

Domestic Violence

Unfortunately, Two Spirit women report that they experience domestic violence at similar rates as their heterosexual Aboriginal sisters. Many generations of colonial abuse has created a legacy of abusive cycles of behaviour and unhealthy relationships are among them. There is also a fear of discrimination to reveal abuse because of the stereotype that “women interact in a caring and supportive manner and therefore cannot be abusers” (Stewart 5).

Domestic violence can take many forms: emotional – cursed or swore at, humiliation, insulted, yelled at, etc; mental – limited freedom in one’s own environment, limited access to friends and family, coercion and intimidation, harassing phonecalls, etc; physical – shoving, pushing, grabbing, bruising, hitting, etc; spiritual – putting down spiritual practices, putting down cultural practices, stopping ceremonial involvement, etc.

In a study done by 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations,

60% of Two Spirit women have experienced homophobia in their communities

60% of Two Spirit women didn’t know where to go for social services agencies

70% of Two Spirit women practice safe sex

73% of Two Spirit women feel their identity is important

73% of Two Spirit women want to know how to protect themselves from abuse

75% of Two Spirit women have been stalked by their partners

80% of Two Spirit women sought out counseling on more than one occasion

Two Spirit women do not feel welcome at social services agencies as a result of racism and sexism

This study recommends that Non-Native agencies need to partner with other agencies that Two Spirit men/women and trans community members access. They also need to help Two Spirit women by listening to and believing their experiences; therefore, validating their experiences. It is important that Aboriginal agencies work with these agencies so that they will be culturally sensitive and respectful of Two Spirit women’s lives and experiences.

It is also important for the Aboriginal agencies and community members to recognize that Two Spirit women also experience domestic violence. It is especially important that Elders in the community recognize that there are Two Spirit women and men in and among us and we share the same issues, including domestic violence. Two Spirit women do not want to be outside of the community, but a part of it, and Elders need to know that we want to learn our cultures and need spiritual guidance without judgement just like everyone else.

(Project on Domestic Violence among Two Spirit People by 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations in Toronto. For more information see www.2spirits.com)

