rural Alberta), as well as ability and sexuality.

## 1.2 Inclusive

Attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and practices are deeply rooted in their specific cultural norms, values and traditions. The factors that lead men

### **1.3 Strength-based**

Strength-based approaches focus on collaboration, growth, empowerment and hopes as opposed to guilt, shame or fear. Showing positive examples of equitable, non-violent behaviour helps foster more meaningful and long-term change. Men and boys are motivated to take on positive leadership roles when their ability to be leaders is affirmed and empowered by those they trust and respect. Positive roles can be encouraged through bystander interventions, peer and near-peer mentoring, role modeling by fathers or other role model men and engaging community or organizational leaders as mentors.

### **1.4 Women's rights are human rights**

Violence against women runs counter to the basic rights and freedoms every person should have. Therefore, programming should share and be explicit about abiding by these values and the commitment to women's human rights and gender equality. Men should be empowered to discover that equality for women benefits all.

### **1.5 Social norms and cultural expectations are root causes of power imbalance, inequality and violence in our society**

Violence against women and girls is still most often perpetrated by men, largely influenced by cultural messages about masculinity, gender roles and relationships, violence and power. By

creating a greater understanding of men's privilege, prevention programming can address men's attitudes that either produce or condone violence against women and encourage men to intervene with other men by shifting harmful stereotypes of masculinity, as well as working towards their enlightened self-interest.

### **1.6 Transformation requires long-term, large-scale and coordinated efforts**

Most violence prevention work with men and boys has been local in scale and limited in scope. To be effective at the societal level – to transform violence against women and girls and the pervasive gender inequalities with which it is associated – work with men and boys needs to be scaled up. In particular, programs that reach beyond the individual level to be part of the social context show more effectiveness in producing behavior change than programs that focus on individuals only. This requires programs to be integrated, incorporating community outreach, community mobilization and mass media campaigns. To truly transform gender inequalities, we must go beyond scattered, small-scale interventions and move towards systematic, large-scale and coordinated efforts. Commitment to long-term and coordinated efforts means that capacity-building approaches represent an integral part of the work, and ensure that the work can be sustained.

## 2 INFLUENCERS

The initiative's reach will impact all levels of our society: individuals, organizations, communities, governments and institutions, as described below. Together, these four groups influence changes in attitudes and beliefs.

Trusted influencers are invited to participate by **Community Mentors**, these **Influencers** are invited to participate by the **Community Mentors** to assist in identifying the **Selected Participants**, based on an assessment of their readiness and their commitment and capacity to engage in prevention work. Once the **Selected Participants** have been identified, individuals, organizations, communities, governments and institutions are called upon as key **Influencers** to support community change, particularly as it relates to activities involving the **Selected Participants**. While the **Selected Participants** are the major audience that this initiative addresses, **Influencers** may also be involved in the model's activities to create change.



### Individuals

Individuals involved in these initiatives will span the full life cycle from pre-school to adulthood and include men, women, youth, boys and girls. The particular group of individuals that is involved in a specific project will depend on the place where they congregate and can include fathers who are part of fatherhood programs, men in domestic violence prevention programs, men and boys on sports teams, men and women as members of geographic or cultural communities, parents, school staff, youth, boys and girls in schools, and/or involved in extra-curricular activities.



### Organizations

Organizations may include clubs, sports teams, educational institutions, (such as schools and universities), service or treatment settings and workplaces. For example, sports settings are places where masculine traditional norms are formed and enforced and offer opportunities for mentoring and influencing coaches and athletes. Workplaces provide access to men in leadership roles in many fields, particularly those dominated by men (e.g., business, politics, police, legal, etc.). Employers can play an important role by sharing information and hosting training to develop skills and motivate employees, clients, consumers and partners to become engaged in efforts to

end violence against women. Programs in schools with children and youth can have a positive and lasting impact on their attitudes and behaviors, particularly if they include opportunities for skill development and mentoring, an understanding of gender-based violence, address norms related to dating violence and are embedded within the school curriculum.

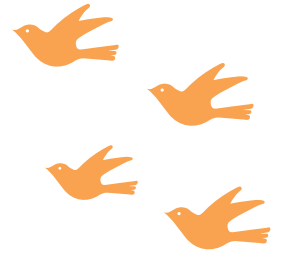
## **Communities**

Community is defined as a social group of any size, whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, have common interests, religion or race or share cultural and historic heritage. Communities involved in these types of efforts can include cultural communities (e.g. Aboriginal or immigrant communities), communities of people who live in a same area of the city or communities of people who share the same interests or participate in the same activity (e.g. sports, school or faith communities). Transformative efforts with communities often include public messaging, community conversation and supporting community members to become leaders and champions in engaging men and boys in addressing domestic violence.

## **Institutions**

Institutions are societies or organizations founded for an educational, social, or religious purpose and devoted to the promotion of a particular cause or program. Institutions can include governments as well as educational, public service or cultural organizations.

Government is defined as any legislative body that can influence broad level policies, legislation and funding. First Nations, Municipal, Provincial, Federal and School Boards, for example, may be involved in a variety of prevention approaches outlined below. Willingness of those institutions to be open to communication or dialogue is essential as are strong relationships with individuals in a position of authority within different levels of government who can be champions and mentors.



# 3 KEY ACTIVITIES

This model includes four key activities that reinforce each other and must be implemented together and sustained over a long-term in order to create transformative change. These approaches will use targeted messaging through different communications media to invite and inspire individuals to take ownership of the issue, and become motivated to lead from where they stand to end violence against women and girls.



## Public Messaging

Sustained, comprehensive, audience-targeted public messaging that aligns with the model's values has the ability to make the content more accessible, reach more people and reinforce learnings. Communications tactics that deliver the messaging include media coverage (editorials, articles, and advertising through television radio, newspapers and internet), social media channels, web pages, passive advertising (e.g. posters), promotional items (e.g. tee shirts with slogans) and educational materials (e.g. brochure). The tactics chosen in each community are best determined by who the **Selected Participants** are as well as their major **Influencers**, what channels and resources are available in each community to reach them, as well as the organization's capacity to sustain them.

In addition to adhering with the values in this model (strength-based, positive, inclusive, includes gendered context, etc.), successful public messaging on this issue:

- Appeals to everyone's ability to make a difference – it inspires & empowers;
- Helps people understand that they already are impacted by this issue, whether they've experienced DV personally or not;
- Informs, doesn't patronize;
- Has a clearly defined, simple action that people can take;
- Employs humour or an element of surprise when appropriate;
- Communicates results;
- Has a high production value, contemporary styling and personal branding opportunities (especially when targeting youth); and,
- Is age and gender appropriate.



## Community Conversations

Community conversations are also necessary to change behaviours which foster a culture of violence against women. Such conversations can help shift social norms within communities and build coalitions and networks to bring together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact. Community conversations can take many forms, including engaging men who lead their community, fostering coalitions and networks, developing forums for discussions, holding discussions on social media platforms, organizing community events and inviting high profile speakers.



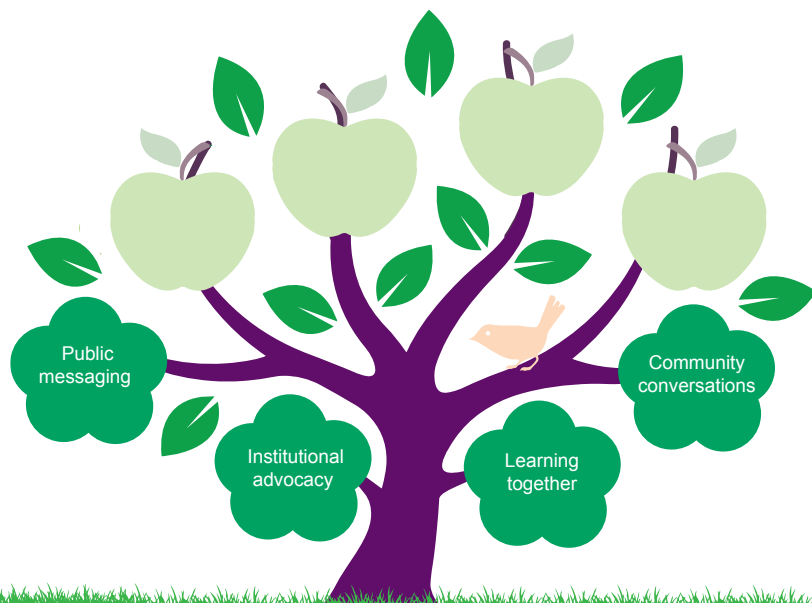
## Institutional Advocacy

These types of activities usually seek out legislative bodies and governments with a primary purpose of influencing policies and legislation or producing legal and policy reforms that support healthy community norms and a violence-free society. Institutional advocacy activities may include working with government officials or organizational leaders to support policy development or change, securing funding, developing position papers, or mobilizing service providers for long-term advocacy.



## Learning Together

These types of approaches include training sessions, workshops on bystander interventions as well as one on one support, role modeling or peer or near-peer mentoring with individual participants. The focus of these activities will be to share information, facilitate discussion and enhance skills related to addressing the issue of gender based violence. In order to be consistent with the core values of the model, Learning Together activities will be strength-based, positive and build on mutual respect and shared power between the facilitators and the participants.



## 4 OUTCOMES

We believe that integrated, systematic and coordinated programming rooted in consistent and clear values such as described in this document will help produce change at a societal level and prevent violence against women and girls. We hope that this work, if sustained long-term, will result in transformation of cultural and gender roles and, ultimately, a peaceful society.

Evaluation is an important component of the engagement model. Model implementation has been tested by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and community partners over the course of a year, supported by Status of Women Canada. Long term implementation with associated evaluation will ensure that lessons learned and emerging insights can be documented and inform model revision and refinement. The following framework delineates key outcomes of model implementation that can be adapted to reflect specific project focus.

### Overall Goal

Develop and strengthen the skills of men and boys, working in partnership with women and girls, to identify and respond to issues of gender-based violence in their communities.

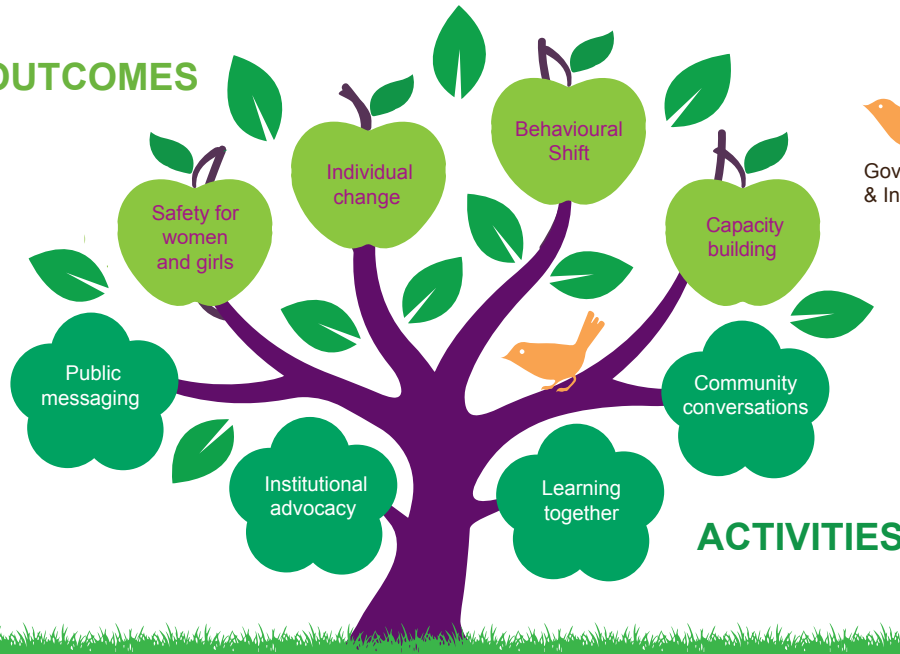
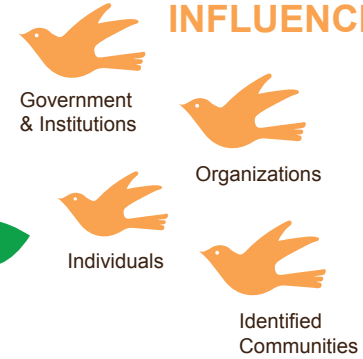




OUTCOME AREA	OUTCOME DEFINITION	SUCCESS INDICATORS
Safety for women and girls	More women and girls are safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer incidents of gender-based violence (GBV) reported</li> <li>• Women and girls report change in the attitudes of men and boys towards gender based violence</li> </ul>
Organizational and community capacity building	Increased capacity among organizational and community leaders to continue the prevention work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders and champions, who can undertake the work over a long-term are identified and trained</li> <li>• Communities commit to continue GBV prevention activities after pilot conclusion</li> <li>• Review of policies using GBV prevention lens will be undertaken</li> </ul>
Behavioural shift	More self-identified leaders and empowered bystanders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men and boys describe themselves as leaders in GBV prevention following community conversations and learning initiatives</li> </ul>
Individual change: awareness, knowledge and attitudes	Changes in awareness, attitudes with respect to GBV among the project participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes with respect to awareness, attitudes and skills as reflected by the post-training or post-project surveys and interviews with participants</li> </ul>

## OUTCOMES

## INFLUENCERS



## ACTIVITIES



Ground all activities, interactions and messaging in all of these six values with all audiences:

## VALUES

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# LEADING CHANGE™: INSPIRED COMMUNITIES MODEL

*Informed leaders taking action to end gender based violence and abuse*

## CHECKLIST

### Before you begin:

- ☐ Assess potential partners
- ☐ Determine the Key Delivery Group and the Community Mentors who comprise it: the agency or team responsible for implementing the model
- ☐ Identify the community to be engaged = “X”
- ☐ Identify and describe Selected Participants for the initiative = “Y”
- ☐ List the organizations, governments and institutions in the community you’ve chosen “Z” that have an influence upon the select audience.

### In clarifying this, you will know:

You are working to primarily impact “Y” participant group, at “X” community, with “Z” influencing individuals, organizations, governments & institutions. Then...

- ☐ Identify priority challenges in the community in addressing gender-based violence and the outcomes they would like to see
- ☐ Identify current activities and initiatives that fit with this audience, and are already occurring within the organization, community, governments and institutions
- ☐ Leverage existing and design new activities for public messaging, learning together, encouraging community conversations, and institutional advocacy aimed at the **Selected Participants**.



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