



Making Connections

Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults

A Framework for Action

NWT Seniors' Society

February 2011

Message from the NWT Seniors' Society

The NWT Seniors' Society is pleased to present our plan of action to address abuse of older adults in the NWT. Our plan is the culmination of many years of work by the NWT Seniors' Society, and highlights our most recent project, Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults Project (Building Networks Project). We are grateful to the many Northerners who are committed to stopping abuse of older adults and who participated in the Building Networks Project. In particular, we'd like to thank the 528 older adults who completed questionnaires; the 98 service providers and policy makers who participated in in-depth interviews; and the over 100 individuals who attended our two-day symposium. We value their input and throughout the report we have highlighted what Northerners said.

The Society would also like to thank our partners and the Project Steering Committee for their guidance, commitment, and support to the Building Networks Project, and Lutra Associates Ltd. for their work on the Building Networks Project. Our partners are:

- Canadian Network on the Prevention of Elder Abuse (CNPEA),
- Seniors' societies in Fort Smith, Hay River, and Yellowknife,
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada - New Horizons for Seniors Program, and
- Government of the NWT, Health and Social Services.

The Project Steering Committee includes:

- Canadian Mental Health Association/NWT Division,
- Dene Nation,
- Inuvialuit Regional Corporation,
- Government of the NWT, Health and Social Services,
- North Slave Metis Alliance,
- Native Women's Association of the NWT/Yellowknife Victims Services,
- NWT Seniors' Society,
- Public Health Agency of Canada,

- RCMP, and
- YWCA Yellowknife.

Finally, we would like to thank the following organizations for their generous financial and in-kind support:

- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada -New Horizons for Seniors Program,
- Government of the NWT,
- BHP Billiton,
- First Air,
- Genesis Group Ltd., and
- SOS – Sailing on Sound New Media.

Project partners, Project Steering Committee members, and Northerners shared their wisdom and gave advice to the Project (and our Framework for Action). They helped us understand the extent and awareness of abuse of older adults, current responses and interventions, and the actions needed to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults. Our Framework for Action reflects what we have learned. It is comprised of doable, achievable actions.

The NWT Seniors' Society is confident that together, all of us – elders/seniors, families, NWT Seniors' Society, our partners, governments, non-government organizations, families, youth, and other interested people - can make a difference. We are excited to begin working with others to put our framework into action.



Beatrice Campbell
President, NWT Seniors' Society



Tom Wilson
Past President, NWT Seniors' Society





Human Resources and
Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et
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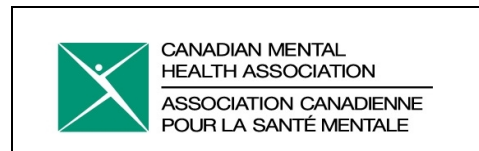
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1. Our Work To Date

For over fifteen years the NWT Seniors' Society has worked to prevent abuse of older adults. Some of our work is highlighted below.

- In 1995 and 1996 we sponsored elder abuse workshops in Aklavik, Fort Providence, Yellowknife, Tuktoyaktuk, Baker Lake, Gjoa Haven, Pangnirtung, and Iqaluit.
- In 1999-2000 we helped create the NWT Prevention of Elder Abuse Committee.
- Since 2000 we have been active members on the Coalition Against Family Violence and have participated in the development and delivery of two Coalition action plans.
- In 2004 we prepared *A Plan for Action 2004 Respect Our Elders – Stop the Abuse*.



Mary Siemens and Arlene Hache

- Objectives of our plan were to: empower NWT elders/seniors to speak out against violence and abuse; identify and deal with abuse through education and awareness; and address the addictions that contribute to abuse.
- In 2005 we organized the *Bridging the Gap* Conference, which brought elders and youth together to talk about issues affecting them, including abuse.
 - We have been active partners with government and other organizations developing and delivering family violence/abuse of older adults awareness campaigns and workshops, and developing and supporting interventions/responses including family violence protocols, and the *Protection Against Family Violence Act*.

Even though we have spent considerable time and resources on this issue, there remains a lack of awareness, reporting, interventions, and policies on abuse of older adults. The Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults Project (Building Networks Project) is the Society's latest effort to prevent and respond

to abuse of older adults. The Project complements and builds on our previous work, and our partnerships within and outside the NWT.

The Building Networks Project has three phases each with its own objectives. Phase 1 and Phase 2 are complete. This framework for action is part of Phase 3 work.

- **Phase 1: Community Research and Literature Review**

Objective: Identify recent/current awareness, intervention, and prevention practices with respect to abuse of older adults in the various regions in the NWT through information gathering, analyses, and reporting activities.

Work Completed:

- Research was conducted in 11 NWT communities¹ on the extent and awareness of abuse of older adults, responses and interventions, and thoughts on networks to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults. Community research included a survey of 528 adults 50 years of age and older; and interviews with 98 service providers and policy makers. Community research was supported by a literature review of best practices and lessons learned in other parts of Canada to create awareness, intervene in, and prevent abuse of older adults.

Phase 1 Report: *Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults - Phase 1 Research Report*

- **Phase 2: A Territory-Wide Symposium**

Objective: Facilitate the establishment of information networks and share information on best/promising practices to address all aspects of abuse of older adults in the various regions of the NWT and other parts of Canada through an NWT-wide symposium.

¹ Behchoko, Fort Good Hope, Fort McPherson, Fort Resolution, Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Hay River, Katlodeeche, Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, and Yellowknife including Ndilo and Dettah.



Work Completed:

- A two-day symposium, Making Connections – Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults Symposium was held in Yellowknife, November 30 – December 1, 2010. More than 100 individuals gathered to vet research, participate in plenary and small group discussions and presentations, network, share best/promising practices, and begin the process of building support networks.

Phase 2 Report: *Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults - Symposium Report*

- **Phase 3: Network Building**

Objective: Develop support networks for those involved in addressing abuse of older adults in NWT regions through internet, information, and support network development.

Work Completed:

- This Framework for Action is part of Phase 3 work and builds on Phase 1 and Phase 2 findings and direction.

Phase 3 Report: *Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults – A Framework for Action*



Della Green and Gail Cyr performing in a play about elder abuse during the evening of entertainment at the Symposium

2. A Demographic Profile of Older Adults

In 2009 there were an estimated 3,828 older adults (60 years of age older) in the Northwest Territories. (Table 1) Older adults in the NWT are following a territorial trend and migrating slowly to larger centres, especially Yellowknife. For example, in 2009, an estimated one-third (33%) of older adults lived in Yellowknife, 28% lived in regional centres of Hay River Fort Smith and Inuvik, and 40% lived in smaller NWT communities. In 2001 approximately 25% of older adults lived in Yellowknife, 30% lived in regional centres, and 45% lived in smaller communities.

Table 1: Population Estimates by Age, 2009

	2009
Northwest Territories	43,439
0 – 4	3,352
5 - 14	6,092
15 – 24	7,234
25 – 44	13,900
45 – 59	9,033
60+	3,828

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the NWT population. If growth rates continue as anticipated, the number of older adults in the NWT is expected to more than double by 2024. (Table 2)

Table 2: NWT Population Projections, by Age, 2009 - 2029

	2009*	2014	2019	2024	2029
Northwest Territories	43,439	44,988	46,357	47,376	48,104
0 – 4	3,352	3,654	3,712	3,605	3,474
5 - 14	6,092	6,032	6,431	6,729	6,710
15 - 24	7,234	6,978	6,026	5,998	6,425
25 - 44	13,900	14,139	14,941	14,876	14,369
45 - 59	9,033	8,863	8,469	7,991	8,291
60+	3,828	5,322	6,778	8,177	8,835

* Based on 2009 Population Estimates Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics



Older adults in the NWT do not live as long as older adults in the rest of Canada. Females generally have a longer life expectancy than males in the NWT, and females of non-Aboriginal descent live longer than those of Aboriginal descent. In Canada, overall life expectancy increased between 1995 and 2004; overall life expectancy in the NWT did not change significantly during this same period. (Table 3)

Table 3: Overall Life Expectancy from Birth, Northwest Territories & Canada, 1995 - 2005

	Canada	Northwest Territories
1995	78.2	76.1
1996	78.4	76.4
1997	78.6	76.8
1998	78.8	76.5
1999	79.0	76.2
2000	79.4	75.9
2001	79.6	75.7
2002	79.7	75.9
2003	79.9	75.5
2004	80.2	76.5
2005	80.4	n/a

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

A number of factors contribute to health, including income, education, genetic endowment, and the physical and social environments. Research has demonstrated that social and economic determinants actually have a stronger effect on the health of Canadians than those associated with personal health practices such as diet, physical activity, and even tobacco and excessive alcohol use.² Poor, less educated older adults are more likely to suffer from ill health than those with greater economic and educational resources.

² Raphael, D. 2009. *Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives, 2nd edition*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.



In 2006 approximately 44% of older adults, 55 years of age and older in the NWT had personal incomes of less than \$25,000. Income levels of seniors in Yellowknife and the South Slave Region were higher than the rest of the NWT. This could be because some of these individuals are still in the labour force and earning high wages. (Table 4) In 2006, 56.7% of older adults in the NWT, 55 to 64 years of age, and 16.4% of older adults, 65 years of age and older, were employed.

Table 4: Personal Income Distribution, Persons 55 Years or Older, by Region and Percent, 2006

Total	NWT	Beaufort - Delta	Sahtu	Dehcho	South Slave	Tlicho	Yellowknife
Less Than \$10,000	11.2	13.5	14.8	12.8	12.2	21.7	8.3
\$10,000 to \$25,000	32.5	44.6	51.8	51.3	28.7	56.5	21.4
\$25,000 to \$50,000	19.8	13.6	18.5	15.4	26.1	4.3	20.8
\$50,000 to \$100,000	25.3	21.7	7.4	15.4	25.2	17.4	33.3
More than \$100,000	11.4	6.8	7.4	5.1	7.8	0	16.1

Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics



Literacy is an important determinant of health and well-being. Education levels are closely tied to socio-economic status, job opportunities and security, and income levels. Older adults with low literacy skills can be dependent upon others to access and understand information. In 2004, approximately half (49.5%) of older adults in the NWT had not achieved a grade 9 compared to 11.6% of persons 15 years of age and older. Older males generally have achieved highest levels of education compared to females. (Table 5)

Table 5: Highest Level of Schooling, Persons 60 Years of Age and Older by Gender and Percent Northwest Territories, 2004

	Number of Persons	% With Less than Grade 9	% With High School No Diploma	% With High School Diploma	% With Certificate or Diploma	% With University Degree	Not Stated
All Persons*	31,340	11.6	19.8	20.6	29.9	17.0	1.1
60 + Years	2,701	49.5	4.7	8.6	21.2	12.7	3.4
Males	16,312	12.4	19.2	18.1	33.8	15.4	1.1
60 + Years	1,390	49.6	5.0	5.0	24.0	14.0	2.5
Females	15,028	10.7	20.4	23.3	25.7	18.7	1.2
60 + Years	1,311	49.4	4.4	12.4	18.3	11.2	4.3

*15 years of age and older Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

Older adults in the NWT live in a variety of public and private housing situations. Seniors own and live in their own homes, live with families in a common household, rent apartments, and live in seniors' independent housing units or reside in long-term care facilities. Generally the rate of core need for housing for seniors is significantly higher outside of Yellowknife, than in the City of Yellowknife.



3. Summary of Phase 1 Findings

Extent and Awareness of Elder Abuse

No data are available on the incidence of abuse of older adults in the NWT. The majority (71%) of older adults surveyed said that abuse of older adults is a problem in their community. A noticeable portion (28%) did not know if it is a problem. All forms of abuse exist but the most common forms are financial (77%), neglect (68%), emotional (63%), and verbal abuse (54%).

An estimated 4% to 10% of older adults in Canada experience some type of abuse.

There is a high level of uncertainty and silence about abuse. For example, older adults surveyed said that most elders/seniors in their community:

- Know they have the right to live without abuse (40%) but 37% are not sure that elders/seniors understand this basic right.
- Don't know how to protect themselves from abuse (47%) and 35% are not sure if elders/seniors have this knowledge or ability.
- Aren't sure (38%) or don't know (36%) where to go for help if they need it.
- Don't speak out about abuse (52%) and 29% are not sure if elders/seniors speak out.
- Want to work with others to stop abuse (39%) but 48% are unsure if this is the case.
- Know that abuse is a crime (31%) but 41% say that they are unsure whether elders/seniors know this.

"Elders are letting it happen because they don't want their grandchildren to go without even though it means they (the elder) will go without."



What Contributes to Abuse of Older Adults?

Older adults surveyed and service providers/policy makers identified a number of factors that contribute to abuse of older adults, including:

- Silence/people not speaking out about abuse.
- Acceptance of abuse.
- Isolation and exclusion.
- Weak family relationships and intergenerational conflict.
- Poverty including lack of affordable housing and unemployment.
- Addictions and mental illness.
- Systemic factors such as lack of policy guidance on adult protection, closure of community-based care facilities that keep older adults safe, and lack of 'on-the-ground' support for elders/seniors.

"Poverty creates the co-dependency and sets people up for abuse."



Lorna Deveau and Esther Braden

Why Isn't Abuse Reported?

Older adults don't report abuse for many complex and often highly emotional reasons including:

- Shame and guilt.
- Denial or lack of recognition for abusive behaviours/patterns.
- Fear of authority, reprisal, hurting family members, or losing independence.
- Lack of knowledge of who can help and lack of confidence that anyone will or can help.

What is Happening Now to Respond to Abuse of Older Adults?

Currently, the main response of front-line service agencies in the NWT is to refer an older adult identifying abuse to another agency, most likely the RCMP or a health professional. There are no adult protection policies per se or legislation specific to the protection of older adults in the NWT.

Overall, legal or medical remedies were described as “overtaxed, punitive or confrontational” and undesirable to older adults because they may result in lengthy court challenges, elders/seniors being brought into care, and/or loss of independence (e.g., giving over their affairs to the Public Trustee/Guardian or an individual with power of attorney). Service providers and older adults agreed that elders/seniors shouldn’t have to give up their rights and freedoms to be safe from abuse.

“Right now Social Services are not equipped to respond in a meaningful way to an elder presenting with abuse. We need to provide extra training for social workers.”

With the exception of agencies/front-line workers with responsibilities for the day-to-day care of elders/seniors, service providers in the NWT have unclear or limited authority to respond to abuse. Service providers and volunteers may talk to suspected abusers and/or victims within their professional capacity or on their personal time. They take these actions even though they pose risks to themselves, their jobs, and their relationships with others.

Some front-line staff said that they are extremely frustrated that elders/seniors will not speak out or press charges against those causing them harm or damaging their property. Frustration both with the lack of ability to provide appropriate interventions and with elders/not speaking out contributes to ‘victim blaming’.

What Would Work Best to Respond to and Prevent Abuse of Older Adults?

Older adults surveyed said that actions that would work best to deal with abuse of older adults are:

- awareness (78%),
- speaking out (76%),
- support groups/buddy systems (71%), and
- help from social/homecare workers (71%).

“Seniors will not come forward without a safety net.”

Consistent with those actions that would work best to deal with abuse, older adults identified several factors that would help communities to deal with this issue:

- education and awareness about abuse (82%),
- more people speaking out (81%), and
- support from leaders (80%).

Most service providers and policy makers agreed that there is no ‘quick fix’ to abuse of older adults. Both immediate responses and longer term solutions are needed. Many suggested confronting abuse ‘head on’ through legislation, significant policy change, or guidelines to support front-line workers to help prevent and better respond to abuse of older

Family-based practice works
“because they (families) are the centre of an elder’s world.”

adults. Some admitted that adult protection legislation may not be the best route but “like child protection, it would at least get seniors into a safe place.”



Service providers and policy makers agreed that the RCMP and the courts are not the solution for responding to and preventing abuse of older adults. They agreed with older adults that more people speaking out, more awareness, and more elder/senior involvement are needed. They also suggested:

- Regular or daily elders/seniors social activities like the Inuvik Elders' Day Program.
- Buddy systems where elders/seniors team up with peers or a younger community member for support.
- Intensive, sustained and relevant information and awareness campaigns.
- Outreach/home visits and one-on-one dialogue.
- Continuity among, and commitment of, front-line workers to keeping elders/seniors safe.
- Active, inclusive and responsive elders/seniors groups/committees that are supported by staff.
- Broadly based, regular elder/senior involvement in key community groups such as local justice committees.
- Elder and youth activities on the land and in the community.
- Grass-roots, community owned activities rather than those run by service providers.
- Ongoing (rather than one-time only) family meetings/conferences/interventions.
- Sustaining activities and workshops that take place during seniors' week, family violence awareness week, and addictions awareness week.
- Focused interagency approaches.
- Residential school healing activities that educate and promote healing.
- Good resources/facilities that do community programming and offer short-term respite (like the Inuvik long-term care facility).



Lois Little and Debby Rybchinski



Service providers and policy makers agreed that the main ingredients of successful responses to the abuse of older adults are: trusting, respectful worker-elder/senior relationships; naming/identifying abuse; positive intergenerational relationships; consistent and regular positive responses; community-based cultural and language appropriate services; and proactive, visible and cohesive services and front-line workers.

What are the Thoughts on Networks to Prevent and Respond to Abuse of Older Adults?

Older adults, service providers, and policy makers participating in Phase 1 research agreed that everyone needs to work together to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults. Older adults said that the best way to get people/groups in their community working together is to do home visits (78%), have training workshops (74%), and form an elders/seniors group (73%). Service providers and policy makers agreed that inclusive, representative and well supported elders/seniors groups can be an effective way for people to work together. Other suggestions for ways people could network and work together to prevent and respond to abuse, included:

“Everyone should work together but there should be an agency in charge or I don’t think that anything will get done.”

- family based, family building networks.
- peer support groups that are facilitated by front-line workers.
- advocates who work with teams/networks of elders/seniors or function as a single entry point to a network of supports.
- elder/senior-based interagency groups.
- multi-party working groups or committees of front-line workers and elders/seniors.

“Seniors would come forward if they knew their views were kept confidential and not spread all over town.”



- front-line service groups who integrate and link elder/senior supports.
- volunteer groups supported by a coordinator.
- electronic information sharing sites.
- electronic case management mechanisms.
- a network of inter-related community-based workshops/town hall gatherings.

Service providers and policy makers drew on past interagency experiences to suggest building on existing groups rather than starting new ones. They said that effective interagency efforts (for example, coordinated responses to an issue such as homelessness) have worked best when supported by a paid coordinator who can follow-up and bring people together.

Service providers and policy makers identified issues that could potentially affect networks to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults. The main issues are:

- lack of awareness,
- lack of statistical data and documented anecdotal evidence of abuse,
- lack of ownership and responsibility for the issue, and
- lack of capacity to effectively participate.



Alison Leaney, Rosa Wah-Shee, and Beatrice Campbell

Awareness and public education, and the proper authority, tools, and training are the keys to overcoming these issues.

While many agencies participating in this research said that they could support and participate in networks to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults, several would need the permission of a parent organization or permission to perform activities that are outside existing mandates. They also might need a terms of reference, protocol, written agreement, or policy guidance in order to participate.

What Advice do People Have for the NWT Seniors' Society?

Service providers and policy makers offered advice to the NWT Seniors' Society to support its work to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults. While older adults surveyed were not asked for their advice, their suggestions on ways to deal with abuse were similar in many ways. Service providers and policy makers advised the NWT Seniors' Society to:

- Advocate more aggressively for the safety of elders/seniors including a policy on abuse of older adults so front-line workers can have a mandate to intervene.
- Lobby for more than one Public Guardian and/or elders'/seniors' advocate positions (e.g. regional positions).
- More actively educate older adults and train front-line workers about abuse.
- Advocate for mandatory documentation and reporting of abuse of older adults.
- Advocate for recreation programs for elders/seniors in every community.
- Advocate for standards and core funding for aged and handicapped and make this a mandated service supported by adult protection legislation or policy.
- Advocate for a shift to positive service responses to abuse.
- Have elders/seniors advocates in each community.
- Support elders/seniors groups in all communities.

"It is important to have service providers be intentional about dealing with elder abuse. They need clear guidelines."



What are the Best/Promising Practices and Lessons Learned?

Three recent documents are good sources of best practices for responding to and preventing abuse of older adults.³ Some common best practices identified in 2005, 2007 and 2009 were:

- comprehensive strategies and networks at all levels (e.g. raising community awareness, empowering elders/seniors to develop support groups and peer networks, and relationships among community services).
- territory/province-wide strategies that provide dedicated and sustained funding.
- particularly in First Nation and Inuit communities, culturally appropriate response and prevention strategies that are supported with implementation tools, guidelines, and programs that use family and culture-based approaches, contribute to community capacity, and use community knowledge.
- following principles that promote balanced and equitable relationships, are visible, and can be reviewed when assessing activities.
- educating professionals and training front-line workers to recognize abuse, the dynamics of abuse, and procedures when abuse is suspected or detected.
- networks of practitioners (e.g. professionals, police, researchers, front-line health and social service workers) to improve coordination, raise profile, conduct



Sandra Beaton

³ *Best Practices for Stopping Abuse of Older Adults in the NWT* (2005).

(http://www.cnpea.ca/recent_canadian_research.htm)

Outlook 2007: Promising Approaches in the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults in Community Settings in Canada (2007). (<http://www.cnpea.ca/Promising%20Approaches%20Final%20%202007.pdf>)

Promising Approaches for Addressing/ Preventing Abuse of Older Adults in First Nations Communities: A Critical Analysis and Environmental Scan of Tools and Approaches (2009).

(http://www.bccrns.ca/projects/docs/promising_approaches_addressing_preventing_abuse.pdf)



research, and develop plans. Examples are the International (INPEA) and Canadian Networks for the Prevention of Elder (CNPEA) and in the NWT, the Coalition Against Family Violence.

- coordinated community responses to increase capacity and enable professionals to work together (e.g. interdisciplinary teams, interagency coordination, and whole community coordination).
- trusting practitioner-older adult relationships. Relationship building takes time but is essential especially in complex cases.
- dedicated services including abuse workers and centres for older adults.
- annual promotion of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
- carefully crafted education and awareness social marketing campaigns to eliminate discrimination on the basis of age, and facilitate the engagement of multi-cultural communities and Aboriginal language speakers.
- programming that is sensitive, makes sense, and is accessible to elders/seniors.
- peer programs that are sensitive in approach, inclusive, and engaging.
- dedicating a community development position to support partnerships, 'whole' community approaches, and stronger relationships among professionals.



Symposium participants in plenary session

Best practices research also describes individual, family, community, and society-wide interventions.

- **Individual:** counselling techniques that offer Western and traditional therapies and use language that avoids blaming and restores dignity.
- **Family:** interventions such as family conferencing that involve a multi-disciplinary team, focus on the 'whole family' including the abuser, and are intergenerational.



- **Community:** interventions such as interagency protocols, agency networks, agency-elder/senior networks, use of existing elders programs, family violence programs, and community justice circles, involving local leadership, and training front-line workers.
- **Societal:** interventions such as policies or legislation, well funded and sustained strategies, and broadly based information campaigns.



Alison Leaney leading a mini-workshop

4. Summary of Phase 2 Findings

Symposium delegates reviewed and discussed Phase 1 research findings, participated in plenary and small group discussions, and listened to presentations.

Recommendations from the Symposium

Symposium delegates offered the following recommendations for building and sustaining networks to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults in the NWT.

Communications

1. Build a territorial, regional, and community media campaign and communications plan to follow-up on the Making Connections Building Networks Symposium in the short term and in the long term, support and sustain awareness initiatives (e.g. Abuse of Older Adults Awareness Week in the NWT).
2. Use innovation and a variety of media to implement the media campaign at the territorial, regional, and community levels (e.g. advertising at bingos, students helping in the production of videos, Internet (Face book, YouTube), radio, and television).
3. Follow-up on the Making Connections Building Networks Symposium by sharing responsibility to:
 - convey the messages that abuse of older adults is as serious a social issue in the NWT as poverty and violence against women and that the NWT Seniors' Society continues to make abuse prevention a priority.



Symposium participants on a health break



- communicate and distribute the Making Connections Building Networks Symposium report and recommendations widely in particular:
 - to local, regional, and territorial interagency groups;
 - to elder committees and elders'/seniors' societies;
 - through editorials and columns in newspapers and newsletters such as *Coffee Break News*;
 - to CKLB and CBC North for inclusion in Aboriginal language programs; and
 - through informal conversations and meetings in communities.
- develop DVDs in which elders/seniors can see themselves and learn about abuse of older adults, including types of abuse, how elders/seniors can protect themselves.

Education and Awareness

4. Advocate for education and information sessions on topics of interest (e.g. scams, fraud, family conferencing, positive social responses). Target audiences might be service providers, frontline responders, schools, and elders/ seniors.
5. Advocate for system-wide change to responses to abuse of older adults by for example, taking a team approach (e.g. elder/senior and health worker) that considers broader family issues.
6. Advocate for abuse of older adults prevention (programs) in NWT schools.
7. Proclaim Abuse of Older Adults Awareness week in the NWT in conjunction with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and promote awareness widely in official languages of the NWT.



Laura Watt leading a mini-workshop

Development of Networks

8. The NWT Seniors' Society take the lead role in advocating to the GNWT and Coalition Against Family Violence for higher priority and a strategic plan for addressing abuse of older adults (e.g. developing and sustaining of networks to create awareness and work on prevention and intervention activities).
9. Focus initially on developing regional networks followed by committees in each community. Networks and committees should seek representation from youth, elders/seniors, leaders, First Nations governments, and community councils. Networks should be sustained through monthly teleconferencing and annual face-to-face conferences/workshops.
10. Develop an NWT Abuse of Older Adults Prevention Steering Committee/ Territorial Network with representation from the private sector, NWT Seniors' Society, and all government departments with the mandate for sharing information.
11. Develop an NWT-wide interagency committee that can respond to abuse policy and response issues.
12. Encourage broader community representation and membership in NWT Seniors' Society.

Funding

13. Advocate for funding for abuse of older adults prevention coordinators in each NWT region.
14. Seek funding and/or in-kind services to support committee/network operations (e.g. meeting space, phone, facsimile, computers).
15. Advocate for more flexible government funding for seniors' groups to ensure that they have adequate resources to sustain elder/senior-focused activities and projects in their communities.
16. Find opportunities to build on existing activities in communities to address abuse of older adults.



In response to the recommendations the NWT Seniors' Society committed to:

- supporting the piloting of networks in communities and finding resources (\$300,000 over the next 3-4 years) to develop and implement networks.
- upgrading its website as a tool for sharing information and materials on abuse of older adults.
- seeking agreement from elders/seniors throughout the NWT to rename Senior Citizens' Week (June 12-18) to NWT Prevention of Elder Abuse Week.
- reinstating the NWT Prevention of Abuse of Older Adults Abuse Steering Committee and inviting symposium participants to become members of the Committee.



5. Framework for Action

Our Making Connections Building Networks to Prevent Abuse of Older Adults

Framework for Action includes eight actions in seven broad areas:

1. Communications.
2. Education and Awareness.
3. Prevention.
4. Training.
5. Networks to Prevent and Respond to Abuse of Older Adults.
6. Policy and Legislation.
7. Funding.

1. Communications

Action: Build a territorial, regional, and community media campaign and communications plan.

Why? In the short-term to disseminate findings from the Building Networks Project, and in the long term, support and sustain education and awareness initiatives.

Activities:

- Develop a communications plan that uses innovative approaches (in all official languages) to implement the media campaign at the territorial, regional, and community levels. Approaches could include presentations; pamphlets/posters; plays; public service announcements and/or videos starring elders/seniors; advertising at bingos; Internet (Facebook, YouTube); editorials and columns in newspapers and newsletters; on radio and television (e.g., Aboriginal and English language programs).
- Upgrade the NWT Seniors' Society website as a tool for sharing information and materials on abuse of older adults.



- Identify individuals, groups, and organizations and populations to be targeted by communications activities (e.g. government, non-government organizations, Aboriginal organizations, interagency groups, elder's/seniors' groups, elders/seniors, the general population, front-line workers, and families).

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Effective, coordinated awareness and prevention messages and initiatives.
- Increased awareness and support for initiatives to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults.
- More elders'/seniors' who understand their rights with respect to abuse of older adults.
- People understand that there is no place for the abuse of older adults in our society.

2. Education and Awareness

Action: Develop and deliver focused education and awareness campaigns to the general public, older adults, youth, and service providers/policy makers.



Paul Andrew performing at the evening of entertainment

Why? To convey the message that abuse of older adults is a serious social issue; to raise awareness of what constitutes abuse of older adults; and to raise awareness of services available to respond to abuse.

Activities:

- Advocate for education and information sessions on topics of interest (e.g. scams, fraud, family conferencing, positive social responses). Target audiences might be elders/seniors, service providers/frontline responders, families, and interagency committees.
- Advocate for abuse of older adults awareness and prevention in NWT schools.
- Proclaim Abuse of Older Adults Awareness Week in the NWT in conjunction with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
- Communicate and distribute Building Networks Project findings and materials widely (e.g., to local, regional, and territorial interagency groups; and elder committees and elders'/seniors' societies).

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Increased understanding and awareness of the dynamics and impacts of abuse of older adults among elders/seniors, general public, service providers, and policy makers.



Symposium closing sharing circle

- Public understanding of elders'/seniors' rights and the need for support for individuals taking action to abuse of older adults.
- Decreased acceptance and tolerance of abuse of older adults.
- More individuals and greater collaboration on projects/activities to respond to and prevent abuse of older adults.
- Increased awareness of programs/services to respond to abuse of older adults.

3. Prevention

Action: Support initiatives that reduce isolation, and develop and support healthy peer networks and relationships.

Why? Empowering older adults, and building healthy and respectful peer, family and dependent relationships are key to eliminating the abuse of older adults.

Activities:

- Establish and support inclusive and representative elders'/seniors' groups in all communities where social and other gatherings occur regularly.
- Advocate for recreation programs for elders/seniors in all communities.
- Advocate for regular visits to older adults who may be isolated and/or need assistance (e.g., by the CHR, homecare worker or an elder/senior advocate).

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Fewer older adults who are isolated and/or unaware of their rights.
- More healthy connections between elders/seniors and between elders/seniors and other members of their families and communities.
- More ways to interact and engage isolated older adults.
- More healthy older adults engaged in their communities.
- More elders/seniors who are aware of abuse of older adults and available supports.
- Less abuse of older adults.



Action: Work with other groups to address the social and economic root causes of abuse of older adults (e.g., poverty, residential school experiences, inter-generational disconnect, addictions).

Why? To support a sustained, collaborative approach to addressing the root causes of abuse of older adults.

Activities:

- Identify opportunities for working with organizations on initiatives (research, policies, programs, and projects) to address the root causes of abuse of older adults.
- Raise awareness and share information about root causes of abuse of older adults.
- Lobby for and support actions that respond to root causes.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Less abuse of older adults.
- Healthier and safer communities.
- Supports and services that enhance the health and well-being of older adults, and others.
- Recognition of the role that policies, programs, and services such as social housing, income security and social services play in preventing abuse of older adults.



4. Training

Action: Develop and deliver older adult abuse sensitivity training to front-line workers and professionals.

Why? To help front-line workers and professionals recognize abuse, the dynamics of abuse, and to provide the most appropriate response when abuse is suspected or disclosed.

Activities:

- Develop, test, and deliver generic older adult abuse sensitivity training.
- Monitoring and ongoing refinement.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Front-line workers and professionals trained to respond to abuse of older adults.
- Consistent and appropriate responses to abuse of older adults.
- Sensitive and timely responses to abuse of older adults and more support for victims of abuse.
- Clear roles and responsibilities for responding to abuse of older adults.
- Greater opportunity for teamwork /collaboration.

5. Networks to Prevent and Respond to Abuse of Older Adults

- **Action:** Establish and sustain community and regional networks, and a territorial network to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults.
- **Why?** To create coordinated responses to abuse of older adults, and improve the profile, research, and planning with respect to the elimination of the abuse of older adults.



Activities:

- Reinststate the NWT Abuse of Older Adults Prevention Steering Committee/ Territorial Network with representation from the private sector, NWT Seniors' Society, government, and non-government organizations with the mandate for sharing information, and responding to policy and response issues.
- Encourage broader community representation and membership in the NWT Seniors' Society.
- Determine whether community and regional networks, and/or a territorial network should be established under the existing family violence and/or other frameworks and/or interagency groups given that effective interagency efforts in the past have worked best when supported by a paid coordinator who can follow-up and bring people together.
- Pilot a regional network(s) and community network(s) project. Networks and committees should seek representation from youth, elders/seniors, leaders, First Nations governments, and practitioners, and be sustained through face-to-face meetings, monthly teleconferencing and annual conferences/ workshops; build on existing activities to address abuse of older adults; and have a paid coordinator.
- Monitor and evaluate pilot projects.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Cooperative inter-sector, multi-level relationships in communities, regions, and throughout the NWT to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults.
- Improved, coordinated response to abuse of older adults.
- Best practices/models that could be adapted by other communities.



6. Legislation, Policies and Approaches

Action: Examine whether older adult protection legislation is appropriate and useful as a tool to address abuse of older adults in the NWT.

Why? To determine whether adult protection legislation is an appropriate tool for addressing abuse of older adults the NWT.

Actions:

- Examine adult protection legislation that currently exists across Canada to determine the nature of these laws and explore why some jurisdictions felt such legislation was necessary and why others did not.
- Examine and make recommendations on what legislative model might be appropriate for the NWT and what the legislation and regulations for the NWT might include.
- If required, advocate for new legislation and/or changes to existing legislation and/or policies with respect to adult protection.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Legislative or policy basis for responding to abuse of older adults.
- Clear authority for responding to abuse of older adults.
- Direction to front-line workers for responding to abuse of older adults.
- Less older adult abuse.
- Mechanisms established to report incidences of abuse.

Action: Advocate for higher priority and system-wide change to policies and responses with respect to abuse of older adults.

Why? To enhance the profile of abuse of older adults and provide positive coordinated responses which are respectful of the needs of older adults.

Actions:

- Lobby the GNWT and Coalition Against Family Violence for higher priority and a strategic plan for addressing abuse of older adults, including a shift to positive service responses to abuse.
- Advocate for policies and procedures on abuse of older adults so front-line workers can intervene with culturally appropriate responses such as family conferencing that involve a multi-disciplinary team and focus on a 'whole family'.
- Advocate for documentation and reporting of abuse of older adults.
- Advocate for regional or community-based elders'/seniors' advocates who function as a single entry point to a network of supports.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Increased profile and resources accorded to preventing and responding to abuse of older adults.
- Consistent, culturally appropriate responses to abuse of older adults.
- Greater protection and safety for victims of abuse.
- Stability of essential/core family violence programs.



7. Funding

Action: Lobby for dedicated and multi-year funding for abuse of older adult initiatives and projects.

Why? To sustain focused territorial, regional, and community activities and projects to prevent and respond to abuse of older adults.

Activities:

- Seek funding and/or in-kind services to support network operations (e.g. meeting space, phone, facsimile, computers).
- Advocate for more flexible government funding for seniors' groups to ensure that they have adequate resources to deliver activities and projects.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Sustained community-based elders/seniors activities.
- More elders/seniors groups/committees.
- More elders/seniors engaged in their communities.
- Fewer elders/seniors vulnerable to or experiencing abuse.



6. Next Steps

Virtually all of the actions identified in this Framework for Action need resources that have yet to be determined or secured. There is also a need to develop implementation details and a process for moving on these actions. The NWT Seniors' Society is committed to moving the Framework for Action forward by undertaking the following next steps:

- Identify and work with potential partners to develop a detailed action plan to prevent the abuse of older adults. The Action Plan will identify priorities, timelines, resources, and partners.
- Develop a work plan.
- Identify a process to monitor, evaluate, review and refine the Action Plan.

