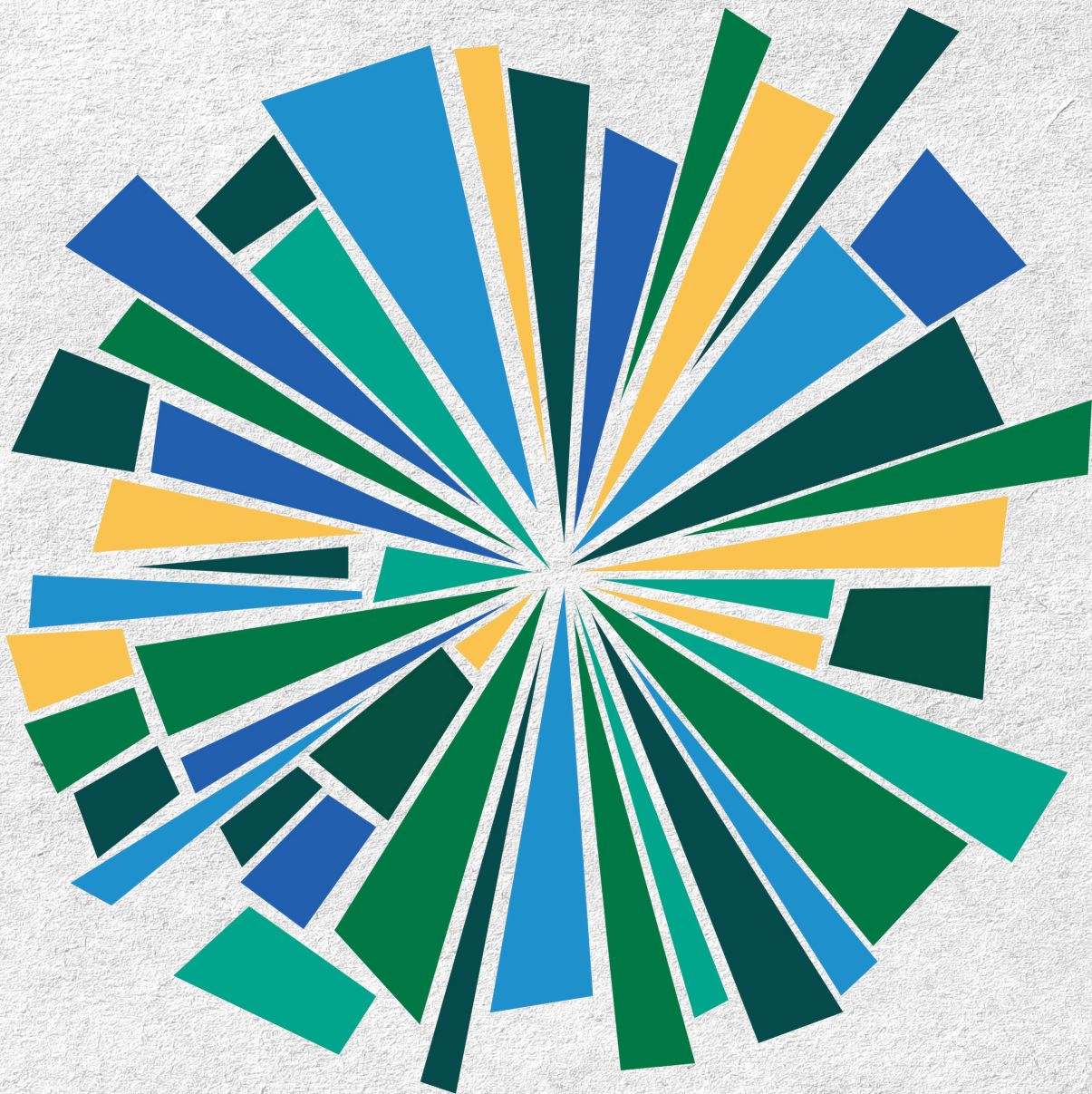


HEALTHY, SAFE AND VIOLENCE-FREE RELATIONSHIP:

Ethnocultural Voices on Intimate Partner Violence



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Acknowledgement

The Ethnocultural Council of Manitoba- Stronger Together (ECCM) would like to acknowledge that this report was developed on Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, and Nehethowuk Nations and the Homeland of the Red River Metis Nation, and that our water is sourced from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, Treaty 3 Territory. We would also like to acknowledge that our power is sourced from Treaty 5 Territory.

ECCM is committed to furthering our work in building bridges between newcomer and Indigenous communities through sharing knowledge with newcomers about Treaties, the history of colonization in Canada, and how that history relates to contemporary Indigenous realities of discrimination in this country.

ECCM would like to thank our funder Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada for their federal contributions which provided us with the opportunity to develop and build this report for the ethnocultural and settlement community.



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada

This report was developed in consultation with the following: Ethnocultural women and men, 2SLGTBQI+ Ethnocultural communities, youth, community leaders, settlement agencies, and service providers. Our gratitude goes to every individual who contributed to this report. Our hope is that we were able to reflect the voices and experiences in a way that the honours the community and paths a way forward. This report would not have been possible without the ongoing efforts of the writing team who contributed to the research and writing of this report, thank you Piper Larsen, Kathleen Vyrauen, Beatrice Maundu, and Carolyn Loeppky.

About ECCM

The Ethnocultural Council of Manitoba- Stronger Together (ECCM) Inc. is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that represents newcomers, immigrants, refugees in Manitoba with the aim to highlight the vital contribution that they make in the socio-economic and cultural vibrancy of our province.

ECCM is a grassroots initiative put together by a group of former immigrants and refugees who call Winnipeg home, along with a community of friends, supporters, and allies. The group, which represents more than thirty different communities, has come together to offer its first-hand knowledge, energy,

and support to facilitate integration and create civic space to enable newcomers, immigrants, and refugees, to generate collective knowledge, ideas, information, resources, strategies, and inspirations.

ECCM Objectives:

1. *Promote a better understanding, collaboration, and cooperation among newcomers, immigrants and refugees.*
2. *Work with community leaders, settlement agencies, public and private institutions to ensure that newcomers, immigrants and refugees integrate into their new home and have access to resources that improve their quality of life.*
3. *Foster and facilitate the capacity of ethno-cultural organizations in Manitoba to act in their own interest and become agents of change for their community.*
4. *Participate fully in community development and capacity- building.*
5. *Work to change inequitable policies and practices by contributing newcomer, immigrant, refugee voices and expertise.*



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Glossary of Terms:

Abuse: A behaviour that scares, isolates, or controls another person. Abuse may be a pattern or a single incident. Abuse includes the following forms: physical, sexual, psychological, financial, neglect.

Asylum Seeker: A person who has fled their country and is asking for protection in another country.

(Dis)Enfranchisement: the act of a government preventing a group of people from voting who are otherwise qualified to vote; or the removal of voting rights from a group of people who are otherwise qualified to vote.

Ethnocultural Community: Community or group is defined by shared characteristics unique to, and recognized by, that group. This can include characteristics such as ancestry, country of origin, cultural traditions, language, national identity and or physical traits. Sometimes encompassed by the term ethnocultural are groups that identify as ethnoracial or racialized.

Gender Based Violence: Refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms, it disproportionately impacts women, girls and Two Spirit, trans, and non-binary people.

GBA+: an analytical process used to assess how different women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs, and initiatives.

Immigrant: refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident of Canada. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenships by naturalization are included in this group.

Intimate Partner Violence: Intimate partner violence (IPV), also known as spousal or domestic violence, is a prevalent form of gender-based violence (GBV). It refers to multiple forms of harm caused by a current or former intimate partner or spouse. IPV can happen in many relationships, including: within a marriage, common-law or dating relationships; at any time during a relationship and even after it has ended; whether or not partners live together or are sexually intimate with one another.

Migrant: A person who is outside their country of origin. Sometimes this term is used to talk about everyone outside their country of birth, including people who have been Canadian citizens for decades. More often, it is used for people currently on the move or people with temporary status or no status at all in the country where they live.

Newcomer: is an immigrant who has been in Canada for a short time, usually less than five years. Newcomers have access to settlement agencies, such as those for language and employment.

Non-permanent Resident: is a person from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and now has a work or study permit or who has claimed refugee status (asylum claimant). Family members living with work or study permit holders are also included unless these family members are already Canadian citizens or landed immigrants or permanent residents.

Non-Citizen: a person who lives in Canada but has not yet gained the rights of citizenship, including the right to vote.

Permanent Resident: A person granted the right to live permanently in Canada. The person may have come to Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee. Permanent residents who become Canadian citizens are no longer permanent residents.

Person without status: a person who has not been granted permission to stay in the country, or who has stayed after their visa has expired. The term includes refugee claimants who have not removed from Canada because of a situation of generalized risk in the country of origin. You may also hear... "illegal migrant/illegal immigrant/illegal/alien" these terms are problematic as they criminalize the person rather than the act of entering or remaining irregular in a country.

Introduction

In 2018, the United Nations reports that nearly one in three women have been "subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence or both" (World Health Organization, 2024). Two years after the report, in March of 2020, the world was hit by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic created serious conditions that caused prolonged isolation, in which individuals and families were required to remain at home and indoors. As a result, there was a reduction in the access to social services and employment, a reduction in cultural/religious events, in-person appointments, school and after school programs, and a realization that "for some people, home was not a safe place to be" (Cooper et. al, 2020).

Among ethnocultural communities in Manitoba, many were seeing emerging themes of intimate partner violence throughout this time. ECCM therefore sought out funding to do further research on the topic, to understand what current resources exist and what research has been done on this topic. With

funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada - Women's Program, ECCM began the Healthy, Safe, and Violence-Free Relationship (HSVFR) project. This project supports a feminist response and recovery from the current impacts of COVID-19 through systemic change. In the first stage of the project, ECCM reviewed and analyzed Provincial, Federal, Municipal and community organizations laws, policies, and services along with funding distributions related to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). In the second part of the project, ECCM facilitated 30 conversations with 30 different ethnocultural communities, to understand directly from community what unique needs must be met and addressed to combat intimate partner violence. Lastly, in the third and final part of the project, ECCM has continued to build stronger partnerships with immigrant and refugee communities in Manitoba, which includes developing and sharing resources about IPV with ethnocultural communities and with service providers that support ethnocultural communities.

Executive Summary

The focus for the Ethnocultural Councils of Manitoba's Healthy, Safe and Violence Free Project (The Project) which was funded by the Government of Canada, WAGE Program, was to learn about the effect the COVID-19 pandemic had on ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities in Manitoba, with a focus on Intimate partner violence. World-wide, these conditions led to an increase in incidents of intimate partner violence, and negatively affected the building of healthy relationships.

Methodology and Limitations:

Information for this report was collected from existing literature, provincial and federal governments, community-based entities, consultations with women, men, youth, 2SLGBTQI+, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and from community knowledge building sessions.

The Project was interested in gathering information related to four major topics of Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence. The intent was to secure information as it relates to the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee community in Manitoba and included the following areas of inquiry:

1. Data Collection and Information Systems,
2. Policies and Laws,
3. Programs and Service, and
4. Funding.

Information collection was hampered by several factors:

1. Information in Manitoba, with a focus on the target communities for the project was limited. System information is not available, is not collected in accessible formats, and is not disaggregated. This often limited the ability of the project to collect information specific to the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee populations in Manitoba.
2. Organizations were recovering from the pandemic, and at times staff members who may have been more knowledgeable about programming for domestic/intimate partner violence were not available due to staff changes or high workloads post pandemic.
3. Formal systems for coordination, planning and implementing programs, and policies for the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee communities on the topic of domestic/intimate partner violence are not evident, and as a result, information gathering was hampered.
4. Individuals the Project was able to connect with based on networks, do not necessarily represent all the voices of that a particular community. Within certain ethnocultural communities there are different subgroups that identify themselves separately through their values, traditions, language, and culture.

Information Collection :

Governments, Community service providers, non-governmental funders, community members:

Interviews with service providers, funders, both governmental and non-governmental were conducted. Ten (10) interviews were completed. Prior to contact with the organizations, a search was conducted to gather information about the organizations current programming and funding. Recent updates in the form of new releases, annual reports and /or other types of reports were reviewed.

Semi structured interviews were completed by preparing a customized set of guiding questions for each discussion. Throughout 2022, ECCM set out to have consultations with 30 different ethnocultural communities and the respective community members. The team utilized the list of community leaders and member organizations within ECCM's network to send out preliminary emails explaining the project, the target audience, time, location, and provided an honorarium. A brochure of the project was then developed for each community in the respective language. In total, 21 languages

were translated into brochures and distributed to communities. In total, this project had the opportunity to speak with 21 ethnocultural women's groups. Consultations were also held with youth, seniors, 2SLGBTQI+¹, community members, individuals with disabilities and lastly, given the feedback from women to have conversations with their spouses, we had the ability to have three male consultations. Each consultation had a PowerPoint presentation which provided key definitions and information and guiding questions for participants. In total, there were 30 conversations with 30 different ethnocultural communities and we had the opportunity to speak with 281 individuals. Of the 30 conversations, several were done with our secondary target groups including rural Manitoba, 2SLGBTQI+², men, seniors, youth, and individuals with disabilities.

The project partnered with Aurora Family Therapy, Immigrant Women's Counselling Services of NorWest Coop Community Health and Immigrant Centre, SEED Winnipeg Inc., and Safe Housing and Direct Empowerment (SHADE). A total of 10 Community Engagement sessions were organized as part of this partnership.

Learnings and Observations:

The opportunity to learn from existing literature, having direct interaction with funders, policy makers, service providers and members of the diverse communities consulted, provided significant information providing greater insight to the issue of Intimate Partner Violence. This reflection has been documented as our Learnings and Observations, which led to the recommendations that are presented in this report.

Information and Data Collection Observations

1. Comprehensive and disaggregated data is not available in Manitoba. Data that would identify race, gender, sex, ethnicity, age, disability, occupation, socioeconomic stats, migratory status, or geographic location is not readily accessible or available.

¹ This acronym represents an array of diverse sexualities and gender identities. The identities listed by letter are: Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Intersex. The + represents questioning folks and others who may not have their unique identities named in the acronym itself, making space for fluid and hybrid identities and for self-identification within the broader queer community.

² It is important to note that one of the groups that identified as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community was attended by predominantly Indigenous community members. We understand that they are outside of the target group for this project, however we found that the conversation aided in understanding that there are definite parallels between their experiences and that of the Ethno-Queer community.

2. Two major programs within the Government of Manitoba, the Manitoba Status of Women Secretariat, The Family Violence Prevention Program and the Justice Departments Victim Services Programs do not track service-user ethnicity.
3. Manitoba indicates that it is using a "whole of Government" approach to the issue of domestic/intimate partner violence. As this system evolves, it may have the effect of improving and expanding on the collection of statistics and information generally used to make funding, service, and policy strategies and priorities when it comes to the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee communities.
4. Data collection in Manitoba should follow the United Nations (United Nations Women and World Health Organization, 2020) guiding principles and recommendations for data collection to ensure women and girls safety. Principles must be informed by the socio-economic and environmental realities of women and girls, with "doing no harm" being the highest priority.

Policy and Laws Observations

1. Laws that enforce zero tolerance for domestic violence can provide the legal framework for the prosecution of those who engage in domestic violence and provide greater confidence to victims that they have protections in law. Manitoba's position in law is that of zero tolerance.
2. The application and impact of the law can be limited by the number of individuals that report domestic/intimate partner violence, and as most literature indicates approximately only thirty (30) per cent of individuals report domestic to the police. This limits what the law can do.
3. Laws, both federally and provincially, have been amended to strengthen approaches. In addition, laws not specific to the crime of domestic abuse are also adjusted to better support victims of domestic/intimate partner abuse.
4. Canadian federal and provincial laws may not be fully understood by new immigrants and refugees due to language barriers.
5. Experiences with the law in home countries and the position or status of men in the culture of the homeland can affect how a woman may view her ability to report a spouse for domestic violence.
6. The law, and the application of the law, can be experienced as very complex, time intensive and costly. For a new immigrant or refugee understanding and navigating this system can be intimidating and frightening.

7. Utilizing a legal approach to the prosecution of an individual who has committed domestic violence can place a spouse in a significantly difficult position regarding shelter, finances, relationships with extended family and community, and with custody of children.
8. Both Canada and Manitoba have articulated policy frameworks. These can be viewed as a good first step, however, a significant amount of work and resources continue to be required, especially with a focus on the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee community.
9. The focus on action for the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee communities are hard to gauge in these policy frameworks as information and data is rudimentary and actions tend to be more generic in nature.
10. The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth special report (Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, 2022) is ground-breaking, and while specific data related to the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee communities is limited, the report can provide important direction and guidance on the impact of intimate partner violence to children and youth.

Programs and Services-Observations

1. Manitoba has an array of programs and services that are available to support all women experiencing intimate partner violence, the number of programs designed specifically to address women from the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee communities is limited.
2. While Manitoba has several programs for men who are abusers or have been abused, the number of programs is very limited and small.
3. Government strategies, and program reviews and submissions to governments talk about the need for community involvement and participation in addressing the issue of intimate partner violence. Community leadership and ownership of prevention initiatives is key, so community groups need to be involved in the design and evaluation of initiatives. (Funding for specific initiatives should consider this principle).
4. The Project would concur with the recommendation made in September 2016 by MANSO in their submission In September 2016, to the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women, that inclusive approaches across gender and generations, with an emphasis on dialogue, and strong support of youth participation in program planning, implementation, and evaluation, as well as in policy development is essential.
5. With over 30 different cultures in the Manitoba ethnocultural community, there is a strong need to understand each of these communities so that programs are helpful and utilized. Understanding the culture, and building relationships and communities of support, can lead to

increased disclosure of intimate partner violence and utilization of programs to support individuals and families. Program and service design needs to take this into account.

6. Knowledge building regarding programs available and supports to navigate the array of programs is essential for individuals experiencing intimate partner violence.
7. Manitoba has a significant amount of information from reports and research that have recently been undertaken. While many of the research reports are not specific to the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee community they can be a valuable resource in developing a framework for further work in service and program design that would lead to more culturally acceptable services and supports.
8. In a limited number of programs, the need for multiple languages of service is recognized, however, this is still very limited.
9. There is a need for increased outreach, prevention programming, and language specific capacity for the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities in building healthy relationships and families.
10. The majority of programs and services offered are designed for individuals who have reported intimate partner violence to the police, or who have decided to leave their partner.

Funding Observations

1. Funding for services and programs in the domestic/intimate partner violence sector is primarily provided by governmental sources and has remained static over time.
2. The provincial funding model for the provision of services has most recently been modified with some additional funding which advocates say is a good first step.
3. Due to the lack of disaggregated data, the allocation of resources for the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee community cannot be articulated.
4. The informal nature of communication between funders, can provide some guidance to the needs within the community, however, with a more formalized structure be in place, greater scrutiny to the needs of the community and potential opportunities would be enhanced. An example of this is the commitment and funding resources provided by multiple funders for the Family Resource Centers operated in Manitoba.
5. The information presented shows that many community-based organizations require multiple funders to provide services. The application process to secure resources, write proposals, manage the multiple resources, and the reporting and accountability requirements all requires a significant amount of time and energy for organizations.

Community Consultations and Community Engagement Observations

1. While short term funding for projects can provide an immediate response to issues, the start and stop nature of this type of funding gives hope and an immediate kick start to programs. It is also difficult for organizations and the community, as it requires constant grant funding applications and projects start and stop without being able to reach the momentum to make genuine changes for members of a community.
2. The nature of the topic, for the target communities that the project worked with was extremely difficult, as it is for many communities. The importance of maintaining confidentiality cannot be overstated and the Project had to take significant steps during the consultation phase to ensure confidentiality of individuals and the conversations that occurred.
3. The Project was grateful that honorariums for participants were an eligible expense. While this was a small gesture, it helped to communicate to participants that their contributions and time were very valued and important to the Project.
4. The ability to communicate in one's first language cannot be understated. The Project would not have been able to secure the depth and breadth of information from participants without being able to secure translations, interpreters, documents that reflected the language groups that were consulted.
5. While community leadership and community organizations were very helpful in providing assistance in contacting individuals for consultations, it also narrowed the potential field of participants.
6. The Project recognized that intimate partner violence is pervasive in many populations and that information from multiple communities is important and valued. For this reason, the project consulted with provincial and federal governments, community-based entities, women, men, youth, 2SLGBTQI+, seniors, individuals with disabilities.

Recommendations

Program and Services-Recommendation

1. It is recommended that further funding be allocated to ensure that culturally appropriate resources are provided to community, including translation of materials and on-site interpretation.
2. Domestic violence shelters are a key site where newcomer, immigrant, and refugee survivors may encounter systemic barriers while in crisis. It is recommended that the domestic violence

shelter model be assessed to determine alternative approaches for use by ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee women, when an alternate living accommodation is needed. An emphasis must be placed on ensuring shelters are culturally informed and gender inclusive.

3. It is recommended that ECCM continue to advocate for awareness raising and engagement with men and boys to have active conversations about reducing and ultimately stopping intimate partner violence, including a shift in culture norms.
4. It is recommended that there is an increased awareness and information of the impacts of intimate partner violence on children and families to expand our understanding of the harms caused to children witnessing violence. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that practices are culturally based. Partnership with the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth should be made to secure resources to develop training modules for organizations serving ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities to increase awareness regarding the impact of intimate partner violence on children who witness it.
5. It is recommended that vicarious trauma trainings are supported and implemented to ensure that service providers remain effective in their interaction with ethnocultural communities.

Information and Data Recommendations

1. It is recommended that ECCM communicate with the Government of Manitoba to express the importance of having disaggregated information and data. As a component of Manitoba's "whole of government approach" to intimate partner violence, it is recommended that a comprehensive and accessible data system be developed and be accessible to governments and non-governmental entities. Data needs to be disaggregated, and categories included need to be race, gender, sex, ethnicity, age, disability, occupation, socioeconomic status, migratory status, and geographic location. In addition to collecting data, as outlined in *COVID-19 Pandemic Guidelines for Mental Health Supports of Racialized Women at Risk of Gender-based Violence* (Khanlou N. S., 2020) consideration needs to be given to:
 - a. fieldwork tools that are more diverse with sensitive questions,
 - b. the depth of questions to capture the lived realities of survivors.
 - c. the recognition that women's experiences of violence are influenced by their social locations and identities (often referred to as relatedness and intersectionality)
 - d. openness and transparency, openness to different ways of thinking and respectful of diversity, plain and friendly language along with open ended questions, and

- e. promoting inclusive approaches to data collection and building partnerships and collaborations that are meaningful.

Policy and Laws-Recommendations

1. It is recommended that ECCM take a leadership role in working with provincial government departments, to assess how the Manitoba Framework 2020, can benefit the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities.
2. It is recommended that ECCM and the Provincial Government have an ongoing partnership which can establish a role for ECCM in the development of the bilateral agreement for Manitoba so that the Manitoba Bilateral Agreement can address needs in the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities.
3. An ECCM working group to be established so that each existing framework, Federal and Provincial, be reviewed to determine how the action areas can be designed to serve the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities.
4. Relevant information regarding the law be translated into multiple languages so that basic information regarding the law and domestic violence is accessible to individuals where language is a barrier.
5. ECCM convene a biannual forum with community-based service organizations to gather information regarding community needs around domestic/intimate partner violence, and to share this information with government and funding bodies, and community leadership, with the aim of improving planning and evaluation of policy and programs and identifying gaps.

Funding Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the ECCM- ST continue to apply for grants from the Federal, Provincial, and non-governmental sources to continue highlighting the serious situation of domestic/intimate partner violence, and to develop information, tools, and program designs that mainstream programs could benefit from in their work with the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities. It is recommended that these short-term approaches be utilized to encourage the development of better information and data systems, and to encourage increased funding sources to be directed to the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee communities, especially with the anticipated increases expected in these populations.

Environmental Scan

Newcomer Lens

In March 2018, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council issued a report on the status of women in Manitoba. Dr. Jeanette Montufar, the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council Chair notes that the council "pays close attention to the experiences of women who face barriers to full equality because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or family status" (Manitoba Government, 2018).

The intention of the 2018 report was to highlight Manitoba's progress in women's equality by commenting on the issues mentioned in the quote above. The broad categories of reporting included education, employment, health, and violence against women. In the report, 29 indicators were identified. Six of which had data from 2016 available for newcomer women, however, no data after 2016 was available for any of the indicators (Government of Manitoba, 2018). This reinforces the need for a more robust and organized system of collecting and analyzing information and data that can be used to help inform governments and non-governmental organizations in their planning, program design, and implementation. The evaluation of policies, programs, services, and funding for newcomer women and visible minority women could be greatly enhanced with a more comprehensive set of data.

Two years prior, in September 2016, the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Service Organizations (MANSO) submitted a brief to the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The brief presented information about violence against young women and girls in Canada. It provided a description of the situation in Winnipeg which to this date is still relevant:

Over the years, we have learned that gender-based violence for newcomers settling in Winnipeg is the result of – or exacerbated by – many socio-cultural and individual factors, including gender inequality, experiences of violence pre-migration, adaptation stresses, sudden role changes in families, perception of changes in gender status and privilege (i.e., women "taking advantage" of women's rights, and protection by the law) and actual changes in gender status (i.e., men being negatively affected by downward socio-economic mobility, including job status loss and/or under-employment). Manitoba Association of Newcomer Service Organizations, 2016).

The MANSO brief identified several areas of specific concern, including:

1. A lack of culturally appropriate family violence/counseling services
2. For some women, the perception of violence as normalized
3. Fear of community backlash on reporting or speaking publicly about violence
4. An increased incidence of street harassment of Muslim women and women of colour

5. Hesitance to disclose or seek help for violence due to being afraid to shame the family or get the perpetrator in trouble with the law.
6. An increase in the use of technology in exerting power and control over women and girls

MANSO therefore concluded that gender violence towards newcomer women and girls was pervasive, within and outside of immigrant and refugee communities.

Shadow Pandemic

In December 2020, the Manitoba Government released *Manitoba's Framework: Addressing Gender-Based Violence* (Government of Manitoba, 2020). This framework recognized that COVID-19 had, and continues to have serious impacts on families along with the significant impacts of gender-based violence. The Chair of the Manitoba Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet, Cathy Cox indicated that, "Manitoba has some of the highest rates of gender-based violence, and their impacts are broad and far-reaching" and "the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need for coordinated, concrete action to support those who are vulnerable to or are experiencing gender-based violence" (Government of Manitoba, 2020).

In June 2022, the Manitoba Department of Families provided ECCM with a description of their understandings of the effect of COVID-19 on ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee families as follows:

COVID-19 has had profound effects on families, especially immigrant families. Immigrant and refugee families represent jobs that have a greater exposure to the virus subjecting these individuals to becoming higher risk for contracting the virus. Studies also found that COVID-19 might have adverse effects on the employment gap for immigrant and refugee families, which was improving prior to the pandemic. These families have experienced great financial challenges as 55% of newcomers to Canada struggled negatively to meet financial obligations opposed to non-immigrants (26%). Specifically, one study found that immigrant women were affected the most by COVID-19.

Media headlines and news across the country, across Manitoba and around the world demonstrates the serious effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on society, in particular vulnerable populations. Reports from within Manitoba have also cited that, for many, home has not been a safe place. This increase in domestic/intimate partner violence is seen as a "shadow pandemic." Many advocate that intimate partner violence has been recognized and treated as a public issue. In the public media, as is evident from the headlines below, we can see that there is a heightened awareness of the link between COVID-19 pandemic and intimate partner violence.

The severity of the situation and the significant, heartbreaking effect of intimate partner violence has been shown in the media and in many reports, including the 2020 Winnipeg State of the Inner-City Report. The report notes that “by the time Manitoba declared a State of Emergency and stay-at-home order, it was clear to policymakers that for some people, home was not a safe place to be” (Cooper et. al, 2020). They continued by noting that on a provincial and federal level, requiring people to stay home and limiting one’s ability to engage with “the outside world” (i.e. school, work, cultural/religious events), would increase “the risk and severity of intimate partner violence and child abuse” (Cooper et. al, 2020). It was at that point that the federal government allocated \$50 million across the country for domestic violence shelters, including rural and northern communities. However, while the funds were duly needed, frontline staff in Winnipeg³ noted that the use of domestic violence shelters went down during the early months of the pandemic. The use of shelters went down due to a fear of contracting COVID-19 in communal settings, lack of transportation to get to shelters, fear of public transportation and a lack of opportunity to flee one’s home (Cooper et. al, 2020). However, what did increase during this time were calls to crisis lines. What did not increase however, was funding to support these crisis lines (Cooper et. al, 2020).

Policies and Laws

Manitoba has a zero-tolerance policy for domestic violence, and the Government of Manitoba is on record indicating a "a whole of government" approach to the issue of intimate partner violence. The "Zero-tolerance" policy means that once law enforcement is called, decisions going forward are made by law enforcement, not the individual who reported the abuse and was the victim of abuse. The Department of Families explained (in Summer 2022), that a "whole of government approach focuses on collaboration and coordination across departmental boundaries. The goal of using a whole of government approach is to create comprehensive resources and seamless services to enhance communication and the decision-making process. This collaboration also ensures all levels of government are engaged in partnership with one another and the community (Government of Manitoba, 2022)."⁴

³ Frontline organizations contacted included New Journey Housing, West Central Women’s Resource Centre, Klinik and North End Women’s Centre.

⁴ Description taken from Department of Families June 2022 response to questions asked, "Do you have a description of the "whole of government approach" that is referred to, and any specific action that has been a result of this approach?"

The government of Canada is also on record as having a whole of government approach to address domestic violence/intimate partner violence. Work on developing strategies to address domestic Intimate Partner/Gender-based violence has been occurring in the Province of Manitoba and also with the government of Canada. It would appear *that Manitoba's Framework: Addressing Gender-Based Violence, December 4, 2020* (Government of Manitoba, 2020), released by the Manitoba Governments Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet (GBVCC), is an overarching umbrella framework for the government's response to designing and implementing policy, funding, and legislative approaches to intimate partner violence.

The Manitoba Framework 2020 was developed using a stakeholder engagement process in October 2020. In addition to stakeholder engagement, the engagement process involved a synthesis of recommended actions from other recent government consultations, stakeholder meetings, and other government strategies. A list of 12 individual strategies and reports are identified as having contributed to the engagement process (Government of Manitoba, 2020).

In the Engagement Report (Government of Manitoba, 2020) there are a limited number of references to the newcomer population. The Engagement Report was used to design Manitoba's Framework: Addressing Gender-Based Violence, released on December 4, 2020. The 2020 Manitoba Framework has approximately 87 action areas, in the areas of prevention, support, and intervention. The Framework commits to measuring progress by establishing short, medium, and long-term target metrics to determine whether the goals of the Framework are being achieved. The Department of Families, in June 2022, provided ECCM with two program examples that were developed as part of the 'whole of government' approach (Government of Manitoba, 2022). They are as follows:

Example 1: The whole of government approach is mentioned specifically for mental health and addictions support. "For this context, the whole of government approach would be used to collaborate and discuss across all levels of government along with the community on how to initiate and provide support for those with mental health and addictions. This means that the Department of Mental Health and Community Wellness could lead particular initiatives but would develop them in partnership with relevant government departments."

Example 2: Another example of the Manitoba government's whole-of-government approach is "the \$6.4 million in funding through the Victims Assistance Fund which went to organizations that offer support to victims of crime. Colleagues from relevant departments within the government worked collaboratively to support Manitoba Justice Victim Services in developing criteria for the funding, issued the call for proposals and finally, reviewed applications. The use of the whole-of-government approach for this project ensured that numerous key government priorities identified in the Framework were addressed. It also ensured that the projects selected enabled victims of crime to receive a range of community-based support. "

The Government of Manitoba's Victim Services program, housed in the Manitoba Department of Justice, identified several activity priorities in the areas of information, service, translation, and training to support the Ethnocultural, Immigrant and Newcomer populations in *Manitoba's Framework: Addressing Gender-Based Violence* (Government of Manitoba, 2020). Specifically in the summer of 2022, it was noted that the following are being prioritized (Government of Manitoba, 2022):

1. enhancing the variety of public materials developed by the Victim Services branch to be available in several languages.
2. supporting community-based agencies that work with victims of crime.
3. ensuring Protection Order Designate training is accessible for community-based service providers.
4. supporting Victim Services service-users with translators when seeking services from the branch, if required; and supporting victims of intimate partner violence seeking Protection Orders with translators, if required.

In June 2017, the Government of Canada released the federal strategy *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* (WAGE, 2017), as the federal government's response to gender-based violence. Like Manitoba's 2020 Framework, this Federal strategy, 2017-2023, also identifies a 'whole of Government' approach to addressing gender-based violence, and specifically identifies that the Strategy will fill gaps in support for immigrant and refugee women. The intent of the Strategy is to reduce gender-based violence, and improve health, social, and justice outcomes for individuals who have experienced gender-based violence. Two annual reports, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 have been published, providing updates on the Government of Canada Strategy (WAGE, 2017). The Strategy is coordinated through the GBV Knowledge Centre where strategy coordination, research, progress reporting, and knowledge mobilization occurs, including participation in data generation through collaboration in national surveys.

More recently, in November 2022, federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for the Status of Women agreed to a Framework for Joint Action for a 10-year National plan for a Canada free of gender-based violence (WAGE, 2023). Other important national strategies for combatting GBV include the *Roadmap for the National Action Plan on Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence, A Report to Guide the Implementation of a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence* released by Women's Shelter Canada in April 2021 (Dale, Maki & Nitia, 2021).

The intention of Bilateral Agreements between Women and Gender Equality Canada and the Province would be to support the implementation of the Federal Framework for Joint Action.

This Framework for Joint Action has 100 policy actions. It recommends an “all of government approach” and a 10-year implementation horizon. Policy issues to be addressed include the following:

1. enabling environment and social infrastructure,
2. prevention,
3. promotion of responsive legal and justice systems,
4. support for survivors and their families, and
5. responses to the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

While many of the action areas are considered to be positive, it appears that there are no mechanisms for governments to implement the actions, no timelines or priorities, and no new funding. There is also not an articulated monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) framework.

Recently, June 2022, the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth released a special report related to children and youth exposed to Intimate Partner Violence. This report, *Every Two Hours: A Special Report on Children and Youth Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence in Manitoba* provides an in-depth view of intimate partner violence and the impact on children (Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, 2022). The report, on page 28, provides the following findings:

1. "Over a period of one month in Manitoba, there were 1,943 police-reported cases of intimate partner violence (IPV); this translates to one police-reported incident every 20 minutes.
2. Of those incidents, 342 (18%) were witnessed by at least one child or youth under the age of 18 years old. This means every two hours a child was exposed to a police-reported intimate partner incident in Manitoba.
3. In the majority of incidents, the victim was female (85%) and the accused was male (84%).
4. Less than half (48%) of the incidents resulted in criminal charges."

The report provides a great deal of valuable information and research, as well as seven recommendations to better support and serve children and youth exposed to intimate partner violence. The report has one section that has a specific reference to newcomers. Three interviews of Community Workers provided information regarding issues related to newcomers.

Canadian Laws:

The Canadian Criminal Code does not contain a specific offence of family violence, however, there are specific offences which prohibit many behaviours that fit within this category of harm. These include offences related to the use of physical and sexual violence, offences related to some forms of psychological or emotional abuse within the family that involve using words or actions to control, isolate, intimidate or dehumanize someone, and occurrences related to financial abuse. There are also

legal provisions designed to protect victims, and special consideration is given to harm that results from family violence (Criminal Code Section 718.2, aggravating factor for sentencing purposes), that provide tools for crimes involving family violence.

Both Federal and Provincial laws are applicable to domestic and intimate partner violence. These laws are used for those cases that come to the attention of law enforcement. It is generally felt that only 30% of spousal abuse cases come to the attention of the police, so in many incidents, the law is not able to support and protect individuals who have experienced domestic and or intimate partner violence. In Manitoba, the *Domestic Violence and Stalking Act* forms the basis for protection to victims of family violence. The provincial statutes complement the Canadian Criminal Code.

In addition to the passing of Bill C-86, the federal government has passed the following laws:

On June 21, 2019, the federal government passed Bill C-75 and it came into law. It is designed to enhance victim safety and toughen criminal laws in the context of intimate partner violence. This new law clarifies that abusing a current or former partner in the commission of an offence is an aggravating factor for sentencing and allows for higher penalties in cases involving repeat offenders of intimate partner violence. In addition, Bill C-75 includes amendments that will facilitate human trafficking prosecutions.

Programs and Services

Manitoba has two government departments, the Department of Families and the Department of Justice, which have significant responsibilities in addressing issues of domestic/intimate partner violence. The Minister of Families has responsibilities for the Manitoba Status of Women Secretariate, the Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet, The Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP), and for Child and Family Services.

The Manitoba Government's Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet released the document *Manitoba's Framework: Addressing Gender-Based Violence* (December 2020).

The Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet was established in December 2018 to ensure collaboration across government and community to address gender-based violence.

The Department of Families, Child, and Family Services is responsible for the legislative framework and funding for the safety of children.

The Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) promotes the elimination of family violence by providing program and administrative support to community-based agencies that offer a wide

continuum of programs and services across the province, and by working to change societal attitudes about issues related to family violence through public education and training.

The FVPP operates emergency shelters and counselling for women and children who are victims of domestic violence and find accommodations for men who need a safe place. The program provides a provincial toll-free crisis service which automatically links an individual with the nearest shelter that can provide safety. The FVPP also operates women's resource centres which provide information and referral, individual counselling, outreach, and support groups for women. Residential second stage housing programs offer protective affordable long-term housing for women who leave an abusive relationship and need more than just physical protection. In addition, there are also urban support programs which provide individual counselling, open and closed support groups, longer term counselling, and training for other service providers and public education.

The Victims Services Branch (VSB), Manitoba Justice, provides a wide range of services throughout Manitoba, including domestic violence, child victims, and victims of the most serious crimes, as outlined under The *Victims' Bill of Rights* and the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*. Victim Services aims to help people access their rights, understand their responsibilities, and obtain resources and support through a trauma informed, culturally safe approach to lessen the impact of the trauma, increase safety, and prevent future victimization. Services offered by Victims Services include providing information about court and the criminal justice system; explaining what to expect as charges move through the court process; providing updates on cases; liaising with the Crown attorney and other justice system staff; short-term counselling and safety planning; referrals to community resources; information about the Compensation for Victims of Crime Program; preparation for testifying in court; direction on how to prepare and submit a Victim Impact Statement; direction on how to register with the Parole Board of Canada; training for community service agencies that may become designated to assist people who apply for protection orders.

Methods

Throughout 2022, ECCM set out to have consultations with 30 different ethnocultural communities and the respective community members. The team utilized the list of community leaders and member organizations within ECCM's network to send out preliminary emails explaining the project, the target audience, time, location, and the provided honorarium. Our reach out emails were as followed:

Good afternoon,

My name is _____, a community consultant/project coordinator with the Ethnocultural Council of Manitoba - Stronger Together Inc. (ECCM). With funding from the Women and Gender Equality Canada - Women's Program (WAGE), we are currently running a project that discusses creating Healthy, Safe and Violence-Free Relationships with a focus on Intimate Partner Violence.

We are hoping to make a connection with you through your organization to meet with ethnocultural women. This will be conducted in a safe, private, focus group.

Briefly we are looking to have:

- 8-10 participants
- Honorarium will be provided to each participant
- Snacks and refreshments will be provided
- The session will run for roughly 2hrs.

A brochure of the project was then attached to each community in the respective language. In total, 21 languages were translated into brochures and distributed to communities. Prior to reaching out to community members, it was discussed at length the importance of providing this project with a culturally appropriate title. It was decided to title the project "Healthy, Safe, and Violence-Free Relationships" with a focus on Intimate Partner Violence to not dissuade any community members or organizations from participating due to the sensitive nature of the topic.

While our project primarily focused on the voices and experiences of ethnocultural women, it was also important to include the voices of youth, seniors, 2SLGBTQI+⁵ community members, individuals with disabilities and lastly, given the feedback from women to have conversations with their spouses, we had the ability to have three male consultations which will all be discussed in further detail in the latter sections. For the consultations with women, youth, seniors, individuals with disabilities and 2SLGBTQI+ community members, the project staff who both identify as women conducted the consultations, with one staff member taking notes while the other facilitated the consultation. The staff recognized the importance of having a safe space for women and ensured that when translation was necessary, the translators were women of the community. This same importance was placed on the three male consultations, ensuring that it was a safe space for ethnocultural men to discuss topics pertaining to IPV and healthy relationships. Therefore, the project contracted out a male facilitator and male note takers to be in the sessions.

⁵ This acronym represents an array of diverse sexualities and gender identities. The identities listed by letter are: Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Intersex. The + represents questioning folks and others who may not have their unique identities named in the acronym itself, making space for fluid and hybrid identities and for self-identification within the broader queer community.

Each consultation had a PowerPoint presentation which provided key definitions and information and prompting questions for participants. The consultations opened up with asking participants what they think healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships are respectively. Next, the group was asked for their opinion about what intimate partner violence is, and what, to their knowledge, constitutes different forms of violence. Participants were then asked how IPV is solved within their community and/or cultural group. Lastly, participants were asked if they are currently aware of any services available to them and for their ideas as to how we stop the cycle of violence.

In total, there were 30 conversations with 30 different ethnocultural community members and we had the opportunity to speak with 281 individuals in this stage of the project.

Ethnocultural Group	Number of Participants	In Person or Zoom
Kenya Women	6	Zoom
Mexico Women	5	Zoom
China Women	7	Zoom
Nigeria Women	7	Zoom
Seniors Women	4	Zoom
South Sudan Women	10	Zoom
Afghanistan Women	23	Zoom
Ghana Women	8	In-Person
Muslim Women	8	In-Person
Youth Mixed	10	In-Person
Congo Women	9	In-Person
2SLGBTQI+	4	In-Person
Philippines Women	19	Zoom
Philippines Men	11	In-Person

Indian Women	10	In-Person (Portage la Prairie, MB)
Youth Mixed	10	In-Person (Portage la Prairie, MB)
Youth Group	13	In-Person (Brandon MB)
Mixed Women's Group	8	In-Person (Neepawa, MB)
Muslim Mixed Mens	17	In-Person
Ghana Men	12	In-Person
Somalia	10	In-Person
Nepal	8	In-Person
2SLGBTQI+	7	In-Person
Colombia	8	In-Person
Indian Seniors	6	In-Person
CMDCI	9	Zoom
Brazil	4	Zoom
Japan	9	In-Person
Burundi	10	Zoom
Eritrea	9	In-Person

Of the 30 conversations, several were done with our secondary target groups including outside of Winnipeg in small centres, 2SLGTBQI+⁶, men, seniors, youth, and individuals with disabilities.

⁶ It is important to note that one of the groups that identified as part of the 2SLGTBQI+ community was attended by predominantly Indigenous community members. We understand that they are outside of the target group for this project, however we found that the conversation aided in understanding that there are definite parallels between their experiences and that of the Ethno-Queer community.

	Consultations with Women	Consultation with Men	Consultation with Youth	Consultation with Seniors	Consultations with 2SLGBTQI+	Consultation with individuals with disabilities
Winnipeg	18	3	1	2	2	1
Small Centres	2	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Analysis

Spaces for Ethnocultural Women

In total, this project had the opportunity to speak with 21 ethnocultural women’s groups. It is difficult to put into words the vibrancy and vulnerability of not only the 21 women’s consultation but the 30 consultations as a whole. Each conversation provided an insight into the intersectionality of needs many ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee women face in Manitoba and the importance of creating space for stories, culture sharing, and importantly acknowledging lived experiences. While each ethnocultural community we had the opportunity to speak with had their own unique collective and individual experiences, there were also many shared stories among the women. This section provides an opportunity to explore the common themes and stories that participants shared with each other. To respect the experiences shared, this section will not provide any identifying information such as ethnocultural group or names.

In the vast majority, if not all conversations, when discussing their perspectives on healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships, one of the first topics brought up by participants was the cultural differences between “home” (country of birth) and Winnipeg. It was noted time and time again that the culture and cultural norms are completely different. Women discussed that back home they were shy to speak up against abuse and sharing household responsibilities. However, in Canada, household responsibilities “must be shared” due to a change in cultural norms along with more women working in Canada. As one participant shared, “back home it is unacceptable to ask men for help, men do not know how to help or assist in the stuff I need help with, they don’t know how to child-rear or cook, so even if I asked for help, he would not know how to help.”

When intimate partner violence and abuse are happening in households, some participants noted that it is not culturally appropriate to speak out about situations, rather it is important to keep it within the household. Women throughout the consultations noted that these conversations are few and far between. That is, it is often difficult to speak about challenging topics such as abuse and intimate partner violence. As one participant reflected, “it is often kept within the family, but it is good to hear that women are becoming more empowered. Hearing everyone speaking and their knowledge about how big this [intimate partner violence] is, hearing the vocabulary and different types of violence is so meaningful.” To this point, many women discussed the importance of culturally keeping their “families together,” stating that “we don’t want a broken family, we will stay no matter how hard it is.” This was echoed over and over again through the distrust in many of the Canadian systems and the apprehension to pursue divorce citing that it is culturally frowned upon and the immense fear as it pertains to the Canadian legal system and child welfare systems.

Many participants noted that they feel unsafe in calling 911 during incidences of violence due to fear of navigating systems coupled with the “what ifs.” This was described as an apprehension to involve the police for a fear that children would be removed from the home and put in the care of Child and Family Services. Community members noted that “we want a community member to be called instead of reaching out to the police.” Other community members noted that they do not feel comfortable calling police in Canada due to the precarity of their status. There is an immense fear that as a result of not yet having permanent residence, they will be deported if they call. This is also a threat that many stated abusers have used, that if they report, the abuser will have them deported or will prevent them from pursuing citizenship. However, the community also stated that if the situation is dire, and their daughter is in danger, they would not hesitate to call the authorities. Community therefore brought up how to create resources and avenues for addressing abuse within the household. There is a need to create safe spaces for victims of abuse to speak up and navigate Manitoban systems with culturally aware and inclusive support.

Many women commented on the increased separation from their culture here in Canada as they are no longer surrounded by family, nor do they have elders to speak with when problems or stressors arise or have close women/sisters/friends as they once did back home. This comment was made in light of asking what services are available to discuss incidents of violence and many women noted that they are more comfortable speaking with a female elder, or sister as opposed to talking to men, or formal service providers about problems within the home. It was therefore noted repeatedly in different sessions the importance of empowering community members and in particular community leaders to

have the knowledge and tools to address intimate partner violence. Community members noted that they rely heavily on their community leaders for information and support over going to formal settlement support and therefore it would be beneficial for community leaders to be adequately informed and trained to support. Community members suggested that having proper access to information, sharing information, and having trust in community levels on smaller scales are all solutions to empowering community members and community leaders.

Culture must also be at the forefront of providing services and connecting with the community. In many consultations women noted how important it is for service providers to understand the culture and traditions of the respective communities they are providing services to. They noted that “learning a community’s culture is paramount to understanding why they will not be quick to address issues such as violence in a public forum or with resources such as counseling.”

To meet the community where they are at, one of the large barriers that must be addressed is language accessibility and literacy. In many of the consultations, there were community members who translated for other participants. In each consultation community members brought up the need to expand resources to having more languages both in written information but also in verbal information. Many women noted that for some community members, they are not literate in either their first language or Canada’s official languages. This presents immense barriers when attempting to access appropriate services as it pertains to intimate partner violence. Other groups noted that when attempting to find services such as a therapist and counselor, “it would be helpful to find someone who speaks my language. So many people in my community are dealing with trauma or relationship issues but due to the language barrier cannot get help.”

The inability to access services in first language, or the fear of having a translator share personal details to community members in respective community groups creates an increasing isolation to an already vulnerable group. Many women noted the impact on their mental health when it comes to speaking up about violence, “mental health is stigmatized in my community... I am worried I will not be listened to by my family, or that my children will be taken away from me so I do not disclose what is happening. It is taboo to seek assistance with mental health.” It is therefore imperative to destigmatize seeking help and resources for mental health and encourage service providers to have culturally informed and inclusive mental health resources that meet communities where they are on their own journeys.

Conversations with Men

The project set out to create a safe space for ethnocultural women to discuss topics pertaining to healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships. It became apparent from the first few consultations that women wanted to see the same conversation happen with men. They argued that bringing men to the table would allow men to discuss in a safe space the systemic factors that lead to intimate partner violence. Therefore, the project team sought out a male facilitator and male notetakers to conduct three consultations with ethnocultural men to provide them with a space to discuss healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships. It was crucial to provide the same safe space that our consultations with women provided, with a female facilitator and female note taker.

Similar to consultations with women, ethnocultural men noted that open communication, transparency, trust, and mutual respect were among the factors that shape healthy, safe, and violence free relationships. The impact of culture came up again and again in conversations noting the difference between country of birth and the culture in Canada, with one participant stating that “when people come from different backgrounds, and different cultural practices, they find themselves in completely different dynamics, many of the relationships can get shaken up.”

Men continued to discuss aspects of culture in relationships stating that some women and other victims of intimate partner violence do not report abuse due to “a cultural aspect,” saying that “some couples do not want to ruin their marriage life by reporting incidents to police.” However, in another consultation one participant cited that “violence is violence, regardless of where it is committed, and violence is violence, regardless of which gender it is committed on. But again, society and culture play a huge role.” The interconnection between culture and violence continued by stating that even within the same culture, each person's value systems can be quite different, which makes it very important to discuss openly in safe spaces.

The male consultations also discussed the work differences between their home countries and Canada noting that “back home, men are working much more than the women are responsible for everything. But when it comes to Canada, it offers better or equal opportunities for women. Women have more chances of getting jobs. Women may get a better job than their husband and so the problem starts from here. So financial independence is important. They noted the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic had on their relationships and that “if you don’t have the tools to fix things, then that is the problem” stating that if in a partnership you are unable to respectfully address an issue in your relationship, it is important to seek out support from those who can help.

In conversations, men were split between who the appropriate person is to talk to, some saying that they are unwilling and unable to discuss relationship issues with people outside of their families and feel shameful to speak to a professional or individuals from their ethnocultural communities. As a result, an overwhelming number of men in the consultation stated how important it is to have safe spaces for men to gather and talk about topics pertaining to healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships along with stressors, cultural changes, and partner violence. Those who participated in these conversations continuously asked for more conversations or a follow up with several participants echoing this statement of “it made us feel that we are not alone in this. This is a great space for newcomers to learn about things that matter and affect their lives. We need more than two hours to address these topics.” It therefore became apparent the importance of involving men and boys in these conversations and providing a safe space.

Urban vs. Rural

The project had unique opportunity to travel to small centres throughout Western Manitoba to connect with ethnocultural newcomer women to discuss their unique experiences as it pertains to healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships along with the challenges and advantages that come with residing in small centres. One thing that became incredibly apparent when speaking with women who are living in small centres is the sense of pride and community. The women in these groups discussed the importance of providing support and helping one another, creating a space for women’s empowerment. They were eager to get together to meet other women from different ethnocultural backgrounds and share space with one another.

Women in small centres discussed what drew them to move to small towns as opposed to the larger cities, many of them stated that they have a sense of community in small centres and moved due to relatives living in the towns already. When discussing the challenges in addressing IPV, many women described the difference between their country of birth and Canada, noting that the clothing, culture, traditions, and practices are vastly different. Women talked in detail about household duties, and that there was an expectation while in their country of birth, and even when returning home for holidays, that the woman would take care of the home and children and the husband would work and provide. However, in Canada that is different and oftentimes, to make ends meet - especially in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic - the men work during the day and the women work the night shift, therefore needing to split household duties. It was echoed among the women participants that men are not as eager to help out around the house and this creates immense stress on the relationship. What emerged

from that conversation was women sharing how educated and qualified they are, but jobs - especially in small centres – are not readily available, which increases stress on the relationship.

In one conversation, we had a group of newcomer women from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds. The women were passionate and empowered to discuss how intimate partner violence impacts their lives. The women were eager to have these conversations and noted that these conversations are not common to have, but crucially important. When speaking about resources they all pointed to their own community facilitators as the contact points for resources and supports. Due to the remoteness of being in a small centre, the women did comment that it is difficult to remain anonymous due to the small town and everyone knowing everyone or recognizing vehicles. This creates a double-edge sword, the women noted, saying it creates a great sense of community, however, it can also make it very challenging to seek out resources when there is violence in the home. As one participant emphasized, “if I am leaving an abusive relationship and someone sees my vehicle at a friend’s place or family member’s house they will tell my husband. The same can be said if someone sees me going to the therapist office, there is little privacy.”

In our other consultation with women in small centres they noted that many of them work with one another, their families are related, and their children all attend the same school and daycares due to the size of the town. The women noted that they frequently get together for gatherings and celebrations, however, in those gatherings they do not discuss the impacts of IPV and different types of abuse. When asked about the unique factors that impact IPV with a small community they noted that there is a severe lack of services within the community and if they are wanting to seek support such as counselling, women’s organization, resources, or child services, they have to go to Winnipeg. This coupled with an apprehension to seek help outside of the family creates increased tensions at home. Many of the women cited an increase in alcohol and substance abuses considering the COVID-19 pandemic. This creates difficult situations within the home, with many women turning the discussion to talk about an increase in substance abuse and addiction in light of COVID-19. The women therefore spoke on the importance of creating more spaces for women and men to feel safe to talk openly and share. These small centres are vibrant and empowering. They provide an immense sense of community and “home away from home,” they speak highly of the newcomer settlement centers which are in the town and desire more spaces such as these within their respective towns and communities.

2SLGBTBQI+ Voices

In the conversation with 2SLGBTQI+ community members, the intersectionality of barriers that many of them face when accessing services pertaining to healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships became evident. The ethnocultural-2SLGBTQI+ participants told stories of displacement both in their country of birth but also in their journey and experience in Winnipeg and across Canada. Participants spoke about the lack of resources available to them both as newcomers and as queer folks, made more challenging by their intersectional identities as newcomer queer folks. Participants spoke about feeling unsafe in Canada, however, the lack of safety and fear of persecution were more prevalent in their country of origin. They noted that emphasis needs to be placed on having culturally specific services. There are currently newcomer services, but no newcomer services that provide and bring together queer community members. It was also noted that there needs to be training for newcomer service providers on how to speak to and speak about the queer community. Support is not provided, nor prioritized in cultural communities, and as a result, participants commented on the indirect support through friends. It was also echoed that participants were apprehensive to disclose their identities with their respective communities both in home countries and now in Winnipeg. As one participant shared, “I feel like I do not have a home, or a sense of home in any country.” Emphasis was made on the need for organizations to gather and bring together resources of staff, training, and money to empower ethnocultural newcomers.

Feedback that was provided during these sessions prompted ECCM to seek out additional funding with the WES Miriam Assefa (WESMA) Fund to address the need for further discussion with ethnocultural 2SLGBTQI+ community members. It is crucial to hear from the ethnocultural 2SLGBTQI+ community members directly in order to better understand the extent of their needs and how our Government and the Settlement sectors can best work with them to address their needs and have their voices heard throughout our province. Guided by a steering committee of community organizations that work in the related field and community members with lived experience, ECCM engaged in further consultations with ethnocultural 2SLGBTQI+ community members and published a report and a toolkit titled “Creating Safe Spaces for All: Working with the Ethnocultural 2SLGBTQI+ Community”. For more information about the report and toolkit visit the ECCM website at <https://ethnomanitoba.ca/>.

Youth Voices

Ethnocultural youth voices offered a great perspective into the conceptualization of what intimate partner violence is and the impacts of violence. The sake of this project defines youth as any

person between the ages of 16-24. The team wanted to ensure that youth were able to attend the consultation sessions without a permission slip from parents or guardians to ensure that participants' confidentiality was honoured. Whereas in our other conversations, they were spaces for exclusively those who identify with that group, our youth groups allowed for an opportunity for all genders to participate together. The diversity in age, gender, and ethnocultural backgrounds led to interesting and in-depth discussions surrounding the topic at hand. When discussing what healthy, safe and violence-free relationships look like to youth, many spoke about feeling safe to be yourself and not being afraid to share your mind. It was echoed that problems in relationships are inevitable, but there is a need to trust each other and come together “both of you against the problem, not both of you against each other.”

One of the themes that emerged throughout the different youth sessions was consent and the importance of consent for both parties. In conversations with youth, many of them brought up the impacts of substance abuse, which they commented impacts relationships “and alters your mind.” It was discussed at length that many friends and family members use drugs or alcohol. When asked how IPV is dealt with within the respective community, two participants in these conversations immediately said: with violence. They continued by saying that if anyone disrespects their family members, they would use violence to deal with it. Participants also noted that many conversations of violence happen within the home, and it is often thought that one should not reach out to other family and friends to discuss intimate topics.

When asked how one would deal with IPV, participants discussed the shame associated with speaking out and sharing their experiences and stories with adults. One group discussed that they are mostly unfamiliar with what type of services are available for youth to access. They noted that there is fear and apprehension with speaking with professionals as they believe “they are only there because they are getting paid.” The group continued by saying that they did not want to speak with school counselors as they do not feel comfortable talking to strangers or talking to the school about home. Many talked about the church being a resource, or creating their own network of friends to confide in. Another group of youth in small centres noted that they would talk to someone that they trust, involving parents, counselors, or other trusted adults. They again noted that there is some shame associated with attending therapy, however, they reflected that many schools now have therapists/counselors to talk to and the youth appreciate the confidentiality associated with having someone to talk to. When asked how do we solve IPV, the participants noted that education is a large contributor, as well as having

appropriate services available. However, one participant also commented that the cycle continues with parental abuse which needs to be eliminated in order to progress.

Seniors

Conversations with ethnocultural seniors provided an important insight into the generational effects of intimate partner violence and ways to combat abuse. In the conversations had with seniors they noted that so often healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships are seldom spoken about from a cultural perspective. Many of the participants noted that culture and values are interrelated noting that there are differences between the Canadian culture and culture back home, i.e. cultural norms “and patriarchal systems that accept abuse towards women,” as opposed to Canadian systems which emphasizes shared household responsibilities and a space where many women are working outside of the home.

When asked if there are any culturally specific recommendations to break the cycle of violence, many of the participants reaffirmed that violence is not acceptable in any culture, rather it is a learnt behaviour, and as such violence continues to happen in relationships, especially those who are newcomers “because women are not financially independent” from their partners. Furthermore, stating that it is imperative for women to support other women, moving away from the recurring theme of “keeping it the family” as it pertains to not speaking about violence in the home. It continues to be taboo for women to speak out about issues of healthy, safe, and violence-free relationships and the truth surrounding intimate partner violence. With many women citing that this idea of “keeping it in the family/house” is due to honour and being concerned with what other people in the community would say if they spoke out. However, the senior women in the sessions emphasized the empowerment that is growing in many ethnocultural communities to be able to speak up about violence both to their husbands to address the issue, but also to share with the wider community in order to reduce stigma associated with experiencing and reporting violence. It was also noted, therefore, the importance of building relationships and collectives of support among women both within their respective ethnocultural communities but also in the broader community.

Conversations with Community Members with Disabilities

The project had the opportunity to partner with the Canadian Multicultural Disability Centre Inc. (CMDCI) to have a conversation with ethnocultural women who have disabilities. The conversation with this group centered around the respect, dignity, and rights of all peoples to be in a healthy, safe, and

violence-free relationship. The women in the group emphasized the shift in culture stating that women no longer need to be submissive, and it is important to “teach women on how to protect themselves against violence in the home.” When discussing what the contributing factors and stressors lead to intimate partner violence, the women noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has been an immense stressor, citing that “suddenly everyone was at home together a lot more.” They continued by noting that violence is a cycle, and it is important to be able to identify different types of violence and to have open discussions with children/grandchildren to break the cycle.

When conversations turned to the disabled community in particular, the participants noted that family can be very intrusive in the lives of women with intellectual disabilities, citing that “we have the right to information, the right to be treated equally.” An important discussion then followed on recognizing different types of disabilities and importantly that disabilities are not just physical. One woman also brought up that substance abuse and addiction can be seen as additional forms of disabilities. The women began discussing barriers to report from the lived experience of those with disabilities with many noting that there is a sense of shame in admitting to being a victim, oftentimes they are in denial. One participant continued by saying that there is immense stigmatization from their ethnocultural community and “in order to be complete, you need a man in your life” continuing on to say “there is no life after divorce.” While another woman discussed the tremendous fear they face in reporting, with other women echoing that some are afraid to report abuse due to a lack of status or the precarity of status.

When asked how IPV is resolved within their community and/or culture, many women noted that a fundamental shift needs to happen within the ethnocultural disabled community to become more aware of services and resources available for community members who do have disabilities, emphasizing the importance of seeking support. They continued by saying that today, “women are being encouraged not to suffer in silence, this means that those who can help, cannot, if they do not know what is going on.” Therefore, they noted that it is important to provide that support, whether that is providing a safe space to allow a victim of violence to come forward, giving courage to a friend to leave a violent situation, or even providing shelter to family or friends if they need it.

Community Engagement Sessions

The Healthy, Safe, and Violence-Free Relationship project set off to build connections with ethnocultural communities as well as organizations and service providers. While the first and most significant phase of the project was centered around the 30 consultations with different ethnocultural

communities, the latter part of the project involved reaching out to organizations in Winnipeg who are working with these communities. These consultations yielded discussions and recommendations which aligned with the preliminary findings of the earlier community consultations. The preliminary findings and major themes that emerged from the consultations included, but were not limited to: respectful communication, conflict resolution, sharing information about Canadian laws regarding abuse, legal frameworks and laws related to domestic violence/intimate partner violence, and financial literacy. The project had the pleasure of partnering with Aurora Family Therapy, Immigrant Women's Counselling Services of NorWest Coop Community Health and Immigrant Centre, SEED Winnipeg Inc., and lastly Safe Housing and Direct Empowerment (SHADE). We want to take an opportunity to thank these organizations for their work with ethnocultural, newcomer, and refugee communities and their work within the field of intimate partner violence.

During this section of the project, each organization partner invited ECCM staff to attend their respective Community Engagement Sessions. These sessions were a mix of in- person and remote sessions based on the topic at hand, the time of the year, and day of the week. The Community Engagement Sessions provided an opportunity for the project staff to learn more about what services are already being offered to the community along with sharing these sessions with the broader ECCM organization who had attended the consultations and were looking for more information and specialty sessions. ECCM staff were not attending to give feedback or critiques on programs, rather to attend sessions to listen and learn from service providers. The sessions themselves covered a vast variety of topics and we will use this opportunity to highlight the sessions that organizations facilitated and who their audiences were.

Safe Housing and Direct Empowerment (SHADE) supports immigrant and refugee women, and any of their children, who have been impacted by domestic abuse; family violence; or gender-based violence. Through psychosocial programming and practical support, SHADE empowers immigrant and refugee women to rebuild their lives and transition from a place of victimization to a place of healing, stability, and resiliency (SHADE Winnipeg, 2024). In this partnership, SHADE and ECCM hosted four Community Engagement Sessions. These sessions were primarily attended by community members and participants who have been accessing services from SHADE along with ECCM's broader networks. The sessions were titled:

1. The Interconnection of Immigration Fraud with Gender-Based Violence
2. Healing from the Damage of Economic Abuse by Becoming Financially Resilient
3. Child Witnesses: Child Victims of Intimate Partner Violence

4. Roof over your head: A Comprehensive Housing Workshop for Survivors of Domestic Violence

SEED envisions a world where opportunities exist for all people and communities to realize their hopes and their mission is to build strong communities and increase opportunities for people through financial empowerment programs and services. ECCM sought a partnership with SEED due to the recurring theme of the importance of financial literacy, budgeting, and the impacts of financial abuse. In the partnership SEED hosted five Community Engagement Sessions. These sessions were attended by ECCM community networks and community members. The sessions were titled:

1. Money Choices Workshop
2. Making and Managing a Budget
3. Access Benefits Workshop: Learn more about Canadian Tax Filing and Benefits
4. Economic Abuse: Understanding Financial Abuse and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities
5. Credit and Debt Management: Understanding the 5 C's of Credit and learn about a debt reduction plan

Aurora Family Therapy Centre Inc. is a non-profit agency providing all levels of therapy to its public clients at an affordable rate using a sliding scale. Any Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) that comes to Winnipeg is also automatically referred to AFTC by their RAP agency. This referral is for a psycho-social needs assessment which is free to GARs. Once that assessment has been completed the clients are referred to whatever level of therapy that is needed, be that crisis counselling or newcomer community groups for "Information & Orientation" or for "Community Connections."

During our Partnership with Aurora Family Therapy, ECCM staff had the opportunity to attend several of their newcomer groups. The newcomer groups were created for a multitude of reasons. The groups were created for those that are lacking basic resettlement information in Winnipeg and broadly Canada. They are created for those that are isolated and need connections or to move their bodies. The groups are also created for those that need therapy support but may believe it is taboo. Many participants continue to attend the groups years into their resettlement because of the connections they build in their respective group, they feel like family. The groups we had the opportunity to join were the Rohiygna mixed group, the Afghan women's group, the Syrian women's group, and the Yazidi women's group. Each of these groups are on different stages of their resettlement and therefore each was able to have different conversations. For some, the conversations revolved around meeting the basic needs of their families, finding employment, housing, English language programs, and where their kids will go to school. Whereas, for some of the groups who have been resettled for longer, they were able to have more complex conversations regarding intimate partner violence and identifying abuse.

Immigrant Women's Counselling Services is a part of NorWest Coop Community Health. The services are to help women and children impacted by violence during COVID-19. They offer counselling and support, protection orders, legal consultations, safety planning and representation. They also are able to provide interpretation services. Immigrant Women's Counselling Services in partnership with Immigrant Centre provided a three day Psychological First Aid and Family Violence Training which was attended by primarily service providers. This training provided context to the importance of training and informing service providers with the proper tools to support community. The other sessions were attended by community members with lived experience as well as front line staff and service providers. These sessions were titled:

1. Psychological First Aid and Family Violence Training
2. Know your Rights: Immigration and Family law in Manitoba
3. Paint Day and Information Session

Limitations

It is important to note that when working with a wide variety of ethnocultural community groups and organizations, the voices that we are able to connect with based on our networks do not necessarily represent all the voices of that particular community. We need to recognize that within certain ethnocultural communities there are different subgroups that identify themselves separately through their values, traditions, language, and culture. While we unfortunately were not able to speak to every ethnocultural community group in Manitoba, we tried to be as specific in identifying the communities we are speaking about and their experiences to show where we would have opportunities in the future for more conversations.

Recommendations

Programs and Services-Recommendation

1. It is recommended that further funding be allocated to ensure that culturally appropriate resources are provided to community, including translation of materials and on-site interpretation.
2. Domestic violence shelters are a key site where newcomer, immigrant, and refugee survivors may encounter systemic barriers while in crisis. It is recommended that the domestic violence shelter model be assessed to determine alternative approaches for use by ethnocultural,

immigrant, and refugee women, when an alternate living accommodation is needed. An emphasis must be placed on ensuring shelters are culturally informed and gender inclusive.

3. It is recommended that ECCM continue to advocate for awareness raising and engagement with men and boys to have active conversations in regard to reducing and ultimately stopping intimate partner violence, including a shift in culture norms.
4. It is recommended that there is an increased awareness and information of the impacts of intimate partner violence on children and families to expand our understanding of the harms caused to children witnessing violence. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that practices are culturally-based. Partnership with the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth should be made to secure resources to develop training modules for organizations serving ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities to increase awareness regarding the impact of intimate partner violence on children who witness it.
5. It is recommended that vicarious trauma trainings are supported and implemented to ensure that service providers remain effective in their interaction with ethnocultural communities.

Information and Data Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that ECCM communicate with the Government of Manitoba to express the importance of having disaggregated information and data. As a component of Manitoba's "whole of government approach" to intimate partner violence, it is recommended that a comprehensive and accessible data system be developed and be accessible to governments and non-governmental entities. Data needs to be disaggregated, and categories included need to be race, gender, sex, ethnicity, age, disability, occupation, socioeconomic status, migratory status, and geographic location. In addition to collecting data, as outlined in *COVID-19 Pandemic Guidelines for Mental Health Support of Racialized Women at Risk of Gender-Based Violence - Knowledge Synthesis: COVID-19 in Mental Health & Substance Use* (Khanlou, 2020) consideration needs to be given to:
 - a. fieldwork tools that are more diverse with sensitive questions,
 - b. the depth of questions to capture the lived realities of survivors.
 - c. the recognition that women's experiences of violence are influenced by their social locations and identities (often referred to as relatedness and intersectionality)
 - d. openness and transparency, openness to different ways of thinking and respectful of diversity, plain and friendly language along with open ended questions, and

- e. promoting inclusive approaches to data collection and building partnerships and collaborations that are meaningful.

Policy and Laws-Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that ECCM take a leadership role in working with provincial government departments, to assess how the Manitoba Framework 2020, can benefit the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities.
2. It is recommended that ECCM and the Provincial Government have an ongoing partnership which can establish a role for ECCM in the development of the bilateral agreement for Manitoba so that the Manitoba Bilateral Agreement can address needs in the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities.
3. An ECCM working group to be established so that each existing framework, Federal and Provincial, be reviewed to determine how the action areas can be designed to serve the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities.
4. Relevant information regarding the law be translated into multiple languages so that basic information regarding the law and domestic violence is accessible to individuals where language is a barrier.
5. ECCM convene a biannual forum with community-based service organizations to gather information regarding community needs in the area of domestic/intimate partner violence, and to share this information with government and funding bodies, and community leadership, with the aim of improving planning and evaluation of policy and programs and identifying gaps.

Funding Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the ECCM- ST continue to apply for grants from the Federal, Provincial, and non-governmental sources in order to continue highlighting the serious situation of domestic/intimate partner violence, and to develop information, tools, and program designs that mainstream programs could benefit from in their work with the ethnocultural, immigrant, and refugee communities. It is recommended that these short-term approaches be utilized to encourage the development of better information and data systems, and to encourage increased funding sources to be directed to the ethnocultural, immigrant and refugee communities, especially with the anticipated increases expected in these populations.

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