

# Lessons from the Field

*Successful Collaborative Practice  
for the Prevention of Family Violence*



**NEXTPOINT**  
*collaborative*

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- Spousal Abuse Advisory Committee, Rankin Inlet, Nunavut;
- Together for Justice Collaborative, Watson Lake, Yukon;
- Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, Calgary, Alberta;
- London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, London, Ontario;
- Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program, Inukjuak, Nunavik, Quebec;
- Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships, Moncton, New Brunswick; and
- Purple Ribbon Task Force on Family Violence, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

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### **Lessons from the Field: Successful Collaborative Practice for the Prevention of Family Violence**

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## Executive Summary

This report highlights lessons learned from seven Canadian family violence collaboratives on the key values/principles, and essential processes and problem-solving approaches to creating and implementing successful partnerships. The report will be of particular interest to family violence practitioners, policy makers, and funders, as well as to others in the health and social justice fields. It contributes to a growing body of collaborative practice research.

These seven partnerships for family violence prevention were selected from all Canadian regions, southern and northern Canada, large and small communities, and urban and rural areas. Together, these groups offer a rich body of knowledge about approaches to collaboration among diverse groups of stakeholders.

Our study of these groups revealed nine elements that contribute to successful collaboration:

- 1) believing in the value of collaboration;
- 2) creating a “culture” of collaboration;
- 3) staying goal-oriented;
- 4) being a good collaboration leader and member;
- 5) practicing inclusion and engagement;
- 6) valuing and sharing power;
- 7) working through conflict;
- 8) providing coordination and infrastructure;
- and 9) reflecting and learning.

For existing collaborations, these findings emphasize the importance of reflection and ongoing learning, whether through experience or formal learning, to ensure that their practices continue to be helpful to individual participants and create collective social value for their organizations. Understanding and balancing power differentials and addressing conflict are also important in successful collaboration. For new partnerships, lessons from the field reinforce the importance of early and ongoing dialogue, relationship building, problem solving, and concrete action.

## Introduction

Over the last three decades, many health, justice, and social service providers; educators; funders; researchers; concerned citizens; and First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations, as well as all levels of government, have worked collaboratively to respond to and prevent family violence. Through coalitions, inter-agency committees, joint initiatives and project-based partnerships, these community innovators have developed expertise and a rich body of knowledge about how to work effectively across sectors on a very challenging issue. However, little research has been done to document and share these success stories or to develop insights into what contributes to collaboration success.

This report highlights lessons learned by these community innovators and provides first-hand knowledge of key values/principles, essential processes, and problem-solving approaches to creating and implementing collaborative partnerships. The report will be of particular interest to family violence practitioners, policy makers and funders, but will also contribute to emerging knowledge of effective cross-sector collaboration on health and social justice issues in Canada and beyond.

The report authors, Dianne Kinnon and Wanda Jamieson, have worked for several decades at the national level in support of government, not-for-profit and Aboriginal responses to family violence, violence against women, and child abuse. We also are founders of [Nextpoint Collaborative](#), an emerging network that supports people, organizations and communities to work effectively together for sustainable social impact. Nextpoint applies state-of-the-art knowledge and practical experience to improve collaborative processes and outcomes.

## Research Method

We chose to explore family violence collaboration by identifying “successful” multi-sector groups and programs, as defined by the participants themselves, and preparing narrative case studies on their approach, activities, processes and structures. For this research, a collaboration is considered successful if, in the general view of its members, it meets or exceeds their expectations, creates shared value, and has an impact on the community. Using a variety of outreach methods, we identified seven diverse, multi-sector family violence collaboratives from across Canada, involved them in the research process, and created brief case studies that yielded insights into their collaborative structures and processes.

We used the following criteria to identify family violence collaborations for the research. Collaborations had to:

- directly involve at least three different sectors, e.g., health, social services, justice, education, housing, employment services, community services, governments, the private sector;
- address primary, secondary or tertiary prevention of child abuse/maltreatment, partner violence, or family violence in general; and
- be a community-based initiative.

## Identifying Family Violence Collaborations

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Potential case studies were identified through a variety of means. An internet search was conducted and email inquiries were sent out by the project team and Public Health Agency of Canada – Family Violence Initiative staff to approximately 60 national, provincial and territorial networks and organizations. These case studies were peer-recommended by government policy and program representatives, funders, and family violence research/practitioner groups.

We received responses to the inquiries over a month-long period and, based on suggestions provided, created a “short list” of about 20 possible groups which the team narrowed down to 12 that reflected a good cross-section of issues, age and composition of groups, types and geographical location of communities, and approaches to collaboration. The team then contacted group chairs and coordinators by email and telephone to gather further information and explore the group’s interest in participating in the project. Among those contacted, two groups did not, on further investigation, meet the selection criteria. Three others either were not able to schedule a time for a group teleconference interview with their members, or, after initial interest, did not respond to follow-up emails. The selection process resulted in seven family violence collaborations being included in the research. They are briefly described below.

### Selected Family Violence Prevention Groups

Family Violence Collaboration	Description
Spousal Abuse Advisory Committee Rankin Inlet, Nunavut	Advisory committee to a spousal abuse counselling program that also functions as an inter-agency committee and network for an evolving group of services providers.
Together for Justice Collaborative, Watson Lake, Yukon	Intensive multi-agency workshops were used to create a common understanding and framework. Collaboration protocol between RCMP and Aboriginal women’s society.
Calgary Domestic Violence Collective Calgary, Alberta	Sixty member agencies and systems with a long history. Infrastructure, multiple activities and program spin-offs. Ongoing reflections on collaboration.

Family Violence Collaboration	Description
London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse London, Ontario	Twenty-five member agencies, long history and many initiatives. The diversity of the group has required flexible approaches. Feminist values and open discussion of power and conflict.
Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program Inukjuak, Nunavik, Quebec	Provincial program being adapted to Inuit community values and ways of working. Uses an informal, relationship-based approach to increase collaboration and program reach.
Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships Moncton, New Brunswick	One of 14 New Brunswick regional networks. Dual role in network coordination and outreach/referral services has been challenging.
Purple Ribbon Task Force on Family Violence Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island	Small municipal-led awareness and prevention group that has been coordinating community-wide campaigns since the 2000s. Relies on close working relationships.

We believe the seven groups provide the diversity we sought. These collaboratives represent a balance of Canadian regions, southern and northern Canada, large and small communities, urban and rural communities, and well-established and newer groups. Three of the groups are led by First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, and others include affected populations. The groups address different types of violence, including violence against women, relationship violence and child maltreatment. Together, these collaboratives offer a rich body of knowledge about approaches to collaboration among a diverse group of stakeholders.

## Data Collection and Analysis

When contacting groups to explore their suitability for the research, we also discussed with them the nature of the project and their potential interest in participating. Group contacts were asked to forward relevant background documents and participate in a group teleconference interview with five to seven of their members. If the teleconference wasn't possible, they were asked to suggest an alternative means of providing detailed information on their collaboration. Groups were informed verbally and in writing that all information collected would remain anonymous and confidential, and that they would have the opportunity to review and correct case-study narratives before publication. In one case, the research team completed a formal ethics review process for one of the member agencies.

Interview questions were developed from the authors' previous work identifying sixteen factors that contribute to effective cross-sector collaboration.<sup>1</sup> These sixteen factors relate to pre-existing conditions among the partners, the formative stage of the collaboration, the use of structures and processes that support collaborative work, and a commitment by the group to

<sup>1</sup> Nextpoint Collaborative, *Factors that Contribute to Effective Cross-sector Collaboration – What Does the Research Tell Us?*, 2015, [www.nextpointcollaborative.com](http://www.nextpointcollaborative.com)

collaborative tasks and activities. The factors were adapted into interview questions that asked about the group’s membership and activities, how collaboration is defined and discussed, the benefits of collaboration, the collaborative structures used, decision-making techniques, resource management, accountability, managing conflict, addressing power differentials, collaborative processes (coordination, orientation and training, assessment), and success factors (what has contributed to success and how the collaboration could be strengthened). Interview questions are provided in Appendix C. Groups were sent the interview questions ahead of time.

In summary, group teleconference interviews were conducted with members of five collaboratives, with supplementary individual interviews of key absent members completed in three cases. One collaborative responded to the questions through email and another used a telephone interview with a program representative complemented by a review of the case narrative by two members.

Once they were drafted, reviewed, and revised based on changes provided by the collaboratives, the case narratives were content analyzed and compared to identify common themes, similarities and differences in approach, and factors in success. While the team recognized a good deal of congruence with the 16 factors identified in the research literature on cross-sector collaboration (cite) that were used to develop the interview questions, we elected to let the themes for the report emerge from the case narratives.

The next section of the report presents the key themes, as revealed in the case narratives, that contribute to successful collaboration for the prevention of family violence. Detailed reports of each of the case studies (including information on the purpose, formation and operation of the groups, as well as success factors, strengths and challenges) can be found in Appendix B.

## The Benefits of Collaboration

The groups in our study identified many benefits of collaboration in family violence work, both personal and professional, including connections with other service providers, increased effectiveness, possibilities for learning, shared information, and the ability to take on bigger projects.

*In Moncton, New Brunswick, one of the greatest benefits identified by participants in the Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships is in connections with other service providers. This makes interveners’ jobs easier because they know there will be follow-up with clients.*

Members spoke of the value of the expanded networks, personal working relationships, and “transformational” learning they experienced through working closely with individuals and organizations they may not otherwise have had the chance to know or work with. These direct



*“We all deal all deal with the same issues in our jobs; when collaboration is there, we are able to reach out to other services/programs for help.”*  
*Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Counselling Program Advisory Committee*

relationships result in tangible benefits to clients and contribute to greater effectiveness among service providers and agencies.

*Members of the Charlottetown Purple Ribbon Task Force on Family Violence identify a number of benefits to their collaboration, including the opportunity to pool resources and expertise and achieve more through a coordinated approach; using the networks created to inspire other initiatives; and the shared sense of ownership of the issues and solutions that this high profile collaborative is able to create.*

### Benefits of Multi-Sector Collaboration on Family Violence

The benefits of collaboration identified by key informants include:

- concrete changes in policies, protocols, and responses by member agencies as a result of joint initiatives and peer influence;
- greater policy influence and credibility through the presentation of a unified message by multiple agencies and institutions;
- the achievement of large-scale projects that would not be possible within one agency;
- personal growth and learning from working with other disciplines, populations and sectors;
- improved services to shared clients, especially those previously under-served or marginalized;
- a shared sense of “ownership” of the issues facing the community;
- collegial support and reduced personal isolation for those working in a very difficult field;
- the opportunity to pool resources, knowledge and expertise; and
- personal and professional connections.

*“[As a new program in the community,] collaborating with the other organizations and service providers gives credibility to the program. There are things we couldn’t do alone.”*

*Inukjuak Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program*

## Lessons from the Field: Successful Collaborative Practice

Given the many benefits of collaboration, our central question in this project was: What are the main features of successful collaboration in family violence work? A striking feature of the seven collaboratives studied is their diversity of approach. Clearly, one size does not fit all. The groups designed their structures and processes to support the specific work they intended to do and the unique circumstances of their communities, and these structures and processes have evolved when necessary to adapt to changing circumstances. This adaptability and flexibility were cited as key contributors to the groups' success and survival over time.

Members of all the collaboratives consider their group to be successful. Their experiences yield some common themes and lessons about the factors involved in successful collaboration that may provide guidance to others in developing multi-sector collaborations for the prevention of family violence. Below is a presentation of these factors in success grouped under nine key themes. They are:

1. Believing in the Value of Collaboration
2. Creating a "Culture" of Collaboration
3. Staying Goal-Oriented
4. Being a Good Collaboration Leader and Member
5. Practicing Inclusion and Engagement
6. Valuing and Sharing Power
7. Working through Conflict
8. Providing Coordination and Infrastructure
9. Reflecting and Learning.

### 1. Believing in the Value of Collaboration

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*"We are stronger as a whole. Collaboration strengthens our community and invites us to find solutions for the greater good."*

*London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse*

A common theme among the collaboratives is their members' belief that they can accomplish more together than apart, and that collaboration is worth the time and resources it takes. This conviction grows out of members' experiences of working together over time; rather than just being a mantra or abstract idea, it is based on group successes and achievements. While the groups had different goals and objectives and carried out a wide variety of activities, they all created perceived value for members. For example, the time invested in meetings, committees

and campaigns was viewed as “worth it” because no one agency could have achieved such successful outcomes on its own.

*“Advice? Dream big, but start small and do it well. Don’t take on more than you can handle and do a good job.”*  
*Moncton Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships*

## 2. Creating a Culture of Collaboration

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*At the Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, common values and ways of working collaboratively are shared through an orientation manual and an informal mentoring process for new members. New member agencies need to be recommended by an existing member, and in a few cases, individuals have been asked to leave the Collective if they do not uphold the group’s values.*

We were struck by the extent to which leaders and longer-term members of these successful multi-sector groups create an implicit collaborative “culture” which guides the behaviour of the members. Both formal and informal leaders set a tone for authentic, respectful interactions that is both a standard and expectation in group meetings, sub-committees, projects and individual member relations. A key value is tolerance for diversity. Leaders model collaborative behaviours and often mentor and monitor newcomers to the group. The groups overlook some non-collaborative behaviours,

expecting that members will eventually adopt the collaborative culture of the group, but also address divisive or disrespectful behaviour, either in a full group gathering or in side meetings. In the case of persistent problem behaviours and conflicts, groups have engaged in outside mediation or in some cases, excluded an individual from the collaborative.

Key informants in this study also noted that open, respectful discussion of race, gender, culture, and sexual and gender diversity enables groups to get to a deeper level of collaboration and inclusion.

*The Spousal Abuse Counselling Program Advisory Committee in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut also functions similarly to an inter-agency committee, and provides a forum for agency staff to meet face-to-face, get to know one another, and develop more effective working relationships. Developing personal relationships and building trust is essential in Northern communities where there often is a high turnover of agency staff.*

### 3. Staying Goal-Oriented

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One thing these successful collaborations have in common is their ability to stay focused on their shared goal, even in times of difficulty. All collaborations, and especially ones working on social and justice issues, experience outside pressures, diverging viewpoints and member conflict at one time or another. In spite of these stressors, effective collaborators are able to keep their purpose and vision front and centre – for example, ending family violence, improving services for victims and abusers, or building safer, healthier communities. If this common value is reinforced by leaders and upheld by members, it can be a strong motivating factor that helps groups persevere through difficulties. Unity of opinion (and always getting along) is considered less important than commitment to the overall goal.

*“For me it means we are not standing alone in our efforts, we work together for common goals, and it’s not just each little group trying to influence policy makers.”*  
*Calgary Domestic Violence Collective*

*“Short term projects are energizing. Things have worked best when we set timelines and deadlines, and we are not doing projects for the sake of doing projects.... We are very goal oriented.”*  
*Charlottetown Purple Ribbon Task Force*

A related strategy for success is planning short-term projects as well as long-term ones, and smaller projects as well as larger, so that group members will experience progress towards the shared goal.

*In Watson Lake, Yukon, the Executive Director of the Aboriginal women’s society and the Watson Lake RCMP Officer in Charge have a common vision and provide visible leadership for the Together for Justice Collaborative. The Executive Director “got the right people into the room” and the RCMP became strong champions of the collaborative process.*

### 4. Being a Good Collaboration Leader and Member

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Successful collaborations require both effective leaders and committed, engaged members. Considerable attention is often given to collaborative leadership qualities and skills; equally important in our minds are the commitment, knowledge and skills brought to the table by all members of the collaborative. In many cases, the “health” of the collaboration depends on the nature of the interactions among members. Leaders can set an important tone for these interactions, but they depend on everyone’s contribution.

## LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

*In Inukjuak, Quebec, the ability of the Coordinator of a new initiative – the Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program – to learn from and take direction from the community, and her intuitive understanding of the natural process of community collaboration, have been valuable assets in engaging community members and agencies in working together.*

Is there an “essence” of collaborative leadership, and is it learned or innate? We would say that there are skills and attributes that are shared by effective leaders, and while some of these traits seem intuitive to some people (who are considered “naturals” in “big picture” thinking, interpersonal relationships and organizing), all of us can learn and develop more collaborative leadership styles. The desired skills are both process- and outcome-oriented; good leaders create an environment in which people feel welcome, valued and included, as well as one that produces results and “gets things done.” Effective collaborative leaders also act as “champions” for the group within their own organizations and the community.

The leaders of the collaborations in this study are relationship builders and collaborative decision-makers. They combine a facilitative style with one that focuses on achieving outcomes. Other helpful leadership skills that emerged from the study include the ability to reflect back the overall vision of the group and set a direction, but then to delegate, empowering others to “own” the issue and lead in areas where they have expertise. Establishing subcommittees and task groups to implement the group’s overall plans and directives is an important way to both broaden leadership and delegate to project-specific smaller groups.

*“[How can you be successful in cross-cultural collaboration?] Maybe ‘just know you don’t know, and just ask.’ It is important to build competence in knowing how to ask. And enjoy the privilege of being useful.”*

*Inukjuak Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program*

Continuity in leadership also contributes to success – several of the collaborations in this study had had the same chair for many years. Another option is having co-chairs from different sectors; this provides a broader perspective on the issues and a wider range of leadership skills and knowledge while also sharing the tasks of group coordination and of representation on outside committees. Mentoring, and planning for leadership succession, also contribute to continuity and stability in the group.

*A major strength of the Charlottetown Purple Ribbon Task Force is the ongoing commitment and leadership of the same mayor since 2001. Mayor Lee acts as a visible and vocal champion of the Task Force, but also leads in a way that enables other committee members to feel ownership of initiatives and gives them the freedom to take a big idea and implement it in a way that meets the needs of the community.*

## MEMBERSHIP QUALITIES

Membership qualities have to do with how members interact with each other, conduct themselves in meetings, and are accountable to the group for their words and actions.

Individual members can either galvanize the energy of the group or create impediments to moving forward. Characteristics that contribute to the success of a multi-sector partnership include its representatives' ability to work well

with colleagues from agencies with different mandates, client bases and philosophies, and to act effectively as the “bridge” between the collaborative and their own organization. Representatives from other sectors or agencies need to be “champions” of the collaboration within their own organizations – sharing information, making and keeping organizational commitments, and ensuring there is ongoing support for both the collaboration and their full participation in it.

*“[There have been] some disappointments or missed opportunities but we have been open about acknowledging differences, disappointments and being sanguine about them... No one has walked away because it didn't quite meet their needs. There is serious sense of value for the collaboration itself.”*

*Charlottetown Purple Ribbon Task Force*

*Many of the participants in the Together for Justice Collaborative workshops in Watson Lake, Yukon, found the process to be personally transforming. Organizations committed to the two-year development process and were expected to send only those able to make decisions, which contributed to continuity and organizational buy-in.*

It is important for members to be willing to address interpersonal tensions or conflicts. Other member skills and attributes that contribute to the effectiveness of family violence collaborations are the ability to form personal relationships with co-collaborators, follow through on personal commitments, and remain open to new ideas and different ways of working together.

## 5. Practicing Inclusion and Engagement

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*The Spousal Abuse Counselling Program Advisory Committee in Rankin Inlet brainstorms about which agencies to invite to upcoming meetings – they try to involve key people that are concerned with family violence, and in particular those that are new to the community. It has an informal orientation process in which Program staff meets with new members before they attend their first meeting.*



These successful collaborations value inclusion and engagement of group members; they work to ensure all members, including new members, feel welcome, valued and respected in the group. Most of these groups make decisions by consensus (full agreement by all members to an action) or modified consensus (full discussion and exploration of an issue followed by a vote). Consensus-building practices ensure that all voices and perspectives are heard and considered, and that a full range of participants contribute perspectives to the discussion. Effective leaders are particularly sensitive to “smaller” and more marginal voices, and they facilitate the discussion in ways that draw out these members. Inclusive decision-making builds support for the actions under discussion and strengthens participant investment in the outcome. According to our key informants, it also creates better decisions.

***“One indicator of success is that I can bring a LGBTQ voice to the table ... this voice might not be heard without this group.”***  
***Calgary Domestic Violence Collective***

***As the Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program in Inukjuak, Quebec is a new initiative originating from outside of the community, the coordinator takes a lot of time to listen and to build relationships in the village, paying attention to the opinions of her Inuit workers, as well as to the pace of the community and its cultural practices.***

Similarly, effective collaborations engage agencies and community members through outreach, joint initiatives, consultations and events. Engagement in agency-to-agency and group collaboration is fostered through open communications, the willingness to adapt and change, healthy group dynamics, and mutual benefits/achievement of objectives. However, engagement does not necessarily mean equal participation; it is recognized and accepted that not all group members will participate and contribute to the same degree, and that levels of involvement may change over time and according to the issue being addressed.

***“Because of the high turnover of staff in the North, it takes longer to build trust between professionals, particularly like-minded professionals.”***  
***Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Advisory Committee***

***Members of the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse consider collaboration to be critical, yet there isn't always consensus on how best to work together. The group uses healthy dialogue to achieve collective solutions, and fosters inclusiveness and full participation among members.***

Another aspect of engagement had to do with the benefits the collective offers to individual members. The ability to form personal relationships with colleagues in other agencies, to get and share information on new initiatives and resources, and to make more effective referrals was named as a strong motivator for participating in inter-agency groups. Strong collaborations provide the forum for this sharing to happen.

## 6. Valuing and Sharing Power

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*The Calgary Domestic Violence Collective recognizes that larger organizations have more resources to contribute to the group than others, and that smaller agencies may not be able to participate as fully as the better-resourced institutions. However, the larger institutions see it as their community responsibility to contribute as much as possible.*

Group members who had reflected on the role of power and influence in their collaborative generally considered the power of certain agencies and individuals to be a positive force that could be harnessed for the collective good. Most groups appear to have an implicit understanding that some member organizations (by nature of their size, resources, and role in the service system) and individuals (through high profile roles or personality) have more power than others. The groups know that they need the power of these organizations and individuals to get things done. At the same time, these organizations and individuals need to accept that they sometimes carry more responsibility.

*“We made it a condition of the [developmental] workshops that higher management attend every meeting, no exceptions. It made an immense difference because the power was in the room.”*

*Watson Lake Together for Justice Collaborative*

It helps for the group to see the power that some members have as an essential resource for the collective. It is also important for those with more power, such as higher management and the larger agencies, to buy into the group’s vision and plans.

To make collaboration effective and to create change, it helps for the collaboratives to share power when possible. In successful multi-sector groups, some power-sharing is expected. Ideally, those with fewer resources and influence outside the group are treated as equal to those inside the group, although some key informants acknowledge this is not always the case. “Inner” and “outer” circles may develop, which can undermine trust and engagement.

Power and resource differentials among collaborators in resource-poor areas where funding competition is fierce can be very detrimental to collaboration. These groups require considerable relationship building and value reinforcement to keep these divisions from inhibiting group efforts. Newer collaborations also may take a particularly conciliatory approach to differences in the interests of building longer-term relationships.

*In the Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships in Moncton, New Brunswick, power differentials do exist due to factors such as different agency mandates and access to funding in the region. It is difficult in a rural, under-resourced area to not compete for funding, and the community can feel torn about which appeals to support.*



## 7. Working through Conflict

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*The London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse acknowledges that work on violence against women is not without conflict. There is a growing understanding that conflict sometimes results from dealing with vicarious trauma and supporting highly vulnerable women and children – a realization that can help committee members feel compassion for one another.*

Those working in the family violence field accept that differences of opinion and conflict are inevitable given the nature of the issue, especially when working across diverse sectors and service systems. The issue of family violence and its impact on individuals and communities can engender strong feelings. Historic conflict between, for example, shelters and police services, or Aboriginal Peoples and the justice system, can have a profound effect on a present-day inter-agency group. Healthy discussion and an honest but sensitive exploration of the issues can contribute to the strength of a collaboration, whereas unresolved or poorly-handled conflicts can be destructive to relationships, breaking down trust and affecting the ability of the group to create results together.

The stronger collaborations manage conflict proactively, either in the group as a whole or between individuals outside of meetings. Skilled collaborative leaders set and enforce a tone of respectful engagement and enable participants to feel safe in expressing opinions and being heard. Collaborations have successfully used facilitated one-on-one meetings, (in which a trusted group member assists the conflicted parties in discussing their differences), coaching in assertive behavior, and outside mediation to resolve conflicts. Newer collaborations may take a particularly conciliatory approach to inter-agency conflict in the interests of building longer-term relationships.

*The Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships in Moncton, New Brunswick has had some ongoing experience with conflict among its members as they try to sort out mandates and funding issues. They have engaged in some mediation and are now trying to operate in an open fashion where members can speak about issues that concern them while also working to rebuild trust.*

*“[In the early days] it was tense at times, people wouldn’t talk with each other. Mostly out of fear... A lot of it is about facilitation. Some behaviours we could ignore, but one time, we said ‘That is not okay, that’s not happening here.’ We were not shy about leading the group.”*

*Watson Lake Together for Justice Collaborative*

*The Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program in Inukjuak, Quebec faced some early challenges in evolving a shared conception of the program within the community. Differences of opinion with staff of already-existing agencies are handled most often through accommodation in order to minimize conflict. The Program takes a long-term view of relationship building based on flexibility and openness to other ideas and methods.*

## 8. Providing Coordination and Infrastructure

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It can be very helpful to have a designated agency or individual whose job it is to provide coordination or infrastructure. While most of the family violence collaborators we spoke with expect to and do contribute considerable time and in-kind resources to the group's operation, there are often "core" members who provide a good deal of the "backbone" coordination for the group. These agencies may be founding members of the collaborative, community catalyst agencies, or larger and better resourced organizations that can absorb extra costs and dedicate staff time to the group's efforts. Without these strong contributors, the smaller and more poorly resourced organizations would find it difficult to keep a collaboration going. This type of resource-sharing also becomes a way to balance power more equitably among members.

*In Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, the Spousal Abuse Counselling Program staff coordinates the activities of the Advisory Committee, and members participate and contribute time and resources to the extent that they can. Staff members in all agencies are time challenged and have limited financial resources, so the Committee has to be careful how much it takes on.*

The availability of resources does have a direct impact on the scope of the activities a group can undertake, and often partnerships in smaller communities and rural and remote areas are restricted in what they can take on even though they know that by working together they could make much better use of limited resources.

*Being a small committee, the Purple Ribbon Task Force in Charlottetown is able to operate effectively with the strong administrative support provided by the Mayor's office. The City's human resources office also has been centrally involved in coordinating staff training.*

***“We have some part-time staff who do project-specific work. Much of the management and administrative work falls to members of the Executive Committee and active Board members.”***

***Moncton Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships***

While considerable work can be accomplished by a healthy collaboration through in-kind donations of time and materials, clearly a great deal more can be done, and with less strain on members, with dedicated funding. Some of this funding can be used for a paid coordinator, whose role can include organizing and reporting on meetings, regularly distributing information and communicating with members, managing projects, events and campaigns, and attending external meetings.

In most cases, even when a collaboration has some dedicated funding, a member agency or other community organization provides “backbone” services such as financial management and office and meeting space.

***Beginning in 2008, the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, along with other family violence committees across the province of Ontario, was given funds for coordination from the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. The Committee used the funds to hire a part-time project manager.***

## 9. Reflecting and Learning

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We found that only a few of the groups in this study discuss the process of collaboration; rather, they say it is “just something we do” and “we learn and grow together, usually “on the fly.” Especially in the less formal collaborations, learning to work together more effectively often is an experimental process of trying different methods and modifying them to suit changing needs and participants – a trial and error approach. Members don’t believe they have the time, with many pressing issues and needs to address, to monitor and reflect on collaborative work processes and structures. However, they do acknowledge the value of monitoring and reflection, and wish they had more time to discuss the strengths and challenges of collaboration and to reflect on what is working well and what could be improved.

***Most of the learning in the Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program is “on the job” – team members try different methods and adjust plans based on the outcomes. It is a very experimental process. Two individuals outside of the community act as “sounding boards” and provide personal support to the Program Coordinator.***

In contrast, some of the groups do build in regular review of their collaborative practices through member surveys, group discussions, annual strategic planning sessions and project evaluation.

*“We learn and grow together although this is usually on the fly. There are ongoing conversations about collaboration and also opportunities for professional development through Pillar Nonprofit, a local organization that supports social innovation and cross-sector collaboration.”*

*London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse*

While many of these collaborations build in occasional professional development sessions and share new knowledge, few include formal learning and opportunities to develop the skills and expertise needed to collaborate effectively. “Learn to do by doing” is the norm – skills are modeled by more experienced collaborators and informal mentoring of emerging leaders takes place.

*Calgary Domestic Violence Collective does an annual review of its work and collaboration processes to see if it is “on track” and making best use of its opportunities and resources. Every two years the group holds a community consultation to identify new needs and priorities, as well as strategic opportunities for their limited resources.*

Members in most of the collaborations said they thought they could do a better job of orienting new members and preparing them for full participation in the group. A few groups have a short orientation package with relevant documents, and others provide a verbal orientation for new members during and outside meetings. But again, learning the “culture” of the group is more of an experiential process, perhaps most successful in groups with a longer history, a clear purpose and a strong orientation toward collaboration.

*In Watson Lake, Yukon, over 30 government and community organizations met for a series of eight two-day workshops in a two-year process of relationship building and mutual learning. The workshops were carefully constructed to provide a safe environment for all participants in order to address barriers that had been built up for many reasons.*

## Challenges Facing these Family Violence Collaborations

Key informants identified some of the challenges they face in collaborating successfully:

- turnover of agency staff and group representatives, especially in rural and remote communities, making it difficult to form ongoing working relationships and develop as a group;
- lack of capacity (staff time, resources, knowledge) to develop the structures and processes to support effective collaboration;
- long-standing distrust among service agencies and community members and between institutions, Aboriginal Peoples and marginalized populations;
- a lack of time/urgency of other issues that prevents members from creating written documentation of the collaborative and its history, and from doing orientation for new members, regular reflection or strategic planning;
- a lack of funding, and therefore a preoccupation with fundraising, that limits the initiatives the group can undertake; and
- the need to work with dual mandates: for example, to provide services as well as support a wider network.

## Key Factors in Successful Collaboration

Each of the groups that participated in our research recounted both strengths and achievements as well as barriers and challenges in working well together. Certainly none of the groups would say they had all of the answers to successful collaboration; nevertheless, they all shared insights and accumulated knowledge related to their collaboration experience. The key points that arose under each of the themes are summarized below.

### 1. Believing in the Value of Collaboration

- Members hold a strong conviction that they can accomplish more together than apart, which grew out of their experience of working together over time rather than being an abstract idea.
- Members are able to identify personal, professional and agency benefits to collaborating.

### 2. Creating a “Culture” of Collaboration

- Leaders and longer-term members create an implicit collaborative “culture” which guides the behaviour of members.
- Leaders model collaborative behaviours and often mentor and monitor newcomers to the group.

### **3. Staying Goal-Oriented**

- The group is able to stay focused on their shared goals even in times of difficulty.
- Leaders reinforce shared goals and members uphold common values.

### **4. Being a Good Collaboration Leader and Member**

- Both effective leaders and committed, engaged members are needed.
- Leadership skills are both process- and outcome-oriented; collaborative leaders are relationship-builders and collaborative decision-makers.
- Continuity in leadership is an asset.
- Individual members can either energize the group or create impediments to moving forward.
- Useful member skills and assets include working well with diversity, acting as a bridge to their agency, and ensuring ongoing support for their participation.

### **5. Practicing Inclusion and Engagement**

- The collaborations value and practice inclusion and engagement by welcoming new members, using consensus decision-making and engaging everyone in discussions.
- They also reach out to other agencies and community members, communicate openly and are willing to adapt and change.
- The groups foster personal and professional relationships among members.

### **6. Valuing and Sharing Power**

- Groups that had reflected on the role of power and influence among group members consider powerful agencies and members to be collective resources.
- Agencies with power and resources are expected to share these assets.
- Collaborators in resource-poor regions require considerable relationship building and values reinforcement to overcome divisions that result from competition for funds.
- Successful newer collaborations take a more conciliatory approach to differences in order to build longer-term relationships.

### **7. Working through Conflict**

- Collaborators in family violence prevention accept that differences of opinion and conflict are inevitable, and know that historic relationships between agencies, sectors or Peoples can affect current relationships.
- Healthy discussion and honest exploration of issues contribute to collaborative strength while unresolved divisions can be destructive.
- The stronger collaborations manage conflict proactively, using a variety of methods.



## 8. Providing Coordination and Infrastructure

- Most collaborators expect to put time and resources into the group's efforts, but a core group often provides "backbone" coordination.
- The availability of resources has a direct impact on the scope of activities undertaken, and a lack of resources disadvantages smaller groups in rural and remote areas.
- Dedicated staffing removes some strain from members.

## 9. Reflecting and Learning

- Many collaboratives learn to work together through an experimental process of trial and error, feeling they lack the time for more formal learning.
- Other groups have built in learning opportunities and a regular review of their collaborative practices.
- The groups acknowledge the value of monitoring and reflection, and would like to develop better orientation materials and processes for new members.

## Implications for Ongoing Practice

Collaboration in the family violence field takes place in a particular context that both enhances opportunities for success and presents particular challenges. Most individuals involved in the issues of child abuse/maltreatment and interpersonal violence bring passion and commitment to their work. Ultimately motivated by the desire to end violence, they work to ensure that survivors are treated compassionately and receive the support they need to heal, and abusers are held accountable while also receiving the services they need so they won't reoffend.

Advocates and service providers are looking for practical solutions, ones that necessarily involve good working relationships with a range of agencies and institutions. Those in the field also recognize that solutions to family violence require systems change and a concerted effort across social services, health, justice, education, and many other sectors. Their passion and knowledge makes them highly motivated to work together toward a goal. However, conflict can result from strong beliefs about the causes of and solutions to violence, as well as differences in institutional policies and work practices. As these case studies showed, differences in approach and opinion can contribute either to innovation and growth or to discord and dysfunction.

A strength of the movement to prevent family violence is its solid history of collaboration. Interagency efforts on the issue began in the 1980s and practitioners today can draw on several decades of expertise, knowledge, and experience in working with others.

The nine themes identified among these family violence collaborations are consistent with a growing body of collaborative practice research (Nextpoint Collaborative, 2015). Collaborators are most likely to succeed when they recognize the importance of context and of developing common goals. They spend the time needed to shape a shared vision and values. Structures and processes are developed to support respectful relationships and open dialogue, and to acknowledge and honour participants.

Successful collaborations achieve a duality of good process and concrete outcomes. Leaders demonstrate a high level of interpersonal and task management skills. In these groups, collaborative practice is very intentional, even if it is not described as such.

While a collaborative approach seems to be intuitive to some practitioners, collaborative practices can be refined and instilled in others. The “collaborative culture” that these successful groups created was sustained through modeling and mentoring of new members.

For existing collaborations in the health and social justice fields, these findings emphasize the value of reflection and ongoing learning, whether experiential or formal, to ensure their practices continue to be worthwhile to individual participants and to create collective social value for their organizations. Understanding and balancing power differentials, and addressing conflict also are important in successful collaboration. For new partnerships, lessons from the field reinforce the value of early and ongoing dialogue, relationship building, problem solving and concrete action.



## Appendix A – Overview of Case Studies

The table below briefly describes the seven case studies.

Name Community	P/T	Community Type	Population Focus	Issue	Sectors
Spousal Abuse Advisory Committee Rankin Inlet, Nunavut	NU	Small remote, Inuit community	Abusers, family members, youth	Family Violence	Police Justice Shelter Health Social services
Together for Justice Collaborative Watson Lake, Yukon	YK	Northern First Nation community	Aboriginal women, community members	Violence against women	Dene Nation Aboriginal Women's Society RCMP Yukon Women's Coalition
Calgary Domestic Violence Collective Calgary, Alberta	AB	Large city and surrounding rural area	Women, men, families, youth, newcomers and minorities	Family violence	Newcomers Justice Health Social Women's services
London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse London, Ontario	ON	Small city and surrounding rural area	Women, children, men, minority groups	Violence against women	Social service agencies Shelters Health Justice Newcomers
Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program Inukjuak, Nunavik Québec	QC	Small remote Inuit community	Families and young children, community members	Child maltreatment	Community programs Health Police Men's association
Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships, Moncton, New Brunswick	NB	Anglophone/ Francophone rural region	Broad community, women, men, youth	Relationship violence	Counselling services Justice Health Education Shelters
Purple Ribbon Task Force on Family Violence, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island	PE	Small city	Broad community, women, men, youth	Relationship violence	Municipal gov't Shelters Sexual assault centre Status of Women

## Appendix B – Family Violence Collaboration Cases Studies

### Spousal Abuse Advisory Committee, Rankin Inlet, Nunavut

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#### MANDATE

The Spousal Abuse Counselling Program in Rankin Inlet was developed in the early 2000s to respond to high levels of family violence and a lack of local services and programs for victims and offenders. A concerned leader in the justice system, the RCMP, and social services personnel, along with Elders and community members, worked together to design and find funding for a pilot program to improve family relations and reduce spousal violence. The program has now been operating for 15 years; its goal is to “reduce spousal abuse through the delivery of an innovative and culturally appropriate counselling program that is designed to assist abusers in changing the way they relate to others, particularly their spouses.” Once the program was well established, a community Steering Committee evolved into an Advisory Committee, (the program is hosted by Pulaarvik Kublu Friendship Centre, so it is overseen by its board of directors), which functions similarly to an inter-agency committee, bringing together all community services concerned with violence prevention.

#### MEMBERSHIP

Committee membership includes the territorial community justice specialist and 20 to 25 key service providers from justice services, the RCMP, victim support services, the women’s shelter, social services, child and family services, and the health centre. Elders and community members also participate, and Elder input is particularly valued. The Committee brainstorms about which agency representatives to invite to upcoming meetings; they try to involve key people that are concerned with family violence, and in particular those who are new to the community.

#### ACTIVITIES

The Spousal Abuse Counselling Program offers group and individual counselling to both male and female offenders, most of whom are court-mandated to attend. Other services include victim support and referrals to other services, safety planning, couples counselling where appropriate, and liaison with police, courts, probation services and social services. With the opening of the Meadowbank Mine near the community, which has a two weeks in/two weeks out work schedule, it is more difficult for clients to attend ongoing group counselling sessions. As a result, program staff has been doing more outreach and education, including holding healing workshops at the correctional facility, providing community counselling on-site at the mining camp, and making presentations to youth in the high school.

The Advisory Committee meets twice yearly to provide input and advice about the delivery of the Spousal Abuse Counselling Program. Advisory Committee members share information and program updates at meetings, address issues and gaps in services, and propose changes in policies and procedures to better support families experiencing violence. The Committee does not share information on individual cases due to confidentiality protocols, but it is able to collaborate on systems-level changes. In May 2015, Committee members worked together to offer a four-day psycho-educational workshop in trauma and family violence for 30 service providers from across the Kivalliq region, and they are planning a smaller community event for the fall.

## **APPROACHES TO AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION**

Members reflected that collaboration usually “just happens” in small remote communities, because it must in order to “get the work done.” The Spousal Abuse Counselling Program Advisory Committee provides the forum for agency staff to meet face-to-face, get to know one another, and develop more effective working relationships. Networking, referrals and mutual support can then occur more easily. Developing personal relationships and building trust is essential in Northern communities where there often is a high turnover of agency staff, and newcomers need to quickly learn “who does what.” Another major benefit to meeting is learning what other agencies are doing, which contributes to everyone’s effectiveness. Members also can use the bi-annual gatherings to address major issues and emerging needs, and to jointly solve problems.

## **LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

Spousal Abuse Counselling Program staff has provided dedicated leadership to both the program itself and the Advisory Committee. Over the years, the group has had champions in the community, in the justice system, and at the Friendship Centre. Committee decisions on joint activities and follow-up are made by consensus.

## **MANAGING CONFLICT AND POWER DIFFERENTIALS**

Group members report that they haven’t experienced a lot of conflict on the Committee. One area of difference that the Committee has had to deal with is varying restrictions related to confidentiality in community agencies compared to government institutions. While this issue has created some tensions, group members do their best to work with each other’s policies and procedures.

## **COORDINATION**

The Spousal Abuse Counselling Program staff coordinates the activities of the Advisory Committee, and members participate and contribute time and resources to the extent that they can. Staff members in all agencies are time challenged and have limited financial resources, so the Committee has to be careful how much it takes on.

## **ONGOING LEARNING**

The Advisory Committee has an informal orientation process in which Program staff meet with new members before they attend their first meeting to provide background information and put them at ease. Meetings include information sharing and speakers on the chosen theme or topic, and members are able to ask questions and seek advice from the Elders who attend.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS**

The Advisory Committee considers itself successful in supporting and expanding a prevention and treatment program that is seen as a best-practice model in Nunavut and beyond. It successfully shares information that enables members to better address family violence in the community. Members believe the group reduces the negative effects of staff turnover that make it difficult to form long-term relationships and reach a common understanding of problems and solutions. The Committee provides a forum where longer-term staff and community members can influence newcomers. For example, reaching out to and sharing information and perspectives with new RCMP officers has recently resulted in the police making more referrals to the Justice Committee for restorative healing processes.

## **STRENGTHS**

Strengths of this collaboration include the dedicated and highly respected staff at the Spousal Abuse Counselling Program, the early and ongoing backing of the community (in particular victims of abuse and program participants), and the involvement of Elders. The flexible and informal nature of the group also enables them to respond to changing needs and to make best use of limited time. For those who have lived and worked in the community over many years, there is a greater personal investment and people care more deeply about the families, although this can be both an advantage and a disadvantage.

## **CHALLENGES**

The main challenges the group faces are staff turnover, gaps in representation, and lack of time. As one member said, “You just get to the point of having a close working relationship with another service provider and they leave the community, and you have to start all over again with

the new person.” In some cases, organizations are unable to send representatives to meetings because of unfilled positions and other pressing priorities, creating gaps in the network. Advisory Committee members have said that if time permitted, they would like to do more education and training in the community and region, do more for youth and young offenders, and mobilize the community around violence prevention. They would like to undertake more joint actions, but because of lack of time, these activities would need to be integrated into regular agency duties, rather than being add-ons.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Website: [www.pulaarvik.ca/counselling/spousalAbuse.html](http://www.pulaarvik.ca/counselling/spousalAbuse.html)

Telephone: 867-645-3785

## Together for Justice Collaborative, Watson Lake, Yukon

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### MANDATE

The Together for Justice Collaborative grew from concerns about a large number of negative experiences Aboriginal women were having with the RCMP, concerns shared by Yukon women's organizations. These experiences were interfering with women's safety from domestic and sexual violence. A territory-wide review of RCMP practices was also underway at the time. The Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS) secured funds from the RCMP, Status of Women Canada, Canadian Women's Foundation, Yukon Women's Directorate, and Justice Canada for a two-year engagement process. Over 30 government and community organizations met for a series of eight two-day workshops on the justice system, policing, First Nations culture, historical colonialism and residential schools. Catherine Richardson and Allan Wade, from the Centre for Response-Based Practice on Vancouver Island, facilitated the two-year process of relationship building and mutual learning about language, violence and responsibility. This initiative culminated in March 2013 with the signing of a Safety Protocol by LAWS and the Watson Lake RCMP "to create safety and justice for women through increased collaboration between the RCMP, LAWS, and community agencies." The Protocol established principles, objectives and core commitments that capture the new relationship.

Since the Protocol was signed, First Nations, community agencies and the RCMP have continued to meet and work together on community justice issues. The mandate of the Together for Justice Collaborative is to cooperatively address and prevent violence towards Aboriginal women in the Laird-Watson Lake area.

### MEMBERSHIP

Representatives from LAWS (women from the Kaska First Nation near Watson Lake), RCMP officers from Watson Lake and Whitehorse, the Yukon Women's Coalition, and other justice and social services organizations participated in the initial workshops. Current membership in the Watson Lake Together for Justice Collaborative includes social services, probation services, police services, women's shelters and First Nations organizations. Agencies are expected to make an ongoing commitment to the work of the group.

### ACTIVITIES

The Safety Protocol is transforming the relationship that the RCMP has with local First Nations. LAWS and the Watson Lake RCMP have held joint community meetings to address issues of concern to the community. Leaders from the two organizations now work actively together to share systems-level information and address service gaps and problems, and community

members know that they can take policing and justice concerns directly to either organization for a joint solution.

The Collaborative meets several times a year to share information and address issues. It has conducted research on effective Indigenous and social justice practices for interagency groups, and on approaches to addressing and preventing violence toward women. It also has plans to coordinate a White Ribbon Community Campaign, establish a youth council, and increase youth programming while continuing with community information-sharing and planning meetings.

## **APPROACHES TO AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION**

The series of workshops leading up to the Safety Protocol provided a process for increasing mutual understanding among First Nations women, RCMP officers, and other service providers in the community. The workshops were carefully constructed to provide a safe environment for all participants in order to address barriers that had been built up for many reasons. At the same time, workshop facilitators maintained a focus on the nature of colonial violence by Europeans and the Canadian state, the intersection of racism and violence against Aboriginal people, and First Nations' experiences of colonialism and cultural suppression, and they challenged behaviours in the group that reinforced these attitudes and practices. While many RCMP members were skeptical and fearful of the process at the beginning, they soon responded positively to the respectful and forward-moving tone of the meetings.

Many of the participants found the process to be personally transforming, and the initiative has resulted in numerous concrete changes in RCMP practices as well as improved collaboration among various organizations. For example, due to the personal relationships developed, Aboriginal women now play an active role in informing RCMP practices and policies, and a community survey indicates that women feel safer and feel that their needs are being addressed. Community members are more willing to make statements to the police, and the number of complaints against the RCMP has dropped.

## **LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

Both the LAWS Executive Director and the Watson Lake RCMP Officer in Charge have a common vision and provide visible leadership for the Safety Protocol and the Together for Justice Collaborative. Organizations committed to the two-year development process and were expected to send only those able to make decisions, which contributed to continuity and organizational buy-in. While there has been some turnover in community representation, a core group of First Nations women remains actively involved.

## **MANAGING CONFLICT AND POWER DIFFERENTIALS**

Not surprisingly, given the work they set out to do, the collaborators experienced tensions and disagreements along the way. In some cases, participants in the workshops were individually coached to bring up their concern in a respectful way; in other cases, the facilitators addressed the concern with the entire group. During the workshops, issues of race, gender and power were openly discussed, and exercises involving role reversals helped participants see the perspectives of others and recognize the “multiple positions” that many people occupy. An important part of the exercise involved contesting the stereotyping, victim-blaming, and stigmatizing of “the battered woman,” and of Indigenous women who have experienced violence, in order to provide a more effective and positive social response.

## **COORDINATION**

LAWS continues to play an administrative role in the Together for Justice Collaborative, working closely with the RCMP on joint activities and coordinating Collaborative meetings and events.

## **ONGOING LEARNING**

The workshops “opened minds” to different experiences and ways of doing things and provided a solid foundation for ongoing collaboration that includes voices from the community. The Collaborative builds on existing working relationships among Yukon Aboriginal women’s leaders and uses the workshop facilitators’ response-based practice approach which seeks to honour resistance to violence rather than seeing those who experience violence as passive victims.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS**

The Collaborative credits its success to a number of factors. The conditions at the time in Yukon were ideal for change, and the Together for Justice Collaborative offered the RCMP, First Nations communities, and service organizations a way to address significant and high profile problems. The leadership provided by the LAWS Executive Director and the RCMP Commanding Officer, as well as the facilitators’ relationship-building skills, provided a positive and productive experience. RCMP members also became strong champions of the process. While they required a substantial time commitment, the eight two-day intensive workshops allowed participants to delve deeply into the issues and create shared understandings. The Elders who attended fostered a caring environment, and women who spoke of their personal experiences were able to do so in a non-blaming way. Similarly, the Safety Protocol created by the process is written in plain, non-blaming language.



## **STRENGTHS**

Strengths of the Together for Justice Collaborative include the participants' commitment to the ongoing process of personal and organizational change, continuity in leadership and in core community participants, consistent participation of RCMP command level personnel, and the fact that the collaborative relationships are spelled out in a written document.

## **CHALLENGES**

The two main challenges facing the Collaborative have been turnover in RCMP staff and the capacity of LAWS to continue to lead with very limited staffing. All but one of the RCMP officers who attended the workshops have left the community. However, the Officer in Charge ensures that new staff follow the Safety Protocol, and mentors them in the importance of respectful relationships with First Nations. Another ongoing challenge is how to involve other key players, such as child protection agencies.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Website: [www.liardaboriginalwomen.ca](http://www.liardaboriginalwomen.ca)

Telephone: 867-536-2097

## Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, Calgary, Alberta

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### MANDATE

The Calgary Domestic Violence Collective (CDVC) was established in 1981 to address the issue of domestic violence in Calgary. Its mission is to create a safe community by eliminating all forms of abuse and neglect in intimate, dependent and trusting relationships through direct client services, justice coordination, and facilitated community action. Its purpose is to: 1) develop capacity to address domestic violence for professionals and allied professionals; 2) inform and influence decision makers around a framework for ending domestic violence; and 3) ensure a collaborative and coordinated community response. The Collective's statement of values stresses client centredness, the importance of research and innovative solutions, and a systems perspective that recognizes the root causes of domestic violence.

### MEMBERSHIP

The Collective currently has a membership of more than 60 non-profit organizations, government agencies, and service systems working in the areas of disabilities, justice, diverse community, sexual violence, shelter and housing, treatment, education, and seniors. Members include organizations serving rural areas as far as Banff and Cochrane, as well as provincial government agencies.

### ACTIVITIES

Activities include advocacy and policy advice to all levels of government, services coordination, and capacity building/training for service providers. Working groups, which lead or coordinate activities, include the Action Committee on Abuse and Disabilities; Engaging Men and Boys; Ethnically Diverse Communities; Safety under the Rainbow (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer issues); and Strengthening the Spirit (culturally competent services for Aboriginal Peoples); Informal Supports, Coordination Along the Service Spectrum; and Research into Best Practices. The Collective sponsors community consultations, prepares position papers, participates on city- and province-wide committees, issues media responses on issues, and addresses service gaps and emerging needs.

### APPROACHES TO AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

CDVC members address common concerns by first fully discussing an issue and deciding if they want to take collective action on it – ensuring that members provide the mandate to proceed. A question they often ask is: “how would this look if we did it in a collaborative way?” Common values and ways of working collaboratively are shared through an orientation manual and an informal mentoring process for new members. New member agencies need to be recommended

by an existing member, and in a few cases, individuals have been asked to leave the Collective if they do not uphold the group's values.

Collective members identify numerous benefits of working together. They appreciate that together, they are stronger and their reach is farther. There is power in a "collective voice" when advocating on issues. Members value being "a part of something bigger" than just their agency, as well as having the opportunity to work closely with a variety of people with a diversity of interests. Participants also report both personal and professional benefits, most importantly the network that the Collective provides; through personal relationships, they can get and give advice, solve problems, and make more effective client referrals. In a 2014 member survey, 82% of agency representatives agreed that other Collective members have positively influenced their agency's services or operation, and 91% felt they can better achieve their agency's goals of ending domestic violence by working together rather than alone.

## **LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

Representatives from 25 to 35 member organizations meet monthly, with members attending the meetings that are most relevant to their work. Full group meetings are used to update each other on activities and emerging issues, to provide collegial support and a "sounding board" for ideas, and to discuss and agree on joint actions. The Collective strives for consensus, which requires a thorough exploration of issues and accommodation of different perspectives. Agencies are asked to send representatives who are decision-makers so the group can continue to move issues forward.

## **MANAGING CONFLICT AND POWER DIFFERENTIALS**

Even though Collective members are passionate about the issues and emotionally invested in solutions, they report that they rarely experience open conflict in meetings. On the contrary, they observe a high degree of respect among the participants, who demonstrate the ability to listen to diverse viewpoints and to keep their common goals foremost. In some cases, tensions between members are quietly addressed through conversations that take place apart from the meeting.

There is recognition that larger organizations have more resources to contribute, and that smaller agencies may not be able to participate as fully. However, the larger institutions see it as their community responsibility to contribute as much as possible. The group views the power of individual organizations as a resource that helps the group influence change.

## **COORDINATION**

For the past three years, the Collective has had a full-time Administrator who works out of one of the member agencies that offers backbone support, including financial management. Prior to

that, members provided in-kind support and services to keep the Collective going. The CDVC still relies on considerable in-kind donations of time and funds to support their work. The current Administrator organizes meetings, takes and distributes minutes of Collective and sub-committee meetings, sends out weekly news, and attends external meetings on behalf of the Collective. The Collective discusses issues and decides how its limited resources will be allocated.

## **ONGOING LEARNING**

CDVC does an annual review to see if it is “on track” and making best use of its opportunities and resources. Every two years, the group holds a community consultation to identify new needs and priorities, as well as strategic opportunities for their limited resources. They regularly have speakers at meetings in order to increase their knowledge and their capacity to address the issues.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS**

CDVC members see significant progress in, for example, recognizing the unique needs of specific populations such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer and two-spirited people; engaging men and boys in ending violence; and influencing policy makers, corporations and government agencies. A key measure of success is that agencies continue to send representatives to meetings.

## **STRENGTHS**

Strengths of the Collective include a long history, common goals, and a high level of trust in the group. A core value is that no one member has more influence than the others, and participants are able to stay focused on solutions and on the people they serve. One of the co-chairs has been in the position since 2001, which provides continuity to the group. Group members are not afraid to question the work of the Collective or to hold each other accountable, in a good way, for positions on issues and ways of working together.

## **CHALLENGES**

While CDVC has had many successes, members believe there is still much that can be done by working together at the community level to broaden awareness of domestic violence. Members would like to further strengthen the Collective through ongoing training, a more thorough orientation for new members, and more information sharing about the roles of different agencies. They also see the value in sharing their story, history and accomplishments with other organizations, but finding the time to do so is always a challenge.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Website: [www.endviolence.ca](http://www.endviolence.ca)

Telephone: 403-802-2382

## London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, London, Ontario

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### MANDATE

The London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse (LCCEWA) grew out of a community advisory committee for a research project in 1980, and by 1981, it included service providers from police, criminal justice, probation and parole services, as well as women’s community services. The agencies and systems stayed together to exchange information, address significant service gaps and lack of coordination issues, and identify common challenges in order to advocate for systemic change. The Committee’s vision is to exercise leadership in the community in order to achieve social justice for women: “Through a coordinated response, we will strive to end violence against women and children, including sexual violence.” LCCEWA’s work is grounded in a feminist approach: a belief in equitable access to quality services, resources, and justice, and in engaging men and holding them accountable for their use of violence.

### MEMBERSHIP

Members include over 35 agencies from London and the surrounding area which focus on sectors and services such as justice, violence against women, shelters, health, education, child welfare, language and translation, offender programs, and mental health. LCCEWA committee members are committed to being agents of social change. An ongoing strategic priority is to actively recruit more representatives from various ethno-cultural and diversity organizations.

### ACTIVITIES

The Coordinating Committee uses collaboration to build energy and achieve greater collective impact for system change, including influencing government funders and policy makers. The LCCEWA achieves its objectives through a number of standing and task-based committees. For example, members have worked together on the “Make it Our Business” workplace education project, the “Neighbours, Families and Friends” project (a model that has been adopted as the domestic violence public education and awareness campaign by the Province of Ontario), and the “High Risk Domestic Violence Safety Project,” which engages high risk offenders in order to increase safety for women and children. Member agencies that work closely together, such as police services, the victim witness assistance program and the Crown Attorney’s office, have developed specific protocols to enhance their ability to collaborate more effectively. The city’s Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration grew out of a LCCEWA project.

### APPROACHES TO AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration is considered critical to individual member organizations and LCCEWA as a whole. Yet there isn’t always consensus on how best to collaborate given different service mandates and

agendas. LCCEWA uses healthy dialogue to achieve collective solutions, and fosters inclusiveness and full participation among members by regularly soliciting feedback from them as well as by leading community conversations on challenging issues such as mandatory charging.

Members benefit from a shared sense of ownership of the solutions they create together to end violence and abuse against women and children. They share knowledge, expertise, and experience that increase the impact of individual organizations and the collective body. Attending committee meetings and working on joint projects also helps agencies better understand what other organizations do, which leads to more appropriate referrals; working together also helps build stronger relationships between organizations. Members have said, “We are stronger as a whole. Collaboration strengthens our community and invites us to find solutions for the greater good.” Members also share program resource materials, and they develop more cost-effective approaches when working together rather than in isolation.

## **LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

LCCEWA reaches decisions through majority vote when a quorum of LCCEWA members are present. A wide range of decisions are made at the table on topics such as advocacy positions and new projects, funding for community events, and electing members to committees. LCCEWA is based on strong relationships and on organizations working together and holding each other accountable for what they say and do in the community, a process that the group continues to discuss and improve on at strategic planning sessions and regular meetings.

## **MANAGING CONFLICT AND POWER DIFFERENTIALS**

The Coordinating Committee acknowledges that work on violence against women is not without conflicts. Organizations have differing mandates, some individuals have personal agendas, and a lack of resources leads to general fatigue at having to endlessly “push the boulder up the mountain.” Due to their long history of working together, individuals can, in most cases, work through disagreements, but not always. There is a growing understanding that conflict sometimes results from dealing with vicarious trauma, engaging with high risk men, and supporting vulnerable women and children – a realization that can help committee members feel compassion for one another.

Committee members are highly aware of power differentials and have discussed this in meetings. There is a core group of service providers who work directly with women, children, and men, and these providers sit in positions of power within the group whether they want to or not. Sometimes the outer circle of members who work more indirectly feel less connected or are not sure where they fit. As well, there are some strong leaders, and their voices are often heard more. Power differentials are discussed between organizations and resolved if possible.

## **COORDINATION**

In 2008, LCCEWA, along with other family violence committees across the province, was given funds for coordination by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. The London Committee used the funds to hire a part-time project manager. The position has been important because previously all work was done by group members. Resources are managed by the Executive Committee and funds flow through Women's Community House, a local shelter which provides bookkeeping and auditing services.

## **ONGOING LEARNING**

Committee members say: "We learn and grow together." There are ongoing conversations about collaboration and ongoing opportunities for professional development, including through a local organization that supports community impact, networking, social innovation and cross-sector collaboration. LCCEWA reviews its collaboration practices through member surveys, group discussions and strategic planning sessions.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS**

Contributors to success identified by the group include: working on tangible projects with direct benefits to members, committing to a systems approach, focusing on areas of strength and expertise, and building on existing member initiatives. Members are also willing to work through conflict even when the going gets tough, as well as to show professional respect, celebrate successes, and acknowledge the hard work being done.

## **STRENGTHS**

LCCEWA has been in operation for more than 30 years and has had many successes during that time that would not have been possible without the effective collaboration of organizations across sectors. The group is able to come together, despite differences, to effect change and increase positive outcomes for women and children, as well as engaging with men who perpetrate the violence.

## **CHALLENGES**

Members think that the collaboration could be strengthened by continuing to highlight the work of member agencies so that everyone knows who does what and where their mandates intersect. Also, to ease the entry of new members, they are considering a buddy system that would pair a seasoned member with someone new to LCCEWA. They also are hoping to strengthen the Committee by deepening relationships and working "outside the box."



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Website: [www.lccewa.ca](http://www.lccewa.ca)

Telephone: 519-434-0077

## Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program, Inukjuak, Nunavik, Quebec

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### **MANDATE**

Launched in 2013, the Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program in Inukjuak, Nunavik (northern Quebec) is a pilot program with the goal of adapting a Quebec-wide initiative on Integrated Services in Perinatal and Early Childhood (ISPEC) to Inuit needs and contexts. The ISPEC program model has proven to be effective in supporting families and new parents and in reducing child maltreatment. It is being implemented in two northern Quebec communities and is supported by the public health department of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services. The implementation is not a “copy and paste” approach to the Quebec program. Those piloting the program are tasked with adapting the approach to the cultural values and ways of working together in an Inuit community, with the hope that the model can then be rolled out in other remote Inuit communities in Nunavik.

In Inukjuak, a four-member project team is taking a facilitative community-engagement approach to supporting families by promoting resilience and use of community supports. The program received initial support from the municipal council and the health committee, and the project team is now gradually building relationships and cooperation with other community agencies and organizations.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

The Ilagiilluta Program team works with healthcare providers at the health centre; traditional midwives from the local birthing centre; staff at Family House, which offers social and educational activities for young families; and the Unaaq Men's Association, among others. A community nurse and a psycho-educator from the health centre have been involved in delivering some of the services. A formal advisory committee or steering committee has not been formed at the local level (although there is a regional advisory committee), and collaboration mainly takes place on an informal basis, which seems to meet the needs of the program and the community. Program staff do attend Community Wellness Committee meetings in order to remain connected to that group.

### **ACTIVITIES**

Ilagiilluta – Let's Be Family Program reaches out to pregnant women, mothers, and children 0 to 5 years of age through a variety of means, including home visits, drop-ins, wellness activities and parent-child programs. Staff have been working with Family House to offer programs for young mothers and their children that, for example, combine cooking and traditional crafts with education related to child development, breast feeding, nutrition, FASD prevention, and so on. The program has also partnered with the men's association to promote father-child activities.

## **APPROACHES TO AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION**

As Ilagiilluta is a new initiative originating from outside of the community, it was important to set an innovative tone for the program and work with the community on the overall goal of family well-being. The Program Coordinator (who is not Inuk) takes a lot of time to listen to others and to build relationships in the village, paying attention to the opinions of her Inuit workers, as well as to the pace of the community and its cultural practices. She has hired three Inuit staff members from the community. She sought out individuals who were innovative and flexible, and provided them with in-the-field training so that they could take on most of the supportive service delivery to families. Program staff work actively with physicians and nurses at the health clinic and midwives at the birthing centre to promote the program and identify possible participants.

A key benefit of this approach is that families are much more open to a home visit that includes an Inuk staff member along with a non-Inuk healthcare provider; furthermore, when working together, Inuit and non-Inuit staff can more effectively assess the family's needs. Holding activities outside the health clinic also makes programming more accessible to parents and children. These and other partnerships have been instrumental in building acceptance of the program and reaching parents and families who otherwise would not necessarily seek help from the health clinic.

## **LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

Using a facilitative leadership style, the Program Coordinator makes program decisions in consultation with her Inuit staff and community partners/leaders. Available resources are shared with other community agencies as much as possible. For example, if additional project funds become available from the province or region, the program staff discusses options with other community agencies and often finds ways to share resources while building collaborative relationships and greater capacity in the community.

## **MANAGING CONFLICT AND POWER DIFFERENTIALS**

There have been some differences of opinion with staff of already-existing agencies that are handled most often through accommodation in order to minimize conflict. The Ilagiilluta Program takes a long-term view of relationship building based on flexibility and on openness to other ideas and methods. The focus has been on developing practical, concrete ways to work together.

## **COORDINATION**

Program coordination and collaboration are managed by the team with support from a physician and program champion who visits regularly and provides medical services in the community, as

well as a Public Health Officer for Children and Families based in Kuujjuaq (the regional administrative centre).

## **ONGOING LEARNING**

Most of the learning is “on the job”: team members try different methods and adjust plans based on the outcomes. It is a very experimental process. So far, team members have been oriented while doing the job; however, the Regional Board is now developing an accredited course for family education workers. The visiting physician, who was involved in the design and funding of the program, and the regional Public Health Officer act as “sounding boards” and provide personal support to the Program Coordinator. An evaluation of the pilot program is being planned; it will examine community engagement processes as well as early program outcomes.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS**

The success of the Inukjuak pilot program to date is credited to the staff’s sensitive adaptation of the mainstream model to Inuit values and ways of working together at a community level. Their experience shows that it is important not to come in with a preconceived idea of a “program” but to be innovative and open to change. The Program Coordinator’s commitment to taking direction from the community and her intuitive understanding of the natural process of community collaboration have been valuable assets. The opportunity to invest in longer-term relationship building through multi-year funding is also helping to create a strong foundation for the program.

## **STRENGTHS**

A particular strength of the Inukjuak pilot program is its commitment to balancing the proven success of this model as reported in the research literature with experiential learning in the local context. Being responsive to what’s working and what isn’t and then making changes is a program strength.

## **CHALLENGES**

The Ilagiilluta – Let’s Be Family Program faced some early challenges in developing a shared conception of the program within the community. Its approach of going slowly and being as accommodating of the local context as possible seems to be working. However, as in any front-line engagement with families in need, especially in a remote community, the risk of staff burnout is high, so ongoing support to the Program Coordinator is crucial. The Program staff is also conscious of the need to share success stories with the Regional Board so it remains informed and supportive.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Website: [www.rrsss17.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.rrsss17.gouv.qc.ca)

Telephone: 819-964-2222, ext. 294

## Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships, Moncton, New Brunswick

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### MANDATE

In 1990, three agencies in Moncton established the Coalition Against Abuse in Relationships (CAAR) to better address the issue of violence and abuse from a community perspective. The coalition operated informally for almost 20 years. Then the New Brunswick Women's Equality Branch began supporting 14 regional networks made up of partners from both government and non-government agencies who came together to work on violence-prevention initiatives within their communities. CAAR was designated as the network representing the Moncton region. In 2010, CAAR incorporated as a not-for-profit organization whose primary goal is to work towards the eradication of violence in relationships. In addition to its local role, CAAR participates in the Provincial Strategy Against Sexual Assault and the Provincial Partnership in Action, a provincial-level response to violence against women.

CAAR now operates under the direction of a Board of Directors that oversees its programs and services and also coordinates the wider regional network of community agencies engaged in violence prevention and intervention.

### MEMBERSHIP

The CAAR Board of Directors is composed of 15 elected members representing partner organizations such as the YWCA, the community's sexual assault clinic, government, and local businesses, as well as concerned community members and those touched by violence. The CAAR network includes broader representation from the police and from the justice, health, and social services sectors.

### ACTIVITIES

CAAR provides primary violence-prevention programming as well as information and support to both victims and perpetrators in order to foster safety and healing and prevent further violence. The agency operates a free counselling and information service out of its office in Moncton, provides "a safe and secure meeting place" for individual support, and liaises with other community agencies on behalf of clients, filling to some extent a case-coordination role.

The Outreach Program focuses on community awareness through presentations and distribution of CAAR materials. In 2015, CAAR staff presented information on abuse in relationships, bullying, family violence, and sexual assault in all Anglophone and Francophone schools in the district, reaching over 1,400 students. CAAR is also planning a joint initiative with the sexual assault clinic nurse to present a program in schools on healthy relationships and sexual consent. Youth remain a high priority target group for CAAR.

Other activities include training and information sessions for service providers, toolkits and presentations for health-care professionals, and information kiosks at health clinics and doctors' offices. The group also makes presentations to a wide range of health and social service providers on screening for abuse among clients and patients. The Coalition has created the "Walk A Mile In Her Shoes®" action fund to promote the prevention of all types of gender-based violence through support services and community education.

## **APPROACHES TO AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION**

As part of efforts to improve relationships between CAAR and other agencies in the regional network, members have been openly discussing the nature of collaboration and how they can work together effectively. Ultimately, all agencies want to provide the best services possible in the area of violence prevention. While CAAR had a few challenging years as it went through the transition from information network to service provider, levels of re-engagement and collaboration are increasing yearly.

One of the greatest benefits identified by participants in the CAAR regional network is in connecting with other service providers and knowing what other agencies are doing. For CAAR's outreach service, a key to success is being able to work closely with others, and the network also helps service providers clarify their roles and strengths. Communication is open and agencies share information of benefit to their common clients; this ability to work as a "team" across organizations has great value for clients. Collaboration with the schools in delivering education programs has also been beneficial. Finally, collaboration makes interveners' jobs easier because they know there will be follow-up with clients by other agencies.

## **LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

The president of the CAAR Board takes an active leadership role in both agency affairs and the broader network. The CAAR Board operates by consensus decision-making to the extent possible within its legal framework, and while the CAAR regional network historically also operated by consensus, this has shifted somewhat in recent years. Currently, the network meets every two months. Each meeting begins with a roundtable of information sharing and identification of community issues and common concerns, followed by a meeting of those who are directors on the CAAR Board to deal with issues specific to agency services.

## **MANAGING CONFLICT AND POWER DIFFERENTIALS**

CAAR has had some ongoing experience with conflict among its members as they try to sort out mandates and funding issues. The Coalition has engaged in some mediation and is now trying to



operate in an open fashion where members can speak openly about issues that concern them while also working to rebuild trust.

Power differentials do exist due to factors such as different agency mandates and access to funding in the region. It is difficult in a rural, under-resourced area not to compete for funding, and the community can feel torn about which appeals to support. However, one Coalition member notes that there are different kinds of power, and that ultimately all agencies have the same goal: to ensure that clients and community members have access to information, healing, and resources.

## **COORDINATION**

CAAR has only one permanent staff person, the outreach worker. It has occasional project-based staff, and no administrative staff; as a result, much of the management and administrative work of the organization falls to members of the Executive Committee and active Board members. Committees are struck for specific purposes. Not surprisingly, fundraising is a major preoccupation.

## **ONGOING LEARNING**

CAAR members share new knowledge that they gain through their agencies and through individual professional development, but CAAR does not have the resources for ongoing collective learning. Members tend to “learn by doing,” and potential leaders are mentored in the role and encouraged to get involved in different initiatives. Member orientation is mostly verbal, supported by a small written orientation package. Assessment of how well the Coalition is working happens informally through conversations the President initiates, as well as through more formal discussions at network meetings.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS**

Factors in success include being able to “get things done,” largely through the dedication of volunteers and the passion various stakeholders bring to the issue of abuse in relationships. The Coalition has created a forum where everyone feels comfortable and welcome and can work together on the issue. Members would like the opportunity to share with others the benefits of collaboration and the lessons they have learned over the years of working together in a rural context.

## **STRENGTHS**

In spite of its challenges over the last five years, CAAR considers itself to be strong in its outreach and service coordination role. It has had considerable success in providing awareness and

education related to abuse in relationships, especially among youth. A number of local service gaps have been successfully addressed, and collaboration among service providers is contributing to the Coalition's long-term goal of eradicating relationship violence.

## **CHALLENGES**

The primary challenges for the Coalition are in maintaining open communications and raising the money needed to continue its work in the community. As described above, operating at both the service and network level has also posed some challenges.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Website: [www.coalitionagainstabuse.com](http://www.coalitionagainstabuse.com)

Telephone: 506-855-7222

## Purple Ribbon Task Force, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

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### MANDATE

The Purple Ribbon Task Force was formed in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (PEI), in 2001 after a particularly brutal murder of a woman by her ex-partner. The goal of the Task Force is to spread awareness of the impact of family violence and the importance of prevention. The Task Force operates mainly at the municipal level, but also has ties to the provincial Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention, and works with other PEI communities on particular initiatives. The group meets regularly at City Hall to advise the Mayor and coordinate joint action.

### MEMBERSHIP

Current members are: City of Charlottetown, PEI Family Violence Prevention Services, PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Government of PEI Inter-ministerial Women's Secretariat, Provincial Community Chaplaincy, and the PEI Family Violence Prevention and Community Development Coordinator.

### ACTIVITIES

The Task Force has led or participated in numerous initiatives over the years, including a Walk in Silence for Victims of Family Violence during the annual Family Violence Prevention Week, regular family violence prevention training for all city employees, and a Purple Ribbon awareness campaign that includes displaying "Peace Begins at Home" decals on all city vehicles. In 2010, the group hosted a presentation by Michael Kaufman, co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign (men working to end violence against women). More recently, the Task Force has worked to raise awareness among youth about abuse in relationships, and has created a youth video, *Talk About It*. It has also begun working on family violence awareness in workplaces, including doing outreach to local businesses.

### APPROACHES TO AND BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

Members of the group share a number of close working relationships; therefore, an informal, collegial approach works well for the Purple Ribbon Task Force, something members implicitly understand. The benefits of collaboration identified by the Task Force include:

- having the opportunity to pool resources and expertise and achieve more through a coordinated approach;
- using the networks created to inspire other initiatives;
- being able to pilot projects in Charlottetown that can then be implemented in other communities or province-wide; and

- creating a shared sense of ownership of issues and solutions.

## **LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING**

The Mayor provides overall direction and champions Task Force initiatives, but leaves planning and execution to committee members. Major planning decisions are made through consensus of the full group, which then delegates operational decisions to sub-committees, who report back on progress. Task Force members are accountable to the organizations they represent, and generally get full support for decisions and commitments made. The City provides secretarial support, some financial resources, and in-kind supports such as meeting space. Member organizations provide considerable in-kind contributions of time, resource materials and services. Many initiatives include other partners such as the school board and the private sector that also bring resources to the table.

## **MANAGING CONFLICT AND POWER DIFFERENTIALS**

Task Force members deal openly with differences in priorities and perspectives as they arise: members feel comfortable presenting their ideas even if they are not always adopted by the group. Similarly, the group has not directly discussed power differences, but they don't think any differences in resources or influence that do exist have been barriers to the active engagement of all members. While they acknowledge that the Mayor has considerable influence in the group, they see this as a positive factor, balanced by his ability to stand back and let other Task Force members lead particular initiatives. Members contribute time and resources as they are able, and the value of these non-monetary resources is recognized.

## **COORDINATION**

Being a small committee, the Task Force is able to operate effectively with minimal infrastructure. The City contributes administrative support, staff training, and communications. The administrative support provided by the Mayor's office is seen as a major contributor to the group's productivity, while the City's human resources office has been centrally involved in coordinating staff training.

## **ONGOING LEARNING**

Collaborators acknowledge that the work of the Task Force is usually based on "learning as we go," a process that has been effective for them and has yielded considerable results given available resources. The Task Force has not established a formal orientation process for new members or provided ongoing collaborative learning opportunities, but it may look into these based on feedback from members.

## SUCCESS FACTORS

Task Force members see their collaboration as being very successful in delivering coordinated city-wide family violence prevention initiatives and awareness campaigns. The work of the collaborative group is focused, well-coordinated, and task-oriented. Group communication is direct and ongoing. Member turnover is low, which provides natural continuity and contributes to strong interpersonal relationships. The Task Force has also achieved a good balance of working on immediate, well-defined projects and planning upcoming initiatives.

## STRENGTHS

According to members, a major strength of their collaboration is the ongoing commitment and leadership of the mayor, who has been in office since 2000. Mayor Lee acts as a visible and vocal champion of the Task Force, but also leads in a way that enables other committee members to feel a sense of ownership of initiatives, and gives them the freedom to take a big idea and implement it in a way that meets the needs of the community. Activities are deliberately chosen and are not “make-work projects.” There is also great respect for the autonomy of the subcommittees and their ability to make decisions and deliver on commitments. There is trust that members will “do what they say they will do.”

Another strength is the diversity of expertise and networks within the group. Members have knowledge and skills in policy development, program design, administration, and campaign coordination. Members’ connections and affiliations at the community, provincial, and national levels have resulted in a wide reach as well as a number of funding sources.

## CHALLENGES

Task Force members are aware of some areas in which their work could be strengthened. For example, a written “terms of reference” and a formal orientation process for new members would contribute to continuity and sustainability. Participants would also like to develop a way to support members’ priorities that fall outside of the mandate of the group, such as improving family violence services and responses.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Website: [www.city.charlottetown.pe.ca/purple-ribbon-taskforce.php](http://www.city.charlottetown.pe.ca/purple-ribbon-taskforce.php)

Telephone: 902-566-5548

## Appendix C – Interview Questions

1. Can you briefly describe the purpose and membership of your collaboration?
2. Can you describe what collaboration means to your group? How widely shared is this definition? Have partners actively discussed the meaning of collaboration? (If so, what did you learn from this discussion.)
3. What are the benefits of collaboration in your context?
4. How are decisions made in the group? Who makes what types of decisions?
5. How do you manage the resources of the group?
6. How are you accountable to each other?
7. How do you address conflict?
8. Have partners discussed power? What type of power differentials exist in the partnership? How do you address power differentials among the collaborators?
9. Do members of your collaboration receive any orientation or training or ongoing learning opportunities about the collaboration?
10. Do you assess how well the collaboration is working?
11. How successful would you say your collaboration has been?
12. What has contributed to your success as collaborators?
13. How could your collaboration be strengthened?
14. Please share any additional reflections or insights about collaboration.