

A Strategic Framework to  
**End Violence against  
Wabanaki Women**  
in New Brunswick

Prepared by the New Brunswick  
Advisory Committee on  
Violence against Aboriginal Women

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# 1. Introduction

New Brunswick is part of the traditional territory for the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy peoples, who are three of the five nations that form the Wabanaki Confederacy. These nations are the ones who first see the light rising each morning, and "Wabanaki" describes this process of dawn breaking. For the purposes of this Strategic Framework, this document refers to Wabanaki women. However, there are women from other nations living in this territory. This strategic framework is intended to include these Aboriginal women so that they may also enjoy lives free of violence.

Violence against Aboriginal women is a pressing issue and is of great concern to the Wabanaki nations in New Brunswick.

The contributing factors and solutions to addressing this issue for Wabanaki women in New Brunswick, living both on and off reserve, require a coordinated and comprehensive approach with leadership and involvement of many different stakeholders. The Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women has developed this strategic framework to assist with addressing this central concern. The framework provides contextual information on the extent of the problem among Aboriginal communities in Canada and New Brunswick, and outlines several potential actions in the areas of capacity building, prevention and education, and service delivery. The document is intended to be used as a tool for provincial and federal governments, First Nation leaders, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service providers and agencies so that they can develop and implement actions in their respective and collaborative spheres to address violence against Wabanaki women in New Brunswick.

## 2. Background

At their September 2003 annual meeting, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women discussed the overall situation of Aboriginal women and agreed to give priority attention to violence against Aboriginal women.

To improve the situation of Aboriginal women, Ministers agreed in September 2004 to take joint and/or individual government action according to their respective priorities and needs in four areas: access to programs and services, public education and awareness, capacity-building, and policy enhancement. They also agreed to host a Policy Forum on Aboriginal women and violence in order to hear directly from Aboriginal women about their issues and concerns. This Forum took place on March 27 and 28, 2006, in Ottawa. Aboriginal women from every province and territory were represented, along with national organizations. New Brunswick sponsored six representatives to attend the forum.

Prior to the Policy Forum, the New Brunswick Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women and Aboriginal Affairs invited representatives from the 15 First Nation Communities and Aboriginal organizations to attend a one-day meeting to discuss issues of concern and select the NB delegation to Ottawa. A fairly good response to that invitation was received. Eel River Bar, Elsipogtog, Eel Ground and St. Mary's First Nations were represented, along with the MAWIW Council, the Aboriginal Women's Council, the Committee on Advancement of Aboriginal Women, the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Institute at UNB, Gignoo Transition House, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and the Fredericton Native Friendship Centre. The issues raised by the group included those related to housing, health, the impact of residential schools, violence, Bill C-31, justice issues, drug and alcohol abuse, employment, education and training, Aboriginal leadership, jurisdictional issues, and

lack of an effective voice for Aboriginal women.

The group that met prior to the Policy Forum and in a follow-up session has continued to meet and has become recognized as the Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women. (Please see Appendix 1 for a list of members). While not all First Nations communities are represented on the Committee, it was agreed that there is a good mix of Maliseet and Mi'kmaq women from different areas of the province and that membership would not be closed should other First Nations wish to be represented. Aboriginal organizations in the province are also represented.

In June 2007, the first National Aboriginal Women's Summit (NAWS) was held in Cornerbrook, NL. More than 300 Aboriginal delegates attended the Summit, including six women from New Brunswick. Discussions took place around the themes of Strength, Balance, and Honour; Health, Safety and Wellness; and Equality and Empowerment. Many of the issues, concerns, and recommendations heard in Cornerbrook have been mirrored by the Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Women in this Framework. The second NAWS will be held in July 2008, in Yellowknife, NWT.

The Advisory Committee has been working to identify issues and develop solutions to improve the situation of Wabanaki women around the province. They have agreed on the following vision, principles and strategic action areas.

## 3. Vision

We, the Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women, have a vision that all Wabanaki women are empowered to work together respectfully to ensure that:

- All Wabanaki women and their children in this territory of New Brunswick live free of violence and abuse and those who have experienced it in the past will have the opportunities to heal from the harm;
- Aboriginal individuals, families and communities are healthy, respectful and supportive to one another, therefore violence and abuse is no longer considered acceptable and commonplace among our people;
- Perpetrators are held accountable for their actions but have an opportunity to heal as they themselves were often victims;
- The intergenerational cycle of violence is broken through effective, culturally appropriate initiatives grounded in traditional Wabanaki values.

## 4. Guiding Principles and Values

In developing this strategic framework, the Advisory Committee based its discussions and recommended actions on a number of guiding principles and values.

1. Working collaboratively for the common good of Wabanaki women and taking into consideration inadvertent impacts that could be potentially harmful to Wabanaki women.
2. Recognizing the interrelationship between the many factors contributing to violence against Wabanaki women.
3. Ensuring that all initiatives undertaken are culturally appropriate and acceptable to the Wabanaki.
4. Respecting the cultural diversity, traditions and realities of various communities.
5. Recognizing, honouring and restoring the connections among individuals, families, communities, and with Mother Earth.

# 5. The Situation

*Violence against Wabanaki women in New Brunswick is a severe problem that requires immediate and effective solutions. While many men and women from First Nation communities are willing to work to find viable options to improve the current condition, their situation is complicated and deep-rooted. Support from all levels of government – federal, provincial, and First Nations – as well as service agencies and organizations will be required to address this issue.*

The Aboriginal population in Canada is growing much more rapidly than the non-Aboriginal population. Between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal population in Canada has grown 45%, nearly six times faster than the 8% increase of the general Canadian population. The fastest increases in population have been seen in the Atlantic provinces, with New Brunswick's Aboriginal population increasing by 67% between 1996 and 2006. Much of the explanation for this growth can be found in the Aboriginal birth rate, which is 1.5 times that of non-Aboriginals. The Aboriginal population is young, with 48% being under the age of 24 years old, compared to 31% of the Canadian population. The Aboriginal population in New Brunswick is still quite small, making up only 2% of the province's population (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census). With this ever-growing population, it is extremely important that the current generation of Wabanaki youth – as well as future generations – be given the tools to bring an end to the ongoing problem of violence against Wabanaki women, and the exposure to that violence experienced by their children.

Research shows that Canadian Aboriginal women are much more vulnerable to violence and abuse than non-Aboriginal women. Many Wabanaki women in New Brunswick reside in rural areas putting them at a higher risk of facing abuse and, having no authorities in the immediate vicinity, makes women less likely to report incidents of violence. In addition, Aboriginal women are more likely to be single mothers than non-Aboriginal women. In 2001, 19% of Aboriginal women in Canada headed lone-parent households in comparison with 8% of non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada, Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report). In the 2006 Census, 29% of Aboriginal children under the age of 14 years old were living with lone parents, compared to 14% of non-Aboriginal children (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census).

***24% of Aboriginal women had experienced spousal violence. This is three times the number of non-Aboriginal women who reported such incidents.***

Spousal abuse is much more prevalent among the Aboriginal population than in the non-Aboriginal population. Within the five years prior to the 2004 General Social Survey on Victimization (Statistics Canada), 24% of Aboriginal women had experienced spousal violence. This is three times the number of non-Aboriginal women who reported such incidents. The domestic violence that Aboriginal women experience tends to be much more severe than that which other Canadian women are likely to suffer. 54% of Aboriginal women who had experienced abuse reported that they had been beaten or choked, had a gun or knife used against them, or had been sexually assaulted. 37% of non-Aboriginal abuse victims reported similar experiences. 33% of Aboriginal women who had been abused feared for their lives, compared with 22% of non-Aboriginal victims. (Statistics Canada, 2006, Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report). The General Social Survey (Statistics Canada, 2004) also found that Aboriginal people are twice as likely as the non-Aboriginal population to report non-spousal violence in and around the home.

Violence against Aboriginal women is a serious problem that will only continue to escalate if it is not dealt with in an effective and timely fashion. Currently Aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 44 experience violence at a rate that is five times higher than that of non-Aboriginal Canadian women, and their mortality rate due to violence is five times higher (Mann, 2005).

***“75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have experienced sexual abuse, 50% are under 14, and almost 25% are younger than 7 years of age.”***

Sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women and girls is a significant issue. In Domestic Sex Trafficking of Aboriginal girls in Canada: Issues and Implications, Anupriya Sethi (2007) states that “75% of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have experienced sexual abuse, 50% are under 14, and almost 25% are younger than 7 years of age.” In New Brunswick communities, anecdotal evidence indicates that this is also an issue, with adolescent girls often trading sexual favours for transportation, especially for those living in rural areas; other practical needs; or, drugs. Sethi believes that since over 500 Aboriginal girls and women have gone missing over the past 30 years, there ought to be more discussion on the possibility that these women have been victims of domestic human trafficking.

In order to find viable solutions, it is important to remember that violence is not an isolated problem within the Aboriginal community; it is caused by a number of factors, and it also produces a range of additional issues in its wake. It is important to keep this in mind, because without creating solutions to tackle both the root causes and the consequences of violence, the issue will only continue to manifest itself.

# 6. Contributing Factors to Violence against Wabanaki Women

## 6.1 Colonization

Colonization and the ensuing influence of European culture and values greatly affected the perception of women among Aboriginal peoples, including the Wabanaki. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, men and women had different but equal roles within families and communities.

*“Traditionally, women were held in high esteem because they were viewed as being closest to Mother Earth and Creation...Women were respected and were believed to be the foundation of the nation...The social structure was built on the complementary roles of its male and female members.” (Kenny, 2004)*

Within this society, women and their contributions were seen as meaningful and important, and they were revered as givers of life. The arrival of European colonists introduced a very different set of values, including the concept of a patriarchal system under which women were subordinate to men. Within this hierarchy, women’s work and roles were undervalued and were viewed as less important than those of men. The idea that women were weaker than, or subservient to, men was espoused by Europeans at that time. As this idea made its way into the heart of Aboriginal societies, the respect and balance between the genders that are central to Wabanaki cultures was severely impacted.

Over time these issues were exacerbated. Wabanaki people experienced extreme incidents of racism and abuse through the implementation of the *Indian Act* and the residential school system. Sexual abuse within residential schools is often seen as a major factor in the propagation of abuse toward future generations as communities deal with the “intergenerational impacts” of the residential schools. The changes that occurred within Aboriginal communities happened quickly and were without precedent.

The consistent efforts to eradicate Aboriginal languages have had an especially devastating effect on Aboriginal populations across the country. As one Mi’kmaq man stated, “the greater part of our spirituality is embedded in our language. That is why it was attacked with such vigour” (Knockwood, 1992). Even today, many Wabanaki people still struggle with internalized racism and mixed feelings about their languages; are unable to participate in many discussions using their own language, making it difficult for them to fully express their thoughts and concerns; or, as youth, grapple with gaining a healthy and strong sense of their identities and values in the absence of their languages. The impacts of colonization on the Wabanaki and Aboriginal people have been devastating – both in number and in the effect they have had upon their societies. It has also resulted in deep-rooted distrust and violence which will require consistent and dedicated efforts to change.

All of these factors have played a significant role in perpetuating violence against Wabanaki and Aboriginal women, and in carrying on the idea that such abuses are acceptable.

*“Years of colonization, residential schools, demoralization by the Indian Act, stripping away traditional governments, languages and ceremonies through the banning of the potlatch – all have severely impaired the First Nations’ ability to govern...Due to all of the above, an atmosphere of lateral violence exists at community, tribal council and other levels.” (Sayers and MacDonald, 2001)*



## 6.2 Gender Bias and Racism

Both within and outside of their communities, Wabanaki and Aboriginal women face issues of violence that are based on gender discrimination or racism. Within Aboriginal communities, the basis for discrimination is often from a legal standpoint. *Bill C-31* created different 'statuses' of First Nations people. Prior to the introduction of this bill, under the *Indian Act*, Aboriginal women lost their Indian status if they married a non-Aboriginal man, while a non-Aboriginal woman who married an Aboriginal man gained status.

*Bill C-31* was enacted in an attempt to amend this previous, gender-biased Act. Three main changes were introduced in the bill, these being:

- The reinstatement of Registered Indian Status. This primarily affected women who had lost their eligibility for registration through provisions of earlier versions of the *Indian Act*.
- The introduction of new rules governing entitlement to Indian registration for all the children born after April 16, 1985.
- The ability for First Nations to develop and apply their own rules governing membership (Native Women's Association of Canada [NWAC], 2007).

Recent court cases have demonstrated that gender bias within the *Indian Act* was not completely addressed through *Bill C-31*. Aboriginal women are still fighting through the courts to address this, as in the 2007 case of Sharon McIvor and her son Jacob Grismer, heard by the British Columbia Supreme Court. This important court decision addressed some of the biases in the *Indian Act* as a result of matrilineal transmission of status, not addressed by *Bill C-31*, and in effect struck down the present way that status is transmitted. Aboriginal peoples are still waiting to find out how this will play out in the court system as the federal government has appealed the ruling.

In some cases, those who were reinstated with *Bill C-31* – along

with their children – have been looked down upon by those who retained their status, with Aboriginal people taking on an "*Indian Act* mentality" after years of enforcement of this legislation in their nations and communities. The addition of more band members has put a strain on Aboriginal communities, who are already dealing with levels of funding that have been capped since the 1980s or 1990s at a time when populations have been rapidly increasing as a result of higher birth rates, and the reinstatement of status of community members. This has led to resentments within communities. Leadership in First Nation communities is also sometimes left with the unenviable task of denying services to their grandchildren or family members because of the rules dictating transmission of status, even though these members live and are part of the life of the community. These individuals may not be eligible for provincial services as they live on reserve land. This situation leaves many Aboriginal and Wabanaki women and children vulnerable because of the jurisdictional inconsistencies and gaps in service provision and programming on and off reserve land for status and non-status Indians.

Because bands could now create their own rules about membership, some also excluded those who had been reinstated from their band lists, creating a great deal of tension in communities (NWAC, 1998). As well, the children of mixed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry sometimes face prejudice and discrimination, both within First Nation communities and in general society, because of their mixed heritage. The various types of community dynamics that have surfaced as a result of legislation can result in women and children facing verbal abuse or bullying.

Racism and discrimination from non-Aboriginals is also a serious concern. Acts of violence against Aboriginal women by non-Aboriginal men are often propagated by racism, or by the belief that the repercussions for their actions will be minor because the victim is Aboriginal. Many Aboriginal women have experienced some form of racism first hand, often at their schools or within their communities. This creates low

self-esteem and low self-worth, and because of this, Aboriginal women who experience violent acts of racism are often simply not confident enough to report them. In addition, there is much distrust toward the police, who in the past were used to enforce racist policies such as the forcible removal of children to residential schools, with the impact of tearing apart families and communities (Amnesty International, 2004). These factors mean that violence against Aboriginal women that is fuelled by racism is currently being underreported, making it difficult to determine its real prevalence. Without the implementation of educational and preventative measures, it is likely that such acts will only continue over time, and could result in deepening misunderstandings and mistrust.

## 6.3 Poverty

Poverty is one factor that influences the rate of violence against Aboriginal women. In 2001, Aboriginal women in New Brunswick earned an average income of \$16,600, while non-Aboriginal women earned an average of \$23,100 (Statistics Canada, 2006, *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends*). The poverty rate for unattached Aboriginal women 15 and older is 59.6%, compared with 28.1% for unattached non-Aboriginal women.

Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women in New Brunswick participate in the labour force at a rate of 57%, however, in 2001, 24% of Aboriginal women were unemployed as opposed to 10% of non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada, 2006, *Women in Canada: A Gender Based Statistical Report*, 2006).

Poverty and unemployment often create conflict within families that can elevate the risk of violence. In addition, without sufficient incomes of their own, Aboriginal women are often unable to leave violent relationships simply because they lack the financial resources needed to support themselves and their children. The cycle of violence can be very difficult to break when generation after generation witnesses violence as a normal part of life and continues to struggle with their

economic situation.

## 6.4 Addictions

Substance abuse is another issue that plays a critical role in perpetuating violence against women in Aboriginal communities. Women who use alcohol or drugs may put themselves at a higher risk of being abused, while women with partners who misuse substances are also at a greater risk of facing violent situations. Family dysfunction can escalate within Aboriginal households because of alcohol and drug abuse, and the admission of Aboriginal women to hospitals due to alcohol related accidents is three times that of the general population of Canada. (NBACSW, 2006).

Although addiction presents a serious problem, many Aboriginal women are not seeking treatment to solve this issue. While Aboriginal women are at a higher risk for substance abuse than Aboriginal men, they only represent 40% of the Aboriginal population in alcohol treatment centres. Some of the reasons for this may include the lack of culturally or women-centred facilities, as well as the impact of violence and the lack of access to childcare (NBACSW, 2006). Treatment centres that use holistic, culturally based methods have generally shown the best results in helping Aboriginal women to deal with addiction. Currently few such facilities exist in New Brunswick, and funding to establish one is currently not available (Mann, 2005). Many Aboriginal people – both men and women – recognize the negative impact that substance abuse has had on their communities; 50% of Aboriginal people see alcohol abuse as a problem, and many are concerned about the effect that drugs and alcohol have in regards to violence, addiction, as well as health concerns such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. (NBACSW, 2006).

## 6.5 Housing and Property Issues

One of the consequences of violence is that women often find themselves displaced with no available housing if they decide

to leave an abusive partner. This is a problem that relates to the lack of Matrimonial Real Property rights on reserve. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples states:

***“Provincial/Territorial matrimonial laws do not apply in the case of ‘real’ property – land and things attached to land, like homes.***

***Even though provincial laws do apply to disputes over other matrimonial property (cars, bank accounts, etc.) these laws are often unable to be enforced on reserve.***

***The courts have held that provincial laws dealing with matrimonial property disputes do not apply to the land or real property on a reserve, which is what creates the ‘legislative gap’ facing couples living on reserve and disputing the possession or sale of real property (houses) on reserve.” (Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 2007)***

For women living on reserves, this creates a huge issue. If the perpetrator holds the Certificate of Possession, an Aboriginal woman has no legal recourse and will have to leave the home. Due to the shortage of housing on many reserves, women and children may have to leave their community and move to a new location off reserve where they have no support system and have to face the many challenges of dealing with a new cultural environment. Fear of this situation prevents many women from leaving abusive relationships. As it now stands, the law often works against Aboriginal women in abusive situations rather than helping to accommodate their needs; in this manner, violence against women is only being further propagated.

Bands have the option of coming under the First Nations Land Management Initiative (FNLMI), which allows participants to develop their own land code, with rules surrounding Matrimonial Real Property. However, these rules can be difficult to develop and agree upon. Currently in New Brunswick, only St. Mary’s First Nation has chosen to fall under the FNLMI (Indian and Northern Affairs [INAC], 2004, *Backgrounder*:

*First Nations Land Management Initiative*). Matrimonial Real Property laws can be quite complex and confusing, and many Wabanaki women are not aware of the ramifications of these laws until such time as they find themselves dealing with them. This lack of awareness, along with the complicated intricacies of Matrimonial Real Property laws can act as a trap, forcing Aboriginal women to remain in abusive situations.

In addition to the issue of Matrimonial Real Property, is the more basic problem that there are simply not enough homes available to accommodate the number of families that wish to live on reserves. This creates a number of issues. Families may be forced to live in temporary housing, where they may have to deal with overcrowding and poor conditions. This can create a very negative dynamic, angering those involved, and potentially creating dangerous and violent situations. The lack of funds to build or to fix homes, combined with the ever-increasing Aboriginal population – and thus ever-increasing demand for housing – can create serious problems within reserves. Without houses available for women to inhabit, and with off reserve housing often being too expensive, many Wabanaki women are forced to remain in abusive relationships simply because they have no other options (NBACSW, 2006).

## 6.6 Normalization of Violence

Violence has become so widespread in many Wabanaki communities that many community members have become desensitized to the violence around them.

Because of this permeation of violence into Wabanaki culture, certain aspects of violence such as verbal and emotional violence are often ignored completely, and sometimes are no longer regarded as violent behaviours. Fears about what other members of the community may think if violence is reported is also a major deterrent to reporting abuse, as are the potential consequences of families being separated, or of authorities not taking Wabanaki women’s reports of violence seriously (NBACSW, 2006).

Children exposed to domestic violence are negatively impacted whether they are exposed to it directly or indirectly. They are at an increased risk of developing emotional, behavioural, and social problems. They are also at an elevated risk for continuing the cycle of violence in their adult lives as either victims or perpetrators.

According to Statistics Canada, 25% of Aboriginal people see sexual assault as a significant problem within their communities (NWAC, 2004). A study conducted by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation found that 20-25% of convicted sex offenders in Canada are Aboriginal; although Aboriginal offenders are more likely to be incarcerated than non-Aboriginals, this is still a very high percentage, considering that Aboriginal people comprise only 2% of the total Canadian population. Most of these offenders return to their communities without being given any kind of rehabilitation, thus encouraging abuse to reoccur (NBACSW, 2006).

# 7. Recommended Strategies for Action

This Strategic Framework is the first step in a process to address Violence against Wabanaki Women in New Brunswick. A long-term integrated effort will be required to address the multidimensional nature of violence. There are many sectors and jurisdictions that are involved when dealing with violence, e.g., health, social services, income assistance, daycare, Headstart, employment and training, education, housing, justice, policing and governance. Leadership from federal, provincial and First Nations governments, as well as the agencies and communities that relate to the field of violence against women, will all have to take a proactive role to reduce violence against Wabanaki women.

In total, there are 49 recommendations spanning various areas to address violence against Wabanaki Women. To address violence against Wabanaki women, the Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women identified three areas for action: capacity building, prevention and education, and service delivery. In some cases, parties have been identified to implement actions or for taking the lead on initiatives. In other cases, the Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women would be in the best position to oversee an initiative for the time being, especially as it could serve as an umbrella network for aspects of the strategy and serve to facilitate or catalyze initiatives at this time. In the future as organizational and service capacity is developed in other sectors, these tasks could be taken on by more appropriate bodies or parties.

## 7.1 Top 10 Priorities

*The following 10 recommendations have been identified as being a priority and the initial places from which the work to address this issue needs to be tackled. The recommendations are not listed in the following section in any priority, but are numbered according to their initial numbering in the text of this document:*

### **General**

2. Establish a Wabanaki Women's Issues Table as part of the First Nation/Province Bilateral process to bring forward the perspectives and address the concern of Wabanaki women, and to ensure that gender equity issues are addressed at the various tables of the bilateral process.

*Responsibility: First Nation Leadership and Government of New Brunswick*

### **Capacity Building**

9. Provide the Women's Issues Branch with adequate funding to hire a provincial Aboriginal Coordinator to undertake and coordinate the work necessary to address violence against Wabanaki women and children. The Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women would continue to provide advice.

*Responsibility: New Brunswick Government*

### **Prevention and Education**

#### ***Training and Education***

12. Provide training to service providers off reserve so they can better assist and address the needs of both on and off reserve Wabanaki women, children, Elders and women with disabilities dealing with violence.

*Responsibility: First Nation Leadership, New Brunswick Government, Government of Canada*

### **Service Delivery**

#### ***Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services***

32. Deliver cross cultural training for service providers that will include some practical and culturally appropriate strategies for dealing effectively with Wabanaki clients and patients.

*Responsibility: First Nation Leadership, New Brunswick Government, Federal Government*

34. Identify and address jurisdictional gaps and inconsistencies in health, mental health and addiction services for Wabanaki individuals.

*Responsibility: Federal Government, New Brunswick Government, First Nation organizations and communities.*

35. Undertake outreach and public education activities to inform Wabanaki women about the options and services available to them in dealing with abuse and violence.

*Responsibility: Federal Government, New Brunswick Government, First Nation organizations and communities.*

37. Increase the numbers of available spaces in detox centres and increase the availability of services in the area of addiction. These services should also consider culturally appropriate avenues and liaisons for assisting their clients.

*Responsibility: New Brunswick Government*

### **Policing and the Justice System**

40. Establish collaborative relationships between police and First Nation service providers so that appropriate approaches and protocols are established for dealing with violence against Wabanaki women, children, Elders and women with disabilities in First Nation communities.

*Responsibility: NB Department of Public Safety, RCMP, Municipal Police Forces, First Nation police forces*

41. Establish a Wabanaki court worker program to assist women dealing with court processes.

*Responsibility: First Nation Leadership, Government of New Brunswick, Federal Government*

### **Housing**

43. Research how First Nations in Canada are dealing with housing protocols and bylaws in relation to violence and abuse. Subsequently, First Nation communities should adapt and adopt those that would suit the particular circumstances of their communities.

*Responsibility: First Nation Leadership, Government of New Brunswick, Federal Government*

## 7.2 General

The provincial, federal and First Nation governments have already started to work on identifying jurisdictional gaps and started work on addressing these so that Wabanaki women and children receive the required services and assistance they need, regardless of whether they are status or non-status, and living on or off reserve. This work is required for each service area, between the interface of different services, and for the various jurisdictions involved (federal, provincial and First Nation). The Advisory Committee recognizes that this is a complicated and longer term process. However, ongoing progress and efforts are important to ensuring that Wabanaki women and children do not fall between the cracks.

### Recommended Action

1. Continue ongoing work to coordinate services, and address jurisdictional gaps within each service or program delivery area, between departments and jurisdictions. The federal, provincial and First Nation governments will need to take the lead for this as this should be done for programming in the federal, provincial and First Nation spheres of authority.
2. Establish a Wabanaki Women's Issues Table as part of the First Nation/Province Bilateral process to bring forward the perspectives and address the concern of Wabanaki women, and to ensure that gender equity issues are addressed at the various tables of the bilateral process.
3. Strengthen or initiate collaborative working relationships between the federal and provincial governments, First Nation communities, off reserve agencies and post-secondary education institutions in the different sectors that deal with violence to Aboriginal women, e.g., policing, health, social services, and others, to ensure that the needs of all Wabanaki women and children are considered.

## 7.3 Capacity Building

In order to ensure that Wabanaki women's concerns and needs are addressed, it is important that Wabanaki women have strong leadership and presence. Their efforts to do this have been affected in the past few years, especially since Aboriginal women's groups have often faced systemic issues when accessing funding. Frequently, they have not been invited to the same tables as other Aboriginal organizations, but these bodies, as well, as mainstream women's groups, cannot represent the needs of Wabanaki women as well as they can represent their own (Status of Women Canada, 2003). Status of Women Canada eliminated funding for salaries and infrastructure to women's equality seeking organizations in 1998 (Petitpas Taylor, 2006). This, among other challenges, has created a serious barrier to ensuring that Wabanaki women receive the programming and services that they need.

The lack of an effective voice to advocate for change on behalf of Wabanaki women in New Brunswick was identified at the initial meeting of the Advisory Committee. Although the New Brunswick Aboriginal Women's Council Inc. (NBAWCI) has been in existence for a number of years, it has lacked the resources needed to provide an effective voice for those they have been elected to represent. The Council also lacks the financial capacity to bring their membership or their board together periodically to discuss the issues and receive input on addressing the concerns.

### Recommended Action

4. Provide base operational funding to the NBAWCI so that it can increase its capacity and be an effective voice for Wabanaki women in New Brunswick.
5. Establish an information resource at the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women and/or the NB Women's Issues Branch on potential funding programs in the federal, provincial government levels and other sectors



from which the NBAWCI and Wabanaki women's groups can potentially access funding.

6. Include NBAWCI at the different federal, provincial and First Nation government forums addressing Aboriginal issues in New Brunswick so that there is a strong voice representing the needs and interests of Wabanaki women in New Brunswick.

7. Facilitate linkages between NBAWCI and relevant key agencies, provincial and federal departments so that the concerns and interests of Wabanaki women can be brought forward, and partnerships and collaboration on issues relevant to Wabanaki women are facilitated. This should be undertaken by the Women's Issues Branch.

8. Provide regular updates to NBAWCI on developments and research in the area of violence and Aboriginal Women by the Women's Issues Branch.

9. Provide the Women's Issues Branch with adequate funding to hire a provincial Aboriginal Coordinator to undertake and coordinate the work necessary to address violence against Wabanaki women and children. The Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women would continue to provide advice.

10. Develop partnerships and collaboration between the NBAWCI and other agencies and institutions to develop the organization's networks, capacity and its work on Wabanaki women's issues. NBAWCI would take the lead for this action once it has established its base of operations.

11. Establish a resource centre at the NBAWCI, once the organization has developed stable operations that will be useful to Wabanaki women's groups in developing their capacities to meet the needs and concerns of Wabanaki women. This centre would provide expertise in areas of interest to Wabanaki women, e.g. proposal development, fiscal accountability, etc.

## 7.4 Prevention and Education

### 7.4.1 Training and Education

To ensure that Wabanaki women, children, Elders and those with disabilities both on and off reserve who are dealing with violence receive the necessary assistance and support they require, service providers both on and off reserve need to have the required knowledge and competencies. Agencies off reserve are often unclear about jurisdictional issues, cultural differences and culturally appropriate options, access and practicalities for Wabanaki women living on reserve who have had to seek services, or move off reserve to escape their situations.

On reserves, not all service providers have the necessary training to recognize and deal with situations of violence. For example, although social workers may be familiar with this knowledge, others in the health, Headstart, policing, education or other fields may not have the same level of knowledge. Service providers on reserve and in Aboriginal organizations also need to be aware of protocols existing off reserve, such as the Woman Abuse Protocols, and adapt these if necessary to suit the circumstances of dealing with violence on reserve. One of the challenges of dealing with violence in First Nation communities is that individuals are often reluctant to report cases of abuse for fear of repercussions or conflicts, and because of the close relationships that exist between members of a community.

Additionally, there are certain situations in First Nation communities and for Wabanaki women, children, Elders and individuals with disabilities that require further investigation before appropriate measures can be implemented to prevent and address these. One of these areas is prostitution and abuse of girls and teenagers in First Nation communities. Anecdotal evidence indicates that girls trading sexual favours for practical needs is taking place. However, the causes or extent of the problem are not entirely clear. Better actions for prevention

and solutions could be identified if this information was known.

### **Recommended Action**

12. Provide training to service providers off reserve so they can better assist and address the needs of both on and off reserve Wabanaki women, children, Elders and women with disabilities dealing with violence.

13. Provide training in woman abuse protocols, recognizing neglected or abused children and reporting of these types of situations to service providers on reserve and Aboriginal organizations.

14. Provide information and training on existing initiatives to service providers on and off reserve as well as Wabanaki individuals where appropriate so that these reach Wabanaki people on and off reserve, e.g., suicide prevention, tool kits dealing with violence against Aboriginal women.

15. Undertake research to further clarify situations where the nature or extent of violence related issues is not known, e.g. prostitution and sexual exploitation of Wabanaki women and girls.

16. Identify areas of service and support where information is not generally available for service providers assisting Wabanaki women, children and community members dealing with violence and develop the necessary public education initiatives.

### **7.4.2 Tools and Materials on Healthy Relationships**

Values and relationships within the Wabanaki communities and between the Wabanaki and others have been distorted by colonization and its impacts. The violence in Wabanaki communities and families is a symptom of the damage that has occurred, and in many cases, families or individuals no longer have a clear sense of healthy relationships with

themselves, their partners, families, communities, leaders, stakeholders and others. Work to restore healthy Wabanaki values and relationships needs to happen so that balance can be restored for Wabanaki peoples between themselves and in their relationships with others. This could include tool kits, community animation or reflection processes and Wabanaki approaches to dealing with this issue. This work will require the involvement of various parties, e.g. service providers, Elders, community members, role models, etc to ensure that resulting materials and processes will be both culturally appropriate and will achieve the desired objective of restoring healthy Wabanaki relationships. These tools could be used within the education system, by service providers and other agencies on and off reserve, and in First Nation communities.

### **Recommended Action**

17. Develop tools and materials to catalyze and assist the process of rebuilding healthy Wabanaki relationships.

### **7.4.3 Communication Strategy**

The issue of violence is of great concern to Wabanaki peoples. However, these concerns have largely been spoken about in particular service fields, such as health or social services, and in the privacy of homes. Many women are not aware of the options that are available to them. This stems from a lack of awareness about available services and how to navigate through them. Lack of understanding of the laws and regulations that determine what happens in cases of violence, or when a relationship comes to an end, can lead to a great deal of uncertainty for Aboriginal women as to what exactly are their rights.

As stated earlier in this document, violence against women has become so prevalent in First Nations that it has become acceptable. If Wabanaki women and girls do not recognize what is happening to them as being abuse, they will not report it or access services. Therefore, there needs to be education

around the definition of abuse. Attention must also be placed on abuse outside the home as it is happening in the workplace as well.

The Committee recognizes that prevention programs need to address the risk factors, i.e. addictions, lack of and overcrowded housing, racism, poverty, unemployment, and impacts of residential schools.

To create awareness and momentum in dealing with the issue of violence to Wabanaki women and children, a culturally appropriate communication strategy needs to be developed so that communities, their leadership and members, and others off reserve begin to discuss and take action at a collective level.

#### **Recommended Action**

18. Develop a culturally appropriate communication strategy to bring awareness and attention to the issue of violence against Wabanaki women and children.

#### **7.4.4 Economics**

Wabanaki women have lower average incomes, higher poverty rates, and higher unemployment rates compared to New Brunswick women. The issue of poverty and economics is intimately linked with a Wabanaki woman's ability to leave an abusive situation and to find alternatives for herself and her children. Wabanaki women face at least the same struggles as their non-Aboriginal sisters in the area of economics, such as pay equity, access to childcare, systemic barriers, etc., but these are often complicated by further challenges such as racism. Ensuring that the necessary supports and opportunities are there for Wabanaki women in New Brunswick is a critical component to ensuring they have violence free lives.

The issue of wage increases is always difficult in communities where programming and services are already cash strapped. However, First Nation governments could investigate this

situation to ensure equitable wages for their female employees. This could prevent situations where external labour unions become involved in band administration, and would ensure that children from single mother households receive the proper nutrition, care and opportunities that are available to others in better financial positions. This is an important consideration in First Nation communities where women are twice as likely to be single parents than non-Aboriginal women.

#### **Recommended Action**

19. Investigate the situation regarding pay equity in First Nation communities. This could be initiated by First Nation governments with the assistance with agencies such as the Coalition on Pay Equity.

20. Institute transparent and objective hiring processes and policies in First Nation community workplaces, if these have not already been adopted by First Nation band governments.

Off reserve, the systemic challenges faced by Wabanaki women in accessing employment have been well documented. The federal government has instituted employment equity measures to address these, and the provincial government has an equal employment opportunity program for Aboriginal people and others. However, rates of employment for Wabanaki people in the civil service are still lower than they could be for this region and challenges still exist in the recruitment and retention process of Wabanaki people.

#### **Recommended Action**

21. Identify the existing numbers of Aboriginal provincial and federal government employees. The provincial and federal governments should actively continue with efforts to increase these numbers as part of their employment equity or equal employment opportunities initiatives. This may require ensuring there are suitable orientation programs for new Wabanaki employees; receptive cultural environments; and,

addressing any systemic issues in the hiring and retention process.

Entrepreneurship may be another viable option for Wabanaki women to decrease their financial dependence. Much work has been done to assist Wabanaki women to initiate and grow their own businesses. These opportunities continue to present themselves, especially in Aboriginal tourism and exports open up. Efforts to provide information and opportunities in entrepreneurship should continue, taking into consideration the particular challenges that Wabanaki women may face in starting their own businesses, such as lack of equity; decisions regarding taxation and incorporation for their businesses and associated impacts if they are located on reserve, etc.

### **Recommended Action**

22. Undertake outreach activities to Wabanaki women, on and off reserve, on the part of agencies providing services and information for Aboriginal entrepreneurs.

Ensuring Wabanaki women have access to adequate and consistent daycare services will affect their ability to find or maintain employment. In First Nation communities, daycare services are not available for women who work shift work, and in some situations, daycare providers will close when there are funeral services in the community – leaving women without options for childcare during this period. Off reserve, Wabanaki women face similar challenges as their non-Aboriginal sisters with respect to affordable and available childcare spaces. As well, there are few options available where a child can have a childcare environment that supports his/her cultural heritage.

### **Recommended Action**

23. Provide childcare options in First Nation communities for women working shift work, and ensure that services are available even when other community agencies may temporarily close.

24. Increase the numbers of affordable childcare spaces available in the province. This should be addressed by the Province of New Brunswick and daycare providers.

As a result of colonization and its impacts, Wabanaki young women are faced with a situation where they may have always been exposed to communities and patterns of dependency. With the current high levels of unemployment and dependence on social assistance in First Nation communities, many individuals have learned how to “play the system.” Often, individuals have learned to “take” from the system, without remembering that reciprocity is a central value in Wabanaki culture. Young Wabanaki women are learning these patterns, leaving them vulnerable when they are in abusive situations as these cycles continue their dependence, reduce their motivation to seek alternatives and limits their abilities to see options for themselves. Changing this attitude of dependence among young Wabanaki women is important so that they can break out of their cycles of dependence.

### **Recommended Action**

25. Develop and deliver culturally appropriate initiatives for Wabanaki young women on and off reserve to foster an attitude of self-sufficiency and reciprocity.

### **7.4.5 Band Bylaws and Protocols**

In order for violence to be addressed and rooted out of First Nation communities, several components must work together – an attitude by community members that violence is unacceptable; policies and protocols that make it easier for service providers and leaders to make difficult decisions involving community members involved in violent situations; and, services to assist perpetrators and victims to break the cycles of abuse, among others. First Nation leaders play an important role in creating the right environment by which collective change can happen in a community. Violence

in a community can happen at many levels, e.g. within the home, at school or in the workplace, and there are other factors that contribute to the continuation or escalation of violence, e.g. addictions, vandalism. Instituting band bylaws which will foster a violence free community and workplace, and facilitate the handling of situations in the community would be a big step in addressing violence against Aboriginal women. Some communities in other parts of the country have already adopted these, and these could be used as models and adapted to suit the particular needs of First Nation communities in New Brunswick.

Additionally, service providers on reserve need to ensure that appropriate protocols are in place which make it easier to make difficult decisions in violent situations, especially when the perpetrator or victim may be related to the staff providing services or to community leaders.

#### **Recommended Action**

26. Investigate band bylaws adopted by other First Nation communities in Canada that assist in creating the right conditions for reducing violence against Aboriginal women and children.

27. Explore and adopt band bylaws conducive to reducing violence against Wabanaki women and children in First Nation communities. This would be the responsibility of leadership in First Nation communities.

28. Develop or adapt existing protocols for service provision in First Nation communities necessary to reducing and dealing with violence against Wabanaki women and children, for example, Woman Abuse Protocols for First Nation communities.

#### **7.4.6 Workplace Policies in First Nation Communities**

Preventing workplace harassment in First Nation communities would be beneficial both for band employees and for the

leadership who will not have to deal with issues such as lost productivity, detrimental employee dynamics and liabilities. Having these policies in place will also provide Directors and supervisors with clear procedures to follow and prevent them from being accused of workplace harassment when they have to discipline employees or deal with unacceptable behaviours in the workplace.

#### **Recommended Action**

29. Develop and enforce human resource policies in First Nation communities that meet or exceed provincial and federal standards, but that are culturally appropriate for communities.

#### **7.4.7 Education**

A healthy sense of self and identity is important for all people. For Wabanaki youth, this process has been undermined by a school curriculum that does not reflect their experiences and history, resulting in poor self esteem and shame about being Wabanaki. Providing youth with a foundation for understanding who they are and an appreciation for the resiliency of their communities and nations will help to give them a healthy self esteem. With a stronger and healthier sense of identity and empowerment, Wabanaki youth are less likely to fall into cycles of abuse and victimization.

#### **Recommended Action**

30. Update public school curricula to include Wabanaki experiences and perspectives on history, using an approach that will foster both an acknowledgement of the past and opportunities to explore building healthy and reciprocal relationships with others. Both the Department of Education and First Nation leaders will need to take a lead for this for schools located both on and off reserve.

A similar process would be helpful in First Nation communities and with Wabanaki people living off reserve. Animation and

education processes to explore and rebuild relationships between Wabanaki peoples to decrease internal divisions and prejudices, and between the Wabanaki and others in this province will accelerate the process of Wabanaki people moving forward in building healthy connections and relationships with each other and with others.

### **Recommended Action**

31. Develop and implement education and animation processes for Wabanaki peoples to learn about their histories and move forward in rebuilding healthy relationships within their communities, with each other, and with other people living in New Brunswick.

## **7.5 Service Delivery**

### **7.5.1 Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services**

Health, mental health and addiction services for Wabanaki women, their children, Elders and women with disabilities are important to preventing and dealing with violence against Wabanaki women. Wabanaki people seeking care can experience a number of problems. Racism among workers who have not received proper cultural awareness training; lack of awareness on the part of Wabanaki individuals about services available off reserve; gaps in services as a result of jurisdictional issues; lack of availability of interpreters, and long waiting lists for essential mental health, health and addiction services are all issues of concern.

At present, the support and funds needed to create programs and raise awareness in this country – and specifically in this province – are minimally available. Using holistic and culturally appropriate models which build on Wabanaki traditional values and culture, such as incorporating extended families into the supports available for women, will increase the options available for Wabanaki women and their children and be in line with Wabanaki culture. In a 1993 interview with Gignoo

Transition House employees, a researcher with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) heard that "Native culture and heritage is important in terms of self-esteem, self-efficiency, self-confidence and control because the traditional ways act as re-connectors for the women who want to heal and break free from the alcohol, drugs and abuse." (NWAC, 1993) It is essential that service providers understand this and accommodate the needs of Aboriginal women seeking their assistance.

Within the general New Brunswick population, there is lack of awareness or distrust of traditional Wabanaki approaches to healing. As a result, there are some service providers who are not receptive to linking their clients with these options. Some Wabanaki individuals may also be reluctant to seek out help from mental health professionals for fear that they will be stigmatized, or may be more comfortable with Wabanaki traditional approaches to healing.

Service providers may be unfamiliar with the culture and the importance of extended family support or of healing ceremonies, as is sometimes the situation when hospital staff do not know how to deal with large numbers of extended family members visiting relatives in hospital, or of healing ceremonies being conducted in the hospital. It is understandable that staff would be concerned about the ability of other patients to rest. However, some cultural awareness and practical strategies will provide them with the tools to strike the balance of meeting the needs of all their patients. Some cross cultural education work is already happening, but this needs to be continued to ensure that all staff have the abilities to deal with Wabanaki patients and clients.

### **Recommended Action**

32. Deliver cross cultural training for service providers that will include some practical and culturally appropriate strategies for dealing effectively with Wabanaki clients and patients.

33. Offer or be receptive to both Wabanaki and western approaches to health, mental health and addiction related services so that individuals can access the type of assistance and support they are most comfortable with. This would particularly apply to service providers off reserve who may be less familiar with alternate Wabanaki approaches.

There are still jurisdictional issues with respect to the consistency, availability and programming of services available to Wabanaki individuals who are status or non-status, and living on or off reserve. This places Wabanaki women, Elders, women with disabilities and children dealing with abuse in a vulnerable situation as they try to leave their situations. These need to be investigated and addressed by the provincial, federal and First Nation governments so that there are no inconsistencies and service gaps for individuals, regardless of their status or their place of residency.

#### **Recommended Action**

34. Identify and address jurisdictional gaps and inconsistencies in health, mental health and addiction services for Wabanaki individuals.

Wabanaki women and children may also not be fully aware of the range of services and supports available to them when they are seeking assistance in terms of dealing with abuse and violence. This should be considered in a public education strategy that deals with violence against Wabanaki women and children.

#### **Recommended Action**

35. Undertake outreach and public education activities to inform Wabanaki women about the options and services available to them in dealing with abuse and violence.

Concern was expressed about burn-out experienced by First Nation social workers who tend to be in these positions for

many years. There has also been deep concern expressed about interference by First Nation leaders with the work of social workers and the ramifications of this interference on the individuals the social workers are there to assist. These situations sometimes arise as a result of the relationships that exist within a community or the lack of clear protocols and policies for these types of situations.

In some areas, nurses, mental health or other health professionals are shared among communities. This was seen as a gap in service delivery and the Committee feels that at least, there should be a nurse available five days a week. In First Nation communities, access to mental health services is also not always available. Off reserve, access to mental health services is limited as available services have long waiting lists, which is not useful when individuals are dealing with crisis situations. Addiction services are limited in New Brunswick with waiting lists to be admitted into rehabilitation programs and very few beds in detox centres. Much evidence exists to indicate that holistic treatment centres are the most effective way for Aboriginal women to fight addiction. However, no facility that caters to such needs for Wabanaki women exists in New Brunswick.

An additional challenge to providing health services is the shortage of health professionals in New Brunswick generally. Increasing the numbers of Wabanaki health professionals is one avenue to address some of these concerns. The Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work program is being jointly offered through St. Thomas and Dalhousie Universities. This program has been successful and will be graduating its first cohort this year. These individuals are committed to returning to their communities or working in agencies off reserve to improve services to Wabanaki people. Similar options could be explored for other health fields so that the numbers of Wabanaki health professionals increase.

## Recommended Action

36. Increase the numbers of Wabanaki health professionals.

37. Increase the numbers of available spaces in detox centres and increase the availability of services in the area of addiction. These services should also consider culturally appropriate avenues and liaisons for assisting their clients.

38. Reduce wait times for services in the health, mental health and addictions service areas.

### 7.5.2 Policing and the Justice System

Police response times and racist or sexist attitudes by police towards Wabanaki women is still an issue that Wabanaki women and children are facing. Anecdotal accounts indicate that in some cases women may not be taken seriously when reporting threats or incidents of violence; are provided with instructions that can sometimes place them at greater risk; or have to deal with extended response times, especially in rural areas. Better protocols and cooperation between police and First Nation service providers could help to improve the quality of services to Wabanaki women living on reserve.

When making their way through the court process, Wabanaki women have stated that they would benefit from the services of Wabanaki court workers who would assist them with the process, translation and provide support. This is in addition to Victim Services that some women may be involved with. Wabanaki women are still unfamiliar with the process and the services available to them while progressing through the court system, making it a confusing and frightening experience and adding to their reluctance to proceed through the process. Existing resource kits, such as The Healing Journey toolkit produced by Gignoo Transition House and the Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick in 2006 make

some of this relevant information available. Ongoing efforts must be made to make this information available widely to Wabanaki women.

Other regions in Canada have also undertaken different or innovative approaches to dealing with violence in Aboriginal communities that involve restorative justice or alternative processes that address the needs of both victims and perpetrators in a culturally appropriate way. Some work is being undertaken in the province by communities, but more could be done to identify and implement suitable options for communities in this province.

## Recommended Action

39. Develop and implement training for police to ensure their approaches and responses are appropriate in the context of First Nation communities.

40. Establish collaborative relationships between police and First Nation service providers so that appropriate approaches and protocols are established for dealing with violence against Wabanaki women, children, Elders and women with disabilities in First Nation communities.

41. Establish a Wabanaki court worker program to assist women dealing with court processes.

42. Distribute existing resource kits and directories to inform Wabanaki women about the service and supports available to them.

43. Review various models across jurisdictions of restorative justice, First Nation tribunal and specialized court processes, and perpetrator interventions. This would be assessed by the Advisory Committee to determine their suitability and applicability to New Brunswick.



### 7.5.3 Housing

The shortage of housing plays an important role in decreasing the ability of Wabanaki women to leave abusive situations. First Nation leaders are heavily advocating with the federal government and others to solve this issue. However, in the meantime, women and children are still at risk. Some communities have established Housing Committees to deal with issues related to housing, e.g. allotment, improvements and repairs, increasing numbers of housing, etc. Still it is unclear whether these Housing Committees are effective in dealing with housing situations, given some of the complexities they have to deal with, such as:

- Lack of funding and available housing;
- Complicated government regulations that sometimes promote inequitable distribution of houses between First Nation communities because of the current funding formulas and requirements. These requirements appear to make it easier for wealthier communities to access funds for housing, than those that are cash strapped or in co-management or third party management arrangements, potentially resulting in increased disparity between communities.

The regulations surrounding housing on reserves sometimes adds further complications in dealing with situations or violence, as when the abuser is in possession of the Certificate of Possession to the home, requiring that the woman and her children leave.

Although it is a difficult task, Chiefs and Councils can address this issue to some extent by exploring how other communities across the country have dealt with the situation of housing as it relates to relationship violence; adopting protocols and bylaws that will help to reduce the impacts and severity of these situations for Wabanaki women and children dealing with violence; and ensuring Housing Committees have the authority and mandate to deal with this matter. The Advisory

Committee recognizes that this is a challenging task and that these protocols will need to be sensitive to the relationships that may exist between clients, leaders and service providers in communities.

#### Recommended Action

44. Research how First Nations in Canada are dealing with housing protocols and bylaws in relation to violence and abuse. Subsequently, First Nation communities should adapt and adopt those that would suit the particular circumstances of their communities.

45. Establish Housing Committees in First Nation communities to deal with housing issues, if these do not already exist. These Committees would also deal with those situations that arise as a result of violent situations. Wabanaki women should be fairly represented on these Committees.

46. Review existing Canada Mortgage and Housing policies, program requirements and implementation so that all First Nation communities in New Brunswick can equitably access funding for new housing.

Off reserve, more second stage housing needs to be available so that Wabanaki women and children leaving violent situations have options available to them. This factor is critically important, as there may be no options on reserve for women with the housing shortages in First Nation communities. Without these options, women may return to their situations as they feel they have no other recourse. As well, Wabanaki women may not be aware of the existence of this support – further efforts need to be made to make this information available to them.

47. Increase the number of second stage housing units available to assist Wabanaki women and their children.

48. Include information on second stage housing in a public

education strategy regarding violence and Wabanaki women.

#### **7.5.4 Workshops and Training Related to Violence and Wabanaki Women**

To date, there are several existing training, public education or animation programs that may be available to help address violence against Wabanaki women and their children. However, these initiatives are working separately. It would be beneficial to complete an inventory of available public education and training initiatives available in New Brunswick, so that useful linkages can be made between them, to determine if these are currently being delivered, or whether additional supports are required for their implementation. As an umbrella group, the Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women would take on this task and determine further actions required in this area.

49. Complete an inventory of public education and training initiatives available that relate to violence against Wabanaki women and children. The Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women should take on this task with secretariat support.

# 8. Summary of Recommendations

## General

1. Continue ongoing work to coordinate services, and address jurisdictional gaps within each service or program delivery area, between departments and jurisdictions. The federal, provincial and First Nation governments will need to take the lead for this as this should be done for programming in the federal, provincial and First Nation spheres of authority.

2. Establish a Wabanaki Women's Issues Table as part of the First Nation/Province Bilateral process to bring forward the perspectives and address the concern of Wabanaki women, and to ensure that gender equity issues are addressed at the various tables of the bilateral process.

3. Strengthen or initiate collaborative working relationships between the federal and provincial governments, First Nation communities, off reserve agencies and post-secondary education institutions in the different sectors that deal with violence to Aboriginal women, e.g., policing, health, social services, and others, to ensure that the needs of all Wabanaki women and children are considered.

## Capacity Building

4. Provide base operational funding to the NBAWCI so that it can increase its capacity and be an effective voice for Wabanaki women in New Brunswick.

5. Establish an information resource at the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women and/or the NB Women's Issues Branch on potential funding programs in the federal, provincial government levels and other sectors

from which the NBAWCI and Wabanaki women's groups can potentially access funding.

6. Include NBAWCI at the different federal, provincial and First Nation government forums addressing Aboriginal issues in New Brunswick so that there is a strong voice representing the needs and interests of Wabanaki women in New Brunswick.

7. Facilitate linkages between NBAWCI and relevant key agencies, provincial and federal departments so that the concerns and interests of Wabanaki women can be brought forward, and partnerships and collaboration on issues relevant to Wabanaki women are facilitated. This should be undertaken by the Women's Issues Branch.

8. Provide regular updates to NBAWCI on developments and research in the area of violence and Aboriginal Women by the Women's Issues Branch.

9. Provide the Women's Issues Branch with adequate funding to hire a provincial Aboriginal Coordinator to undertake and coordinate the work necessary to address violence against Wabanaki women and children. The Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women would continue to provide advice.

10. Develop partnerships and collaboration between the NBAWCI and other agencies and institutions to develop the organization's networks, capacity and its work on Wabanaki women's issues. NBAWCI would take the lead for this action once it has established its base of operations.

11. Establish a resource centre at the NBAWCI, once the organization has developed stable operations, that will be useful to Wabanaki women's groups in developing their capacities to meet the needs and concerns of Wabanaki women. This centre would provide expertise in areas of interest to Wabanaki women, e.g. proposal development, fiscal accountability, etc.

## Prevention and Education

### *Training and Education*

12. Provide training to service providers off reserve so they can better assist and address the needs of both on and off reserve Wabanaki women, children, Elders and women with disabilities dealing with violence.

13. Provide training in woman abuse protocols, recognizing neglected or abused children and reporting of these types of situations to service providers on reserve and Aboriginal organizations.

14. Provide information and training on existing initiatives to service providers on and off reserve as well as Wabanaki individuals where appropriate so that these reach Wabanaki people on and off reserve, e.g., suicide prevention, tool kits dealing with violence against Aboriginal women.

15. Undertake research to further clarify situations where the nature or extent of violence related issues is not known, e.g. prostitution and sexual exploitation of Wabanaki women and girls.

16. Identify areas of service and support where information is not generally available for service providers assisting Wabanaki women, children and community members dealing with violence and develop the necessary public education initiatives.

### *Tools and Materials on Healthy Relationships*

17. Develop tools and materials to catalyze and assist the process of rebuilding healthy Wabanaki relationships.

### *Communication Strategy*

18. Develop a culturally appropriate communication strategy to bring awareness and attention to the issue of violence against Wabanaki women and children.

### *Economics*

19. Investigate the situation regarding pay equity in First Nation communities. This could be initiated by First Nation governments with the assistance with agencies such as the Coalition on Pay Equity.

20. Institute transparent and objective hiring processes and policies in First Nation community workplaces, if these have not already been adopted by First Nation band governments.

21. Investigate the situation regarding pay equity in First Nation communities. This could be initiated by First Nation governments with the assistance with agencies such as the Coalition on Pay Equity.

22. Institute transparent and objective hiring processes and policies in First Nation community workplaces, if these have not already been adopted by First Nation band governments.

23. Provide childcare options in First Nation communities for women working shift work, and ensure that services are available even when other community agencies may temporarily close.

24. Increase the numbers of affordable childcare spaces available in the province. This should be addressed by the Province of New Brunswick and daycare providers.

25. Develop and deliver culturally appropriate initiatives for Wabanaki young women on and off reserve to foster an attitude of self-sufficiency and reciprocity.

### ***Band Bylaws and Protocols***

26. Investigate band bylaws adopted by other First Nation communities in Canada that assist in creating the right conditions for reducing violence against Aboriginal women and children.

27. Explore and adopt band bylaws conducive to reducing violence against Wabanaki women and children in First Nation communities.

28. Develop or adapt existing protocols for service provision in First Nation communities necessary to reducing and dealing with violence against Wabanaki women and children, for example, Woman Abuse Protocols for First Nation communities.

### ***Workplace Policies in First Nation Communities***

29. Develop and enforce human resource policies in First Nation communities that meet or exceed provincial and federal standards, but that are culturally appropriate for communities.

### ***Education***

30. Update public school curricula to include Wabanaki experiences and perspectives on history, using an approach that will foster both an acknowledgement of the past and opportunities to explore building healthy and reciprocal relationships with others. Both the Department of Education and First Nation leaders will need to take a lead for this for schools located both on and off reserve.

## **Service Delivery**

### ***Health, Mental Health and Addiction Services***

31. Develop and implement education and animation processes for Wabanaki peoples to learn about their histories and move forward in rebuilding healthy relationships within their communities, with each other, and with other people living in New Brunswick.

32. Deliver cross cultural training for service providers that will

include some practical and culturally appropriate strategies for dealing effectively with Wabanaki clients and patients.

33. Offer or be receptive to both Wabanaki and western approaches to health, mental health and addiction related services so that individuals can access the type of assistance and support they are most comfortable with. This would particularly apply to service providers off reserve who may be less familiar with alternate Wabanaki approaches.

34. Identify and address jurisdictional gaps and inconsistencies in health, mental health and addiction services for Wabanaki individuals.

35. Undertake outreach and public education activities to inform Wabanaki women about the options and services available to them in dealing with abuse and violence.

36. Increase the numbers of Wabanaki health professionals.

37. Increase the numbers of available spaces in detox centres and increase the availability of services in the area of addiction. These services should also consider culturally appropriate avenues and liaisons for assisting their clients.

38. Reduce wait times for services in the health, mental health and addictions service areas.

### ***Policing and the Justice System***

39. Develop and implement training for police to ensure their approaches and responses are appropriate in the context of First Nation communities.

40. Establish collaborative relationships between police and First Nation service providers so that appropriate approaches and protocols are established for dealing with violence against Wabanaki women, children, Elders and women with disabilities in First Nation communities.

41. Establish a Wabanaki court worker program to assist women dealing with court processes.

42. Distribute existing resource kits and directories to inform Wabanaki women about the service and supports available to them.

43. Review various models across jurisdictions of restorative justice, First Nation tribunal and specialized court processes, and perpetrator interventions. This would be assessed by the Advisory Committee to determine their suitability and applicability to New Brunswick.

### ***Housing***

44. Research how First Nations in Canada are dealing with housing protocols and bylaws in relation to violence and abuse. Subsequently, First Nation communities should adapt and adopt those that would suit the particular circumstances of their communities.

45. Establish Housing Committees in First Nation communities to deal with housing issues, if these do not already exist. These Committees would also deal with those situations that arise as a result of violent situations. Wabanaki women should be fairly represented on these Committees.

46. Review existing Canada Mortgage and Housing policies, program requirements and implementation so that all First Nation communities in New Brunswick can equitably access funding for new housing.

47. Increase the number of second stage housing units available to assist Wabanaki women and their children.

48. Include information on second stage housing in a public education strategy regarding violence and Wabanaki women.

### ***Workshops and Training Related to Violence and Wabanaki Women***

49. Complete an inventory of public education and training initiatives available that relate to violence against Wabanaki women and children. The Advisory Committee on Violence against Aboriginal Women should take on this task with secretariat support.

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# Appendix A: Advisory Committee Members

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Women's Issues Branch  
Executive Council Office

Natalie McBride, Co-Chair  
Gignoo Transition House

Christine Augustine  
Member at large (formerly from ACSW)

Genine Paul  
St. Mary's First Nation

Tamara Polchies  
Fredericton Native Friendship Centre

Ruth Levi  
MAWIW Council

Mary-Jane Peters  
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Patsy McKinney  
NB Aboriginal Peoples Council

Rebecca Knockwood  
Fort Folly First Nation

Tammy Augustine  
Elsipogtog First Nation

Barb Martin  
Member at large

Mary Solomon  
Tobique First Nation

Cheryl Ward  
CAAW/Eel Ground First Nation

Jeannie Bartibogue  
Burnt Church First Nation

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