INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV) IN INDIGENOUS CANADIAN COMMUNITIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE PIMICIKAMAK CREE NATION IN CROSS LAKE, NORTHERN MANITOBA

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Abstract

Based on individually conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews, this study examines Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) violence in a First Nations community in Northern Manitoba, Canada. It takes as a point of reference the Pimicikamak Cree Nation of Cross Lake. This study situates IPV within the broader context of societal violence and employs a Structural Violence Theory perspective. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that IPV is a serious problem facing Canadian Indigenous families. Women are by far the main victims of this problem. Considering that no studies had been published previously about spousal IPV in the Cross Lake community, this study became, by default, exploratory, with the following three crucial questions: (a) what are the social factors shaping IPV in the community? (b) how does IPV affect the lives of victims/survivors? and (c) how is the community responding to the problem? The main findings of this study are as follow: (a) IPV is a systemic problem in the community; (b) women suffer more serious and repeated IPV than do men; (c) despite community efforts to address IPV, inadequate prevention programs have further compounded the problem; and (d) survivors of IPV demonstrated a high level of resilience in the face of pain and suffering. IPV in Pimicikamak Cross Lake community has been compounded by the intergenerational effects of systemic (structural) poverty and the Indian Residential School experience. The interplay of these factors has harmfully affected individual, family, and community relationships and wellbeing.

Résumé

À partir d'entrevues individuelles faites en personne, cette étude examine la violence faite par un partenaire intime (VPI) dans une communauté des Premières Nations au nord du Manitoba, au Canada. L'étude prend comme point de référence la nation Cri Pimicikamak de Cross Lake et situe la VPI dans un contexte plus large de violence sociétale en utilisant la perspective de la théorie de la violence structurelle. Des études empiriques ont démontré de manière répétée que la VPI est un problème majeur vécu par les familles autochtones au Canada et que les femmes sont de loin les victimes principales de ce problème. Puisqu'aucune étude n'a été publiée auparavant au sujet de la violence conjugale dans la communauté de Cross Lake, cette étude est devenue, par défaut, exploratoire, et a voulu

répondre aux trois questions suivantes : a) quels sont les facteurs sociaux qui façonnent la VPI dans la communauté ? b) De quelles manières la VPI affecte les vies des victimes et des survivant.e.s ? et c) Comment la communauté répond-elle au problème ? Les résultats principaux de cette étude sont les suivants : a) la VPI est un problème systémique dans la communauté; b) les femmes souffrent plus souvent et plus sérieusement de VPI répétée que les hommes; c) malgré les efforts communautaires pour enrayer la VPI, des programmes de prévention inadéquats ont plutôt accentuer le problème; et d) les survivantes de VPI démontrent un haut niveau de résilience face à la douleur et à la souffrance. La VPI dans la communauté Pimicikamak de Cross Lake a été exacerbée par les conséquences systémiques intergénérationnelles et structurelles de la pauvreté et par les expériences dans le système des écoles résidentielles. L'interaction entre ces facteurs a endommagé les relations individuelles, familiales et communautaires, ainsi que le bien-être des membres de la communauté.

Introduction

According to the 2021 Statistics Canada Census (2022), the Indigenous[1] population (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) is 1.8 million or 5% of the total Canadian population. The Census also reported that the Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger now that the non-Indigenous population. Manitoba is Canada's fifth most populous province (1.34 million) with a significant First Nations population (121,415). Manitoba is home to sixty-three First Nations communities, including six of the twenty largest bands in Canada. Many of these communities are in remote areas of Northern Manitoba and face systemic socio-economic problems (Assembly of First Nations, 2011; MacKinnon, 2013; Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, 2012). Based on individually conducted in-depth interviews, this study examines Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation of Cross Lake, Northern Manitoba. It does so by employing a Structural Violence Theory perspective. The rural community of Cross Lake is located 520 kilometers north of Winnipeg and has a population of 8,380 inhabitants (Cross Lake Band of Indians membership office number).

IPV has had negative consequences for women in First Nations communities: it has had a traumatic effect on their self-esteem, loss of self-identity, and socio-economic well-being (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane 2003; National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008; Kwan, 2015). The intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School experience have further compounded these problems (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011; Blacksmith, 2011; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). IPV harms relationships, which in turn, undermines the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities. Notably, IPV negatively affects the human development of children (Kashani, & Allan, 1998; Howell, 2011). First Nations men and women survivors of IPV need to be heard and listened to and their experience documented. Regrettably, the study of IPV in Cross Lake has not received the necessary attention it requires from the Family Violence Research community: there are no published studies on IPV in this community. Thus, this study offers a small contribution to the understanding of how the legacy of colonial structures and systems have worked not only to incite IPV, but also to silence the voices of victims and survivors in a First Nations community.

Importance of the study

The study of IPV violence is important to understand its impact on human development. The wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities are intrinsically linked to the quality of their social environment. Children, for instance, who are exposed to IPV are likely to experience emotional and mental traumas that can affect their developmental growth. They may lose the ability to feel empathy for others. Some children may feel socially isolated or unable to make friends, while others may underperform in school. Without a positive environment at home, children are likely to face challenges or difficulties in later years. Therefore, studying IPV is of utmost importance because healthy human development cannot develop amid pervasive personal pain and suffering (Afolabi, 2015; World Health Organization, 2014).

In First Nations communities, the study of IPV is especially important because their population continues to experience steady grow. If the First Nations population continues to grow and IPV is not reduced or contained in these communities, how then are governments and communities to address the violence in the face of constant funding limitations? IPV is likely to

[1] In Canada, the term 'Indigenous' is rapidly replacing the term 'Aboriginal' in academic and non-academic contexts. The term Indigenous is also widely used by national, transnational, and international organizations such as the United Nations.

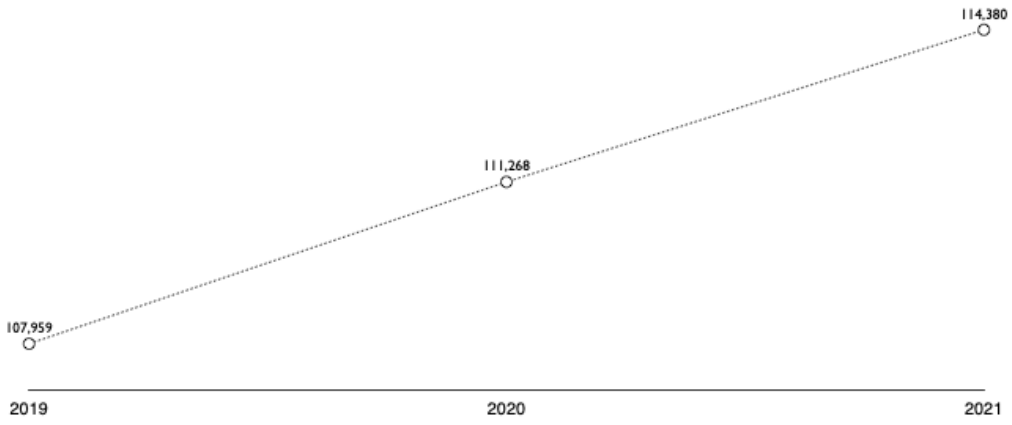
get worse and its impact on these communities will be exponentially greater. Thus, it is imperative to study IPV in First Nations communities. Hearing the voices of the survivors of IPV is critically important in this process.

Literature Review

a) Spousal violence in Canada

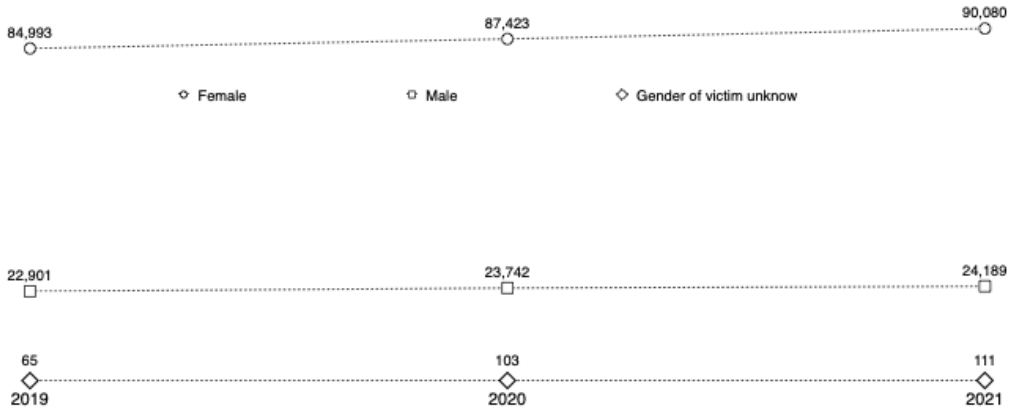
Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that IPV is a serious problem facing Canadian families. According to Statistics Canada, there was around 115,000 of IPV reported cases in Canada in 2021 (Figure 1). Out of this total, over 90,000 (or 87%) were women victims (Figure 2).

Figure 1
Intimate Partner Violence in Canada, 2019-2021 (Thousands)



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 35-10-0202-01 Intimate partner and non-intimate partner victims of police-reported violent crime and traffic offences causing bodily harm or death, by age and gender of victim.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.25318/3510020201-eng

Figure 2
Intimate Partner Violence in Canada, 2019-2021 (Numbers)



Source: Statistics Canada. Table 35-10-0202-01 Intimate partner and non-intimate partner victims of police-reported violent crime and traffic offences causing bodily harm or death, by age and gender of victim.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.25318/3510020201-eng

b) Spousal violence in Canadian Indigenous communities

Women are the main victims of IPV in Indigenous communities. First Nations women are much more likely to experience IPV than non-First Nations peoples (Heidinger, 2021). IPV in First Nations communities has been compounded by the intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School experience, which have negatively affected family and community relationships (Blacksmith, 2011; Bombay *et al*, 2011). IPV has had a traumatic effect on First Nations women (Brennan, 2011). First Nations victims of IPV experience an enormous sense of personal failure with feelings of hopelessness and helplessness especially when they face continuous violence in their relationships (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008). They often blame themselves for their situation and conceal abuse from others to avoid the shame of being a victim of IPV. However, the harmful consequences of IPV on First Nations women are not well documented. This is the case in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation community of Cross Lake. First Nations women victims of IPV from this community need to be listened to and their experiences documented.

Theoretical framework

What causes IPV/spousal/family violence? This is certainly a complex issue because IPV/spousal/family violence can take many forms—physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, and more. Despite its complexity, understanding the underlying causes of spousal/family violence are fundamental to proposing effective intervention strategies. Scholars of IPV/spousal/family

violence tend to disagree as to what the causes are. Not surprisingly, they have put forward several different, and at times overlapping, theories of causation. Despite their differences, these theories recognize that IPV/spousal/family violence is about power and control. Thus, it is important to understand the power and control dynamics of IPV/spousal/family violence to contextualize the problem and to propose effective intervention strategies.

The study of IPV/spousal/family violence in First Nations communities is best understood by examining the violent historical process of colonization. With the blessings of European secular and religious powers, colonizers aggressively took traditional lands from First Nations communities and over time displaced and subjugated them. The colonization of First Nations communities left a sad legacy: the loss of land, culture, religion, language, and economy. The long-term result of colonization was family dysfunction manifested in institutionalized violence, poverty, inequality, and racism. Even today, the legacy of colonization continues to have a disastrous impact on First Nations families and communities (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Colonization greatly affected the traditional roles of First Nations men and women (Allen, 1986). Prior to the arrival of the European colonizers, First Nations men and women performed functions vital to the survival of their communities and both enjoyed a high degree of personal autonomy (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991). They were both equal providers and managers of the household. Elders and parents taught husbands and wives to respect and honour one another, and to care for one another in good and bad times. Men and women played active roles in the social and economic life of their communities and enjoyed respect inside and outside their home. First Nations women held a special place in the family and community. In addition to their traditional roles as wives, mothers, grandmothers, and caregivers, First Nations women actively engaged in small animal hunting, fishing, gathering, and horticulture (Bourgeault, 1991). Colonization changed all of this. In First Nations communities where patriarchal relations prevailed, colonization not only intensified the subjugation of women to men but also restricted the role of women to household chores. In First Nations communities where matriarchal relations existed, colonization subjugated women to men according to Western patriarchal norms, values, and practices that were alien to the communities (Allen, 1986). Patriarchy reshaped and limited the personal autonomy of First Nations women inside and outside the household. As a result, First Nations women lost their role as relatively equal partners, providers, and managers in the household. First Nations family systems became dysfunctional and problematic. This situation was severely exacerbated by the separation of parents and children, intra-generationally, by residential schools, and the Sixties-Scoop, a practice that sadly continues in current fostering practices. IPV/spousal/family violence in First Nations communities is a manifestation of these tragic historical events.

Scholars have studied IPV/spousal/family violence from different disciplinary perspectives and levels of analysis (Levinson, 1989; Malley-Morris & Hines, 2004; McKie, 2005; Hattery & Smith, 2016). Some of these theories are: Biological Theory, Individual Psychopathology Theory, Ecological Theory, Social Learning Theory, Feminist Theory, and Structural Violence Theory. All these theories have strengths and weaknesses in explaining IPV/spousal/family violence.

a) Biological Theory and Individual Psychopathology Theory

Biological Theory and Individual Psychopathology Theory focus on the offender's personal characteristics that trigger IP/spousal/family violence. That is, these theories link personality disorders, trauma experiences, mental illness/injury, alcohol and drug/substance abuse, poor self-

control, and other personal characteristics to acts of IPV/spouse/family violence. These theories are deterministic as they focus on the genetics and physiology debate: IPV/spousal/family violence behaviour is explained in terms of genetic, organic, or chemical disorders or imbalances. Biological Theory and Individual Psychopathology Theory tend to overlook the social environments and structural factors conducive to IPV/spousal/family violence. There is also the danger that the uncritical use of these theories can link IPV/spousal/family violence to a particular group of people based on its genetic background. Are First Nations more prone to IPV/spousal/family violence than compared to Euro-Canadians based on their genes alone? There must be a great deal of caution when using these theories. Despite their shortcomings, the Biological Theory and Individual Psychopathology Theory have persisted, in part because they were the first conceptualizations of IPV/spousal/family violence. Indeed, these theories were put forward by the medical profession in the early 1960s (Malley-Morris & Hines, 2004; Hattery & Smith, 2016).

The Biological and Individual Psychopathology theories are inadequate to explain IPV/spousal/family violence in First Nations communities. For instance, alcoholism and drug abuse, which certainly contribute to IPV/spousal/family violence, is a manifestation of a bigger social problem within First Nations communities. The appalling social conditions and family dysfunctions in these communities have created a predisposition to alcohol and drug abuse that has, sadly, continued to incite many forms of violence. Unfortunately, biological, and psychological reductionism has unfairly been used to popularize the racist view that First Nations peoples are physiologically prone to the uncontrolled consumption of alcohol. As Kwan (2015) affirmed, IPV/spousal/family violence is intrinsically linked to the destructive historical experience of colonization. Alcohol and substance abuse, transient lifestyle, homelessness, poverty, displacement, gender inequality and violence are manifestations of this sad historical legacy.

b) Ecological Theory and Social Learning Theory

Ecological Theory and Social Learning Theory stress the view that IPV/spousal/family violence can best be explained by taking into consideration the external and learned social, environmental factors that influence family relationship, organization, and structure (Malley-Morris & Hines, 2004; Hattery & Smith, 2016). Ecological Theory links IPV/spousal/violence to the broader social environment. Put forward by Urie Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist, during the mid-1960s, Ecological Theory has remained influential in the IPV/spousal/family violence field. This theory incorporated and expanded the Biological and Individual-Psychopathology theories to examine violence across all stages of life. Bronfenbrenner argues that human development is composed of several nested layers of influences. Within this context, IPV/spousal/family violence is perceived as the outcome of interactions among many interrelated factors situated at four different levels—the individual, family, community, and society (Carlson, 1984; Reilly & Gravdal, 2012).

At the individual level, Ecological Theory pays close attention to the personal history and biological factors of the perpetuator, or the victim, of IPV/spousal/family violence. Among some of these factors are early childhood experiences of neglect and abuse, psychological or personality disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse, and experiences of violent traumas (Bimm, 1998; Yuen & Skibinski, 2012). At the family level, Ecology Theory argues that family members, intimate partners, friends, and peers may influence an individual becoming a perpetuator or victim of violence. In 1988, DeKeseredy popularized this notion when he argued that certain all-male peer

groups encourage, justify, and support the abuse of women (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013). At the community level, Ecological Theory recognizes that schools, neighbourhoods, and workplaces may also influence violence. Schools situated in neighborhoods with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and crime are potential risk places for students learning violent behaviour. At the societal level, Ecological Theory looks at the social factors that influence or inhibit violence such as social and economic policies that generate inequalities and cultural and religious norms that legitimize male dominance over women (Bimm, 1998; Carlson, 1984; Reilly & Gravdal, 2012).

Social Learning Theory popularized explanatory perspectives of IPV/spousal/family violence as 'cycles of violence' and 'intergenerational violence'. Formulated by development psychologist Albert Bandura during the mid-1970s, Social Learning Theory contends that people model behavior that they have learned from others. IPV/spousal/family violence is a behaviour learned from parents, siblings, relatives, friends, and boyfriends/girlfriends, either directly (i.e., participating in violence) or indirectly (i.e., witnessing violence). Violent behaviour is learned and reinforced in childhood and continues in adulthood as a coping response to stress or as a method of resolving conflict.

Ecological Theory is inadequate to explain IPV/spousal/family violence in First Nations communities because it gives too much importance to the child's biological and psychological development, at the expense of later-life adult socialization experiences. It also overemphasizes internal and linear family relationship dynamics at the expense of broader social, economic, and cultural conditions and processes. First Nations children certainly come to learn and accept the 'values,' 'norms', and 'worldviews' of their parents, siblings, and extended family members. However, in most cases, these values, norms, and worldviews are borrowed, fragmented, and alien ones. That is, these children are socialized within colonized social and cultural norms, values, and practices. This environment is the product of the historical experience of colonization, and it has impacted First Nations children's ability to construct traditional meanings and understandings of family, community, and society.

Likewise, Social Learning Theory is insufficient to explain pervasive IPV/spousal/family violence in First Nations communities. The origin of the intergeneration transmission of family violence in these communities are not located in the inner workings of the traditional First Nations family structure, but in the cruel implementation of colonial structures, especially the educational system that legitimized violence against First Nations peoples in all its forms. Specifically, the Indian Residential School system was the main venue of transmission of institutionalized violence. More than 150,000 First Nations children were separated from their families and communities from 1876 to 1996 with the explicit purpose of removing them from the influence of their traditional culture, language, norms, values, and religious beliefs and practices (The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Indian Residential School system sought to 'kill the Indian in the child' and did so very effectively. Colonial administrators conceived First Nations peoples as 'savages' and 'backwards', who needed to incorporate into their mindsets the 'civilized' and 'superior' European culture. First Nations children became, by default, objects of social experimentation on a grand scale through the Indian Residential School (Milloy, 2017; Miller, 2017). Contradictorily, the 'civilized' and 'superior' European culture was implemented through uncivilized methods: systemic brutal violence. First Nations traditions, languages, and knowledges were lost during this historically disastrous colonial policy of cultural assimilation. Over the last century, the generations of children who participated in this social experiment have suffered from the traumatic intergenerational effects of physical, emotional, mental, and sexual abuse. Eventually, most of these children grew up and became struggling parents because the

trauma they experienced did not help them to develop trusting relationships, strong self-esteem, and good parental skills. If, nowadays, First Nations men abuse their spouse/partner or their children, it is in great part due to the traumatic intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School experience (Ball & Moselle, 2015; Blacksmith, 2011; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; Morrissette, 1994).

c) Feminist Theory and Structural Violence Theory

Feminist Theory and Structural Violence Theory explain best the complex problem of IPV/spousal/family violence in First Nations communities because they examine the problem within the broader context of societal violence. These theories take into consideration the social, economic, and cultural factors that legitimize individual and collective violence.

Feminist Theory argues that IPV/spousal/family violence is rooted in patriarchal (male-dominated) power relations (Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004; Alaggia & Vine, 2006; Chan, 2012; Hattery and Smith, 2016). This theory has played an important role in bringing IPV/spousal/family violence into the public arena. Patriarchy is the amalgamation of Judeo-Christian religious ideas, Greek philosophy, and Western legal code that has over the centuries promoted the rationalization and legitimization of male dominance over women and children in both the family and in society. Patriarchy relies not only on socially and culturally constructed norms and practices, but also on legal and civic institutions that covertly and overtly sanction the subordination of women to men.

Since the mid-1960s, women's movements in many parts of the world have challenged patriarchy to tackle violence against women in both the private and public spheres of human life (Alaggia & Vine, 2006; Chan, 2012). They have established public education programs, advocated new legislations and policies, organized shelters for women victims of violence, and promoted changes in the law-enforcement agencies and health care systems. In Canada, for instance, the Parliament of Canada changed the Criminal Code to better protect women and children from many forms of physical and psychological violence. Provincial and Territorial governments have also passed family violence legislation that further protect women and children. Even so, violence against women has continued to persist across Canada because is shaped by complex societal and cultural power relations.

While Feminist Theory has greatly advanced the study of IPV/spousal/family violence by highlighting the ways in which patriarchy has historically spawned violence against women, this theory has some limitations. Specifically, there are problems with viewing patriarchy as the ultimate cause of IPV/spousal/family violence. First, Feminist Theory cannot adequately explain violence in same-sex relationships (Lawson, 2003). IPV/spousal/family violence in same-sex couples requires a more comprehensive analysis and theoretical explanation that goes beyond patriarchal relations. Secondly, Feminist Theory is also limited to explain IPV/spousal/family violence perpetrated by women. Although this theory usually explains women's use of violence in the context of self-defence and retaliation for previous abuse, it does not explain why women commit violence outside of their spousal and family relationships. Feminist theorists acknowledge that women can also be violent in their intimate partner relationships with men; however, they simply do not see the issue of women abusing men as a widespread, serious social problem. Finally, Feminist Theory tends to focus more on the victims rather than the perpetrators of violence. This tendency obscures the widespread, complex, and dynamic nature of IPV/spousal/family violence in society (Malley-Morrison & Hines, 2004; Alaggia & Vine, 2006; Hattery & Smith, 2016).

Structural Violence Theory posits the view that IPV/spousal/family violence is a manifestation of structural violence in society (Moyo, 2008; Hattery & Smith, 2016). Structural violence is embedded in unjust and uneven social, economic, and cultural relationships that harm vulnerable people (Galtung, 1996). Structural violence is indirect, often invisible, or impersonal, and often has no one specific person/agency who can be held responsible. Such violence is accomplished in part through formal and informal social policies and practices that deny people of their fundamental human rights. A common example of structural violence is the maintenance of systemic poverty, inequality, and marginalization that negatively affects vulnerable people. Structural violence facilitates the institutionalization of IPV/spousal/family violence—the processes by which society and institutions perpetuate or, at least, tolerate IPV/spousal/family violence. Patriarchy is a form of institutionalized violence that has harmed women in both developed and developing countries (Carter, 2015; Frias, 2010; Ghanim, 2009; Matern, 2013).

Feminist Theory and Structural Violence Theory are two important and complementary theories that best explain the complex problem of IPV/spousal/family violence in First Nations communities. From Feminist Theory, First Nations people can learn how European imperialism and colonialism brought about the imposition of patriarchal social structures that has negatively affected Indigenous women. The institutionalization of Western gender roles and patriarchal norms and practices through the Indian Residential School system fundamentally transformed First Nations communities (Barnes et al, 2006; Kwan, 2015). First Nations women lost their autonomy, power, status, and control over their own bodies. Children learned to internalize vertical forms of power relationships and social behaviours that legitimize violence against women in all its forms. Patriarchy sanctioned gender and power inequality in family relationships. It also sanctioned males' use of violence and aggression in the private and public realms of human life (Jamieson, 1987). In the private realm, patriarchy dictated how First Nations men and women should behave in their roles as husbands and wives. Western patriarchal family norms and practices condoned aggressive behaviours perpetrated by men, while teaching women to be submissive and passive toward their husbands.

From the perspective of Structural Violence Theory, First Nations peoples can learn how the establishment of colonial structures and systems has systemically perpetuated social marginalization in their communities. Displaced from their lands, deprived of their livelihoods, and robbed of their languages and cultures, First Nations peoples have come to depend almost entirely on state agencies for their very survival. Systemic dependency has disempowered First Nations peoples by silencing their voices and restricting their participation in the family, community, and society. Faced with pervasive poverty, unemployment, low educational levels, lack of self-steam, discrimination, racism, and sexism, First Nations women have had little choice but to live under unequal, unhealthy, and risky intimate partner relationships (CampBell, 2012).

Research methodology

a) Research design

Since its inception, this study was a community-based and community-driven research agenda. In consultation with the main researchers, Cross Lake community representatives identified, prioritized, and approved the IPV research topic. This was a genuine collaborative process that followed strict community and academic principles, and procedures. Community representatives played an active role in the formulation and implementation of the study by taking into consideration the community's traditional knowledge, values practices, and protocols. Notably, the researchers and community representatives committed themselves to: (a) make the

research results accessible and understandable to the wider community; and (b) respect the anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of the research participants.

The target population for this research study were survivors of IPV as well as Cross Lake community representatives and other stakeholders. The community established a IPV research study committee whose responsibility was to ensure that the research causes no harm to the participants and was conducted according to the Cross Lake community's ethical guidelines, principles, protocols, and cultural values and traditions. Participants were survivors of IPV and eighteen years of age and over. The researchers of this study obtained the informed consent from all the participants by fully informing them about his or her rights, the purpose of the study, the interview processes, and the potential risks and benefits of participation. The researchers informed the participants of their right to withdraw from participation at any stage of the research process.

Because of the oral tradition in First Nations communities, face-to-face interviews were the most appropriate way to gather data from both participants and other community stakeholders for this research study. Indeed, First Nations research participants do not respond well to the use of survey questionnaires, because they feel intimidated and restricted by them (Ball & Moselle, 2015). Individual interviews were designed around semi-structured (for victims of IPV), structured (for other community stakeholders), and open-ended (for all participants) questions to facilitate the flow of the research participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and challenges confronting IPV.

The main objectives and research questions of this study were:

a) to examine the main causes of IPV in the Pimicikamak Cree Nation community. What are the social factors shaping IPV in the community? How does the interplay of external (social exclusion, institutionalized racism, state dependence) and internal (child abuse, school failure, family dysfunction) factors shape the social context of IPV in the community?
b) to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of victims of IPV in the community. How does IPV affect the lives of victims/survivors? What challenges do the victims and community face in confronting IPV?
c) to discover and evaluate the strategies the Pimicikamak community use to manage the issues and challenges of IPV. How is the Cross Lake community responding to the problem? What IPV prevention and intervention programs are in place in the community?

Some of the questions for the survivors of IPV were:

a) Can you please tell me about yourself? Did you attend school? Are you currently in a relationship?
b) Did you or any member of your family attend the Indian Residential School?
c) Please tell me about your experience with IPV.
d) Did you ever talk with your family or friend or anyone about the abuse? Did you seek support in the community?
e) Is there anything else you would like to share?

Some of the questions for the community representatives were:

a) What is your responsibility in the community? What is your educational level and training? Do you work formally with victims/survivors of IPV?
b) Does the community provide prevention and intervention programs for victims of IPV? Does the community run emergency shelters? How are funded these programs?

c) What changes in staffing, and funding would facilitate the work of your organization?

b) Data collection

A total of fifteen voluntary participants were interviewed over a period of seven months. All of them were current residents of Cross Lake. The participants were recruited and interviewed by the researchers with the assistance of the Pimicikamak Community Health Department. Out of the fifteen participants, only one withdrew from the study for personal reasons. The remaining fourteen participants included nine (9) victims/survivors of IPV and five community representatives and service providers. Most of the participants were women, employed, with complete or incomplete technical, college, or university education. The age of the participants ranged from mid-forties to mid-sixties (Table 1).

Table 1

Socioeconomic background of research participants

Participant	Age	Occupation	Education
Margaret	56	employed	Technical school/incomplete university
José	48	employed	Technical school
Josefina	56	employed	Technical school
Juana	47	employed	University degree
Mikisew Kapit	53	employed	Incomplete middle school
Elder Paul	n/a	employed	Technical school/incomplete university
Mariana	54	employed	Technical school/incomplete university
Sofia	42	employed	Technical school
Muriel	45	employed	Incomplete university
Camila	53	employed	Incomplete elementary school
Mario	67	employed	Incomplete university
Alejandra	47	employed	University
Estela	59	employed	University
Tania	45	employed	University

Note: With a single exception, names of participants listed in this table are pseudonyms.

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and checked four times for accuracy and then reviewed by participants. After carefully reading and re-reading each transcript, these researchers constructed a coding frame of common themes, sub-themes, and connectors contained in all the transcripts. The participants reviewed their transcripts and reviewed the analysis and interpretation of the transcripts for accuracy and confirmation. Then, the analytic themes were discussed and developed further by these researchers. Ultimately, the data collected generated the following three main themes: (a) IPV as an ‘everyday’ form of violence in the family and community; (b) IPV as a consequence of intergenerational abuse and trauma; and (c) confronting IPV in the face of dysfunctional family, community, and societal relationships (Table 2). These three main themes are linked to historical events and processes of colonization, social marginalization, gender discrimination, and educational and health inequities. All these factors have contributed to systemic IPV in the community.

Table 2

Main themes, sub-themes, and connectors that shape and define IPV in Cross Lake

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Connectors
• IPV as 'everyday' form of violence	▪ Systemic physical and emotional abuse in the family and community ▪ Widespread poverty and unemployment ▪ Discrimination, racism, and sexism ▪ Government and community neglect	○ Loss of identity ○ Isolation, fear, depression, shame, embarrassment, and humiliation ○ Low self-esteem ○ Power and control ○ Poor and crowded housing ○ Low socio-economic and educational status ○ Lack of shelter and support programs for victims of IPV
• IPV as consequence of intergenerational abuse and trauma	▪ Colonization ▪ Legacies of Indian Residential School ▪ Social isolation and lack of community connection ▪ Family disfunction	○ Loss of language, culture, traditions, livelihoods ○ Hopelessness and helplessness, ○ Lack of parental skills ○ Exposure to child maltreatment and sexual abuse ○ Alcohol and substance abuse ○ Suicidal ideation
• Confronting IPV in face of dysfunctional family, community, and societal relationships	▪ Inadequate government educational and health funding ▪ Inadequate spousal violence prevention and intervention programs ▪ Limited community capacity building	○ Victim/survivor resilience ○ Providing safe environment for victims/survivors of IPV ○ Strengthening positive community-family relations and networks ○ Promoting adaptive coping skills and well-being

Research Findings

The main results of this study are as follow: (a) IPV is a systemic problem in the community of Cross Lake; (b) women suffer more serious and repeated IPV than do men in the Cross Lake community; (c) despite community efforts to address IPV, underfunded, underrepresented, and inadequate prevention and intervention programs have further compounded the problem; and (d) survivors of IPV demonstrated a high level of resilience in the face of pain and suffering. Based on the comparative thematic analysis and interpretation of the data collected, these researchers identified IPV within the broader concept of structural violence, as defined by Galtung (1996). Structural violence embodied in social structures—economic, political, legal, religious, and

cultural—stops individuals, families, and communities from reaching their full potential. From the structural violence perspective, IPV cannot ignore the roles of larger social systems and institutions in the production and reproduction of interpersonal and collective violence. IPV is a significant health concern, as it negatively affects the physical and emotional well-being of the victim/survivor. Indeed, spousal violence can have a lifelong negative impact on the social and economic outcomes of the victims/survivors as well as have a negative impact on the social development of families and communities. What is even more troubling is the fact that spousal violence often occurs within the family home. This unfortunate situation exposes children to the negative consequences of spousal violence: they are unnecessarily exposed to the forceful physical, emotional, or verbal abuse inflicted by one parent on another parent. Thus, children who witness family violence are at serious risk of experiencing long-term physical and mental health problems (Adam et al, 2011; Kashani, & Allan,1998). Mikisew Kapit's story is particularly telling on this issue:

> I went through a lot of pain as a minor. IPV/spousal violence hurts me. I saw it when I was growing up. My mom never drank at all, but my dad did. My dad was a big man. When he drank, he was violent. He used to come home in the middle of the night and start beating up my mom for nothing. When he did that, I would take my siblings down the riverbank and go home when I thought the fighting had stopped. Sometimes I would go and hide in the bush. Sometimes my mom would manage to get away. I don't know where she used to go. Seeing my mom like that angered me. Seeing her go through that as a woman, made me angry. I would think "one of these days when I get bigger, I will protect my mom."[2]

IPV in Cross Lake is intrinsically linked to cultural dispossession, breakdown of traditional family and community relationships, systemic racism and sexism vilification, entrenched poverty, problematic substance use, and inherited grief and trauma. In most cases, the origins of these destructive social forces can be traced to the colonial and residential school experiences. IPV is one of the harmful legacies of the past that even today continues to impair healthy family and community relationships in Cross Lake (Hamilton & Sinclair, 1991).

a) IPV as an 'everyday' form of violence

IPV in Cross Lake is an everyday form of violence that touches the lives of its most members. IPV is also a greatly under-reported problem. Why would IPV victims report their cases to police authorities that they do not trust? Why would these victims report IPV when they feel that it is a 'normal' occurrence in the community? Why would IPV victims think that anyone cares or believe them if they did report it? Out of the fourteen IPV survivors interviewed, only one of them reported her case to the local police authority. The rest of the survivors gave different (but complementary) reasons for avoiding reporting their cases to the police. Some of these reasons included: personal embarrassment; fear of retaliation; economic dependency on the abuser; ineffective police intervention; wanting to maintain the privacy of the family; victim-blaming attitudes; and lack of understanding from support services. Even the IPV survivor who took the courage to report her case to the police did so reluctantly and as a last resort when she felt her life was at substantial risk from the abusive partner. This is Camila's story:

> I was trapped in a horrible physically and emotionally abusive relationship that lasted many years. I tried several times to get away from this situation, but I simply

[2] Interview with Mikisew Kapit (actual name) on June 14 and October 18, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> could not do it. Each time I tried to run away from home, my former partner would find me and bring me back home and hit me and beat me. He would say "you will not do that again." He implied by this that I could not run away from him. The way I was treated by him was very cruel. He tormented me and abused me all the time. He broke my heart. One day, he beat me and hit me in the chest so hard. I thought I was going to die. I couldn't catch my breath. I couldn't breathe at all. I think he almost killed me. I could no longer stay in this relationship. I had had enough of the abuse. I had to stop this relationship. One day when I ran away from him, he came to find me at my mom's home. He wanted me to go back with him, and I would not go. He pushed me to the ground and dragged me. This is when I decided to quit my drinking and my relationship. I had had enough. I went to report him abusing me. He was charged and went to jail.[3]

Stories such as Camilla's are not uncommon in the Cross Lake community. IPV is a manifestation of a much larger and deep-rooted problem facing the community: structural violence. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire says that structural violence condemns poor people to live under the 'Culture of Silence'—the condition in which they are powerless to reflect and act on their social situation (Freire, 1998; Robles, 2018). Likewise, internalized IPV condemns the victim to live under the culture of silence. Internalized violence infuses within the victim a submissive, suppressed, and dominated self-image. The victim perceives violence as a 'normal' occurrence in the private and public realms. This condition makes the victim incapable of understanding and changing his/her situation. Internalized violence is a consequence of several factors: entrenched economic conditions (widespread poverty and unemployment); poor housing conditions (living in unsafe and overcrowding conditions); traumatic childhood upbringing (witnessing domestic violence and experiencing physical and emotional abuse); dysfunctional family relationships (marital conflict or discord in the relationship); educational and health problems (low educational level of husband/wife and consumption of alcohol and drugs); restricted community life (lack of social and employment opportunities); and traumatic school experience (Indian Residential School). All these factors play major roles in the long-term process of internalization of IPV. Mario and Alejandra's stories illustrate the conditions conducive to internalizing IPV. This is Mario's story:

> I was raised by my grandparents. My mother died when I was born. This was a sad event for my family. My father was absent most of my childhood. He was an alcoholic. When I was a boy, I witnessed my family and extended family drink, get drunk and fight at the house when they visited us. I witnessed a lot of violence in my home and the community. Violence was everywhere and every day. It was sort of a 'normal' occurrence for me. I attended the Indian Residential School, and I experienced physical and mental abuse and trauma there. I became indifferent and numb to all forms of violence by suppressing my feelings. I felt loneliness, sadness, anger, fear, hurt, pain, hunger, and poverty. I drank alcohol to numb the hurt and pain of all that I witnessed. After the passing of my grandparents, I felt alone and abandoned. I had few friends. I was in so much pain I felt like I didn't want to live anymore. I became an alcoholic and abusive to my wife and others.[4]

[3] Interview with Camila on June 12 and October 11, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[4] Interview with Mario on June 14 and October 24, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

This is Alejandra's story:

> When I was a teenager, I met my husband. I think we were both troubled teenagers and we kind of got along and started going out from there. I got pregnant a year later. During the mid-1980s, there were a lot of suicides in Cross Lake. This affected both of us, as we lost some dear friends. My husband drank a lot and used drugs. As a result of his drinking, he could never stay permanently employed. I worked all the time. I always worked to provide for my children, for my family. When he lost his job, he stayed home with the children. It was at this time, I went to school, while the children were small. I was looking ahead for the future. IPV began about three years into the relationship. I was physically and mentally abused by my husband. I was traumatized with all the emotional, mental, and physical abuse I went through with him. I felt helpless, and useless because I felt like nobody cared about me. I was alone. I had nobody to talk to, nobody to turn to. I lived with my pain silently. It was at times like this, I felt like I didn't want to live because of what was happening. IPV slowed down when my sons became older and protective of their mother. Eventually, my husband left me and my children.[5]

These heartbreaking stories clearly illustrate the deep-rooted causes of IPV in the Cross Lake community. IPV is further compounded by the effects of systemic social and economic discrimination, and government and community neglect. It is true that IPV can be perpetrated against anyone, regardless of race, age, sex, religion, and social and cultural status. However, it is also true that Indigenous peoples in Canada suffer the most from spousal violence (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2016). The community of Cross Lake is not immune to this problem. The community suffers from the lack of social and economic opportunities and support programs for IPV victims. There is not a single safe house or short-term accommodation for women and children escaping violence at home in the Cross Lake community. Estela's story illustrates this situation:

> I was a single mother with two children when I met my husband in the late 1970s. We married two years after we met. I didn't have any children with my husband. He also didn't accept my children. It's a fact that I started to realize after fifteen years that I was physically and emotionally abused by my husband. The abuse started during our wedding night. He got drunk and beat me up. From this day on, my relationship with him became unhealthy. He was very jealous and did not want me to go anywhere at all. I could not go anywhere or visit anybody! He didn't provide anything for the house or for me, so I worked. I didn't have a safe place to go! Where would I go anyway? Physical and emotional abuse became part of my daily life for several years. My relatives and friends told me to leave my husband. I started school again to improve my employment skills. I missed many classes because of the beatings and embarrassment of my black eyes. One day, he came home and beat me up so badly that I ended up in the hospital. I couldn't even open my eyes. The cops were there because the nurse had called them. The cops took pictures of me. I was bruised up all over my body. I had to lift my eye lid to try to see. This was the time when I really started to think about what I was going through. One of the nurses said to me, "you should leave him, he's going to kill you." I

[5] Interview with Alejandra on June 26, and October 24, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> thought about it. I tried to go to my parents but each time I went back to him. Finally, I started fighting back to protect myself. The abuse continued. One day, I was badly beaten. That was it. I left him after fifteen years of abuse.[6]

Tania's story also illustrates the difficulties IPV victims face when escaping abusive relationships:

> I grew up in a single parent family, which was difficult. My grandparents both attended Indian Residential School that affected their parenting skills with stern discipline. My mother raised us with this same parenting and stern discipline, the only way she knew how. As I know it today, her discipline was abusive. The abuse in my relationship started when I first met my partner. I was in a very unhealthy relationship, thinking it was a normal relationship. The physical, mental, and psychological abuse got worse when I became pregnant. There was a time when I became extremely depressed. There was a time when I would have more than one mental breakdown because I could no longer cope with the abuse and my situation. I was struggling as a single parent on social assistance, and homeless. I tried to get help but there was no support in the community. I didn't have a place to go! I needed help, but I couldn't get help due to lateral violence. This situation caused more problems for me. I felt helplessness and I hit rock bottom. My situation was like my mom's situation. This explains why I was in and out of the relationship with my partner. I didn't know what a healthy relationship was because I never saw my mother in a relationship. I did not want to live like this, in an unhealthy situation. I knew there was a way out, and that was getting my education. I decided to leave my community and my partner. I left with my children. I went back to school and completed post-secondary education. This was the beginning of my own journey to healing.[7]

b) IPV as consequence of intergenerational abuse and trauma

IPV in Cross Lake is also affected by intergenerational abuse and trauma. Intergenerational trauma, or transgenerational trauma, is the process by which untreated trauma-related stress experienced by survivors is passed on to second and subsequent generations (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Intergenerational trauma is a consequence of Canada's past injustices against Indigenous people. Canada's cultural genocidal policies and practices such as the Indian Act, Indian Residential School, and the Sixties-Scoop collectively harmed Indigenous people. Systemic and continuing discrimination and stereotypes have further compounded intergenerational abuse and trauma experienced by Indigenous people (Voyageur, 1994). The consequences have been clear: loss of language, culture, and livelihoods; breakdown of traditional family and community structures and relationships; widespread cases of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; loss of traditional parenting and socializing skills; persistent poverty and alcohol abuse; and systemic violence in all its forms. The abuse and trauma inflicted upon Indigenous peoples were significant and continue to have an impact on Indigenous communities (Sotero, 2006; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Systemic IPV is one manifestation of these extended effects. Mario's story illustrates the sad legacy of the colonial and Indian Residential School:

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[6] Interview with Estela on June 27 and October 9, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[7] Interview with Tania on June 28 and October 24, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> My father forced me to attend residential school. He was not a good role model for me. When my father was drinking, he was violent and used to beat up his relatives and others. I was afraid of him. At the residential school, I experienced physical, sexual, mental, and emotional abuse. This is still vivid in my memory. The brother [priest], this tall man with thick glasses and a pipe, started coming around me. He would buy me drinks, candy, and other stuff. I didn't know why he was doing that until one day in the gym I discovered his bad intentions. He sexually molested me. I didn't know how to react; I didn't know what to do; I did not know what to think about it. Even though, I knew it was wrong. I wanted to tell my dad what happened, but he wouldn't believe me. He'd say to me "you just don't want to stay in school." I was ashamed; I was embarrassed. I suppressed all these emotions. I started drinking. I used alcohol to numb the hurt and pain. The physical and sexual experience at the school was a bad experience that is hard to forget.[8]

It is a pathetic irony of history that Canada's 1867 assimilation policy designed to transform Indigenous peoples from "savage" to "civilized" required savage and uncivilized methods to achieve its objectives. Canada's assimilation policy forced Indigenous parents to send their children to the residential schools, where they were prohibited to speak their language or observe and practice their spiritual and cultural traditions, teachings, and customs. Indigenous children did not see their parents and siblings for months and even years at a time. In Cross Lake, the St. Joseph's Residential School, a Roman Catholic residential school that operated in the community from 1908 to 1948, left a tragic legacy for the Pimicikamak Cree people.

Although only three of the research participants attended residential school, the impacts of the residential school experience are clearly marked in the lives of all the research participants in one way or another. The impacts were unconsciously passed on from generation to generation. Parents who were forced to send their children to the residential schools faced the devastating consequences of separation. Many of the children, such as Mario, suffered physical and sexual mistreatment. Abuse was compounded by a school curriculum that denied the children of their Indigenous languages and culture. All of this exacerbated the anger, shame, and alienation that were passed down to their children and grandchildren (Kolahdooz et al., 2015; Sotero, 2006; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Elder Paul's story illustrates how the effects of the Indian Residential School continues to permeate Indigenous communities even today:

> I witnessed and experienced physical and mental abuse at home and at school. I witnessed my mom being abused at home. I thought abuse was 'normal' in many circumstances. I had a lot of anger and shame because of what I witnessed and experienced at the residential school. I felt unwanted in my home. I felt unwanted in my community. I used to come home for my holidays in the summer and Christmas and I'd do nothing but drink a lot. One day I saw my stepdad beat up my mother. I couldn't understand all the abuse. And I told my stepdad at the time, "one of these days, I'm going to beat you up, when I'm all grown up, I'm going to beat you up." This eventually happened when I turned fifteen years old. He was beating up my mom. I grabbed him. I grabbed him and knocked him down. My mom pulled me away from him. I couldn't understand why my mom was defending him. I left

[8] Interview with Mario on June 14 and October 24, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> my community when I turned eighteen years old. Soon after, I was in an abusive relationship with my wife.[9]

c) Confronting IPV in face of dysfunctional family, community, and societal relationships

Although the Cross Lake leadership is aware of the seriousness and persistence of IPV in the community, it has faced enormous difficulties in dealing with the problem due to several factors beyond the control of the community. Some of these factors include limited resources to develop and promote coordinated responses to IPV. Like most other Indigenous communities in Canada, the community of Cross Lake does not have full autonomy to run its own affairs. Self-government is critically important for communities that want to contribute to and participate in the decisions that affect their lives. The absence of self-government restricts the capacity of Indigenous communities to make their own decisions on how to effectively respond to the intergenerational effects of abuse and trauma. The community of Cross Lake is one example of this depressed situation. Responses to IPV from agencies and services providers are inadequate and ineffective: prevention and intervention programs suffer from limited and uncertain federal government funding, shortage of locally trained and experienced counsellors, and underutilized Indigenous healing traditions and practices. This is the story of José:

> IPV in the community is a serious and widespread problem. There's a broad aspect of family violence in the community. I've seen husbands beating up wives and grown-up children assaulting their mothers or grandmothers. Physical violence is not just between husband and wife. Not at all. It can get really distressing, responding to calls for intervention coming from homes in the community. Sometimes, I would say to myself "we need to address IPV." I see a lot of big men, bigger than me, getting violent in their homes, abusing their partners, and traumatizing their children. I don't think there's a place for that in our lives and this is the reason why we remove abusers from homes. Abusers are violent because of their past. A point in question: why did this person do this to this person? Either stemming from the past, learned social experience, or because they do not know how to deal with anger. Abusers tend to consume too much alcohol. In fact, excessive alcohol consumption is the major cause of all sorts of violence in the community. Regrettably, we have limited funding to deal with the problem. If the government could provide more funding for programs, it would certainly help a lot to assist with the victims and abusers. Right now, many victims and abusers seek treatment outside the community in places like Norway House, Thompson, or Winnipeg because we do not have locally based programs to assist them.[10]

Margaret's story illustrates the importance of working with the whole family:

> I work with youth who want to go to an alcohol treatment centre. I also work with children and families. I do a lot of community volunteer work because I care about my community. I bring the family together through family gatherings and family feasts. These are important activities for the whole family. They bring the family together; they strengthen family bonds. Many of our families in the community do not have strong family bonds anymore. The community offers some programs to

[9] Interview with Elder Paul (real name) on June 24 and November 16, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[10] Interview with José on June 11 and October 12, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> deal with family violence. However, they are limited programs because of limited financial resources. It's always the cost, cost, you know, but we always try to help the victims as much as we can.[11]

In Cross Lake, the uncoordinated delivery of spousal violence prevention and intervention programs is evident in Josefina's story:

> I deal with a variety of violence cases, including family violence. IPV is among the variety of violence cases in the community. Although I grew up experiencing violence at home, I don't accept it, because it destroys relationships. It's hard to live with IPV. My own daughter got married and she suffered from IPV. It almost killed her. IPV ended her marriage. There's just too much IPV in the community. There are a few programs for victims of IPV in the community. However, I'm not sure who does what. The community justice office provides some support program for the victims. The justice office does not run emergency shelters for victims. I also don't know what sort of programs or shelters the Health Services Department provides for IPV victims. There is no interagency coordination for sure.[12]

Juana's story also illustrates the lack of support for IPV victims in the community:

> I do not work in any way with IPV victims. However, I am aware of the harmful consequences of it because I experienced IPV spousal in my own life. For me, it was hard to get out of that abusive relationship, because there was no support within the community. There was no safe place go. And because it was a small community, my partner would soon know where and with whom I was. Of course, my partner would come and find me, talk to me, and express remorse and apologize. I'd go back with him again. My relationship with my partner would be good for a while and then it would go back to that abusive relationship once again. It was hard to get away from this situation. I went through this sad experience for many, many years because there was simply no support for me in the community. Even today, I am not sure if there is any support for IPV victims. There is not even a shelter for them in the community. There is no funding for this.[13]

Other similar stories reinforce the view that the community of Cross Lake is ill-prepared to deal with IPV. This is Sofia's story:

> Family violence is a community issue. It is a widespread problem. Families that experience violence come to the child protection office for help and, in many cases, we don't have the resources to help all of them due to funding issues. Because we don't have shelters in the community, we refer serious cases to Norway House, Thompson, or Winnipeg. This is stressful, particularly for women and children. For male victims of IPV, the situation is difficult, or even worse: they do not receive any support at all. We tried referring them to shelters outside the community and we've been told many times that they don't take dads and their children in.

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[11] Interview with Margaret (real name) on June 8 and October 12, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[12] Interview with Josefina on June 11 and October 12, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[13] Interview with Juana on June 16 and October 24, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> Sometimes a hotel room is paid for so that the dad and the children are safe. However, this is a short term, temporary measure. Dads are left with the responsibility of finding another safe place to go. They seek safety in extended families, but it is difficult because a lot of the extended family homes are overcrowded. At times, there are three or four families living in a one- or two-bedroom house. This situation is unsafe specially for children. The community is always trying to find ways to tap into other resources within and outside the community to help the families, but it is often too difficult.[14]

This is Mariana's story:

> We have no shelters, no shelters for victims to go to. If a woman is a victim of violence and she wants to go to a shelter, she must call Norway House. And I've seen this: victims don't want to go to Norway House because they know their men know they are in Norway House; the family knows that they are in Norway House and it's easier for them to reach the victims there.[15]

The most telling case of the IPV crisis in the community of Cross Lake is describe by a health worker. This is Muriel's story:

> At a recent youth and Elder community conference on healing and wellness, many participants came with black eyes and bruises on their faces. There was this one young girl at the conference that did not take off her sunglasses the whole time we were there. It was as if she was saying that she was being abused by her spouse. There were other similar situations. I became convinced that they came to the gathering to get help! They didn't hide that. The sad truth is there is no support for them in the community. They don't tell anyone, they keep silent. In fact, I don't think there's any prevention or intervention programs in the community. I don't think there's any at all. Nothing. As you have seen, there is a 1-800 number only. That's all I've seen too. Nothing else, nothing about family violence prevention or intervention programs. We do not have any safe shelters for victims. No, we don't. There is none. We badly need shelters and programs to help the victims in the community.[16]

Despite the lack of support programs in the community, IPV victims do not easily succumb to their suffering: they often find creative social, cultural, and spiritual ways to recover from abusive relationships. Somehow, they find each other and learn to help each other. In most cases, victims begin their recovery process when their aggressor attempts to kill them or when they can no longer cope with the pain and suffering. The threat to their lives jolts them out of the state of immobility and propels them to search for help in informal social support networks. By individually and collectively reflecting and acting upon their lives, victims can gain the necessary inner force to overcome the culture of silence. This is Camila's story toward the journey of recovery and survival:

> I have shared my story with others many times. Sharing my story with other women victims has helped me. Women should get together to talk about their experiences;

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[14] Interview with Sofia on June 25 and October 11, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[15] Interview with Mariana on August 28 and October 18, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[16] Interview with Muriel (real name) on October 23 and October 24, 2018, in Cross Lake Manitoba.

> to talk about the abuse they have gone through; how they felt in abusive relationships. As I said, I was treated with such cruelty by my partner. He constantly beat me and abused me. One day he beat me up so bad that I thought I was going to die. I had had enough. When he pushed me to the ground and dragged me, this is when, I thought to quit, to quit what I was doing, to stop, to end my relationship with him. I had to end it. I also quit drinking. Today, I don't drink anymore. I have a different life. I made mistakes in the past and suffered from the consequences. I live peacefully now. I like who I am. I am happy now.[17]

This is Alejandra's story:

> There is a history of the intergenerational impact of residential school in my family. I was involved in an abusive relationship that lasted many, many years. I wanted a love relationship. I got into an abusive relationship. I suffered a lot. One day my husband violently wanted to get into the house where I was with my children. I wouldn't let him in. He started breaking all the windows. He tried to come in. I thought to myself "what am I going to do now, I can't let him come in. I can't let him come inside. I can't let him come inside. I must do something." I ran to the kitchen and grabbed a knife. He was already halfway into the house through the window. I knew what was going to happen if he came in. I grabbed the knife and stabbed him in the arm. He tried to hold me. I pulled out. I managed to phone the police. They came and took him away. From this time, I started fighting back. I started to get back my confidence. I didn't want to be in this relationship anymore. I was fighting back. Reflecting and acting on my situation helped me a lot to move on with my life. My education helped me with this.[18]

Many abusers also come to the realization that IPV is destructive of family relationships. As such, many of them consciously join the healing journey by connecting to available informal and formal support networks. They want to change their lives; they want to leave their past behind; and they want to discover their culture, traditions, and spirituality. This is Mario's story:

> I abused my wife, physically, emotionally, and sexually. I regret this now. I didn't' know how to be a good husband. One day, I had come from drinking and my wife wasn't home. I asked the kids "where's mom?" "I think she went drinking with some women." They replied. I went to look for my wife, but I didn't find her. She was out all night. I was sitting on the recliner, waiting for her to come in. That's when I did what I did. I grabbed my wife by her hair; I slapped her around until my oldest son stopped me and said, "dad, you're hurting her." Then something happened to me. I suddenly stopped. I totally lost it, that jealousy. I froze. I didn't move. The next day, the cops came and arrested me, I got thrown in jail. I stayed there three days. When I went back home, my wife was sitting there. Then I asked her, "Are you okay?" She said nothing. That's when I knew my marriage was over. After this, I was lost. I didn't care about anyone or anything anymore. All the anger

[17] Interview with Camila on June 12 and October 11, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[18] Interview with Alejandra on June 26, and October 24, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> was coming out now. I hated everything. I hated the white man; I hated the system. I was ashamed to be an Indian. I didn't even know my culture, my language. I did not know even who I was. I didn't know anything. I had so much anger and bitterness. I was at university at the time. I dropped out of school. Even though I did not complete my university, I learned a lot during the time I was there. Eventually, I quit drinking and started working in the community. I began my rehabilitation. I asked the Master [Creator] for help and that's when my healing journey started. I began with the twelve-step program. I discovered my culture, my roots, that's where I found myself. I found myself in my culture, who I was, a Cree man, a native man. For the first time in my life, I was proud of who I was. The drum, the beat of the drum, the heart and I danced. My body felt good, my mind, my spirit, everything. I wanted this life; I want this good life. I have worked on my issues, my childhood, my anger, shame, rejection, and alcoholism. I am now on good terms with my former wife and children.[19]

Deep wounds need to be healed. The first step in this process is to educate the Cross Lake community about IPV. In this respect, it is necessary to confront the prevalent view among many community members that women's actions are to blame for the problem. Mariana's story describes this perception:

> I have been working with women in the community for a long time and I've seen first-hand the problem of IPV against women. What I've come to see is this: we are still blaming women for being abused; that it's always their fault; that they did deserve it. This is one of the biggest problems that prevents women from coming forward, because they know they are going to be blamed for the abuse; that they did something to deserve it; that what happened to them was their own fault; that they shouldn't have been there; that they shouldn't have done that; that they shouldn't have drank; that they should have stayed home and it wouldn't have happened. No one ever talks about that the abuser had no right to violate the victim in any way. Some of the young ladies that I've worked with, they've come to see it as "oh! it's just part of the relationship." They've told me that it's normal and attempting to break the cycle of abuse is hard. Because how do you change the mindset of family members, who since nineteen hundred, have been taught in residential school that the man rules the household; that the house is his kingdom and, therefore, what he says goes? Women are men's property. We're property of men. And you know the other thing is when women are repeatedly beaten, and I've seen this time and time again, they will leave, they will go to a shelter, and they eventually come back home! And it is usually pressure from their own families, from the women of their own families, and another thing "your children need their dad," and "you have to work it out, you have to stay." If the family is Christian, the victims are told that the bible says, "till death do us part." In those cases, some of them have been beaten to a pulp where "till death" almost came true. That becomes part of it; it's that, the guilt of this book that holds them and it's been since residential school, the fact that the residential school was here, I think, has had more

[19] Interview with Mario on June 14 and October 24, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> impact than other communities that didn't have a residential school in their communities.[20]

The road toward the healing and recovery journey is paved with challenges and opportunities. The Cross Lake community leadership now has the difficult task of developing effective IPV prevention and intervention programs by challenging the whole community to take part in the process. These programs must mobilize available resources within and outside the community to promote coordinated responses to spousal and family violence that meet the cultural, gender, and spiritual needs of victims, survivors, and abusers. Working in partnership with outside institutions and organizations, the Cross Lake community has the potential to finding long-term resources to address family violence in all their forms. Encouraging the community to rediscover their culture, identity, and ceremonies are essential elements in this process. Community members need to hear Mikisew Kapit's story to understand the power of rediscovering one's culture in the healing process:

> When I was young, I spent a lot of time alone. I always thought that if one day an old man [traditional healer] came here, I would live with him so he could teach me who I am. So, a few years went by, I think I was sixteen or seventeen, an old man came to Cross Lake, he was an Ojibway, a traditional healer. I asked my mom and dad: "I want to live with that old man, I want to go and live with him." They talked with me and said, "go ahead, you'll be in good hands." So, I went. I learned about our culture, our traditional teachings, and our ceremonies. When the traditional healer passed away, I was lost. I started drinking to deal with my loss. I got married and I abused my ex-wife. IPV hurts me because I saw my mom being beaten and I did that to my ex-wife. I am not a violent person, but when I used to get drunk that's when I would become violent because I'd seen that when I was growing up. That's what drinking did to me. I'm sober now. I know who I am. I found me in my culture and ceremonies. I learned from the healer, and I found my culture here in the community like the healer said I would. I am happy, I am happy where I am. I am healing.[21]

This is also Elder Paul's story:

> For many years I struggled suppressing my anger and emotions. The hurt and pain I suppressed from the abuse in my home, in the Residential School, and with my ex-wife all turned into anger. I suppressed my anger. I internalized that hurt and pain. I felt isolated. I didn't know what to do. I eventually quit drinking. I was sober. I had that. But I had nothing. I was planning suicide. One day, I went behind the lagoon by the lake. I sat for an hour looking for a sign of why I was so angry, what God wanted me to do and, "what was my purpose in life?" and nothing. For over an hour I lay there. I was going to take my life. "I'm going to ask one more time." I was looking for a sign. Show me something. Tell me something. I looked at everything. This is why I went to the land. The land had energy; where there were medicines, rocks, water, nature's energy. I had sat for hours thinking, listening to the wind, the trees, watching and listening to the water. Then I saw a duck in the water. I watched it. What was it doing? It would dive and come up with seeds and

[20] Interview with Mariana on August 28 and October 18, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.
[21] Interview with Mikisew Kapit on June 14 and October 18, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

> let them go and he'd go back in again. What was it doing? Then it came to me. I understood what this duck was doing. He was repacking seeds. He was picking up seeds from under water and spreading them, letting them go when he came up. Spreading more seeds. Then it hit me. "That was my purpose, to spread my love, to spread my love unconditionally." I understood this message. That duck saved my life. This was the start of my being me, of who I was, of what I wanted to do. Because of the witchcraft stories there were instilled in me in the residential school scared me, I started going to sweats with my late grandpa, Johnston Blacksmith. He taught me about the sweat ceremony, his cultural teachings, and my grandmother's teachings. I found healing in my traditional cultural teachings. This is what I share, our cultural teachings. Now, I continue to share with everybody what happened. I have come to a point in my life today, that every day is a celebration. I go home and I've done my job well. I feel good about where I am, about who I am. We can heal ourselves through our belief in our culture and accepting who we are. Through my university counselling skills and my culture. I became a helper, then a trainer, now, helping people who come to me for help.[22]

Conclusion

Firstly, this study reinforces historical evidence that the negative effects of colonialism, racism, discrimination, and sexism have severely undermined the social, cultural, and spiritual fabric of Pimicikamak Cree Nation of Cross Lake, Northern Manitoba. Secondly, IPV in this community has roots in these harmful historical processes. IPV has been compounded by the intergenerational effects of the Indian Residential School experience. The appalling social conditions and family dysfunctions in these communities have created a predisposition to alcohol and drug abuse that has, sadly, continued to incite many forms of violence. The appalling consequences of the Indian Residential School experience continue to reverberate in the life of many members of the Cree Nation of Cross Lake. The intergenerational effects of violence and trauma have negatively affected family and community relationships in this community. Alcohol and substance abuse, transient lifestyle, homelessness, child abuse and neglect, poverty, unemployment, health inequalities, and gender violence are manifestations of this sad historical legacy. These factors continue to exacerbate IPV in the Cross Lake community. Systemic IPV in the community is a clear manifestation of the effects of intergenerational trauma. First Nations women suffer the most from spousal violence. That is, the health consequences of IPV are severe for women, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, phobias, panic, alcoholism, and substance addiction. Thirdly, despite countless Canadian government promises over the last decades to tackle IPV in Indigenous communities, the problem continues to persist today. In Cross Lake, IPV is one of the most serious issues affecting the community. IPV has had a devastating impact on the physical and phycological health and wellbeing of the victims: it has had a traumatic effect on their self-esteem, loss of self-identity, and socio-economic well-being. IPV has been compounded in the community by inadequate, underfunded, and underrepresented prevention and intervention programs. Current 'programs' are not meeting the basic needs of the victims and their dependents. The Cross Lake community does not have the financial and human resources to provide the victims with adequate services like transitional housing, trauma counseling, legal assistance, and coping skills. Fourthly, this study demonstrates that IPV survivors

[22] Interview with Elder Paul on June 24 and November 16, 2018, in Cross Lake, Manitoba.

possess a high level of resilience in the face of pain and suffering. They acquire through their own efforts survival skills and attitudes that help them to cope with stress, trauma, and suffering. Eventually, they adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, and stress. By developing their own survival skills and attitudes, IPV survivors are capable of 'bouncing back' from difficult and painful experiences. Yet, the path to resilience is often paved with physical pain and emotional grief. IPV leaves deep wounds in the body, soul, and spirit of the victims. Finally, this study encourages the promotion of community-based approaches to addressing holistically IPV in the community. The promotion of transformative community based IPV and intervention programs based on culturally and spiritually traditions of the Pimicikamak Cree Nation of Cross Lake. The community of Cross Lake must become a place where its members come together to weave together transformative responses to IPV. The community must become a place where its members can take control of their lives and reconstruct family and community relationships. Only when broken family and community relationships are repaired and healed will IPV cease to be a systemic problem in the community of Cross Lake. Cross Lake First Nations leaders and Elders must take the lead in mobilizing, organizing, and preparing the community to the challenge of IPV. Without their active and committed leadership, the community will continue to suffer from the physical pain and emotional strain caused by systemic IPV.

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