

HUSH HUSH

NO



MORE

**SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE NWT**

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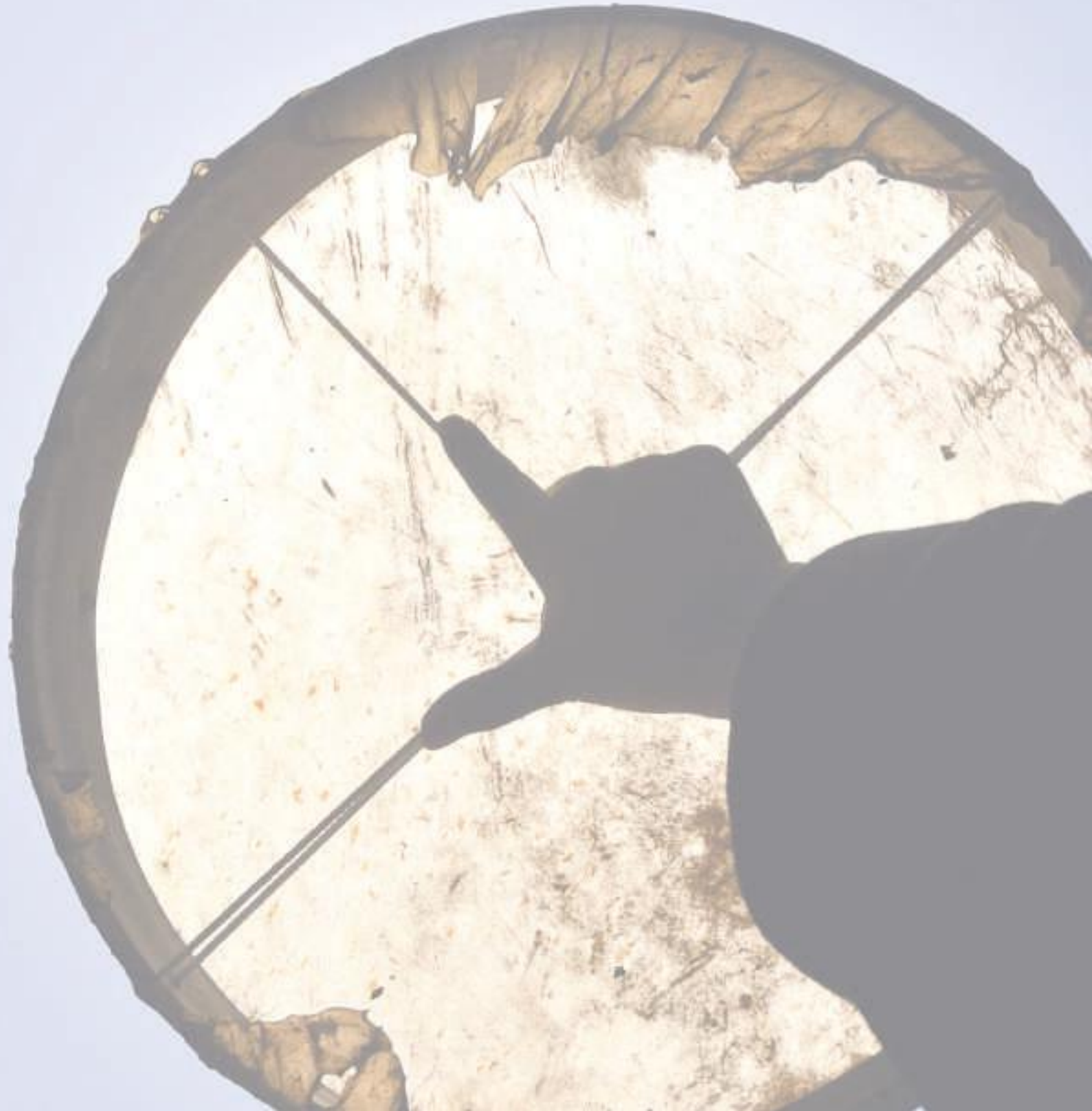
MORE

Improving NWT Community  
Response to Sexual Violence  
Against Women and Girls



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Improving NWT Community Response to  
Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls

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## The Project

The YWCA-Yellowknife received funding from the Status of Women Canada to conduct a two year project examining the needs of NWT women who have experienced sexual assault and the NWT services that respond to these needs. The project has met with service providers to plan for ways to better support women in the future.

The project conducted confidential interviews with ten women from five NWT communities. It took courage for these women to share their stories - for some of them it was the first time they had spoken to anyone about the sexual violence they had endured.

The project conducted 20 confidential and 17 non-confidential interviews with service providers in six NWT communities.

## Collaboration with Service Providers

The project established a “community of practice” consisting of ten to sixteen service providers and policy analysts, mainly from the community of Yellowknife, to discuss findings of the research and explore ways to work together to better support women who have been sexually assaulted/raped.

A protocol chart containing basic contact information, and a general service description has been produced and distributed to service providers throughout the NWT.

The YWCA – Yellowknife was granted a license from the Aurora Research Institute to conduct this research. The research approach and methodology have been carefully reviewed and approved by the Aurora College Research Ethics Committee.

## Researching Promising Practices

The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, Women Against Violence Against Women (a Vancouver rape crisis centre), and the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services provided important information about services. Some academic research, statistics, and government policies were accessed through the internet. Information reviewed includes:

### **Sexual Assault in Canada Law, Legal Practice and Women’s Activism;**

edited by Elizabeth A. Sheehy, published by University of Ottawa Press, 2012

### **Transforming a Rape Culture;**

edited by Emilie Buchwalk, Pamela R. Fletcher, and Martha Roth, published by Milkweed Editions, 2005

### **Disclaimer regarding the sexual assault of NWT men**

The researcher was told that men, as well as women, in the NWT have experienced high rates of sexual violence.

This report researches the sexual assault of NWT women and thus uses feminine descriptors throughout. This does not in any way diminish the severity nor the prevalence of sexual assaults against boys and men in the NWT.

### **IT’S NEVER OKAY: An Action Plan to stop Sexual Violence and Harassment,**

March 2015 (Government of Ontario)  
<http://docs.files.ontario.ca/documents/4136/mi-2003-svhap-report-en-for-tagging-final-2-up-s.pdf>

### **General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization by Statistics Canada 2009**

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010002/article/11340-eng.htm#a3>

### **Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends,**

Juristat Article, edited by Maire Sinha, February 2013  
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf>

### **Disclaimer regarding sexting and cyber sexual violence**

Sexual violence in the NWT, as elsewhere, is perpetrated through digital media, especially among young people. It is clear that the prevalence of cyber violence requires diligent and extensive research. This project was not licensed to interview women younger than 19 years and did not have the resources necessary to research the subject area of cyber sexual violence.



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Statistics  
Sexual Violence in Canada and the NWT

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In 2009 Statistics Canada conducted a General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010002/article/11340-eng.htm#a3> This survey collected information from approximately 19,500 respondents 15 years and older living in the ten provinces. The three northern territories were not included in this 2009 GSS report. One of the major benefits of the GSS is that it captures information on criminal incidents including those that do not come to the attention of the police.

According to the 2013 Statistics Canada, Juristat Article *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical trends*, Women ages 15 to 24 reported to police the most violence. *"In 2011, females aged 15 to 24 generally experienced the highest rates of violence, with rates subsequently decreasing with increasing age."*

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf> )

### According to the Canadian Women's Foundation

- > 66% of female victims of sexual assault are under the age of 24 and,
- > 11% of female victims of sexual assault are under the age of 11

From the Canadian Women's Foundation Website. Nov 2015

### According to the 2009 Statistics Canada GSS

- > The self-reported sexual assault victimization rate for females is 472,000 women, age 15 years and older, in provinces of Canada, in one year. This victimization rate is calculated at 34 women for every 1,000 people.
- > The self-reported sexual assault victimization rate for males is 204,000 men, age 15 years and older, in provinces of Canada, in one year. The GSS notes that the data collected for men has a "high coefficient of variation" and is "to be used with caution." This victimization rate is calculated at 15 men per every 1,000 people (a statistic to be used with caution).
- > The GSS also indicate that incidents of sexual touching, unwanted grabbing, kissing, or fondling accounted for 81% of sexual assaults reported to the GSS
- > sexual attacks, which involve the use of threats or physical violence accounted for about one in five sexual assault incidents in this survey
- > 92% of all sexual assaults were carried out by someone acting alone
- > In over half (51%) of sexual assaults reported to this survey the perpetrator was a friend, acquaintance, or neighbour of the victim

### Women with Disabilities - Four times more likely to have experienced a sexual assault

According to a 2014 Factsheet produced by the Disabled Women's Network of Canada, *"It has been determined that women with disabilities are four times more likely to have experienced a sexual assault than women without disabilities."*

<http://www.dawncanada.net/main/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/English-Violence-January-2014.pdf>

### Very few sexual assaults reported to police

There are varying estimates of how many sexual assaults are reported to the police. The Canadian Women's Foundation provides an estimate less than 10% of all sexual assaults are reported to police. According to a University of Ottawa criminology professor, Holly Johnson, who analysed Statistics Canada data and reported on the CBC website, approximately 3.3% of sexual assaults are reported to police and approximately ten percent of the sexual assaults reported result in a conviction.

### Nine times more sexual assaults in NWT

Statistics Canada reports that the prevalence of sexual offences, like other violent crimes, is substantially higher in the northern territories. Figures for Northwest Territories reported by Statistics Canada in 2011 indicate that women's risk of sexual violence is 9 times greater in the NWT than the provincial average.

(Juristat Article - Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends, released February 25, 2013, edited by Maire Sinha, page 30 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf>)

Also noted in the Juristat Article is: *"Women most at risk of non-spousal violence included those who were young, participated in many evening activities, were single, used drugs, identified as an Aboriginal person and lived in a community with social disorder, such as vandalism, noisy neighbours, and people using or dealing drugs."*

Most NWT victims and all of the service providers who provided information to the project indicated that there is a great deal of sexual violence in the NWT perpetrated against both men and boys and women and girls. The sexual violence includes child sexual abuse, sexual assaults at drinking parties, male friends raping their female friends, women in positions of authority sexually assaulting younger men, and men sexually assaulting and raping their wives. Historically, many boys and girls have been sexually abused in the residential schools of the NWT.



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Impacts

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## Impacts of Sexual Assault and Abuse

**Although there are many common effects of sexual assault and abuse, the impacts are influenced by many factors including\***

- > Age of the person when they were sexually assaulted/abused
- > The relationship to the person who assaulted/abused them
- > The frequency of the abuse
- > How much violence or coercion was used
- > How did people react when the sexual violence was disclosed? (Was the disclosure believed?)

**Some of the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder include**

- > Emotional numbing and emotional flooding
- > Panic attacks
- > Chronic illness and pain
- > Withdrawal from family, friends, work
- > Abuse of alcohol, drugs, to help avoid the feelings related to the trauma

**Both adults sexually assaulted as children and those assaulted as adults experience**

- > Poor self esteem
- > Depression
- > Anxiety
- > Feelings of self-blame, guilt, shame
- > Sleep problems
- > Substance abuse
- > Eating disorders
- > Unsafe sexual promiscuity (at risk for prostitution)
- > Post traumatic stress disorder

A research study conducted by the NWT Status of Women Council in 1996 found that substance abuse is related to underlying causes such as trauma from violence and abuse. The study recommended that programs need to be developed to address the underlying issues and trauma that have led to substance abuse.

\*From "First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training, Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, 2011



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## Definitions of Sexual Assault and Consent

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In Canada the Criminal Code defines sexual assault as: “any unwanted sexual act done by one person to another or sexual activity without one person’s consent or voluntary agreement.” Sexual assault occurs if a person is touched in any way that interferes with their sexual integrity or for a sexual purpose without their consent. This includes kissing, touching, intercourse and any other sexual activity without consent.

The Criminal Code of Canada Section 150.1 provides information about the age of consent and Section 273.1 (1) provides information about the definition of consent.

### The Age of Consent

- > In Canada the age of consent to sexual activity is 16 years. This means that a 16 year old person may consent to sexual activity with anyone who is their age or older. The exception is that a child/ youth under the age of 18 cannot consent to sexual activity with someone who is in a position of trust or authority over them, someone they are dependent on, or someone who is exploitative of them.
- > Children under the age of 12 years cannot consent to sexual activity. Thus if a person engages in any form of sexual activity with a child under the age of 12 that person is committing sexual assault regardless of whether or not the child is said to have consented.
- > Children who are ages 12 and 13 years may consent to sexual activity with someone who is less than two years older than they are.
- > Children of 14 and 15 years may consent to sexual activity with someone who is less than five years older than they are.

### Consent is Not Given

- > if it has been obtained through the use of force, threats, fear of bodily harm, misleading information, or lies about the intention of an activity
- > by anyone who is incapacitated by drugs or alcohol
- > when one person forces or coerces another person to engage in sexual activity by abusing a position of trust, power, or authority
- > when a person expresses by words or conduct a lack of agreement to engage in the sexual activity
- > when a person, having initially consented to engage in sexual activity, expresses by words or conduct, a choice not to continue to engage in sexual activity

A partner in a marriage or common-law relationship requires consent for sexual activity. If consent is not given the partner forcing a sexual encounter is committing a sexual assault.

### Three Sections of Sexual Assault in the Criminal Code of Canada

#### Section 271 Sexual assault

- > This crime occurs if a person is touched in any way that interferes with their sexual integrity - this includes kissing, touching, intercourse, and any other sexual activity without his/her consent.

#### Section 272: Sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party, or causing bodily harm

- > This crime occurs if a person is sexually assaulted by someone who has a weapon or imitation weapon and threatens to use it; if the offender threatens to harm a third person such as a child or a friend if the person does not consent to a sexual act; if the offender causes harm to the person; if more than one offender assaults the person in the same incident.

#### Section 273: Aggravated sexual assault

- > This crime occurs if the person assaulted is wounded, maimed, disfigured, beaten, or in danger of losing her/his life while being sexually assaulted.

### Sentencing

The mandatory minimum sentences in cases of sexual assaults on victims under the age of 16 are one year in custody for an indictable offence, and 90 days minimum for a summary conviction.

There is no mandatory minimum sentence in the case of a major sexual assault on an adult. A major sexual assault includes but is not limited to non-consensual vaginal and anal intercourse as well as forced fellatio or cunnilingus. It can also include non-consensual digital penetration. It usually does not include touching.

The common law (common law is based on precedents in law) sentence for any major sexual assault is three years in custody. This sentence may be different due to the characteristics of the assault, if the accused has a criminal record, or if the accused pleads guilty.





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Silence Allows It to Continue

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## Hush Hush

*"Elders have worked to keep sexual assaults secret. It has always been 'Hush. Hush. You don't talk about things like that. You don't want to make trouble for anyone.'"*

In the NWT people have been as silent as possible about sexual assaults/abuse/rapes. Many family members have strongly encouraged their daughters and sons not to report sexual abuse by another family member. One woman was told it would be better for her to commit suicide than report to police about a sexual assault.

This norm of secrecy is maintained by community repercussions for those that do report - informants told the project that "bad medicine" may be used against people who seek justice for sexual assaults, families may be ostracized, some relatives could lose their jobs due to a report of a sexual assault.

Other informants talked about the courtrooms filling to capacity to stare down the victim and intimidate her from giving testimony. One victim felt that community members came to her trial *"because they wanted to hear all the horrible details of my rape."*

Through observing some court proceedings in the NWT it was discovered that many women are sexually assaulted as children and the family covers it up keeping it secret. *"My mother said that we would deal with this within the family,"* one daughter testified in court, as an adult, after being sexually assaulted by her step-father throughout her teenage years. Her younger sisters were also sexually assaulted when they reached the age of puberty. The witness said that there were many families in the community who abused their children.

## An Elder said

*"We have to be more open and talk about it. We need to start awareness campaigns. Women have nowhere to go... I would say that women are keeping this pretty quiet... I am concerned about the young women who are dealing with a mental health illness due to the trauma."*

## Hide Everything

In some communities, *"the community attitude is to hide everything There's a small proportion that will talk about things The other, majority won't but that's because they're hiding secrets"*

*"... everybody would talk about, 'oh you know, he has done this for years'. But in the next breath he's talking away at the hall, preaching about something and everybody knows what he's like. And there is so much enabling ..."*

*"Everything was just kept inside, hidden. Living in a small community, you talk to one person and the next thing it's out in public ... we didn't have faith in the workers that were there ... we've heard stories about things said in confidence and the next thing it's out in the public. It was very hard."*

Because of so much violence in her family, one woman was frightened to tell her mother: *"If I would have gone to my Mom and told my Mom what was happening to me, (that an acquaintance of her father had sexually assaulted her) and my Mom told my Dad, she would've got beat up. I know that for a fact."*

## "If it's not dealt with, it's gonna fester..."

One service provider felt strongly that *"Silence about the sexual assaults allows them to continue."* Another service provider said, *"If it goes underground and it's not dealt with, it's gonna fester."*



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Experiences of Sexual Assault and Rape

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## Victims blame themselves

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The project conducted ten confidential interviews with NWT women from five communities who have experienced sexual violence.

Women who are survivors of sexual assault/rape are often ashamed of their rapes, feeling that they are somehow responsible. Their families and communities may also blame the woman for being sexually assaulted/raped.

*"I blamed myself for many years. I told my mother about our dad but she didn't believe me, saying it was probably someone else and you just thought it was your dad...I was too ashamed. I didn't even tell my friends or anyone. I just kept it between my mother and myself... I couldn't even talk to my sisters until years later about our father...they had also gone through the same thing..."*

One woman, who was fourteen when she was raped by her boyfriend and then violently sexually assaulted for the next two and a half years, indicated that *"He was very loving in public, very affectionate (he was five years older) and I loved him and I thought that that was what love was supposed to be...I was also very insecure at that time and thought that if I can't keep even this low life... I tried to kill myself a few times. It was a really hard experience."*

One woman said *"I blamed myself and I felt ashamed of what had happened.... I felt that it was my fault because I...you know... maybe I led him on."*

Another woman wondered, *"Did I deserve it? or, What did I do to deserve it?...there was not enough water to wash the grime away..."*

## From childhood into adulthood

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One woman was sexually touched by a friend of the family at age five, sexually assaulted as a child while sleeping in a tent, *"also sexual assault, sexual touching by my father, which was alcohol related"*.

When this woman was attending residential school she was raped when she drank alcohol for the first time and passed out. *"And then... I just rebelled and they sent me home and I got into heavy alcoholism from there."*

*"And then, you know, alcohol and passing out as a woman, waking up with someone, you know, a friend maybe, or acquaintance... and making a fool of you while you're passed out. And that happened quite a bit in my mid-to-late teens."*

## Confinement and rape

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One woman had a nervous breakdown after being picked up at a bar, confined and raped for over twelve hours in southern Canada. The man was convicted and sent to jail but she has very little memory of the trial and events that took place after this violence.

*"I remember what he did to me and that was pretty well about it... I was grateful to be alive and being able to get away...I did fight him off and told him No, No, No."*

*"I couldn't talk to anyone. I was just too ashamed... I didn't go out for over a month after that happened. I wouldn't go out."*

## Breaking the secrecy

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### One woman said,

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> *"That really helped when I started talking about all the gross things that happened."*

### One woman talked to her aunt,

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> *"I used my aunt as that resource to help me get through this situation in my life and to this day I'm very thankful to her for that. Because it helped me realize that it was not my fault."*

### Talking about it is the most important thing,

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> *"You need to find somebody who is going to listen to you, talk through this stuff when you need to talk through it and recognize the fact that, yeah, you might take five steps forward but then three steps back... and be willing to be there for you. And it could be different people in different professions, or, you know, in different circles of your life."*

### Developing trust

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> *"...just being believed, being supported. Being able to talk to someone. That's the hardest, I guess, gaining trust with people in general. All through my life I've had trust issues because of what's happened. And alcoholism. Divorce. Hard to communicate with my kids..."*

## Resisting the rape

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One NWT woman told of a sexual assault on a semi-deserted road in a foreign country when she was travelling alone in her late 30's. Although her assailant had a knife she resisted his sexual advances with everything she had. She grabbed onto a tree and screamed and screamed, *"And he was very, very disconcerted by this screaming..."*

He gave up on raping her when he broke her leg. When he left she was able to crawl back to the road and flag down some help. The foreign doctors said, *"Oh well, you know, men here really like blondes"...* "Everybody who knew my situation did pretty much say, 'Oh you shouldn't have been alone, you shouldn't be travelling alone. That's why this happened.'"

*"You do have anger with these perpetrators... I do think they are getting messages somehow that this is okay, this is the way they can operate and how they can have sex."*

## Myth of Resistance

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> One myth of resistance *"is that acts of resistance must be overt and clearly identifiable on the outside or it only matters when it is overt... For instance, when a woman screams while being sexually assaulted, it would be considered resistance, whereas if she instead thought of something that reminded her of a time when she was safe, many people would be hard pressed to also identify this as resistance."* From a training by the Center for Response Based Practice, February 2014, Yellowknife.

## Criminal justice not often pursued

Of the ten women interviewed, only one reported her sexual assault to the RCMP who then charged the man. In one other situation a bystander called the RCMP.

### Lack of trust in RCMP

- > “Back then the only time you saw them (RCMP) was for not good reasons and nobody liked them and so how could I feel comfortable talking to them?”
- > “Never!” (response to question about involving the RCMP.) “Didn’t want my boyfriend to get hurt. Didn’t want to shame his family. Didn’t want him to have to deal with that. Really I deserved it so why would I tell people?”

### More awareness needed

- > “I should have went to the RCMP and made those charges, brought them to the incident where it had happened and they would have collected the evidence that was there, as well as what was on my body, rather than going home and scrubbing away what had happened. And if there was more awareness in the community at that time, and this was in 1980-81. If there was more awareness, I would have been able to know where to go.”
- > “Yeah, but then what are they (RCMP) going to do? That was so many years ago and I cannot prove it and they’re going to deny it... Denying, laughing, saying, ‘oh she deserved it’, or ‘she was just a common slut.’”

## Going through the legal system

(After a more recent rape) “I felt worthless... But instantly the RCMP was kind and helpful. The RCMP did a great job.” She noted that it was hard to give a statement so soon after the rape had taken place. She also noted that the health care system responded very well. “They were wonderful.”

However, the accused rapist was let out on bail and this woman felt very frightened for her safety with this man out of custody. As well, it took almost three years for the case to come to trial.

She received a great deal of support from her church, from a women’s shelter, from community Elders. Victim Services provided excellent support at the preliminary inquiry. The victim requested that the preliminary inquiry be closed to the public and the court complied with this request.

The final court case was heard before a jury and was open to the public. This woman was re-traumatized by the court experience

“..it brings up a lot of memories of what had happened... and then you have all these people sitting in the court, watching, and they run out, and gossip.”

Although the man was convicted on one charge, this woman did not feel that he was properly punished for the violent rape that she experienced.

Another woman said,

“I do believe in holding these guys accountable, and part of that is through the legal system. Don’t just let it drop. This is wrong.”

## Families and communities need to talk about this

The majority of survivors of sexual assault who participated in confidential interviews felt that families need to talk about the dangers of sexual assault and rape with their daughters. They also felt that the schools have a role to communicate about sexual violence.

“...when I was growing up my mother didn’t talk to me about sex, she didn’t tell me about getting your periods. I had to learn that all on my own. I think if parents took the initiative to let their children know about all their body changes, what happens, especially if they’re in a sexual relationship where it is abusive, or if they’ve been raped, then they need to know where these resources are, and how they can access them.”

“...parents really need to take a bigger role with being responsible with their kids and talking about life, sharing those stories with them. And sharing about how it is to grow up when you’re a teenager and you’re going into womanhood. Those kind of things need to be taught...”

One woman spoke about not knowing at age four and five that sexual touching was wrong. “I was four or five years old so I didn’t know any different until years later...” When she discovered that it was wrong to sexually assault girls she concluded that it must have been her fault that these men sexually assaulted her.

She taught her daughters that it was wrong:

“I did talk to my girls when they were a young age... about sexual touching and if that ever happened that they were to go see an adult, come to me...so I believe our children were more aware of what was right and what was wrong.”



## Roles of Men

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More public, community, and family messages about the role of men may start the process of stopping sexual violence.

### Disappointment in Men

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*"Guys are supposed to be protecting women not abusing or taking advantage of people who are in a helpless situation. That's what it is supposed to be: a man not being an aggressor, not being a predator..."*

### No Respect for Women

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Another woman said that men believe that they have all of the power and do not respect women. This is contrary to the traditional teachings. *"The Elders taught me that when you value yourself, you value others."*



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Information from NWT Service Providers

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## Many have been raped

Most of the 37 NWT service providers with whom the researcher spoke indicated that almost everyone they see has experienced sexual assault/rape, and/or child sexual assault/abuse.

- > *"We talk with approximately 100 women a month who have been sexually assaulted."*
- > *"I think that there's a lot of sexualized assault that happens, a lot on children... And I do think that it's normalized to a certain extent in the Northwest Territories."*
- > *"Almost everybody that we talk to has disclosed some form of history of sexual violence."*
- > *"Just say that I have not met any woman in my many years of working here that hasn't been sexually abused. I haven't met one."*
- > *"It happened to maybe all of the family members, maybe all their friends...it's really minimized a lot. I don't think anybody would tell you that in public."*
- > *"There are pedophiles that go after our boys... and that has not been addressed."*
- > *"And there are rumours of pedophilia nowadays in the NWT - child pornography, even at the community level."*

## Opening the conversation

- > Disclosure of sexual abuse in residential schools throughout the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has encouraged more women and men to come forward and talk about their sexual assault/rape according to a service provider:
- > A lot more people are coming forward *"maybe creating a stronger path for other women who have been victims of sexual assault to feel comfortable that they could come out and speak about something that happened. So I would definitely say there's an increase in women talking about this."*
- > The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has increased the availability of counselling services for women and men who have experienced sexual violence in residential schools.

## Some communities "Call it Out"

*"What I found in more open communities is that people would be called out on things..."*

*"There would be something said so everybody knew it, so it (sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape) would not be swept under the carpet."*

## Police Services

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When the RCMP are called to investigate an alleged sexual assault the first thing they focus on is the safety of the victim. *“We may take her to the health centre or maybe to her relatives.”*

A formal victim’s statement is not usually taken at the scene of the crime. The victim’s health, her emotional state, possible intoxication, and her willingness to make a statement affect the timing of when the police will proceed with taking a formal statement.

According to the RCMP, *“An informal statement may be taken at the scene, especially to gather details to formulate grounds for an arrest of a suspect or to ensure the safety of the public... Although the preference is to take a formal statement from a victim while they are sober, this would not prevent an investigator from gathering information from an intoxicated victim in order to formulate grounds for an arrest, develop a safety plan, or gather physical evidence.”*

Police collect evidence at the site of the alleged crime which may be in the form of statements from possible witnesses and the collection of physical evidence. Physical evidence may be present on clothing, sheets, kleenex, and/or wipes which may contain DNA evidence.

Shortly after arriving on the scene, the police may decide to accompany the victim to the hospital or health centre. She is required to give her consent to have the health professionals collect evidence from her body. *“Women have a lot of apprehension about this process.”*

The evidence is collected using an RCMP- issued “sexual assault kit”, also known as a “rape kit”. *“There is nothing complicated about administering the kit. You just follow the checklist which is supplied.”*

The formal audio/video statement is taken at the detachment as soon as possible after the incident to ensure that the details are fresh in the victim’s memory.

Every detachment in the NWT has audio/videotape recording capability.

The police often contact a victim services worker to offer support to a woman going through a sexual assault investigation. As well, nurses will often inform a woman about the availability of a victim services worker. Victim services workers are not available in all communities of the NWT.

## Victim Services

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There are ten NWT victim services workers located in Hay River, Fort Good Hope, Tulita, Inuvik, Fort Simpson, Behchoko, Fort Smith and Yellowknife. They work to provide assistance and support to victims of crime including information about being a witness, the court process, personal safety planning, preparation of the Victim Impact Statement, and how to contact a counsellor. They support victims to access the “Victims of Crime Emergency Fund” and continue to support people after the court case is completed.

Some of the victim services operate help lines twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week service to do emotional support and referrals. One worker describes the support offered when she first gets a call:

*“We accompany people to the RCMP station, to the hospital, will help to walk people through what’s going to happen, and will go with them, if that’s what they want, and provide emotional support during the time of crisis, and referral to ongoing longer-term counselling services. We help people get into shelters and we also serve as a liaison to other services.”*

People can be referred to victim services by other service providers. Victim services can also be accessed by phone or by dropping into the office during office hours.

## Confidentiality of victim services is important

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Many people may not feel safe to talk to friends and others in their community due to concerns about maintaining confidentiality.

*“I think because of a lot of problems like intergenerational impacts of trauma, colonization, gossip, that people don’t feel safe to contact people in their community because they don’t know that it is going to be kept confidential...our service is completely confidential.”*

## Health Services

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Sometimes women who have been sexually assaulted come to the hospital or health centre accompanied by the RCMP. However, often doctors and nurses in the emergency departments of NWT hospitals and nurses in the health centres in smaller communities see women before they have contacted the police.

Women may feel more comfortable seeking services in a hospital or health centre than immediately reporting a sexual assault to the RCMP. The emergency departments in the Fort Smith and Yellowknife hospitals seek a private room as quickly as possible where women can feel safe and nurses/doctors can gently work to support them.

The health practitioners look after many health concerns, checking for STI’s, offering the morning after pill, and explaining the requirement of giving consent that will allow the nurses to take evidence using the RCMP-supplied “sexual assault kit”.

## Sexual Assault Kits (Rape Kits)

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In the hospital a doctor or a nurse practitioner with sexual assault examiner training, do the procedures required to collect evidence using the sexual assault kits.

In the small communities of the NWT nurses in the health centres perform the procedures required with the sexual assault kits.

All children, ages 12 years and under, who are alleged to have been sexually assaulted, are sent to paediatricians in larger communities for support and collection of evidence.

## Confusion about sexual assault kits

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Although the RCMP has worked on this issue, there still is confusion in some smaller communities about where the sexual assault kits are located. RCMP officers explain that the kits are either located in the health centre or the RCMP detachment. *“If you need to get a kit call the RCMP.”*

Project research indicates that some community nurses are unaware of the location of the sexual assault kits, some are very hesitant to use them, and one nurse who worked in a small NWT community, indicated that she had never heard of a sexual assault kit.

Most nurses in the health centres do not have training about how to use the sexual assault kits, although, as the RCMP point out, the instructions provided within the kit are fairly clear. If a woman (or a man) has consented to allow a nurse to collect evidence after a sexual assault, the nurse will perform a variety of procedures which can take from one to six hours. One nurse must remain at all times with the evidence until it is handed over to the RCMP, who then send it to their labs for analysis.

It is best if the evidence is collected as soon as possible after the sexual assault although collection may take place up to 72 hours later. If the victim has showered the evidence on her body is destroyed.

## Sexual assault nurse examiner training

A variety of specialized trainings for nurses about how to provide services to patients that have been sexually assaulted are available across southern Canada. Some NWT nurses use their professional development allowance to access this training.

## Dep't of Health & Social Services policy review

The GNWT Department of Health and Social Services is currently (as of February 2016) developing a policy and guidelines for health providers - at hospitals and health centres - who work with victims of sexual assault. The policy and guidelines describe how health providers should support such clients and what investigations and treatments to offer. It is intended for the policy and guidelines to be in place in 2016 to coincide with the roll-out of the updated RCMP sexual assault kits.

## Sensitivity required

- > One nurse, who has worked in health centres in small communities, explained that different women need different types of support when evidence is being collected for the sexual assault kit:
- > *"the biggest thing in performing this is to not rush them.... They've already been traumatized so you can't go in there and say...'we're on a timeline here'...you kind of gauge the situation. Some of them want to be*

*comforted, like a hug. Some of them don't want to be touched, which is totally understandable. So basically what I would do is explain different options, like we can do the kit if they want. And at any time if they need time during the kit we just stop...you give them the control... if they decide halfway through or in the end that, I don't want to do this any more, it is totally up to them. It's their call. I also stressed throughout the entire thing that they did not do anything wrong. And that is the biggest, biggest thing...to constantly reassure them that they didn't do anything wrong...*

- > *"I always relay to them that, 'this thing happened to you but this is not you. Don't let it define you... you are a bigger and stronger person than this. This is his fault.'"*

## Information offered

Nurses at hospitals in the NWT indicate that they will provide information to women about a safe place to stay, such as family violence shelters and the women's centre in Yellowknife, as well as contact information for victim services workers and counsellors. One nurse may ask permission to contact the woman's family doctor.

In the smaller communities nurses will possibly provide contact information for a local community wellness worker and the schedule for travelling counsellors who visit the community.

*"But they tend to come back to the nurses and it's just that reassurance and acknowledging how they feel. And then I think they almost get a little bit strong enough to go for counselling."*

## Public Health Services

In their role of providing health information, public health nurses visit schools in the NWT and provide information about healthy relationships, safe sex, sexual violence, and consent. They also talk to students about birth control and sexually transmitted infections (STI's).

*"I go into the high school a few times a year and I do teaching on sexual health, the right to say no and the consent... as well as the services that are available to them in the community if they are not sure, if it was consensual...and if they want STI testing... we are right in the school to do that for them."*

The nurses do testing for STI's for all populations of the NWT and will provide counselling on that as well as discussions about the morning after pill.

*"We do have to refer them to a physician afterwards and we do encourage them to report sexual assault in any form to both RCMP and to get a rape kit done in the emergency department of the hospital."*

In one community, over the course of one year, the public health nurses talked with three young women (ages 17 to 29 years) who indicated that they had been sexually assaulted.

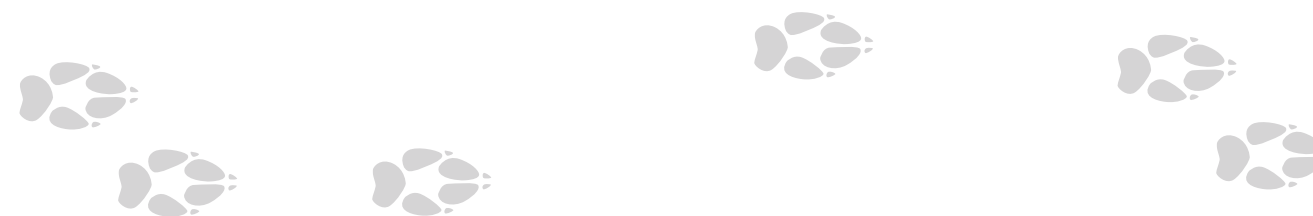
*"And a lot of girls just aren't comfortable reporting it (to police) because it's a small community, they know this person, the person's well-known to their family - type of thing...as much as we can support and advocate for them, ultimately, it's their decision if they choose to report it."*

In one community the public health nurses indicated that a lot of the younger people are not as quiet about sexual assault as they used to be.

*"I think they're much more aware of what it is, so therefore they utilizing the services as much as they can. As far as reporting it, that's a different thing..."*

The public health nurses believe that their accessibility is an important part of their service. *"There are very few people who walk through our door where we say, 'Sorry, you have to come back another time.' We say, 'Well, come on in,' and we take them into our office and shut the door and find out that maybe an assault occurred..."*

*"I think public health is a pretty non-threatening environment... our practice is acceptance of them as they are, at their time and place. We offer the service, we offer the options, we offer the information, and we also offer the fact that it is up to you. We are not going to force you to do A, B, or C. We're going to look after you right now and do what we can do here, and we can be a hub of resources. If it's the RCMP or if it's the NOW program or if it's medical clinic, or if it's counselling, we can be a bit of that hub of that wheel of care afterwards."*



## Family Violence Shelter Services

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There are five family violence shelters in the Northwest Territories in Fort Smith, Hay River, Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Tuktoyaktuk. These shelters provide a safe place and support for women and children who are fleeing family violence and violence against women.

Workers in the three shelters where interviews were conducted indicate that they often provide support to women who have been sexually assaulted.

Two of these shelters have toll free crisis phone lines for abused women, one has a local line, all of which are answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

*“When a woman who has been raped calls us we tell her to come right on over.”*

*“Being here, having the phone line for them to talk and have access to staff 24/7, and listening in a caring, non-judgmental manner is very important.”*

Shelter workers agree that it is very common that women who call or come to the shelters have experienced some kind of sexual assault, abuse, rape.

*“They do not say upon admission that they have been sexually assaulted... but sexual violence is often a part of everyone’s story... It comes out in the one-on-one support conversations that we have with women.”* It is during the one-on-one conversations that women begin to trust enough to talk. *“Childhood sexual abuse comes out a lot. From age 3 and older...”*

Women may not recognize it as a sexual assault when it takes place within a marital or common-law relationship.

*“Sometimes when they are in a relationship for a long time, they don’t see it as sexual assault. Then they start sharing their story and that’s what it is.”*

## The door is always open

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*“The service we provide for community walk-ins, drop-ins... when they need to talk at a certain time and they know that the door is always open. And the confidentiality is very important to them. So we ensure that everything is confidential. We help them to feel safe.”*

Some shelters provide transportation to the hospital, and if a woman chooses to contact the RCMP, the shelters support them to do so. Shelters also connect women to victim services and counselling, and may be present, if requested during court.

*“We do not provide counselling. We provide emotional support.”*

The shelters are sensitive to traditional and cultural aboriginal practices.

*“We have aboriginal staff... if a woman chooses to smudge she can do this in her bedroom. We are also aware that other women may have allergies.”*

*“Our manager is aboriginal. Women staying here are offered the opportunity to do beading, make mitts and moccasins, and we also have access to country food.”*

Some shelters are doing public awareness work about sexual violence at the schools and the college. One shelter provides step by step guidance to women going through the process of getting an Emergency Protection Order through the justice system.

Shelter workers already support many women who have experienced sexual assault. The workers know that there are many other women who are not connecting to any supports.

## Court Services

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### Victims treated with care by Crown Prosecutor’s Office

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The NWT crown prosecutors recognize that women who have made a complaint of sexual assault and are proceeding through the court system, have gone through trauma. *“So we try to establish a rapport with them from the outset. We usually try to keep the same prosecutor for these type of prosecutions for sexual offences. We try to maintain continuity in the files - because it’s so intimate. Usually... there’s practice not to have too many people dealing with them so that they don’t have to tell their very intimate story to many strangers, because that’s one of the main challenges of these type of prosecutions.”*

*“So we have to recognize that we’re dealing with special victims, in that case... we will make sure to make contact with them very early on in the process. We have... crown witness coordinators. Their role is more specifically to do the liaison between the prosecutors and the complainants.”*

### Women pass out and are raped

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*“...a lot of rapes in this jurisdiction are passed out women who have been sexually assaulted and wake up and the perpetrator is on top of them, having sex with them... that’s a very, very common scenario. Most women who will find themselves in these types of situations, of being in random houses, passed out, have substance abuse problems.”*

## Sexual abuse of children

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Sexual abuse of children is very different from sexual abuse, assault, and rape of adults. The sexual assault of children within a family may continue for many years, whereas the sexual assault of an adult may take place only once, except in situations where a married person is consistently sexually assaulting their spouse.

In cases of child sexual assault *“usually it’s a relative or a person who’s known to the child and who will, in a position of trust, abuse that trust and sexually assault a child...It doesn’t involve alcohol, usually. Well, the children don’t consume alcohol. Sometimes maybe the perpetrator will have consumed alcohol, but not necessarily... It’s more men, usually, will befriend the younger one, in their family, and they will use that position of trust to touch them, or there is a spectrum of what a sexual assault is, all the way to full penetration, rape...”*

The justice system is aware of both boy and girl children getting sexually abused:

*“We are seeing both...in my experience, more girls than boys. But we see both.”*

### Special accommodations for victims to testify

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In the NWT court system a witness under the age of eighteen may speak behind a screen that will block their sight of the accused. In larger centres the witness may use a closed-circuit television to present the testimony in a separate room from the accused. The witness may have a support person present who has been approved by the court. This person may be a crown witness coordinator, a victim services worker, a family member, an advocate.

## Alone? or With Support?

*"... more young victims are being very supported, both by their families, parents, aunts, and uncles. But also... in the school system, by counsellors, by teachers... I've seen both. I've seen women who seemed to be on their own, who even family members have told them not to come forward, are not supporting them... Of course some women are more vulnerable in general, because of their abuse, substance abuse problems, being on the street, being homeless. All of that will increase the chance of not having support from their families just because their families are not in their lives in general, for example. But I've seen both. I think that young women are more likely to be supported."*

## Public trials

All criminal trials in Canada are presumptively open to the public. In the case of all sexual assault charges, the name or any identifying information of a complainant can be subject to a publication ban throughout, upon application by the prosecution.

The preliminary inquiries are subject to a publication ban in their entirety to ensure that the public is not tainted which may make it difficult to get a jury.

*"So, for the most part, it is closed at the pre-lim stage but open at trial stage. Unless, again, a woman has an extreme fear and the judge agrees. I have seen women on the stand where they won't testify, they won't talk, and the judge has said, 'Would it be better if we closed the courtroom?' and she says, 'Yes' and then the courtroom's closed... So it usually has to be of a fear a woman has, and then we have to apply, and then the judge has to agree."*

## Dropping the charges

Court workers indicate that it is extremely common for victims to want to drop the charges once the case is going through the court system.

## Alcohol use

Court workers note that in almost all of the sexual assault charges heard in the NWT court system alcohol has been consumed by the accused and the victim.

## Jury trials

In southern jurisdictions sexual assault trials are rarely heard by juries. But in the NWT most defence lawyers ask for a jury trial.

*"My experience in southern jurisdictions was that almost no sexual assault cases would go before a jury and, on the other hand, in this jurisdiction, it seems to be a very, very common - in fact, almost all cases go before a jury."*

## Victims may be intimidated

One court worker noted that *"some of the accused will pay medicine people to get them off."* The medicine is used to cause the victim to be fearful of testifying against the accused.

*"And there's also intimidation by the community, and there's shame associated with it and some of the victims just don't want to go back to the community because of the shame that's built up..."*

## Lengthy court process

Length of court process allows for more intimidation of the victim. One court worker recommends foregoing the preliminary inquiry and going directly to trial. It can take approximately two years, sometimes up to three years, for a case to go from the charge to the preliminary inquiry and then the trial.

*"This gives the opportunity for the accused to put his forces together... to put intimidation and shame and to get other people to harass the victim... It happens all the time."*

## Telling the story in court

*"Some women feel liberated for just telling their story (in court)... They say, 'It was important to me to tell my story, it was important to me to tell him that what he did to me was wrong.'"*

*"Other women are really, really eager to get a conviction and I think that in small communities, there's all these issues of 'was she lying?,' 'did she consent, in reality?' and 'she's trying to portray it as a rape.' And when they get a conviction it's a validation, like 'I'm not a liar. I told the truth. I am a victim.'"*

A court worker indicates that if one woman goes through the justice system and the accused is convicted of committing a sexual assault, often other women in the community will decide to come forward, talk to the police, and go through the justice system.

One service provider, concerned about the number of acquittals in sexual assault trials, indicated:

*"So to me there's no stigma... there has to be some condemnation of this, as a society. These are our mothers, these are our wives, these are our sisters, these are your daughters."*

## Counselling Services

### Not the woman's fault

- > *"Women need to understand that they are not the ones in the wrong. Women feel so guilty. There is more concern about the reputation of the man and no concern about the woman who has gone through the violence... When this happens people need support, even trained and skilled community wellness workers. Right now that service is not readily available."*
- > *"Often people think that women are putting themselves into a situation if they go to a party and get drunk... people ask, 'What were you doing at that party, passed out and drunk?'"*
- > *"And women may feel cheated by the justice system... and they carry it (guilt), they carry it."*

### Giving power back

*"The whole process of sexualized assault is about removing people's power. So being able to go somewhere to talk to someone about the experience in a very real and honest way... So our job (as counsellors) isn't to tell anybody what to do... But really, we put all the power back into their hands, so to try to help them feel like they have a little bit more power and control over their own lives and what happens to them. Even if they're making decisions that we wouldn't want them to make, 'cause that happens, but it's really about what they need, to try to give them that sense of agency in their own lives when it's been removed from them."*

## Don't force counselling

Mandated counselling is not helpful said one service provider. "I don't like how people are always saying, 'Oh, this happened to you, you need to go for counselling.'... I would like to see more services where a woman could just go and be without having to feel... there's something wrong with her. There's nothing wrong with her. Put the blame where the blame goes, on the people that are doing it."

Some women need focussed support to work through the trauma of their sexual assaults/rapes. "There are those that this affects them, and affects them real good.. And I would hope that those services are provided... acknowledge what has happened to them, because most of their stories are not acknowledged, they are not believed... help them to direct the strengths that they have so that they can use that."

## Trauma treatment program

"My dream goal, what I would love to see in the NWT, is for there to be two or three trauma retreat settings where we could take a group of women - it can be on the land, it can be at the old Treatment Center in Hay River... where they're there for a month or two months... And that we're doing both... traditional and research-based interventions... And so I would love to be able to put together: traditional practices, experiential therapies, with group therapy in a safe retreat setting."

## Sharing Circles

"In my several years working for..., we did so many healing circles, sharing circles, and I think what worked best was in a sharing circle with other women - even men, too - hearing their story and saying, 'Wow, I'm not the only one. This person understands. They've been through it, too.' And at first nobody wants to speak in a circle but, once one starts speaking, all the rest want to talk, like, everybody wants to speak of their story, what happened, and they can form that bond with each other... it's kind of like a group session. And we would always have a counsellor on-site, in case somebody needed that extra level of help or assistance. There are professionals to do that."

## Counselling in high school

One of the high school counsellors indicated that there are many sexual assaults at the school in which she works.

"There is a history of sexual assaults and then others refusing to associate with the victim... I tell them 'I'm not here to judge you. You can swear in this room.' I try to be at the same level as the student. They are the expert in this situation... Girls have a fear that they are not supported by the community."

"A lot of girls are getting sexually assaulted... most are happening at parties... what I see is the pain...everyone is shaming her... kids are slut-shaming her."

The school counsellor incorporates aboriginal spiritual practices into her work.

"90 percent of the students are aboriginal. Spiritually you need a connection, through smudging and the medicine wheel...kids feel safe here."

The counsellor makes referrals to the community counsellors but notes that there is often a three month wait for counselling. She believes that many of the students come from violent homes.

"Domestic violence is in the heart of these students. They call themselves DGK's - Dirty Ghetto Kids. There is pain in their homes. They have developed a gang mentality. There needs to be support for the boys as well."

She does group work with the students using the Fourth R -Relationship Program (see page 47, Promising Practices)

## Role of Schools & Colleges

Many service providers felt that the schools could present more information about sexual assault/rape:

"The schools need to play a big part. It starts when they're young, you know. Don't just do sexual education class, because we all know that."

"from very young, teaching the boys also..."

In some schools the public health nurses are asked to deliver information about healthy sexual relationships, STI's, consent, and sexual violence.

## NWT health curriculum

The GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment supports schools in identifying and implementing teaching resources to support healthy relationships. Along with other GNWT departments, it works to identify resources and partnerships to support students dealing with trauma.

The core, or key component, of the current NWT health curriculum is mental and emotional wellbeing, and the other six issue areas connected to this core are: growth and development, family life, nutrition, dental health, safety and first aid, and alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

The department's guidelines for K-9school programming state that 6 percent of instructional time, or approximately 90 minutes a week, per school year, be devoted to the health curriculum.

The current NWT curriculum contains information and learning outcomes related to mental and emotional wellbeing including:

- > healthy relationships
- > consent for sexual activity
- > safe sex, including abstinence
- > sexually transmitted infections,
- > equality for all people,
- > challenging homophobia

The department currently has a team working on developing a new K-9 health and wellness curriculum. The draft curriculum will be developed in 2016 and piloted in three grade groupings (4-6, 7-9, K-3) between 2016 and 2018. NWT-wide implementation is expected for the 2018-19 school year.

Additionally, the department staff is scanning the school programs and practices both within the NWT and beyond, that schools are finding promising and helpful. One of the programs that's being carefully examined is *The Fourth R: Healthy Relationships, Safe Choices, Connected Youth*. (see page 47, Promising Practices)

### Aurora College awareness and supports

Staff at Aurora College offer immediate service to students who have experienced a sexual violence crisis. *“We can act upon a crisis immediately. We have a counsellor on staff and we can connect students by phone to counsellors in other communities, if need be.” The local community counselling services are taxed, “and they can’t immediately support our students.”*

Staff would like to see Aurora College campaigns that specifically provide information about awareness and prevention of sexual assault/abuse/rape. *“One week in the academic year devoted to sexual assault/rape awareness and prevention would be very helpful...My vision is for the college to take a stand, update its policies, and be more comfortable talking about this.”*

Staff add that they would be very interested in accessing more training about increasing awareness and the prevention of sexual violence.



8

Transforming a Rape Culture





### Definitions of Rape Culture

Many people working in the area of violence against women make references to the idea that, in the world today we live in a “rape culture”. Some of the definitions of “rape culture” include:

*“A rape culture is a complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture, women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm.*

*“In a rape culture both men and women assume that sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable as death or taxes. This violence, however, is neither biologically nor divinely ordained. Much of what we accept as inevitable is in fact the expression of values and attitudes that can change.”\**

The definition of “Rape Culture” in Wikipedia (November 2015) is:

*“Some sociologists put forward the position that rape culture links non-consensual sex to the cultural fabric of a society - where patriarchal world views laced with misogyny and gender inequality are passed from generation to generation, leading to widespread social and institutional acceptance of rape.”*

### Transforming the Rape Culture

The book “Transforming A Rape Culture” notes that television, advertising, cinema, poetry, music, and many other aspects of our modern culture often promote a rape culture.

*“Every man, woman, and child is negatively affected by living in a rape culture, in which children, females and some males are perceived as sexual prey. No one is safe as long as anyone is physically and spiritually violated. We are all responsible for doing what we can to change the status quo. Finally we must imagine a different world. If we can dream of a safe place, surely we can build one....Please join us in envisioning and building a humane future.”\**

\*Emilie Buchwald, Pamela R. Fletcher, Martha Roth. 2005. Transforming a Rape Culture. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.⁴p xviii, Transforming a Rape Culture. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.



9

Promising Practices

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## A Vancouver Rape Crisis Centre

Since 1982 Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) has provided support to women in Vancouver who have experienced sexual violence.

The staff of WAVAW emphasized the importance of the “big picture” work of transforming our society to prevent future violence against women. *“At WAVAW we keep our work focussed on a society shift away from rape culture. Men need to be accountable for their actions.”*

## WAVAW Services

Some of the most promising service practices and advocacy approaches identified by WAVAW include:

- > Respectful and close working relationship with the Vancouver Police and the BC Women’s Hospital
- > Twelve week volunteer training (2 nights per week equalling approximately 96 hours of training) for volunteers who become qualified to work the rape crisis line
- > Operation of the rape crisis line, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- > Monthly de-briefs and self-care for volunteer crisis line workers
- > Victim Services workers located in the offices of WAVAW
- > Free counselling program, one-on-one with a WAVAW counsellor every week for nine months, located at WAVAW offices
- > After going through an intake process women are invited to participate in drop in group sessions “Women Connect” of up to 16 women per group
- > “Visioning Safety” - a four week closed group, one evening per week. Regular attendance is expected. Women on the waiting list for one-on-one counselling may attend

- > Self-identified aboriginal women may participate in “The Sacred Circle” a once a week women’s circle held at a housing project in Vancouver
- > “Sacred Footprints” developed by an aboriginal WAVAW staff which provides traditional teachings, involves youth and holds ceremonies
- > Partnerships with First Nations Bands - one such partnership resulted in a youth-created video and a comic book called “Myth Busting”
- > Public information sessions at high schools and colleges about “Culture of Violence” and how to change it
- > Focus on acknowledging and defining the “rape culture” in which we live and working to transform it
- > Finding common ground with other Vancouver groups that serve women

### The WAVAW Vision

A society where all women are free from violence.

### The WAVAW Mission

WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre works to end all forms of violence against women. Guided by our feminist anti-oppression philosophy we challenge and change thinking, actions, and systems that contribute to violence against women. We provide all women who have experienced any form of sexualized violence with support and healing, and engage with youth to develop leadership for prevention of future violence.

## Kanawayhitowin - Taking Care of Each Other’s Spirits

Staff of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) in Toronto train service providers that work with women who have experienced family violence and sexual violence in aboriginal communities of Ontario.

- > In 2007 the Ontario Federation started the Kanawayhitowin project
- > Information is sent out to service providers that work with Ontario’s aboriginal people and if a group wants the training they request it. It is up to the group to decide who to invite to the training.
- > Although the training is mostly aimed at service providers one group invited their own Elders and women who have been abused to attend.

## Training based on Elders’ knowledge

The training is based on a manual that has been developed with Elder direction covering many topics including

- > Understanding women abuse from a historical perspective
- > Traditional women’s roles
- > What is women abuse?
- > Warning signs of abuse
- > Understanding stalking behaviour
- > How to talk to women who are abused or at risk of abuse
- > Traditional approach to working with men who are abusive
- > Community healing prevention strategy
- > Overcoming hesitation: intervening in women abuse
- > Remembering the women who have died
- > Contacting the media

The OFIFC also offers a men’s program that provides counselling services to aboriginal men who use violence. This program, called Kizhaay, employs five full time workers who work with men involved in the parole and probation systems in Ontario.

## The Fourth R health curriculum

The Fourth R “is a skill-based curriculum that promotes healthy relationships and targets violence (bullying, peer and dating violence), high-risk sexual behavior and substance use among adolescents.

“It is the contention of the Fourth R that relationship skills can be taught in the same way as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Furthermore, given the plethora of negative relationship models available to teens, it is crucial that adolescents be exposed to healthy alternatives, and equipped with the skills to engage in healthy relationships themselves.”\*

The Fourth R has been developed through a partnership of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health- Centre for Prevention Science and the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children at the University of Western Ontario.

During the course of the lessons, students engage in extensive skill development and role-play activities to help develop effective and healthy responses to situations of conflict and violence.

Some of the lessons related to sexual violence/abuse and consent included in the Fourth R Healthy Relationships, Safe Choices, ConnectedYouth Grade 9 Health & Physical Education curriculum are:

### Unhealthy Relationships and Understanding Consent

- > Preventing and responding to harmful behaviours
- > Warning signs of an unhealthy or abusive relationship

### Binge Drinking and Sexual Consent

- > Thinking about the consequences of binge drinking

### Consent and Sexual Responsibility including the following activities

- > Deciding if consent was given
- > Defining sexual violence
- > Consequences of sexual assault

#### Premier Kathleen Wynne of Ontario introduces “It’s Never Okay”

“We need to talk about sexual violence and harassment in every community, every classroom and every workplace. And that conversation needs to include everyone — women and men, young people, seniors, people living with disabilities, newcomers and members of culturally diverse communities, aboriginal people, visible minorities, and the LGBTQ community.”

<http://docs.files.ontario.ca/documents/4136/mi-2003-svhap-report-en-for-tagging-final-2-up-s.pdf>

\*The University of Western Ontario (2015). The Fourth R Healthy Relationships, Safe Choices, Connected Youth, Grade 9 Health & Physical Education

## IT’S NEVER OKAY An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment Government of Ontario March 2015

### The Ontario Government Action Plan, “It’s Never Okay” includes commitments to:

- 1 Introduce legislation to strengthen provisions related to sexual violence and harassment in the workplace, on campus, in housing, and through the civil claim process.
- 2 Launch a public education and awareness campaign across Ontario to challenge attitudes, promote immediate change in rape culture behaviour, and encourage a longer-term generational shift to end deep-rooted attitudes and behaviours.
- 3 Develop tools and identify best practices to support a compassionate and sensitive response from law enforcement authorities to encourage more survivors to report sexual assaults.
- 4 Increase supports and develop an enhanced prosecution model to improve the experience of survivors navigating the criminal justice system.
- 5 Update the Health and Physical Education curriculum to help students from grades 1-12 gain a deeper understanding of a host of important issues, including healthy relationships and consent.
- 6 Introduce legislation to require colleges and universities to work with students to adopt campus-wide sexual violence and harassment policies that include training, prevention, complaint procedures and response protocols.
- 7 Strengthen supports provided by hospital-based Sexual and Domestic Violence Treatment Centres to maintain 24/7 access to excellent, appropriate and timely care.
- 8 Develop up-to-date training for frontline workers in the health, community services, education and justice sectors to better support survivors of sexual assault and harassment and develop training for workers in the hospitality sector to empower them to know how to help when they encounter high-risk situations.
- 9 Stabilize and increase funding for community-based sexual assault centres.
- 10 Create a pilot program to provide free independent legal advice to sexual assault survivors whose cases are proceeding toward a criminal trial.
- 11 Establish a permanent roundtable to make Ontario a leader within Canada on issues of violence against women.
- 12 Enhance workplace laws to strengthen enforcement under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, including establishing a Code of Practice to help employers develop stronger sexual harassment policies.
- 13 Launch a creative engagement fund that supports Ontario artists to develop projects that provoke conversation and dialogue on issues of consent, rape culture and gender inequality.



10

Recommendations

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### Support from other women, from family, from community

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- > Believe in the woman's experience
- > Tell her it is not her fault
- > *"If women have the support, and they're encouraging each other, then that's the best thing."*
- > *"A supportive community and a supportive family that believes you is the most important thing. LOVE"*
- > People and services that are *"very open, very non-judgmental, very welcoming."*

### Talk about it

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- > Developing a trusting relationship and sharing the experience with someone is a first step in healing. *"...just being believed, being supported. Being able to talk to someone."*

### On call sexual assault team

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- > A team consisting of a nurse, social worker, specialists in this area to be available to work with people who need support at a health centre or hospital due to a sexual assault.

### Dedicated 24/7 toll free NWT Rape Crisis Line

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- > Rape crisis line for both men and women who have experienced a sexual assault
- > To provide a first response, support, and information about services available
- > Public awareness campaign required to introduce the crisis line
- > First responder training required for staff and volunteers who answer to the calls

### Support groups

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- > Women share and get support from other women who have also experienced sexual violence. Counsellors are close by and may be called upon, if necessary.

### NWT sexual violence awareness and prevention campaign

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- > Address sexual violence as an NWT societal issue
- > Increase awareness about the requirement for consent to sexual activity
- > Increase awareness about child sexual abuse/assault
- > Increase bystander awareness
- > Include awareness of the prevention of sexual assault on boys and men
- > *"There's got to be a lot more discussion and education to tell guys that this isn't the way to get your gratification for your sexual urges, being the big, tough guy that can get what he wants. A lot of men they just believe that, and they don't even think it's wrong."*
- > *"It's a prevailing attitude about young women in general, that's it's okay to go and assault them... if they're at a party and they're passed out drunk, well, it's okay for everybody to help themselves to them. So we need some major, major education in that way."*

### More information in the schools about sexual assault/abuse/rape

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- > Start teaching young students about sexual abuse/assault. *"Some children who are being abused in their homes do not know that this is wrong."*
- > Both survivors and service providers indicated that the schools need to provide more information - about healthy relationships, sexting, internet sexual abuse, roles of young women and young men, understanding consent, impacts of sexual assault, abusive relationships.
- > *"My vision would be that we work with young people, like kids in school...I really think that in the schools is where it has to start."*
- > *"and teach them the values that they need so that they can be good citizens in the community."*

### Parents have a responsibility to talk about this

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- > *"Parents really need to take a bigger role with being responsible with their kids and talking about life, sharing those stories with them. And sharing about how it is to grow up when you're a teenager and you're going into womanhood. Those kind of things need to be taught..."*
- > Parents need to talk to their children about the choices in life that they are making. *"Tell our daughters, 'You are putting yourself in a dangerous situation if you choose to go to a party and pass out drunk.'"*

### Close sexual assault cases to the public

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Several of the interviewed people who work within the court system believe that sexual assault cases in the NWT should be closed to the public. (see Information about Court Services, page 34)

### Better liaison and collaboration amongst services

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There are clearly efforts among NWT service providers to be aware of and provide information and referrals to other services that can support women who have experienced a sexual assault. However, there is a sense that this could improve.

*"We definitely need to do a lot more networking and education with the RCMP about the victim services process. We need to ensure that the RCMP have our business cards with our contact information. So the RCMP can give that contact information to the victim. Or the RCMP can ask victims if they would like victim services to attend when a statement is being given, and then the RCMP can call us but that doesn't happen all the time."*

A vision for the future was described as follows:

*"a lot of collaboration together, working as a group. Agencies helping, agencies supporting, staying on the same page of understanding ways of helping, providing the support, knowing where the resources are, knowing what they have to do to support the people that need support."*

### More training

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Shelter workers indicate that they would like more training on first response to a sexual assault disclosure and more information about sexual assault.

- > *"We would welcome more information and training on how to support women who have been sexually assaulted."*

Aurora College staff also indicated an interest in accessing more training about support for students, ways to increase awareness and prevention of sexual violence.



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