



RESPONDING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE DISCLOSURE HANDBOOK

A Guide for Okanagan Nation Families and
Frontline Workers



Intention

This book was developed by the Okanagan Nation Alliance through its You Empowered Strong (YES) program as a resource to support responding to sexual violence disclosures.

At the heart of this document is to build capacity for Okanagan Nation families and frontline workers.

The cycle of sexual violence continues to occur in Indigenous communities due to the legacy of Indian Residential Schools, the 60's scoop, Day Schools, and the Indian Act. This handbook will look at some of the immediate ways to support sexual violence disclosures while incorporating our traditional Syilx values.

About You Empowered Strong (YES) Program

YES is a confidential, non-judgmental service that provides one on one support which varies from case to case. Services range from emotional support, advocacy, connecting clients to cultural supports, debriefing, developing a safety plan and assisting clients in accessing resources and referrals to other programs.

For more info:

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ǰəli kʷu sqilxʷ
For the people

Perspectives of the Four Food Chiefs

Syilx knowledge and cultural values have been passed down through our captikwł. Within these stories are our values, our protocols, and our laws. In this handbook, topics are grouped according to each of the Four Food Chief perspectives.

The Four Food Chiefs had to decide how the People-To-Be would live and what they would eat. They held many meetings and talked for a long time about what the People-To-Be would need to live. After much thought, all of the Four Food Chiefs gave themselves and their resources to feed the People-To-Be. That is how food was given to our People. That is why we give thanks and honour to what is given to us.

Chief skemxist

The perspective of
wise reflections,
traditions, & culture

Chief n'tyxtix
The perspective of
taking action to get
things done



Chief spitlem
The perspective of
inter-connectedness
& relationships

Chief siya

The perspective of
creativity, vision,
innovation

What is a Sexual Violence Disclosure?

Sexual violence disclosures can occur when a person discloses to someone they trust, crisis line or frontline staff, that they have experienced sexual violence.

*It is each individual's choice to go beyond disclosing the sexual violence. The responder can inform the person harmed options beyond disclosing, but they should not encourage, advise, or force them to go beyond what they are comfortable doing.

How to Respond to a Disclosure of Sexual Violence



A Responder must be able to demonstrate appropriate and sensitive communication to the person harmed. The goal would be to ensure that the person does not feel judged, but that they are being heard, accepted and believed.

Here are some examples of appropriate communication for first responders:

1. Open-Ended Questions

- "What Happened?"
- "How are you feeling?"
- "Tell me your main concern"

2. Close-Ended Questions

- "What is your name and date of birth?"
- "Can you talk?"

3. Encouragers

- "Take your time"
- "Tell me more about..."

4. Paraphrasing

- "What I hear you saying is..."
- "Do you mean..."

5. Normalizing and validating

- "Everything you are feeling is normal"
- "It's okay to feel..."
- "It's okay to cry"

6. Problem-solving

- "What have you done to cope with stressful situations before?"
- "What do you think about..."

7. Summarizing

- "What you've said so far is...."
- "So, you've decided to..."

(Source: AASAS (2011) First Responder Communication Chart)



Appropriate Responses (Do's)

- Be aware of environment (is it comfortable or private, do they want to go for a walk?)
- Be aware of your body language (position and physical space)
- Be aware of touch (always ask permission to hug or touch an individual)
- Make eye contact when appropriate (do not search or probe for eye contact)
- Be aware of cultural differences and intersectionality
- Do not pressure one to report or tell others, if they are an adult

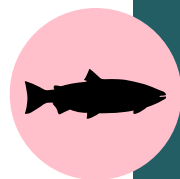
Duty to Report

The Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) requires that anyone who has reason to believe that a child or youth has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, and that the parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child or youth, must report the suspected abuse or neglect to a child welfare worker.

How to Report

To make a report, please call [1 800 663-9122](tel:18006639122) any time of the day or night. You can also call your local band office, or in an emergency 911.

Reporting and Next Steps



Report to Police

To report a sexual assault, you can call the Police Non-Emergency line, go to the hospital, or go to a police station.

Access a Victims Assistance Program for Support

The Victim Services & Violence Against Women Program Directory provides contact information for service providers across BC that assist victims of crime and women and children impacted by violence.

Use a Third Party Process to Report Anonymously

Third Party Reporting of sexual assault is a process which allows adult survivors (19 and over) to access support and to report details of a sexual offence/assault to police anonymously.

Connect With Someone That You Can Trust

It can also be beneficial to reach out to your supports to help guide your process emotionally. However, it's important to be selective about who you tell, especially at first. Be sure to reach out to someone who will be supportive, empathetic, and calm.

Go to the Hospital

You may choose to go to the hospital. If you have been injured, your injuries will be treated. You may be offered pregnancy prevention medication and HIV/STI prevention medication.

Gathering Forensic Evidence

The hospital can complete a forensic exam where evidence can be held for up to one year. You do not have to press charges to complete this. The exam consists of: documentation of injuries, examination and treatment of injuries, documentation of biological and physiological findings, and collection of evidence

mrimstax
They heal themselves



Grounding and Healing

Our Syilx culture and traditions have been handed down to us for generations, and it's critical to use a cultural informed response to disclosures of sexual violence. These suggestions below are some reminder of practices that we can do for self.

Grounding Techniques:

- Hold a rock, traditional medicine, or a feather and pour your energy into it.
- Take a drink of water or hold a mug of tea in both hands and feel its warmth.
- Rub your feet on the ground or earth, notice the sensation and sound as you connect with the ground.
- Smelling of oils or nature as aromatherapy.
- Slow your rate of breath (In 4 seconds, hold 2 seconds, release 6 seconds).
- Connect to a Traditional Knowledge Keeper you trust.

Healing and Caring for Ourselves:

- Go to the water. Our relation *siwtk^w*, is our most sacred medicine.
- Be on the land. Syilx people have spiritual connections to *tmx^wulax^w* and *tmix^w*.
- Nourish your body and mind with healthy activities, such as drumming, singing and dancing.

RESOURCES

Crime Victim Assistance

☎ 1-866-660-3888

✉ cvap@gov.bc.ca

Helpline for Children

☎ 310-1234

VictimLinkBC

☎ 1-800-563-0808

☎ 1-800-563-0808

✉ VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca

🌐 www.victimlinkbc.ca

🕒 Available 24/7

HealthLinkBC

☎ 811

🌐 www.healthlinkbc.ca

Kids Help Phone

🌐 kidshelpphone.ca

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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