

femmes. Depuis 1990, le programme offre un cours monté en collaboration avec TV Ontario: *La Femme et la Violence*. Conçu et mis sur pied par la professeure Lorraine Gauthier, ce cours de 13 émissions — le premier du genre à Glendon — s'adresse non seulement aux étudiant-e-s inscrit-e-s à Glendon, mais aussi à toutes les femmes francophones de l'Ontario. C'est ainsi que plusieurs femmes ont suivi ce cours à distance; des téléconférences leur permettaient de participer aux groupes de discussion hebdomadaire. Certaines des participantes étaient elles-mêmes victimes de violence sexuelle et physique, et le cours leur a fourni l'occasion, pénible mais positive, de mettre en perspective leur propre expérience traumatique et de ressentir des liens de solidarité avec d'autres femmes d'âge divers. Cette année, le cours *La Femme et la Violence* devrait atteindre un nombre encore plus grand de femmes de la communauté francophone. Un nouveau cours télévisé dans lequel la violence faite aux femmes occupe une large place s'est également ajouté au programme: *Les Femmes et la Santé*.

En plus d'offrir des cours qui traitent de la violence, le programme Études des femmes s'associe à des activités qui ont pour objectif de réduire la violence subie par les femmes. Une étude, menée conjointement avec le Réseau des femmes du Sud de l'Ontario, a permis d'établir un répertoire de la documentation sur la violence disponible en français. Ce répertoire est à la disposition des francophones de la région torontoise à Glendon même, au Centre de Recherches et de Ressources pour femmes, siège social du Réseau. Un autre projet est en cours, en collaboration avec d'autres universités ontariennes, pour monter une campagne éducative contre les viols commis dans les campus, particulièrement contre ceux commis par des personnes connues des victimes.

*Pour obtenir de plus amples renseignements sur le programme et ses activités, veuillez prendre contact avec Lorraine Gauthier, Coordinatrice, Études des femmes, Collège universitaire Glendon, 2275, avenue Bayview, Toronto, M4N 3M6; tél.: (416) 487-6828.*



## Teaching and Transformation: A Native Family Violence Training Program

*By Connie Chapman*

*The Vancouver Native Education Centre offers a one year Native Family and Community Counselling Program which trains Native adults to be entry level family violence workers. This course works to balance skill development with personal growth and transformation. This article describes the program, discusses the areas of growth and describes the Talking Circle, one of the major tools of transformation.*

The Native Family and Community Counselling Program, a year long certificate program at our centre, is designed to train Native adults to do safety interventions in family violence situations (wife battering, sexual abuse, elder abuse). The primary focus is on crisis and short-term interventions. The Urban Native Indian

Education Society first saw a need for such training through the experiences of its students. Many of the students were having trouble completing their studies due to current or past abusive situations. In 1987, money was received from Health and Welfare Canada to run an experimental two and a half year Family Violence Counselling and Community Service Training (FVC&CST) program.<sup>1</sup> Although the length of this initial training proved to work, available funding limited the succeeding programs to one year in length.

Two additional training sessions have been completed since the first eight learners completed the two and a half year Family Violence Counselling and Community Service Training programme. Both the particular circumstances of the learners and the nature of the work has contributed to this being both a skill training program and a transformative personal process.

### Training Process

Learners spend eight months in a classroom setting and two months in a work experience setting. The school year is divided into two semesters of 16 weeks each. The following list shows the courses learners take each semester.

#### *Semester One:*

- Counselling Basics
- Sociology of Family Violence
- Social Psychology of Family Life
- English Writing and Communication
- Psychological Development
- Psychology of Human Sexuality
- Personal and Cultural Development
- Practicum (four weeks)

#### *Semester Two:*

- Issues in Counselling
- Group Therapy and Group Skills
- English (Public Speaking)
- Dynamics of Family Violence
- Community Development
- Program Development and Evaluation
- Personal and Cultural Development
- Practicum (five weeks)

### Transformation Process

The learners come into the program carrying the legacy of two hundred years of foreign rule that have destroyed every aspect of their societies through disease, residential schools, church intervention, introduction of alcohol and drugs, outlawing of governing and spiritual practices and removal of children. As well, since the majority of the learners are female, they are also carrying the legacy of hundreds of years of sexism imported from Europe. Of the 38 trainees who have attended the course 56 per cent were raised either in residential schools or foster homes, 80 per cent had come from alcoholic homes, 72 per cent had been sexually abused as children and 56 per cent of them were recovering from alcohol and drug use. Seventy-nine per cent of the 33 women had been in battering relationships as adults. We do screen for active alcohol and drug problems and ask potential learners about the stability of their personal relationships. However, we know that

it is unrealistic, given the financial and therapeutic resources available to most of the learners, to expect them to have done any or much work on past abuses.

Upon entering the program, we tell learners that the course material may raise personal issues for them and talk about ways they may want to handle the stress of personal change. However, many learners believe they have dealt with past issues. Others believe they have buried the past. Given the nature of the course material and of their backgrounds, even the most reluctant learners find personal transformation taking place. Transformation for learners comes in three main areas: native identity, past abuse issues and current abuse issues.

Many of the trainees come into the program unfamiliar with the history of colonization and with Native cultural practices and believing many of the stereotypes of Native people they have been subjected to, including the belief that 'Native ways' are savage and evil. Through Talking Circle (Personal and Cultural Development), where many spiritual beliefs and practices are introduced, through course material, through associating with other Native people who are making changes and through role modelling of teachers, trainees begin to reevaluate many of the beliefs they were taught about being Native. They leave the program with a stronger sense of what it means to be Native and how they will live that out in the world.

For many trainees, the classroom setting is the first time they will have talked about the abuse that was a daily part of their life when growing up. This happens primarily in Talking Circle, although as the group becomes more comfortable with one another and as individuals become more sensitized, they bring up past abuse during classroom discussions. They being to apply what they have learned in class to their own lives and make corresponding changes to their self image and behavior.

The majority of learners come into the program having a very narrow and extreme definition of abuse. In the first training, community members described family violence as "getting beat up and hiding under the bed," as "pushing, slapping and grabbing" or they felt that 'real abuse' meant "just about killing someone else."<sup>22</sup> Several months into the program, learners begin to realize that abuse is also "how my

partner talks to me" and "how I talk to my children" and that abuse is still very real for them. While dealing with past issues is painful, dealing with current abuse most often precipitates the learner into a personal crisis. The classroom becomes a hybrid between a lecture hall and a self-help support group. The experiential learning style that is used helps facilitate this process. However, learners are constantly working to balance the mental and emotional demands of the program.

### The Talking Circle

The talking circle is a traditional Native group process which has been adapted to the classroom setting. Linda Giddings, one of the main instructors in the program, describes the Circle as a tool that combines "spiritual and psychological dynamics while accessing participants to underlying belief structures and traditional values."

In the Talking Circle, learners and teachers sit in a circle. The Circle opens with a cleansing ceremony followed by a prayer. Then a sacred object (an Eagle feather is used in the program) is passed from person to person. While holding the feather, each person shares from his/her heart whatever it is they need to say that day. In a Talking Circle, there are no interruptions and there is no cross talk. The person who is speaking receives the respectful attention of others in the group. After everyone who wants to share has done so, the Circle closes with the Circle of Two Medicines. Each person, in turn, greets every other person in the circle, either shaking hands or hugging.

This is the particular form we have adopted in the program. There are other forms of the Talking or Sacred Circle, depending on local practices. Although each year a few learners come into the program with a familiarity with the Circle, the majority have not been exposed to it. The first month or so is spent with learners becoming familiar with the process. Learners are encouraged to participate in all aspect of Circle and they are not forced to take part. However, they are required to attend. During this initial learning time, learners are concerned about 'getting it right' and 'knowing what it all means.' After several months of participating, learners begin to find their own meaning from the Circle. Comments on the Circle include:

*It provided healing and support to get through the program.*

*We could choose to speak or not, pray or not, help or not. I was allowed to choose to be myself and do the things that were taken away from the generations of my people.*

While learners are encouraged from the beginning to lead various part of the Circle, during second term each person does so in a more structured way. The Talking Circle is used frequently in Native communities as a healing, problem-solving and governing tool. Learners will be seen as leaders in their communities and thus will be expected to take part in and lead Circles.

### Evaluating the Process

In determining the success of the program, we must remember that success is a relative term. Funders tend to evaluate success in terms of the numbers who complete the program and who are subsequently employed. Of the 38 learners who have started the program, 31 have graduated or will graduate. Of the seven who did not complete, four left the program early on and three have only minimal requirements left to complete before graduating. Fifty-eight per cent of graduates are currently employed, 19 per cent are enrolled in further education and the re-examining 23 per cent (most from the current class) are seeking work.

Success can also be defined, however, on the basis of the experience of the participants. The vast majority of the learners feel differently about themselves after the program is over. One learner, for example, commented that:

*I realized I had to deal with me first, clean up my own backyard. I had to address my needs as a person and a victim before I could attempt to apply things as a worker. By being able to participate in an experiential way with the training and being allowed process time to apply the training to myself... I learned to know what was healing for myself.*

We are currently working on adding a second year to the program to focus on long term counselling issues and on issues centred around work with abusers and offenders. We are also in the process of

articulating courses. Learners now receive a joint certificate from the Urban Native Indian Education Society and Vancouver Community College. The issue of articulation and transfer of credit is becoming increasingly important as bands and tribal councils move towards self-government and control of child welfare services. The provincial and federal governments are expecting trained personnel with a minimum of a Bachelor's degree to run these programs.

<sup>1</sup> The final report from this program is available from the Urban Native Indian Education Society, 285 East 5th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5T 1H2. Ask for information on the *Family Violence Worker Training Kit*.

<sup>2</sup> Denise Nadeau, *Training Family Violence Workers: a resource kit based on the evaluation of the Native Family Violence Training Program* (Vancouver: Native Education Centre, 1991), p.3.

*Connie Chapman is a sociologist by training and a feminist by inclination and necessity. For the past 15 years, she has worked to end violence against women by working in shelters for battered women, provincial organizations of transition houses, and, since 1987, has coordinated the Family Violence Counselling program at the Native Education Centre in Vancouver.*



# Sex Exploitation of Clients by Therapists

## *Breaking the Silence and Exploding the Myths*

*By Temi Firsten and Jeri Wine, in collaboration with Christine Dunbar, Cheryl Rowe and Lynda Davies*

***The implicit contract at the root of the psychotherapy relationship is that one individual agrees to put aside his or her needs to attend to the unfulfilled needs of another. More than caring and sensitivity, the therapist requires the capacity to delay gratification and keep the other's needs paramount. The client, usually alone and in a very vulnerable state, finds herself with someone who listens and understands and seems to genuinely care. Perhaps it is the first opportunity in the client's life to be heard and understood. And, trustingly, the client divulges everything.***

One can appreciate the potential for clients to experience such a relationship as larger-than-life:

*I felt totally dependent on him... this was sort of the high point of my existence.*

*He was the first person I'd ever met that fit into my version of what a normal human being was.... I think I wanted him to be a father figure. He certainly seemed like my lifeline to sanity, to health, to a better way of living, and he was very important to me...*

*My life was put on hold, my entire life was centred around this hour, four hours a week with him.*

That such an intimate encounter might elicit erotic feelings or romantic fantasies

for either party is also to be expected:

*I thought about him all the time. The first three or four months of therapy my body felt like it was just going to fly right out the window, because I was like an overstimulated child all the time.... I was just barely in control.*

*I was so infatuated with him, and really wanted to have an affair and would violate any standards to do that....*

No matter what thoughts, feelings or behaviour the client brings to the therapy arena, the therapist has the *absolute* responsibility to establish and maintain the therapeutic boundaries. When the contract is broken, the potential to do damage is vast.

As with incest 10 to 15 years ago, the veil of silence around sexual abuse by psychotherapists is just beginning to be lifted. The frequency of this abuse and the leniency of the legal system and professional regulating bodies in prosecuting the offenders is beginning to be brought to light by the media.

Three years ago a group of concerned mental health practitioners came together in Toronto to look at the frequency of sexual exploitation by therapists and counselors of predominantly female patients, and the negative effects that experience has on the patients' lives. We have since organized as *CHASTEN*, the Canadian Health Alliance to Stop Therapist Exploitation Now. We currently have representation from the fields of nursing, psychology, social work and psychiatry. Our members share a clear feminist perspective on this issue, viewing it as a form of sexual exploitation second only to in-