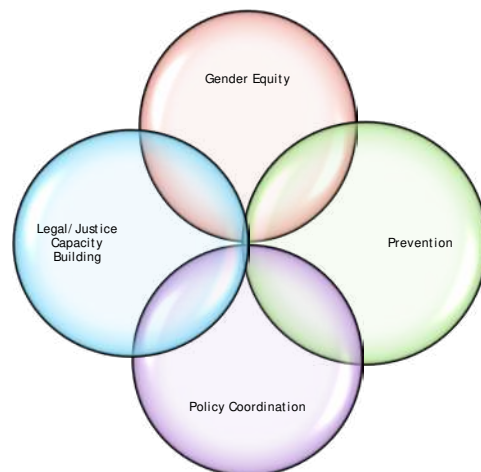




Families First Society
FORT SASKATCHEWAN

COMMUNITY PLANNING TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AND SMALL URBAN CENTRES IN CANADA

*Final Evaluation Report
Executive Summary*



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Status of Women
Canada

Condition féminine
Canada



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Evaluation Report

COMMUNITY PLANNING TO REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AND SMALL URBAN CENTRES IN CANADA

INTRODUCTION

In March of 2012 the Families First Society of Fort Saskatchewan (FFSFS) received a 3 year Status of Women Canada project grant to reduce violence against women and girls in rural communities and small urban centres. Families First and their community partners committed to conducting a Gender Based Analysis (GBA) which would explore the root causes of violence against women and girls in their community, creating a collaborative community based plan to address the root causes, and implementing effective, evidence based, sustainable solutions to reducing violence as outlined in the community plan.

Building Bridges, an informal network of dedicated human services professionals, volunteers and elected officials from Fort Saskatchewan, agreed to serve as the project's Advisory Committee and partners in implementing identified strategies. The project was carried out over 3 years, March 2012 to March 2015. A "Bridge Mender" was hired to coordinate the project.

PROJECT DESIGN

Collaborative Process

From the writing of the proposal to the implementation of all components of the project, collaboration was an overriding theme. The "Bridge Mender" who acted as a Project Coordinator and liaison between network members, ensured that partners' efforts were leveraged and maximized.

Gender Based Analysis

The project began with a Gender Based Analysis (GBA) which was undertaken to assist stakeholders in identifying both challenges in addressing domestic violence and the assets and opportunities available to be used to reduce domestic violence in the City of Fort Saskatchewan.

Key Findings of the GBA:

- The community of Fort Saskatchewan reflects general findings within Alberta and across Canada. Domestic violence is on the rise and comes with significant costs to taxpayers and the community. Unlike other rural or isolated communities, Fort Saskatchewan has access to resources and services both locally and in neighbouring communities such as Sherwood Park and Edmonton. It also has a group of dedicated support staff, agencies and leaders who are committed to listening to the voices of those who are impacted directly by gender based violence and transforming interventions and attitudes in order to not only reduce – but end - domestic violence. This is their greatest resource and opportunity.

The GBA process and resulting document acted as a springboard for collective and informed action.

Community Plan

Based on the findings and recommendations of the GBA a Community Plan to end domestic violence was written. An extensive consultation process took place with the following participants:

- Front line staff of 7 human service agencies
- Municipal elected officials
- Women experiencing/ experienced domestic violence
- Building Bridges community network of service providers
- Non-profit human service agency board members

Analysis of Fort Saskatchewan's existing services and supports along with the gaps and opportunities identified resulted in the selection of 4 strategic focus areas;

GENDER EQUITY; *there is a greater level of gender awareness in the community*

PREVENTION; *develop and strengthen primary violence prevention initiatives*

LEGAL/ JUSTICE CAPACITY BUILDING; *deepen knowledge and sensitize local legal/ justice system to complexity of domestic violence (root causes) and those impacted*

POLICY COORDINATION; *improve services available to those experiencing violence by increasing level of knowledge and harmonizing practices*

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Strategies and related activities were designed and delivered for each of the four strategic focus areas.

GENDER EQUITY

Strategy: Recognizing that a series of activities would be needed to maintain a focus on gender and violence against women and girls, seven activities were planned. Take Back the Night, International Women's Day, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, The Vagina Monologues, White ribbon Campaign, Call in Radio Show, and World Elder abuse Day. Each one was evaluated for its' effectiveness in contributing to the overall expected outcomes

PREVENTION

Strategy: workplace based education, engaging men and boys

LEGAL/ JUSTICE CAPACITY BUILDING

Strategy: Education; Gender/ domestic violence/ trauma sensitive training

POLICY COORDINATION

Strategy: Map existing services, identify gaps and potential actions to fill gaps

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Project Design and Implementation

The implementation of this project over a 3 year period achieved a broad scope of participation and dedication in the City of Fort Saskatchewan among community leaders, human service practitioners and community members alike. It utilized two well-developed theory based approaches to achieve success in raising the profile of the important issues of gender equity and violence against women and girls; health promotion and community development.

A shared leadership model was used from the beginning of the project, beginning with the proposal. The collaborative approach used by the Families First Society of Fort Saskatchewan, as the lead agency, and Building Bridges, the Advisory Committee,

both modelled community building values and strategies and set up expectations of participation by others. They carried the banner for the project and were viewed by their peers as positive role models.

The four strategic focus areas delivered together provided consistent messaging and created a very supportive environment for behavioral change among individuals and professionals. The combination of experts, community based leadership and community members exemplified the behaviour change approach to health promotion.

The project involved a strong media presence with consistent messaging and media advocacy. It involved numerous human service leaders from the network of agencies engaged in the prevention and response to family violence and beyond. Practitioners in complimentary fields received training and education in the identification and support of families/ individuals experiencing domestic violence. Participants reported increased knowledge.

Policy makers at the municipal level created Proclamations and civil servants were involved in the delivery and leadership of the project. Human service leaders in their planning exercises, identified as a next step, creating common policies and protocols which would be jointly adopted and utilized in the prevention and response to domestic violence.

The project was able to bring together the community of Fort Saskatchewan around the issues of gender equity and violence against women and girls. The broad representation of community political leaders, media, service providers, individuals impacted by domestic violence, community volunteers and residents involved over the 3 years of the project is impressive. If the commitment shown by participants is any indication, the ground work has been set for continued action on the important issue of violence against women and girls.

Achievement on Expected Outcomes

Each of the activities carried out within the scope of the project achieved the expected outcomes they intended as measured by the indicators of success identified in the project design stage. The project was able to demonstrate:

- ❖ Increased knowledge among attendees/ participants
- ❖ Increased skills among attendees/ participants
- ❖ Increased understanding of issues faced by victims
- ❖ Increased commitment to change in personal behaviour
- ❖ Increased commitment to change in professional practice
- ❖ Increased motivation

- ❖ Increased commitment to continuing leadership regarding these issues within their organizations and the community

Unexpected Outcomes



In November of 2014 the Families First Society of Fort Saskatchewan was recognized by the Alberta Ministry of Human Services with an Inspiration Award in recognition of a commitment to ending family violence in their community. This award served as a great validation of the work being undertaken by the Project partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ The Action Plan endorsed by Building Bridges, continue to guide family violence prevention efforts in Fort Saskatchewan.
- ❖ Seek funds as soon as possible to support the creation of common policies, protocols and tools which will require coordination and the involvement/ commitment of all partners. Momentum has been built and can be harnessed for this next very important step.

- ❖ Conducting another GBA in 2 years would provide some evidence of community level change.

CONCLUSION

The City of Fort Saskatchewan has identified willing and able change makers within the community at each level of influence including; government, human service sector including education, social services, justice and health, media, industry, community volunteers, people who have experienced domestic violence, enforcement and faith organizations. They have highlighted issues of gender equity and violence against women and girls through their proclamations. They have increased knowledge and commitment to social change. The Building Bridges Committee has created an action plan for moving forward. The pieces are in place for a sustained effort to reducing violence against women and girls in the community.