

Report for Fort Providence on Creating Safe Communities for Older Adults

The event took place in the community hall in the Nahecho Keh Centre on September 30th and October 1st. It was organized by Phoebe Parent, Community Justice Worker for Fort Providence and facilitated by Suzette Montreuil. The workshop was attended by 5 elders, a home support worker, the justice worker and the elder coordinator. Chief Joachim Bonnetrouge attended the first morning. The mental health counsellor attended the second day. Snacks and beverages were provided by the Charter and lunch was provided on both days in separate servings. The RCMP was invited to participate and attended the second morning.



First Day

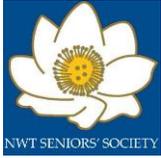
The event started with an opening prayer. Roundtable introductions were then completed.

Phoebe reviewed the housekeeping issues for the group. Suzette reviewed the agenda for the first day. She explained that participants were able to keep resources and non-medical masks. She then offered a short introduction on the *NWT Seniors' Society* and the *NWT Network to Prevent the Abuse of Older Adults*.

Elder Abuse in Fort Providence

Due to small numbers and need to keep social distance, no subgroups were formed. The group as a whole was invited to discuss what abuse of older adults in Fort Providence looks like. Their responses are presented below.

- Elder abuse by their children
- Children take over control of house
- Children do not help with bills
- Elders are being hungry
- Elder credit at store being used
- Empty fridges
- People visit elders' home only when elders get money – taking advantage
- Verbal abuse - elders are afraid
- Their food gets taken
- Family abuses own family elders
- Overdraft – no money left in the bank
- No visits
- No senior activities
- Lack of language – connection



- Bush Dene and community Dene – big difference
- Concerns for their care and safety
- Being pressured
- Respite – give them a break for themselves
- Residential school abuse
- Learned to accept daily abuse
- No healing journey
- Lack of help
- Respect lost by children
- Addictions
- No support – more support from family needed
- Role models needed
- Rich culture forgotten – need to maintain
- Use to be a gift being brought up with grandparents
- Family dysfunction
- Hidden family secrets
- Avoiding healthy relationships
- Safety for their health in their own homes
- Evictions - children's addictions and no concern over COVID-19
- No help with cleaning
- Interference – people won't accept
- Need the right person to work at senior home

Neighbours, Friends and Families – It's Not Right

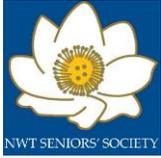


Suzette then presented the *It's Not Right- Neighbours, Friends and Family* materials. This material covers the role of ageism, warning signs of abuse, types of abuse, obstacles to getting involved, and the three steps that bystanders can take: See it, Name It and Check It. It also discusses two aspects to consider when approaching an elder, namely safety and respect. The main goal is to keep the door open for communication with the elder and decrease their sense of isolation.

At the end of day, the group viewed a video called **Hidden: Elder Abuse**

The video outlines cases of elder abuse in Northern Alberta and highlights an Indigenous response of restorative practice. The group was asked to think about the video and bring any comments back.

Second Day



Suzette presented a quick summary of the work from the day before. The points covered included:

- Types of abuse
- Three steps: See It, Name It, Check It
- How to approach an elder and what types of questions to ask
- What stops us from getting involved

There were no comments on the video from yesterday.

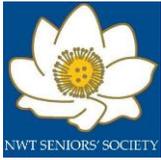
Financial Abuse and RCMP presentation

Two RCMP officers attended the session. They were Cpl Cagri Yilmaz and Cpl Emily Wright. They discussed the ways that the RCMP can respond and explained the limitations they face if the elder does not want to lay charges. They gave an example of helping an elder get a new key for a truck that was repeatedly “borrowed”. The RCMP brought copies of the RCMP Seniors Guidebook to Safety and Security.



The group had a further discussion on responding to financial abuse happening in Fort Providence. They developed a list of problems and possible actions that would help elders.

- Pension days – relatives call RCMP
- Purchase of alcohol
- Emotional attachment (to children)
- Feedback from elders – victims
- Ongoing cycle
- Involve support workers
- Not providing statements for assault cases
- Language barrier for elders
- Not laying charges – limits
- Being preyed on
- Others taking advantage (not family)
- Safety issues (vulnerable)
- Debit cards – access and PIN given out
- Disabled depends on those who take advantage – sometimes it’s the primary caregiver
- Support workers cannot be involved with safe keeping of bank cards
- Housing shortage
- Being cautious in talking to elders
- Place being used (alcohol and drugs)
- Not being acknowledged
- Scammers on telephone



- Money transfers – legal documents

Scenarios of Elder Abuse

Suzette and Phoebe role played a scenario of visiting an elder after a granddaughter had used her bank card inappropriately. The first role play showed a visitor asking the grandmother to stop giving her granddaughter money and to call the RCMP if she did not know how to take action. The second role play showed a visitor who did not have all the answers but showed concern for the grandmother. The group discussed these questions.

What Was Wrong with the First Visit?

- Talking loud
- Telling her what to do
- Overstepping boundary and pointing finger at her
- Conflict and threatening

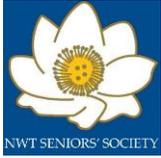
How Did the Grandmother feel?

- Scared, soft spoken, afraid
- Helpless
- Had no say about bank card
- Feeling blamed
- Put down
- Living within your means
- Body language – “in her face”
- Afraid of a person bigger than her



What Was Helpful in Second Visit and How Was Grandmother Feeling?

- Segha dzagút'e (not too good)
- I have not one to talk to
- Grandma mega duyé
- Try to get a hold of granddaughter for bank card
- Need to pay my bills. But can't get a hold of her.
- Greeting
- Saw her using bank card
- More calm, polite
- Ask to come back, keep door open for another day
- Anxiety, don't know what to do, due to her card being used
- Try to get hold of other family members, anguish, concern



- Need support, someone to talk to
- Elders were told don't talk or say anything, due to being in residential school and how they were talked to
- Scared to talk
- Talk on spiritual level

The responses show that the group understood the grandmother's feeling. They also recognized the need for support for the grandmother.

Community Response

The group discussed the benefits of working together rather than staying alone. They discussed several questions related to forming a support group.

What Would the Group Do?

- Media – use local radio station, talk about elder abuse
- Sharing circle to talk about this
- Form a committee.
- Review guidebook from RCMP. Make posters and put them up. People will set it more.
- When community talks, it counts.
- Group of trusted people.
- Recognize history, hard to ask for help.
- Talking about it and becoming aware of it.
- Distribute report from workshop.
- Talk about not visiting just on pension day.
- Could cook meals on fire for elders.
- Don't just rely on care staff.
- Consider elder abuse when hiring manager.
- COVID-19 restrictions helped with current unit. New unit will have monitor.
- Make a local information sheet and distribute.
- Prepare a monthly newsletter.
- Dechinta is preparing a large gathering and a second book on colonization as next year will be the 100th anniversary of Treaty 11.

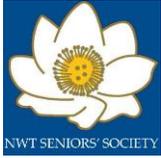


THIS IS OUR COMMUNITY. WE
NEED TO DEAL WITH THIS.

Workshop participant

Who Will Be Involved?

- Invite leaders and support workers
- Call out for people about committee
- Invite older elders to sit with us



- Use paid staff and volunteer time.

Process for Meeting

- Meet once a month. Let leadership know and ask for someone who can help.
- Could take turns chairing meeting.
- Post a sign to recruit volunteers.

Where and When Will You Meet?

- Possible locations are front room at Housing, Friendship Centre.
- Date proposed for first meeting is November 18th at lunch. Everyone bring something to eat.
- Sam will chair the first meeting. Berna will chair the next. Choose someone each time.



Sharing Circle

Participants ended the workshop by gathering in a sharing circle. Participants shared what they had learned and talked about how important it is to honour elders in their community.

Suzette explained that the NWT Seniors' Society could be contacted if more support was required.

Results of the Evaluations:

The evaluation form was revised for these workshops as previous participants had noted the questions were difficult to understand. The participants were asked to evaluate themselves on the following statements prior to the workshop and after its completion. Three forms were only completed before workshop as participants were not there at the closing of workshop.

I know warning signs and risk factors of elder abuse

Prior to workshop average: 3.7 Post workshop average: 4.7

I can ask questions and talk to someone I think is being abused.

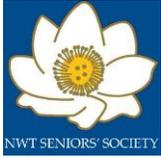
Prior average: 3.7 Post average: 4.2

I can encourage someone who is experiencing elder abuse to seek help in my community

Prior average: 3.3 Post average: 4.5

I see the value in working together as a group to try and decrease elder abuse

Prior average: 3.5 Post average: 5



The following comments were also provided:

What will you take away with you?

- Information on learning the support for elder abuse.
- Being more aware and wanting to be more involved with caring and protecting our elders.
- Work with our elders without being judgemental.
- Knowledge and meeting with group to discuss it.
- Safe ground.
- To start some elders support group. It's our community. We need to solve our own problems. It's not going to happen overnight. Take baby steps.

What had the greatest impact?

- I think the greatest impact would be the controlling of elder abuse.
- The learning of all of the abuses and the role playing (visualizing).
- Elders in my community being abused by family.
- Hearing the ideas of others.
- Many types of experience.
- It's something to see every day but elders know they help out there. It's always about safety of our elders.

Other Comments

- My point of view would be supportive for the elders. Be there for them to listen. Let them know there is help out there. If no one can't change, we as a community can make that change.
- I have dealings with hearing from elders when they are being financially abused. It is very exciting to hear of our Group wanting to form a committee; taking elder abuse issues serious.
- Starting a working group will be very useful for our elders and for myself.
- Always good to share and discuss.
- I wish there were more community members, especially elders were more involved. It's a big issue that we face every day but would have been good to see more elders in this workshop. For future workshops, elders need to be heard about what they face everyday.

Respectfully submitted by:

Suzette Montreuil
Executive Director, NWT Seniors' Society