

RURAL AND NORTHERN COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Saskatchewan

Funding provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada



Introduction and background

- Intimate partner and family violence (IP & FV) are some of the most pervasive forms of gender-based violence worldwide (Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottmoeller, 2002). These forms of violence are defined as “physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and psychological aggression (including coercive tactics) by a current or former intimate partner” (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017) and “physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and financial victimization, or neglect” (Sinha, 2012: 9).
- Within the Family Violence Initiative, family violence has been conceptualized as “a range of abusive behaviours that occur within relationships based on kinship, intimacy, dependency or trust”. (Family Violence Initiative Performance Report, 2008)

Introduction and background

- The national average of police-reported IPV is 309 per 100,000 population, with Saskatchewan having the highest rates of IPV (666 per 100,000) among the Canadian provinces (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2017).
- Findings published from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016) suggests that 21% of Indigenous women report experiences of physical or sexual IPV, compared to 6% of non-Indigenous women. These findings indicate that rates of IP & FV among Indigenous women are over three times greater than for non-Indigenous women.
- Of great concern is that when considering the increased risk for violence within rural and northern regions, as well as for Indigenous women, significant barriers exist to accessing services, such as distance to the nearest formal service, limited options for transportation, issues with maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, pressure to maintain the family unit, social isolation, and minimal options for culturally sensitive services (e.g., McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Peek-Asa et al., 2011; Riddell, Ford-Gilboe, & Leipert, 2009).

Study background and methodology

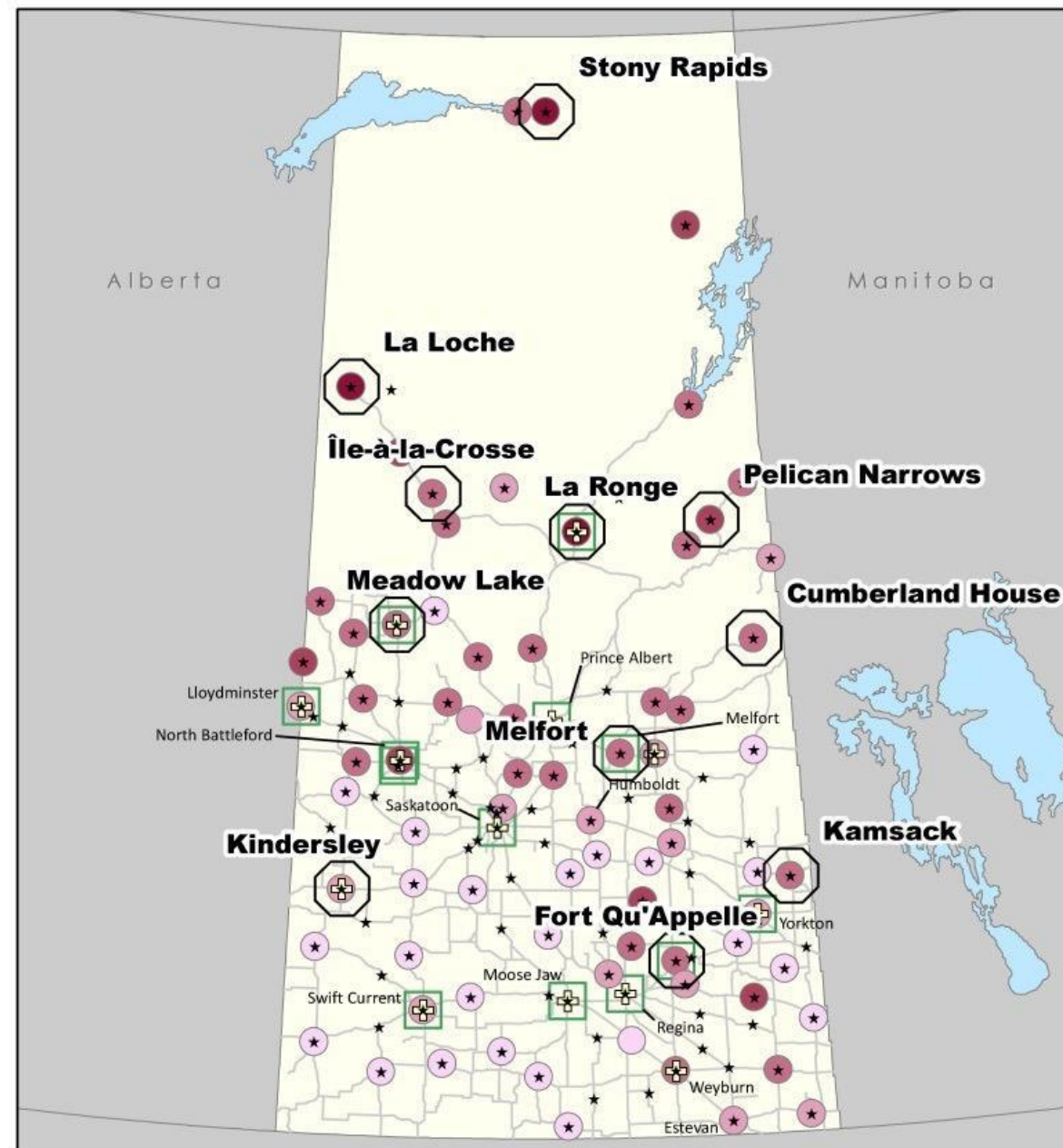
- The five-year research project (2011-2016), funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-Community-University Research Alliances (SSHRC-CURA) was conducted in collaboration with four regions across the Prairie Provinces and Territories (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Northwest Territories). In all locations the focus was on rural and northern communities because of insufficient research on IP & FV in these regions.
- This research project utilized a community-based participatory action research strategy in all jurisdictions by adopting a collaborative approach and inviting community partners to work with academic researchers at all stages of the research process.

Methodology

- Environmental scan of IP & FV resources and services
- Focused on a broad range of supports in relation to IPV, including police services, legal services, crisis intervention, women's shelters, second-stage housing, counselling services, children exposed to IP & FV services and culturally specific interventions
- RCMP data of reported incidents of IP & FV experienced by women and girls from years 2009-2010 aggregated by community
- Map generated to show incidents and services northern and rural

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Saskatchewan, Canada

2009-2010 Interview Locations



0 125 250 500
Kilometres

Number of IPV Incidents

- 0 - 25
- 26 - 50
- 51 - 150
- 151 - 300
- 301 - 625

- ★ RCMP/Municipal Police
- ✚ Victim Services
- Women's Shelters
- ⬡ Interview Locations



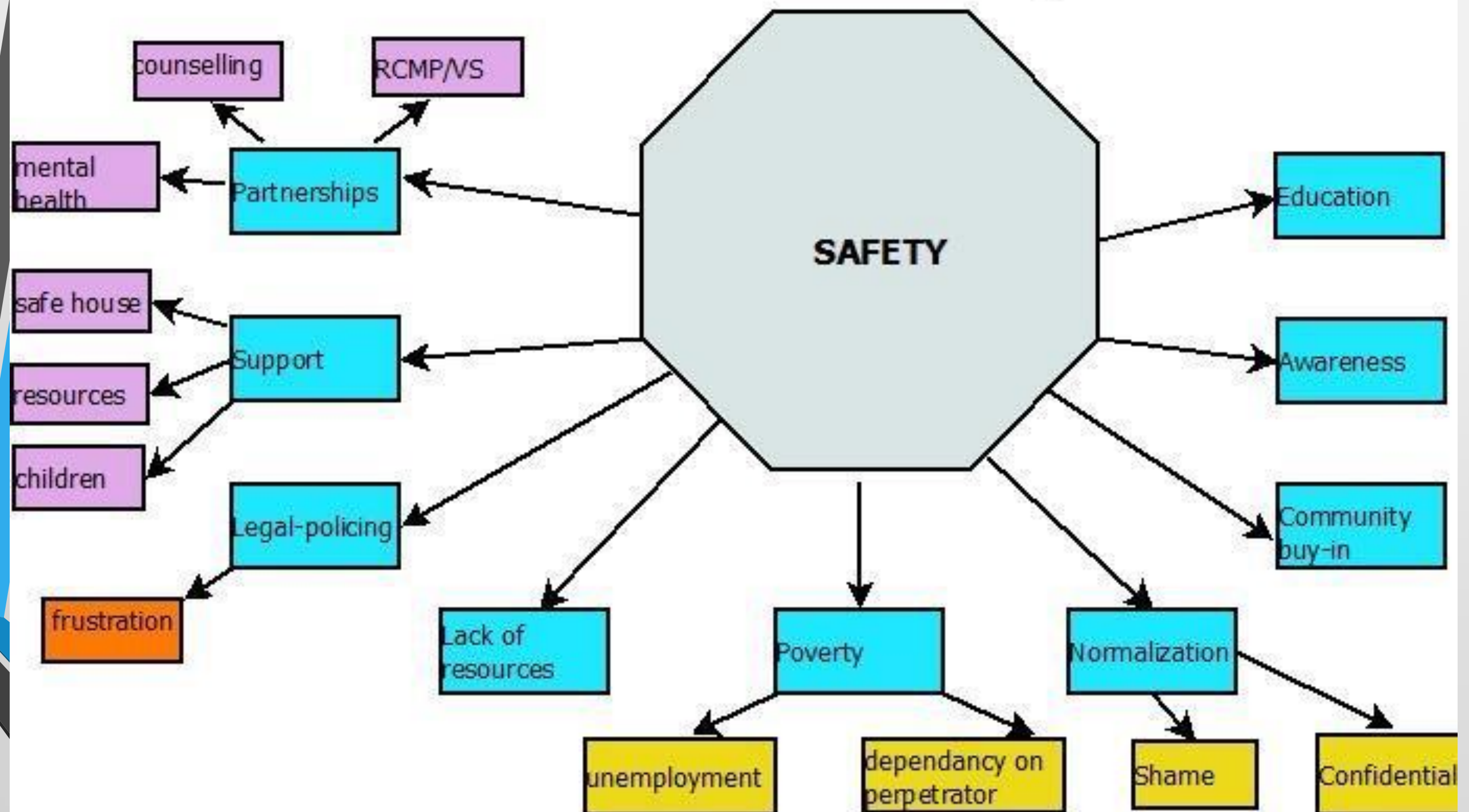
Funding for the "Rural and Northern Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence" project is provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Community/University Research Alliance (SSHRC/CURA).

Methodology

- Qualitative telephone interviews and subsequent coding open and axial
- Open codes are themes that are derived from the research data, that is from the interviews, using NVivo, which allows for the breaking down of the data into bits or codes, such as, “In the North - high percentage, the victim returns home”, or “behind closed doors”.
- Following the development of the open codes, axial coding was done as part of grounded theory. Axial codes, which is the grouping of the opening codes in sets of like kind, was done next. Axial coding pays attention to the conditions, contexts, actions and strategies, and outcomes in order to link the open codes that then allows researchers to develop the next level of categorization (Corbin & Strauss 2008; Kendal 1999, Polkinghorne, 1995). Visualizations were also created to detail the axial codes

Axial coding rural

Saskatchewan Axial Coding - rural



Methodology

- Focus groups - rural and northern
- The focus groups were guided by the question of “What do you think are some of the needs of women coming through your services with regard to intimate partner violence?” Participants varied in gender, ethnicity, and occupation. Both focus groups were audio recorded.
- Cases Study - northern
- An in-depth case study of one selected community (Yin, 2009). This community was chosen based on review of the GIS-map (pg. 12) and analysis of the qualitative telephone interviews and focus group

Some suggestions from interviewees

- Education and workshops for abusers, abused and their children
- EIO - things work better - Emergency Intervention Orders aren't enforceable on reserve land/women don't have place to go
- Safe houses/cool-off houses
- Intervention prior to police involvement
- Healing lodges
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation
- Culturally appropriate family-violence services (health rather than justice model)
- Investment in the northern and rural regions toward sustaining small communities
- Healing from colonization
- Buy-in from properly-resourced communities
- Leadership from politicians and community leaders sending a clear message that violence harms and prohibits healthy communities
- Long term support such as support groups for sustained change

Northern community focus group

- Challenges

- Lack of safe shelters, transportation, services, timely response, and safety

- “Yes because I mean, if they’re coming for help, they need that help today, not tomorrow, not next week; because next week they’ll be back there in that same house again. I mean, I have never successfully gotten a woman fleeing domestic violence into a safe shelter, because by the time there’s a bed available, she’s gone.”

- “...it’s the fear like ‘oh, he’s going to come back and kick my ass.’ So, I might as well let him back in.”

- Isolation

- “But here some people are so isolated....they have no idea how to cope when they get out there. And when they do get out there, there are language barriers, there’s financial, and there’s being away from their family. Like how do you disappear all of a sudden from all that? Okay, we got in a fight, yes he hurt me, but do I give that up and leave him and give up my life here? Or do I try to come back and fix it? They have a life here. They have their children, they have their homes.”

- Stigma associated with cognitive illness

Northern community focus group

Narrativization of northern focus group: Two broad categories derived from narrativizing the Focus group

- Challenges and suggestions, successes
 - Challenges: distance to shelters & shelters full, mostly 9-5 services, services overwhelmed, casualties of IPV with nowhere to go but back, communication (language), isolation and estrangement, stigma, lack of trust (colonialism), services - high-turnover and helicoptered in
 - Suggestions: supporting casualties of IPV regardless of their choices, home visits, **safe house for women in area**, properly train service providers, use imagery to assist with communication, collaboration between services, education, particularly young people

Rural community focus group

Narrativization of rural focus group: Three broad categories derived from narrativizing the rural focus group

- **Challenges and Suggestions, successes**
 - Challenges: transportation, communication (lack of viable devices and linguistic), mental health, stigma, racism and colonization
 - Suggestions: Education (focus on youth), consistency across programs and agencies, culturally appropriate options, confidentiality
 - Successes- partnerships working, information being shared between services

Comparison of rural and northern

Similarities between rural and northern

- Challenges: distance, transportation, communication, mental health, colonization, confidentiality, stigma
- Suggestions education, and collaboration among services

Differences that mark the northern

- Challenges: overwhelming of services, isolation and estrangement, high turnover and services helicoptered in
- Suggestions: mobile crisis, home services, culturally competent services

Northern community case study

- The intention behind a case study is to investigate a subject or issue as singular, particular and complex; that is as a single case. The subject of the case study is understood to be an integrated system; that is a whole in itself, but it is also part of (integrated with) the larger social and cultural context. By examining the -complex whole in the case study, we acquire greater understanding of the subject or issue, and by integrating it, we also are positioned to understand beyond the case itself.
- Indigenous and postcolonial scholars employed to situate the study in a white settler colonial context. We also draw on theories of violence toward making apparent the complexity of the issue of interpersonal violence. Our theoretical lens is feminist poststructural as it allows for an intersectional analysis that pays attention to how socially constructed categories such as gender, race, indigeneity, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and geopolitical location intersect with power that provides access to limited and valuable resources—however those resources are defined. With power differentials in mind, the analysis examines violence in the context of northern Saskatchewan, asking how past and present colonialisms continue to shape that violence and how colonialisms intersect with and shape interpersonal violence.
- A harm reduction approach does not dismiss or diminish the harm done; instead, the effort is to recognize the potential for further harms beyond the initial event of violence and ask how they can be reduced. Moving beyond the discourse of victimizer and victim, a harm reduction approach considers the complexity of the event of violence and looks instead to mitigate violence rather than up the ante of an already charged situation.

Northern community case study

Issue and research questions/statements

Issue questions/statements

As violence is at the center of this case study, it is necessary to ask:

what are we talking about when we use the terms violent and violence?

How then has the understanding and discursive framing of violence shaped responses to it?

How has this framing shaped discourses of intimate partner and family violence?

How has this framing shaped responses to IP & FV?

How does introducing a harm reduction model alter IP & FV discourses?

Research questions/statements

What is the historical context of northern Saskatchewan? How has colonialism shaped northern Saskatchewan? How does it intersect with and shape gender ideologies in northern Saskatchewan? How do the above define and shape IP & FV in northern Saskatchewan? How do the above define and shape responses to IP & FV in northern Saskatchewan? And finally, what can a harm reduction approach bring to understanding and responding to the needs of those caught up in interpersonal violence?

Theorizing violence

- Violence is an unstable concept, one that is “non-linear, productive, destructive, and reproductive. It is mimetic, like imitative magic or homeopathy.” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004, 1)
- “...violence is structured to harness cultural notions of femininity, masculinity, procreation, and nurturance and to put them in the service of state wars and mass murder or to fuel peacetime forms of domination that make the subordinate participate in their own socially imposed suffering” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004, 22)
- Slavoj Žižek (2008) - “Modes of violence”
 - Objective: (embodied in social systems and institutions)
 - Symbolic (embodied in language and all its forms - house of being) and systemic
 - Subjective: also a mode, but often subjective violence is presented repeatedly as the truth of violence in what Žižek (2008) calls “urgent injunctions” (6)

Intimate partner and family violence

- Violence against the female/feminine was criminalized, but humans marked as female/feminine were formally and informally held to views that tended to mitigate the application of laws against this kind of violence
 - For example, the state of Texas ratified its laws to include violence against women in 1994 and again in 2000, however a thirty-year old white man was cleared of murder after the Texas court determined that his actions were justified since the woman he killed took his money (\$150.00) but refused to have sex with him (Moran, 2013)
- Representation of masculinity as naturally prone to violence influences how intimate partner and family violence are understood
 - IP & FV are often taken to be normative outcomes because of an implicit understanding that violent rage is naturally—that is a biological reality—declined in the masculine
- Interpersonal violence and Intimate Partner & family violence
 - “...activists’ analysis of family violence was based on Indigenous values and was critical of government policies and social welfare practices that targeted Aboriginal families...For these reasons, proposals for ending violence in Aboriginal communities have focused on healing the family, but they have also emphasized the urgent need for services that recognize the impact of colonization on Aboriginal women” Nancy Janovicek (2007, 12-13)
 - To speak only of intimate partner violence limits the event of violence to two people, a victim and a perpetrator. However, in small, remote and/or isolated communities rarely are only two people involved in the event of violence.
- Family violence and intimate partner violence allows researchers to understand that all members of the family are affected by family violence when it occurs, such as children, siblings, older dependent parents, cousins and other extended family members

Context

Northern Saskatchewan

- a designation of a spatial divide between the developed south and underdeveloped north - underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure that supports and sustains communities
- History of northern Saskatchewan, as with all of Canada, is one shaped by English and French colonialism -
 - It is a history steeped in the blood of Indigenous peoples whose lands and lives were delimited by the influx of Europeans
- Colonialism shapes the landscape, e.g., extract from the (Indigenous) North with no investment in the North
- Colonialism linked to state violence is objective violence and enacted in Canada is the terror embedded in the space of everyday life
 - The absence of an engagement with objective violence, that is the violence enacted by the colonial state through its many institutions; governmental, juridical, legal, religious, educational, economic and health, has meant that all forms of subjective violence are responded to through the legal system

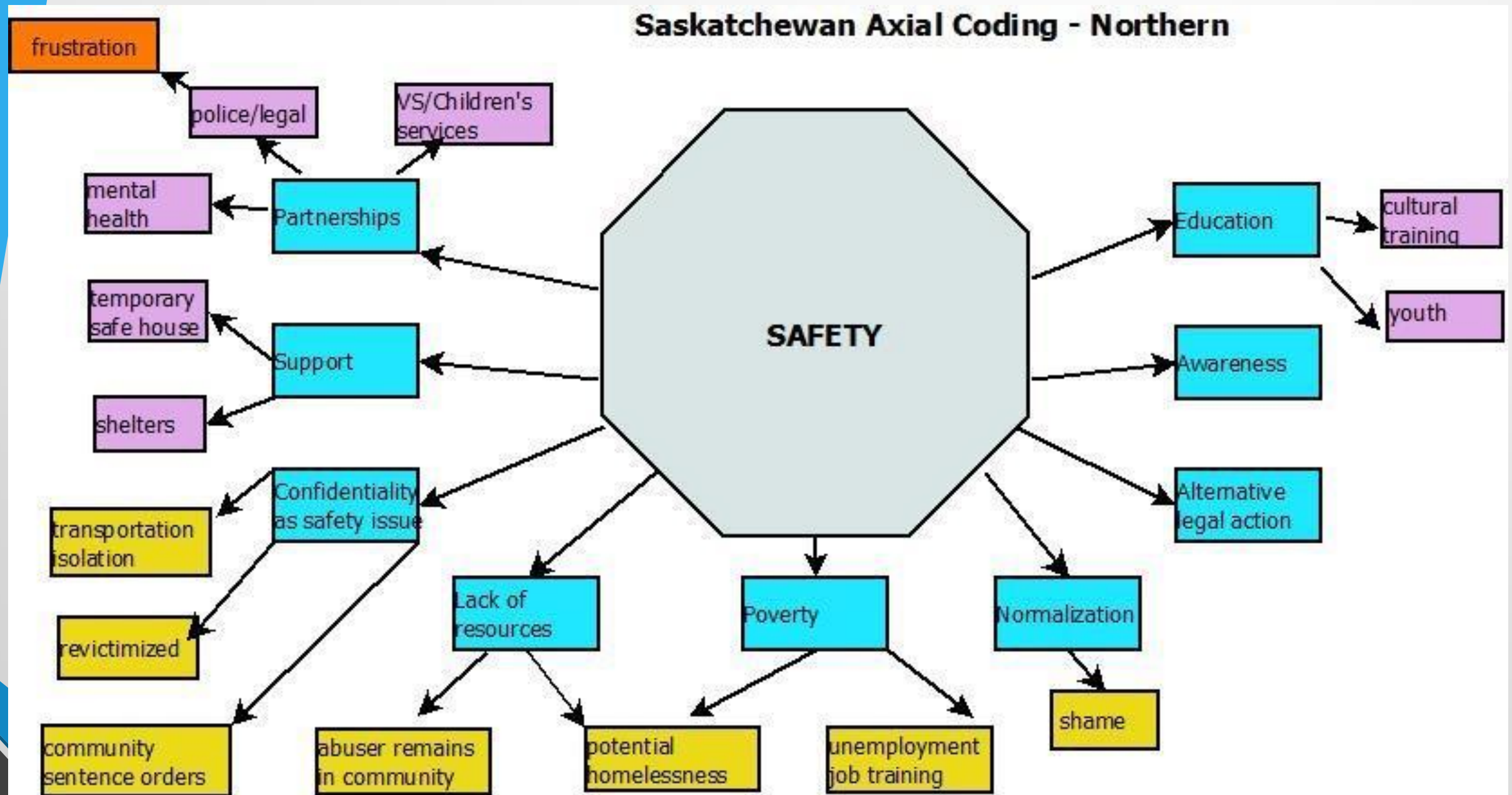
Northern community telephone interviews

- Twenty-eight telephone interviews were conducted over approximately six months in 2013
- Open codes derived through analyzing the interviews - some of the codes are:

Safety plans, housing needs, partnership among agencies and case planning, access to child care, transportation, a safe house, proactive policing and services, First Nations Victim's Service, education, mental health, children, confidentiality, perception of family violence normalized within and by community, re-victimization by the legal system, remaining in the relationship, in crisis, shortage of spaces in shelters and distance to travel, lack of use of EIO (Emergency intervention orders), unemployment and potentially homeless, poverty, housing needs, community and family disbelief and lack of support for victimized, shame and fear, no alternative to legal action, "they really get lonely for the north", need intervention prior to police involvement, less rigid shelters, understand and allow for addictions and their treatment, basic living needs must be met, abuser remains in community, victim and children must leave, victim seen to be the problem, little support, family violence workers, education for women and men, and youth — generational violence, lack of follow up services, lack of counselling services for children in situations of family violence, must call police before one can access family violence services, lack of attention to dating violence, education and workshops for abusers, abused and their children, a team approach as victim often receives numerous calls from different offices and gets confused and overwhelmed, overstretched and insufficient resources, no support groups, EIOs are not enforceable on reserves, healing from colonization, more healing lodges, and Elders trained about interpersonal violence

"You know, ever since when I was small, I saw abuse happening. Ever since I can remember, I've seen people, women getting beaten, and there was no place for them to go."

Coding Interpersonal violence



Northern community telephone interviews

- Axial Codes Primary axial code Safety
- Safety connected to the open code partnership, and partnership is linked to the open codes of police/legal, mental health, victim and children services, which are connected to the code "frustration"; the last open code being expressed multiple times by all service providers
- Other axial codes determined by the researchers and service providers were education, perception of intimate partner violence, lack of resources, legal and policing, partnerships and support. Under each of these axial codes, open codes were organized
- Axial codes, open codes and map provided researchers with a complex view of the interpersonal violence
- Difficulty leaving violent relationships entails: so difficult that women do not leave or will return as soon as the violent event has been brought to an end:
 - **FGP: "I would say that...they're afraid would be the biggest thing, I would think. Yes, and I know one couple we've dealt with repeatedly is that she relies on him, financially, you know? She says, 'how can I testify against him, I need him, he provides for me and my family. So they're stuck in this situation, or they feel they are. So they just keep living with it."**
- Nine of the women we interviewed remained in abusive relationships because they knew how much they would receive on welfare and felt that they could not provide adequately for themselves and their children; seven women reported returning to an abusive relationship in situations where their struggle to survive on welfare was the reason, or one of the main reasons for returning; and six women were contemplating returning at the time of the interview or had considered returning to the abusive relationship because of the difficulties of surviving on welfare. (Mosher and Evans 2013, 139)

Coding family violence

Codes then organized into two categories, objective (and within this symbolic) and subjective violence:

Objective violence

- Cyclical: Generational - Lack of attention to dating violence - Children - Lack of counselling services for children in situations of IPV
- Deracination (patriarchal relations that take the male to be owner of property): Abuser remains in community, victim and children must leave - Leaving pretty much everything behind - No longer have safe homes - In the north a high percentage of victims return home - They get really lonely for the North
- Systemic poverty: Most of the people here live on social services - Poverty, high level of poverty and unemployment - fear of homelessness
- Systemic violence: North is a violent place - Colonization - Lack of cultural training/understanding of Indigenous and small community kinship systems - Harder to call for help because of pressure of the community; Mistrust of governmental systems; Female seen to be the problem - “Get women into counselling right away” - self-esteem
- Criminalization of family member: no alternative to legal action

Subjective violence

- Blame and shame: Stigma attached to IPV - Confidentiality - Nobody reports or talks about incidents - Lack of support for the victim
- Fear: Lose children, home, community - Women don't leave unless they are assisted or really hurt
- Mental health: attempted suicides, rage, despair, hopelessness
- Distrust: Behind closed doors - Re-victimization by systems meant to assist

Objective, symbolic and subjective violence

“There is too much abuse and the people are too isolated. Members of the community, in general, tend to have little trust in others and police are only called to “life and death” incidents of intimate partner violence. Most women, after being physically abused, will go to a friend or family member’s home, but these conditions are often very difficult because up to three families might be living in the same house. Only on very rare occasions will a woman go to a shelter, the nearest one being a two to three hour drive and the next closest shelter a five hour drive. The cost of transporting the women to these sites for any services, let alone crisis shelter services, is prohibitive and therefore too difficult for the women. Hence, the women generally return to their abusive partners after serious incidents, if they even leave at all.”

Focus groups: Sharing and intersecting narratives of intimate partner violence in northern Saskatchewan

- Discussion around the table
- Noted an assumption - the house is taken to be the male/masculine offender's house and is not her house
- The women want the violence to stop but do not want to stop the family, life, and community that comprise their lives
- Uprooted and impoverished means everyday away from home, family, and community is a struggle
- Stigma of poverty, of needing help - shame constrains

FGP: "You want a certain image, you want to be held at a certain standard in our community and yet, you're trying to, you're living a lie pretty much. And then you get into this domestic violence and then you don't want people to view you as 'oh you shouldn't have dated him in the first place, you know.'"

- Mistrust of the IP & FV services insofar as strangers are not trusted, but equally local folks may well not protect the privacy of those seeking assistance (distrust of gov't, southern services)

Focus groups: Sharing and intersecting narratives of intimate partner violence in northern Saskatchewan

- Gender is an important aspect of IP & FV

“That’s the only life that they know. They’re known as a big macho, six foot something 300-something pound guy. They’re not going to go talk to a lady because it’s about your image. How are your friends going to feel? How is this person going to feel? How are they going to treat you? You have this tough macho image and to top it off, if you’re uneducated and you go talk to say a female counsellor, that when you leave everything that she says, or the words and the phrases that she used you don’t understand and that adds to your anger or stress.”

- Where young men are taught they have a work future, young women are often not:

“When kids have kids, they have no idea what they’re facing. So when they’re having babies at sixteen and baby daddy’s beating on them, they don’t know how to cope, they don’t know where to go, and this baby initially was supposed to be that happily ever after. And it just adds to the stress of everything as it is. And every time I hear of a girl getting pregnant, I just shake my head. Do they not want any better? Like do they not see what the world has to offer?”

Focus groups: Sharing and intersecting narratives of intimate partner violence in northern Saskatchewan

Answering the question, what are the gaps that exist in meeting the needs of those in situations of IP & FV, participants came up with a number of clear issues:

- the persistence in linking the male/masculine to property and the subsequent disenfranchisement of the female/feminine (why are Emergency Intervention Orders that remove the violent offender not the default of actions taken? And why are they not applicable on reserves?).
- They spoke of a lack of viable and sustained IP & FV resources and services, and in particular, culturally competent services in the north of Saskatchewan.
- Linked to this is a lack of commitment on the part of provincial and federal governments to northern communities of Saskatchewan reflected in such problems as the lack of infrastructure, healthy food choices, housing, and a hopeful future.

Focus groups: Sharing and intersecting narratives of intimate partner violence in northern Saskatchewan

How do we create non-violent communities in these regions?

- Is this the right question?
- Criminal justice approach and harm reduction approach
- Identify the harm(s) and ask how they might be reduced:
- Criminalization causes more harm than it reduces
- Healing approach to subjective violence toward reducing community identified harms

Potential solutions

- Victimized and their children should be those who remain in home and community rather than the abuser
- With a home and community support, the harmed is positioned to make a choice
- Support and resources for all involved in the violence event with the objective being healing rather than criminalizing requires communities to support healing rather than taking sides
- Sustained and ongoing education concerning IP & FV so that they no longer occupy the space of a public secret
- Healing also requires that all members, including children, be involved
- Shift from a model of punishment where all parties involved are criminalized, intentionally and unintentionally, to one where the effort is to reduce harm
- Requires that objective and symbolic violence be acknowledged, which then allows subjective violence to make sense, e.g., “frontier justice” that can prevail in the North
- Shift from treating IP & FV as anomalies, and instead to ask how they interact with and reflect the objective and symbolic violence that defines all human communities.

Moving ahead

- Violence surrounds us... .And we know it. It lurks in dark alleys and empty parking lots. It hides in our homes and our schools. It peers at us from our television screens, movie theatres, and now even our electronic game consoles—as our ‘entertainment’ activities are increasingly saturated with images of violence. And it roams across our football fields, race-car tracks, and other sporting venues. (Tyner 2012, 5)
- We are not, however, simply passive in the face of such a complex onslaught and indeed are the makers of the many kinds of violence we deliver, encounter and/or observe daily. Understanding the structures, contents, and networks of violence allows for a deliberate and measured engagement, an engagement that does not seek to blame, shame and punish perpetrators, recipients and witnesses of violence nor to mystify and make incomprehensible the events of violence that have played out

RURAL AND NORTHERN COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO INTIMATE PART Saskatchewan

Thanks!

