



Lilian Gladeau, Elder

Theme: Culturally Appropriate Services for Indigenous Women

Lilian is an Elder in the Indigenous community and she shared her experiences working with Indigenous families experiencing domestic violence. Her comments are based on her experience with Victims' Services in Maskwacis and her work at an on-reserve shelter.

Critical Elements

- Supports should always include a basic need component, because often women who are fleeing domestic violence do not have money, home, kitchen supplies, furniture or warm clothing.
- Integration of cultural teachings are important for Indigenous women: e.g., the teepee teachings, referral to an elder or to a cultural sweat, teaching them how to sew traditional clothing or make moss bags. I always remind them when things are working so great, make a little offering to the creator, a little bannock and soup. You and your family can do it, prayer works for anybody but you have to learn to practice prayer, you have to believe you want to change, that's why they have cultural programming in some shelters.
- Teaching women skills for independent living should be another part of service delivery. If they are going to go on their own they need to understand how they are going to maintain the home by themselves.
- We talk to them in our own language which is a Cree language. If you talk to people in your own language then you have more impact for understanding.
- Personal relationships are important - when they know who you are, the people would come to you and say I need to talk to you, and I have to give it some time.
- Those supporting Indigenous women should be available as needed and over a long term, to provide immediate and continuous support and encouragement, and involve the whole family if necessary. ("Don't give up on them, don't shut the doors on what's going to work with this individual, maybe you have to involve the whole family too.")
- Women must be ready and willing to participate in programming, otherwise it will not work.