



Rick Makokis, Elder, Family Support Worker

Domestic Violence Treatment Program, St. Paul and District Crisis Association

Theme: Perpetrator Accountability

This is a treatment program for men and families that utilizes Indigenous traditional knowledge to address the issue of domestic violence. The program is provided out of the Columbus House of Hope which is a shelter for abused women and it works with groups of men who have been charged with domestic violence offences.

Critical Elements

- The program talks about traditional circle of life. In the centre of the circle is the leaf which means ceremony, in the next circle are children linked together, then in the next circle are hunter gatherers and protectors - the roles that the men and women played together. This is compared to how it actually is today: children are outside of the circle and addictions and abuse are in the middle.
- When people are confronted with the loss of identity, they turn to violence; through traditional knowledge and experience we bring identity back. Each program session starts with a pipe ceremony, and finishes up with a sweat ceremony and a letting go ceremony.
- Including an elder the program has three facilitators who make themselves available by phone to the participants (creating a kind of a family – there is always someone with you).
- It is important to work on people's strengths not weaknesses.
- The groups help men get back to the Indigenous traditional values, which is love and sharing. The program uses traditional Indigenous knowledge, is based on the Medicine Wheel, discusses men's and women's roles and Indigenous culture as it was before the arrival of the visitors.
- Experiential approach based on creative exercises and activities helps participants connect easier with the subject area.
- Recognition that it takes time and sometimes years to address the impact of the trauma and the loss of identity that expresses in addictions and domestic violence.
- This is not work it is what I do, it is the way of life. I maybe situated as an Elder or an outreach worker, but I work within the communities to build their strengths, and I'm driven by my passion for humanity from all walks of life.