

Nanda Gikendan

“To Seek Knowledge”

Community Education and Engagement Project



Final Report

Sponsored by Mending the Sacred Hoop / Funded by the John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation Fund of the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation

Acknowledgements

Mending the Sacred Hoop gives a Chi-Miigwetch (a Big Thank You) to all the participants and supporters of the Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” project. Our dedicated regular participants: Ida, Christine, Ron, Darcy, Daryl with special recognition to Joan who came as a community member and representing a youth services organization. To the volunteers: Terri, Kali, and Reese who committed time to the project to help form data and create material. Misty, our courageous visitor who jumped in as guest speaker and blessed us with her story – Pilamayaye! Donna B, of the Duluth American Indian Commission, was our number one promoter. Staff: Sarah, Jeremy, Tina, and Holly for organizing, creative input, as well as taking personal time and bring family to the events. Finally, we recognize the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Fund for their belief in our project and generous support. Sincerely, we could not have done it without each and every one of you and your personal and financial contributions.

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Mending the Sacred Hoop is a Native American program founded in 1993 to address violence against Native women in individual and institutional levels. We organized to ensure that Native women survivors had access to quality services, ensured that Native men who battered had access to culturally specific reformatory services, and changing the way the criminal justice system and service providers responded to Native women who have been battered. Mending the Sacred Hoop was given a national venue in 1995, when the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) approached us to assist Tribes across the country to address violence against Native women. In 2006 we organized a Statewide Native Domestic Violence Coalition to provide more assistance and organize locally and to provide assistance to off-reservation/urban Native communities.

Mending the Sacred Hoop (MSH) begins with a community based approach that recognizes the strengths of community in addressing violence against women. Education and organizing builds an informed and active population to further the efforts of institutional and legal reforms. People need to know why these issues are important and understand the dynamics in order to change social standards and tolerance. Organizing brings people together to discuss a common issue and decide on steps to take. MSH designed the Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” project as a way to share what we know about domestic violence and to ask the community what else can be done to end violence in intimate partner relationships.

The basis for the Nanda Gikendan project is a culmination of issues we have seen over the past 10 years. MSH started as a project working with multidisciplinary teams on policy change and serving the local community with advocacy for Native women and groups for Native men who batter. During the latter part of the 90’s we began doing more National work and got away from local direct services. Returning to the roots of our work, MSH conducted two local research projects with the criminal and civil justice systems where results showed a need for community awareness and organizing.

We established a series of 10 monthly educational forums to educate community members and service providers that provided education on violence against women issues, cultural teachings, to raise awareness of local services, and well as collect ideas for creating public awareness campaigns.

We used the Seven Grandfather Teachings we are using are: ***Honesty, Humility, Courage, Wisdom, Respect, Generosity, and Love***. While there are some variations, like Courage for Bravery and Generosity for Truth, we selected these particular ones because of the applicability and ability to match with addressing domestic violence. Each community forum was 3 hours long with introductions, an opening 20 minute presentation on the theme, feast, and group activity. We started with a Native speaker to frame the cultural and social structures that thwarted violence we illustrate how we can reclaim those practices and examine where we are today in the levels of domestic and sexual violence in the community with the issue presentations. We worked with local service providers inviting them to present at one of the events. The group activity was interactive to enhance understanding. We created fliers and notify programs of our monthly schedule as well as posted specific details each month on that particular theme.

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Monthly Themes and Schedule:

February: Kick-Off Meeting

March: Honesty

April: Humility

May: Courage

June: Wisdom

July: Respect

August: Generosity

September: Love

October: Changing Perceptions

November: Closing Forum

Kick-Off meeting (Feb)

Once we received notification of the grant we immediately started notifying service providers and Native people of the upcoming project. We invited members of the Native community, the Duluth American Indian Commission, American Indian Community Housing, Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Thunderbird/Wren House staff (residential treatment homes), CAIR (Center for American Indian Resources), PAVSA (Program to Aid Victims of Sexual Assault), Fond du Lac Human Services, and to our Board of Directors to our Kick-Off meeting. At this event we disseminated the program overview, project goals, monthly themes and additional issues we are seeing in the community. The aspects of community education on abusive relationships and forums to gather were highly revealed and people were excited about the upcoming activity.

Honesty: Talking about Power and Control (March)

During this meeting we set the tone of Honesty by conducting an activity “Where Do You Stand?” where participants were quizzed on their perceptions of domestic and sexual violence. We would read a slide and ask each person to take a position of True, False, or Unsure (standing in respective areas of the screen) and we facilitated an open dialog on why they took the position they did. We covered 10 of the 19 questions in this activity in about 30 minutes having rich discussion while unearthing perceptions and beliefs about domestic violence.

Where Do You Stand?

1. Domestic violence affects only a small percentage of the population

• TRUE UNSURE FALSE

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We handed out by-stander scenarios adapted from “Mentors in Violence Prevention” a project by Jackson Katz, that has people play the role of witness to an incident and then discuss what they would do and why. There is quite a dramatic difference in what men and women said they would do when it came to obvious uses of physical force – most women would seek additional help and men said they would jump in and restrain the guy in the scenario. Then it came to objectifying women and emotional abuse comments were about the same from men and women in trying to that when it comes to ‘cat calling’ they experience degrading one another. Also, they would shame to stop. We discussed what would be helpful and (saving face for the offender/not escalating the situation) issues with our youth, Peer police/Guardian Angels, silent we are condoning”, Conflict resolution skills

Tina Olson was our closing speaker of the night. Hoop since its inception in 1993 as a local intervention Tribe, St Louis and Carlton Counties. Tina had a shelter (known as the Woman’s Coalition then) for theme as “It takes courage to be honest, about you

The discussion was framed around how little we are to be teachers, especially to our children, of being get out of work, ‘white lies’ to avoid phone calls, or make an excuse about dropping the ball on something) that say much more about how little we are honest.

Where Do You Stand?

5. Alcohol and drug abuse cause violent behavior so staying sober, or with sober people, will prevent sexual or physical assaults

• TRUE UNSURE FALSE

Where Do You Stand?

1. Domestic violence affects only a small percentage of the population

• TRUE UNSURE FALSE

“We often tell our children to “say you’re sorry!” even when we know they don’t mean it.”

Tina Olson

Tina used the example of parents/teachers often making kids apologize for things they may not necessarily be sorry for to illustrate how this is teaching dishonesty and it’s OK to be insincere if it gets you off the hook for something. She then closed with a list of activities that community members can do to meaning of Gwekwaadiziwin (Honesty):

- Draw the feeling of honesty
- Create a collage that expresses honesty
- Write a poem expressing honesty

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- Create a video or song expressing honesty
- Keep a journal about times when you experienced honesty or when you should have been honest and your weren't
- Take a photograph of something that represents honesty
- Hold a discussion with family, community at some type of gathering where honesty is the theme
- Create a booklet on the care and feeding of your honesty
- Create a maze that you have to navigate to reach honesty

Humility: Knowing our Limits (April)

Humility: *the quality or condition of being humble; having a modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance*

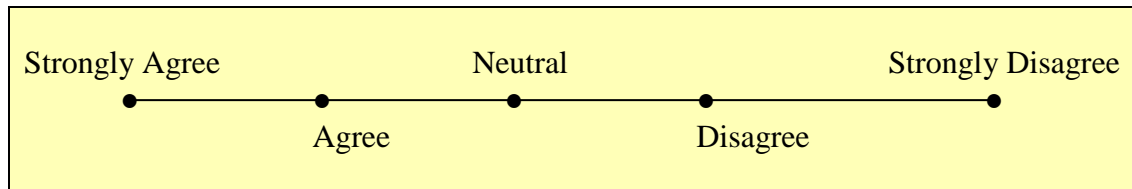
For Humility we started by presenting the definition and stated that we will be looking at men who batter, and why they batter, and how they are on the opposite end of the continuum from being humble. With battering behavior, the abusive and controlling beliefs come largely from the person ego – thinking mostly of themselves in relationships, decisions, and desires. We drew as triangle and circle on the white board and explained the triangle represents the belief of dominance and power, while the circle harmony and balance. Our teachings brought us up to strive for balance and nowadays the social norm is to be “the best”.



We brainstormed examples of dominating and being #1 was the best and had them list examples of where they have learned values of balance and living cooperatively. We handed out a section of our community survey that we created to get at the perceptions and understandings of: “Decision Making in Relationships”, “Behaviors in Relationships”, and “What is violence?” and we reviewed the results and had a group discussion on the topics.

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We asked questions like: “I think that all relationships have conflict and conflict is healthy and important to the growth of the relationship”, “I can hold hands, kiss, be affectionate while in public places (stores/mall, walking, etc.)”, “If you get beat up by a partner you just need to learn self-defense to stop them next time” and had people respond on a continuum rating scale how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement (below).



In closing, Jeremy NeVilles-Sorell spoke on what it means to be a man doing domestic violence work. He has been with Mending the Sacred Hoop since 1994 and also worked at running the Duluth Family Visitation Center and operated the children’s program at Woman’s Transitional Housing Organization (later changed to Women’s Community Development Organization) and also had facilitated men’s groups. The message of humility included not thinking you are over your partner in a relationship as well as needing to understand women’s anger in reaction to men’s violence against women and sexism in general.

“As Native men we will never fully understand sexism but we understand racism, and if we look at the social, political, and economic parallels between the two ‘isms’ we can better address the social norms.”

Jeremy NeVilles-Sorell

Courage: Speaking Up Against Violence and Abuse (May)

For the theme of courage we decided to engage the community in discussing “What can I challenge in my community?” We started by handing out the other half of our community survey to get at the perceptions and understandings of: “Having a Relationship”, “Having sexual relationships”, and “Gender Roles in Relationships” where, after completion, we debriefed a few of the questions to set the premise for the group activity called a Carousel Exercise. The carousel exercise involves writing questions on large sheets of paper for each group or table for them to respond to the question, having 2 minutes to write 4-6 answers on sticky notes, and pass the paper onto the next group/table. We had six groups so the questions we asked were:

1. *What does courage look like addressing domestic violence?*
2. *What awareness and beliefs can I challenge?*
3. *What professions or programs can I engage that exist on our community?*

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4. *What kind of materials or tools would help in challenging domestic violence?*
5. *What do I need to change/challenge in my personal beliefs?*
6. *What can I challenge within my family about domestic violence?*

After each group had a chance to respond and all the sheets of paper ended up back with the original table each group summarized and reported back to the whole room on the activities listed. Here are a few of the responses in respective categories:



What can I challenge in my community?

“What does courage look like addressing domestic violence?”

- That a person can change his or her life / Break the cycle of the family
- Putting strong messages out there i.e., he goes to sweat lodge once a week vs. he beats his wife once a week
- Courage to love yourself
- Challenging stereotypes of gender roles, jokes and remarks
- Participating in community awareness groups and events / have more men speaking out
- Using your own experiences to speak and share with others

“What awareness and beliefs can I challenge?”

- Be aware of violence
- Challenge “good ol’ boys club” approach in politics and law enforcement
- The belief that it is the woman’s fault, i.e. “if she goes back to him she’s asking for it”
- The idea she doesn’t love her family, kids, self if she doesn’t leave
- Unspoken norms of looking the other way
- The idea a man has ownership of a woman, that domestic violence is O.K. or isn’t real



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“What professions or programs can I engage that exist on our community?”

- Public school and higher education curriculum on domestic violence
- To be more public about domestic violence in our community, to acknowledge it and use more awareness and prevention in our schools, from elementary through high school
- Batterer treatment in prison
- Support homeless people
- Provide a safe place children can go to just be kids when they are being raised around domestic violence

“What kind of materials or tools would help in challenging domestic violence?”

- Hotlines, websites, groups, walks
- Booklets, brochures, pamphlets, posters explaining what domestic violence is / Videos-speaking out, empowerment videos, YouTube videos
- Phone numbers to support and crisis lines- like #211
- Awareness education and prevention / Actual role plays and hands on learning
- Teaching the old ways to preserve respectful values



“What do I need to change/challenge in my personal beliefs?”

- Respect for women / Self-respect, be aware of red flags / Share 50/50 with my partner and respect each other
 - Reclaim my sacredness
 - Challenge myself to live and work with “circular thinking” / use tradition and culture
 - Challenge that any form of violence or power and control is acceptable
- Tolerating and minimizing, like name calling or “little” slaps
 - To not shut down and tune out but to listen to myself and others

“What can I challenge within my family about domestic violence?”

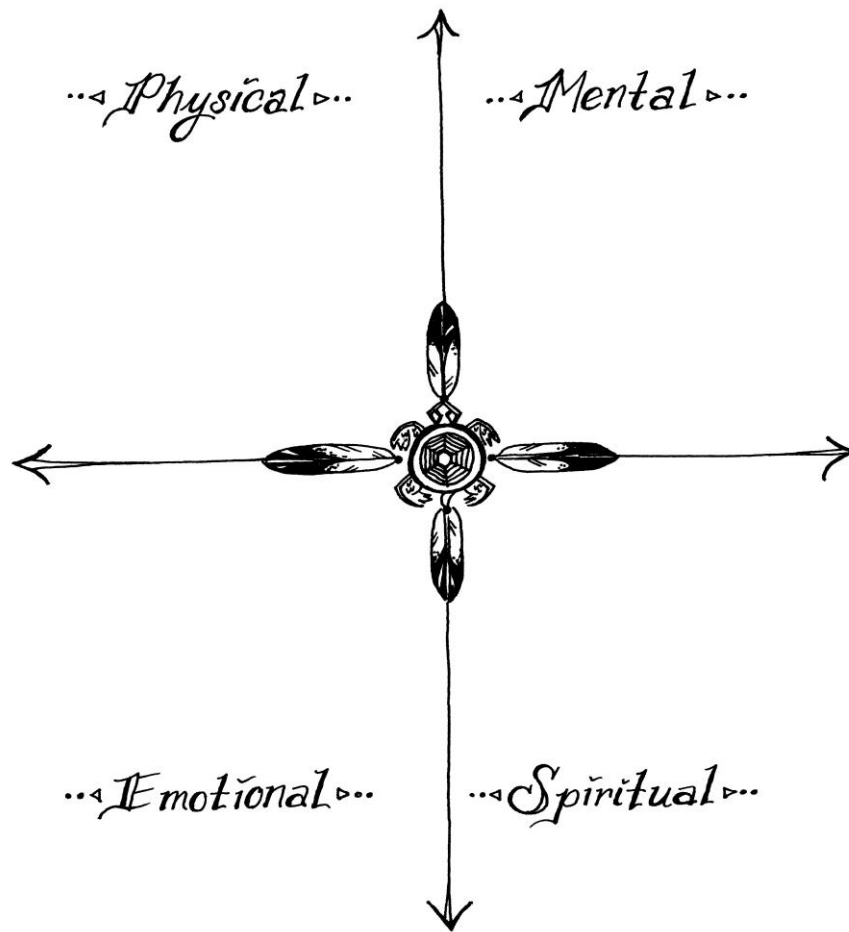
- Beliefs about gender roles

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- Confront the males in my family about their attitudes, beliefs, and actions in their relationships
- Teach about the resources in our areas: Shelters, food banks, positive community groups
- Listen to and help support the women in my family
- Model healthy relationship behavior
- Reteach children who have been witness to domestic violence that it's not o.k., try to break the cycle
- Talk openly and ask Questions, “what would you do if...”



For the closing we asked one of our guests from the Santee Sioux Tribe in Nebraska (Advocates that we know and who were in town attending a different training) and talk about courage. Misty spoke of her personal journey in living in a violent relationship and what it's been like staying with her partner as he makes personal changes. She spoke about the silence she kept and how scary it was to reveal the abuse and even more challenging dealing with friends and family after deciding not to leave the relationship. Misty talked about the dynamics and how trust really isn't the same but mentioned how you establish new boundaries and essentially are forming a new relationship. Misty added that her partner has not assaulted her for many years and is making the courageous step of not only completing a batterer's intervention/non-violence program but is learning to facilitate groups for other men who batter (Mending the Sacred Hoop actually provided that facilitator training for members of the Santee Sioux attended and received certification on the “Duluth Model Curriculum” that is required by Nebraska state standards). It was a very powerful story that we were honored to have shared with us as this was the first time that Misty spoke publicly about her journey.



Wisdom: Understanding domestic and sexual violence (June)

For wisdom we showed our Native Videos Examining Domestic Violence that depicts incidences of abuse and control. We asked participants to look at the eight tactics listed on the Power and Control Wheel and identify as many as they could from the vignettes and write them on post-it note paper. A volunteer had illustrated a Medicine Wheel (above) that shows the different parts of "self" and if we humans are to live "in balance" all of these should be equally attended to. We then asked people to take the post-it notes and place them on the medicine wheel under the categories of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse. The main intention was that people often forget the tactics on the power and control wheel simply because there are too many to easily recall. By using the medicine wheel we will define the tactics in four areas easily recognizing by both Native and non-Native people.

Dawn LaPrairie was our speaker on the theme of Wisdom. Dawn is a former domestic violence advocate who worked as a legal advocate for Safe Haven, when the program was known as the Women's Coalition, and a shelter advocate for Dabinoo 'Igan (operated my American Indian Community Housing Organization) who now teaches at Fond du Lac Ojibwe school. She started with talking about what it means to be wise and that comes from a place of possessing wisdom.

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Wisdom comes from experience and learning from the world around you to know “how things are”, or facts, thus knowing the truth about things. Dawn explained the language and the interconnectedness of our vocabulary where the work for ‘truth’ is based on the word for ‘drum’ (the heartbeat of our Nation(s)), and in turn that is based the word for ‘heart’.

De bwe’ = the truth

Debwe’win = drum

Dewi’ = heart

“This, for native people, is who we are – the truth is inside us and it comes from the heart.”

Dawn LaPrairie

We went onto activities of describing wise people and practiced “speaking from the heart” where we drew illustrations instead of using words to express things that were important lessons for us.

What are the characters of wise people?

Serene

Patient

Truthful

Honest

Responsible

Courageous

Heart

Loving

Humble

“Do not ask questions – watch and listen” “Wisdom cannot be learned it must be experience”

Respect: Working towards social equality (July)

In preparation for this specific teaching we understood that we would have to approach this from many different angles because respect has many meanings and its definition can be deeply personal. The meeting began with the facilitators going around the room having people discuss what respect meant to them personally. These definitions were written on the board around a circle so that a visual image was created that showed how each participant’s definition of respect was connected.



How do I define respect?

Then the participants were engaged in two activities. The first activity had the community members stand in a circle, and throw a ball to another person in a circle, but before they threw it they had to say the catching person's name out loud. After the first round was done, another ball was introduced and participants were instructed to start again, but they had to continue to throw the ball to the same person. If the ball was dropped the group had to start over until the circle was completed. At first the throwing was chaotic, with the ball being dropped many times, then the group began to work together, and listen to each other so that the balls made it all the way around without falling. This activity was debriefed by discussing the importance of respecting everyone in the circle, and in order to have a



Listening and considering everyone in the group is respect

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respectful community, everyone present must be considered before an action is taken, or that action will not be successful.

The second activity forum participants engaged in began with a ball of yarn. They were instructed to hold on to a piece of the yarn, and then toss the ball to another person across the circle, eventually ending up in a web. A beach ball was thrown into the middle, and the group had to keep it up in the air using only the web. In debriefing this activity, group participants discussed that in the excitement of keeping the ball in the air, some people pulled too hard and it hurt their fingers. Again it was discussed that in order to live in a respectful community, a person must consider the impact on the community before an action is taken so that no one is hurt by another's good intentions. The closing discussion during this meeting was around the Equality Wheel, and how equality can be articulated and recognized.



Respect is remembering that we are all connected

Generosity: Generous with our knowledge (August)

During this meeting, meeting participants engaged in discussion on the many different definitions of generosity. A focus was put on how generosity is not limited to the giving and receiving of monetary items, but for the purposes of our meetings, the group could look at generosity through the lens of sharing information. The group was then challenged to come up with statements to counter negative

messages about relationships, and how they might speak to people in the community about domestic violence.

The activity participants engaged in was to design bookmarks and use the traditional words in Ojibwe/Dakota for each of the seven teachings from a list provided for them. After the bookmarks were completed, the name of the participants were written on paper and put into a basket. The basket went around the table and each participant drew a name. The bookmark the participant made was given to the person whose name had been drawn, along with an explanation about why the bookmark was designed as it was and why a particular teaching was chosen.

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The debrief for this activity was a discussion about how it is important to be generous with the knowledge we have because it gives permission to others in the community to do the same, and deeply connects our communities.

Love: Defining healthy relationships (September)

At this meeting community forum participants screened the film produced by Tribal Law and Policy Institute called, “Listen to the Grandmothers”. The video provides participants with a frame work of violence against Native women, that communities had traditional responses to that violence, and how traditional cultural views can be combined with modern life to create a comprehensive and inclusive community response to domestic violence. After the participants screened the movie, the group discussed how the teaching of love encompassed all of the other teachings that have been covered so far. That how the elders in the movie shared their stories, both personal and traditional, was out of love for their communities. The discussion continued with the members of the group talking about acts of love they have done in the past, and what new ways they could show love to the community, and make it a safer place for Native women and children.



By living in love, I can fully live the Grandfather teachings

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October: Changing Perceptions (Domestic Violence Awareness Month)

October is known as Domestic Violence Awareness Month so we wanted to have an engaging type of presentation and create toolkits for participants to go out and share what they have learned about domestic violence throughout this process. Dawn LaPrairie addressed issues of domestic violence and working with children. She used a few videos to present the impact on children as well and facilitated a discussion on ways we, as a community, can bring back our teachings into our daily lives to have strong healthy families. After the presentation we gave out “Stone Soup” toolkits so people can host their own events this month to talk about domestic violence with their friends and family.



We told the story of stone soup where a traveler comes into a destitute town where villagers hoard what little they have to themselves and the traveler dupes them into creating a feast and they learn to cooperate for the benefit of the community. We then reviewed and provided brief demonstration of all the material in the toolkit: the bystander scenarios, bookmark activity, “Faces of Violence” digital stories and discussion guide, “Native Videos Examining Domestic Violence” and discussion guide, and (of course) a soup packet, and had each participant build their own kit based on material they felt confident in using. This event concluded the educational portion of our Nanda Gikendan series.



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In Conclusion:

The objectives were: to educate community members on domestic and sexual violence the services and resources available; educate non-native community and service providers on violence against Native women; utilize Ojibwe teachings to guide intervention and prevention strategies; develop a cohesive network of direct service providers; and establish a base for recruiting peer educators.

The original plan was to have an initial forum to establish a baseline of knowledge, followed by seven meetings based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings, with the ninth forum assessing the change in knowledge and future needs, with the tenth and final gathering reporting back the findings and honoring those who have participated.

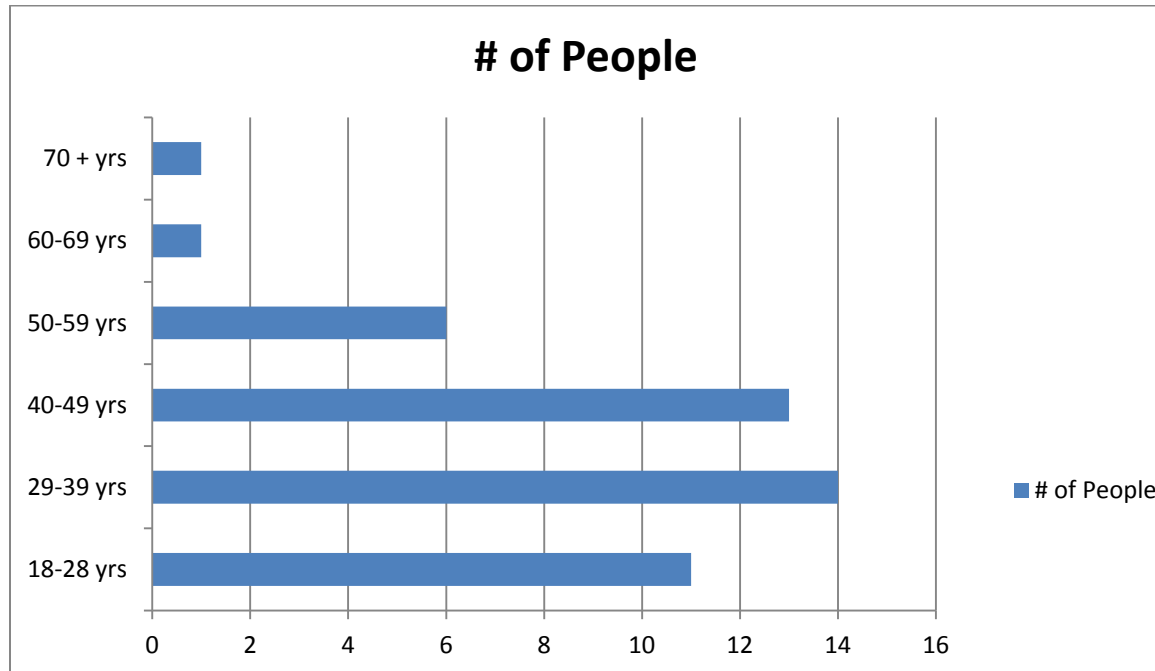
The initial forum changed from conducting an assessment to establishing key partners in spreading the word about the project. We had wanted to have a mix of community people and professionals in attendance so the various perspectives can be shared. Quite often as professionals we view the lives of the people we work with as moldable if they follow our theories and principles. When we use the systems we feel that they don't understand what our true needs are and place irrelevant requirements upon us. To help bridge that we hoped that the services providers would attend as well as send their constituents so we could reach out as broadly as we could. The assessment we developed was a survey on perceptions of relationships, conflicts, and violence. Our categories were: demographics, having a relationship, having a sexual relationship, gender roles in relationships, decision making in relationships, and behaviors in relationships. The seven monthly meetings based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings were carried out as planned. The ninth forum we switched to coincide with domestic violence awareness month to test out how many people would engage in community awareness activities as part of reaching our goal of having a pool of peer educators. The final meeting was a report of the overall findings and celebration of our project.

Insights from Nanda Gikendan “Public Awareness” Surveys

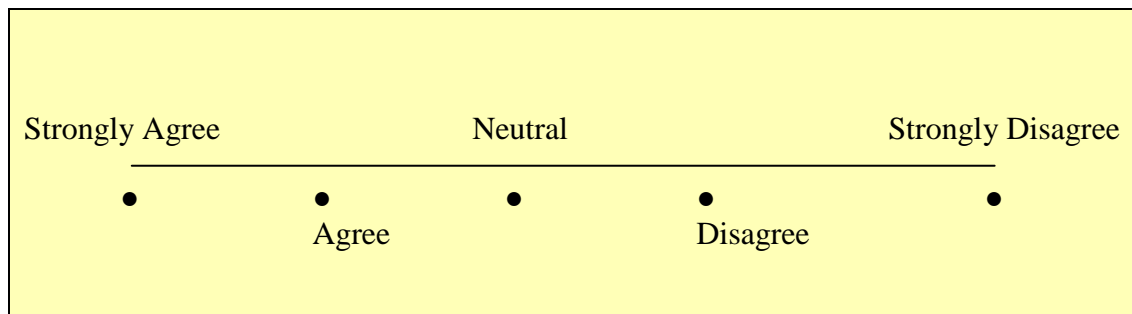
Demographics:

Overall we received 46 surveys responses. Because the trial time in completing the survey was greater than 15 minutes we decided to split the survey into two parts, categories A-C and D-F, with a demographic page on each. There were 8 men and 38 women were surveyed with a fairly diverse age spread. 44 identified as being heterosexual and 2 as bisexual. 74% had less than 10 dating relationships and 64% had less than 10 intimate/sexual relationships. 79% stated they were currently single or dating.

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We used a scale measure tool to gauge the participant’s responses to various questions related to each category (of relationships, roles, decision making, behaviors, and violence) from a range of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. After compiling the data we analyzed it for trends and cross referenced sections drawing our conclusions. This survey was designed to measure perceptions and knowledge of the community to help identify areas to provide further education and awareness.



Having a Relationship:

This section was designed to gain some insight on dating to the cordial side of relationships. The questions focused on people’s attitudes when entering or in relationships.

The first question asked was, “I feel it is important to be dating or in a relationship all of the time”, in which we had 68% of the participants weighing on the disagree side with the

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undecided at 33% and had zero participants answering that they agreed with the statement. This data leads us to believe that people feel it is not important for individuals to continually be part of a romantic relationship. Yet when we asked “my friends think it’s important for me to be in a relationship” we had 10% of the people respond with agree. This information told us that even if it is not important to the individual to be part of a romantic relationship, the social pressure from an individual’s peer group may influence the need of someone to enter a relationship in order for them to fit in with their social network.

Further in this section this question was posed, “It’s OK for me to see other people when I’m dating someone”, and 37% strongly disagreed and 20% agreed. Yet when we asked, “It’s OK for the person I’m dating to see other people”, the strongly disagree spiked to 53% and the number who agreed dropped to under 6%. This told us that people have different standards for themselves than for their partners when dating. Considering all of the other factors of this section, it was discovered that 68% of the community members disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question, “I would rather date many people than be in one long relationship”, showing that most people prefer being in a long term relationship versus casual dating.

Having Sexual Relationships:

This section was designed to get at the perceptions of relationships when sex is involved or desired. The questions involve talking about sex with friends, families, and partners and parameters around engaging in activities.

When asked if “all relationships start with the intent of having sex” 65% were on the disagree side (37% strongly disagreeing). Reflecting on this question and the revelation that people in the group preferred long-term relationships, it shows that people who are dating are in search of a companion. However, we also see that when it comes to having a sexual relationship, those surveyed had a difficult time negotiating the moment of initial approach. When asked, “I find it easy to approach someone I like and ask them out on a date”, 53% answered that they found it difficult, 21% were undecided and only 26% agreed that they are confident enough to freely ask someone they were romantically interested in out on a date. Yet, when asked “I can always tell when someone likes or is interested in me without being told” 42% agreed they knew someone was interested in them. When it came to having a sexual relationship, participants were asked if they “were comfortable with talking to their friends about sex”, 47% of the participants agreed that they were comfortable talking to their friends, but when asked “I feel very comfortable talking about sex with people I’ve have dated” the number of those who agreed dropped by approximately ten percent to only 32%.

We can see that the desire for long-term relationship is prominent but the survey showed people required more skills and confidence in initiating a long-term relationship, and furthermore the survey showed that there was a desire for further education on how to engage in conversation about beginning a sexual relationship with potential romantic partner.

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Gender Roles in Relationships:

This section was designed to obtain a sense of how people see gender roles in relationships. The questions involved self-defined role, preference/difficulty of respective gender, and same-sex couples to show the prevalence of how gender roles shape their life and perspectives on relationships.

When participants were asked if “they think that there are very specific and defined roles for each gender in a relationship”, the results were 37% disagreed/strongly disagreed, 37% undecided, and 26% agreed/strongly agreed. When asked if they thought “it was important to stick with defined gender roles” when they were in a relationship 37% disagreed/strongly disagreed, 42% undecided, and 21% agreed/strongly agreed. This shows us that people feel some degree of social gender typecasting although more were not sure it was important. When asked if people felt family or friends “would look down on them if they did not conform to specific gender roles” there was overwhelming disagreement (69% for family and 59% for friends). In one data set where all the respondents were heterosexual we were surprised that 26% agreed that “in same sex relationships it’s important that there are still male and female roles”. However, when asked “I think my gender (man or woman) is the most difficult in a relationship” 58% were undecided and 25% agreed theirs was harder. In general, the results show that gender roles and pressure is not applicable unless the pressure is understood by members of the opposite sex.

This leaves us with the question of where does the pressure of gender conformity comes from? If it is not our family or our friends, then is it internal subconscious pressure or possibly an external pressure that was not reflected in the survey – certainly insight to the pressures to our counter parts experience needs attention.

Decision Making in Relationships:

This section is intended to understand how people deal with conflict in relationships. The questions mainly center on assessing levels of conflict resolution skills.

The questions began by asking if “all relationships have conflict and it’s healthy and important to the growth of the relationship” 63% agreed, 30% undecided, and strongly agree/disagree equal at 3.5% each, so pretty normal. When asked if they feel they have the “necessary skills to handle conflict and negotiate respectfully” we had 63% respond agree or strongly agree. When we compared that with the question “when fights or arguments occur both people are at fault because it takes two-to-tango” the replies were nearly equal thirds between disagree, undecided, and agree. In debriefing this question, we found that it largely depended on the argument. Some said it depended on the type of argument and others wanted to reserve the right to not “drop the issue” if they were not satisfied with the outcome. The response to “it’s more important to understand my partner’s point of view first” in order to resolve the conflict showed 40% were undecided and 19% disagreed. From this we see that respondents felt they have the skills to handle conflict but digress in their ability to apply those skills. Subsequently,

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they were not sure if considering their partner’s point of view in an argument was important or valid. Again, pointing to the limitation of applying conflict resolution skills.

Behaviors in Relationships:

This section delves into areas in which the survey asks about abusive behavior and physical acts of violence. Essentially we asked the question “what is violence” without being overt and potentially off-putting. It was interesting to compare answers in this section because there was a wide range of responses and many had conflicting positions.

We started with the question “I feel it’s important to be able to share thoughts about family and friends with the person I’m with” and we had unanimous responses of agree/strongly agree. (There were some marks on “strongly disagree” but when we debriefed the survey they stated they misread the question.) Again, this points to the desire for strong relationships.

When asked if “name calling was just as abusive as slapping or pushing” 75% agreed or strongly agreed, and 81% believed that “someone can be controlling without using insults or physical force”. We compared that with the replies that “being mean in a relationship makes you controlling” in which 44% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 30% were undecided. People could name the abusive behavior but when giving an everyday description, such as being mean, the responses differed. We then asked more direct questions related to physical and sexual violence. 67% agreed “if a woman stays in a relationship that is abusive, the woman is not at fault for being abused” and 70% believed that “if a person gets hit once by a partner that they will be hit again”. The participants acknowledged that domestic violence is not the fault of the victim and also that if there is previous violence, the violence often continues. Yet there is evidence of prominent social myths in that “a woman will claim rape if she was caught cheating” with 55% of respondents either agreed or were on the undecided side and 55% agreed that “women will call the police in order to win a fight” as a tactic women use.

When it came to questions on unhealthy dynamics of relationships survey participants consistently identified violence in physical, emotional, and verbal forms, but when it came to the practical application of understanding the dynamics as it applies to their own personal relationships the responses were not as consistent.

One of the major findings of the survey was the high amount of marks for “undecided” in response to the questions we asked. During the month of April when we gave out half of the survey and processed some of the answers with the group, many respondents stated that they were neutral in their responses because they have never thought about the topic before, they did not have relevant experience related to the question, or truly thought they could go either direction depending on the circumstance. Additionally, when asked about their knowledge or skills on a particular area people rated themselves rather high. Yet when a practical application of a skill was later presented their marks were contrary to the skill.

Overall we are extremely pleased with the results of the Nanda Gikendan project but we did experience challenges with our initial plans. We wanted each meeting to start with a Native

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leader (elder, organizer, respected member) to speak on a teaching related to the monthly theme for the opening 20 minutes before we followed it with a 40 minute presentation on domestic and sexual violence issues. We solicited help with recruiting speakers from attendees at the kick-off meeting but were unable to secure presenters (one presenter we rescheduled twice) while other speakers we invited were not available at the times of our events. We opted for an “ad hoc” approach to speakers in using staff as back-up and recruiting month-to-month. During the month where the theme was “courage” we asked a guest from Nebraska (and advocate MSH staff has known for years) if she could speak and she delivered a very powerful impromptu message that worked out very well with the theme. Also, unforeseen was the challenge to get a local service provider to speak at each event. We had the Native women’s advocate from DAIP speak and a youth worker from Life House who spoke and attended all but one of the events. The other times the people didn’t show up or respond to our request. We also underestimated the amount of staff time that it went into carrying out this project. Some it was the need for staff to fill in as a speaker but largely the vast amount of time involved in compiling data and creating the final report. Also, toward the end of the project attendance dropped to about one-third of our beginning averages. We could have increased our outreach effort and keyed additional interest by reporting on what had happened in the project thus far to maintain high attendance. If we were to do it again we would look at a shorter series, like 4-5 sessions, hosted in spring and fall.

One of the successful outcomes of this project was that Mending the Sacred Hoop was able to raise awareness of domestic violence in the Duluth community and how it looks specifically through the lens of Native women. At the start of the event, we gave a survey to the forum participants and learned that where we thought the community’s education level was at, and where it actually was, based on the information gathered from the surveys, was very different. It was not that our community was completely uneducated on the topic of domestic violence, but we found they lacked the vernacular to articulate the issue. We realized we needed to start at a basic level, so that the community could understand all of the elements of domestic violence. When we asked the group if they perceived domestic violence as wrong, we would be met with resounding agreement, but when we asked the deeper questions about domestic violence that was not physical or sexual in nature the answers were not so definite from the group participants. Education of the Power and Control wheel allowed the group to understand the non-physical tactics (such as, minimizing and blaming, financial control, use of children, etc.) that are involved so that they would be able to identify domestic violence outside of the physical and sexual realm. Education on the Equality Wheel gave examples of behaviors that exist in healthy and well balanced relationships.

Another successful outcome was that connections and relationships were made by people who would have not necessarily interacted outside of the group. The diversity of persons who attended, for instance, a normal gathering of forum participants would include; community leaders such as members of the American Indian Commission, service providers from local agencies, residents of alcohol and drug treatment programs, survivors of domestic and sexual assault, as well as members from the community both Native and non-Native. We saw members of the forum group attend each other’s events hosted outside of our meetings, provide support to each other when needed, and use their personal expertise to benefit and assist other participants when they were facing difficulty. For instance, a young Native woman that was attending the forum was having difficulty with her medical insurance, and was struggling to contact the appropriate people to fix the issue. Another woman from the forum worked at the clinic the

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young girl was seeking treatment from and personally made the contacts and guided her through the process from the inside. We have had many more people come into our office and visit with Mending the Sacred Hoop staff more and we’ve been invited to participate in other community forums. We are glad to have this happen because it shows that people understood the purpose of the traditional teachings and wove together relationships that relieved feelings of isolation, and reinforced a sense of community.

With the Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” project Mending the Sacred Hoop set out to assess awareness of domestic and sexual violence, provide community education, and engage people as active participants in a larger effort. Our regional and national experience fed the desire to create a spark locally as we saw the same issues at home as we did out-state and beyond in the need to create an active campaign to increase understanding of violence against women. We have seen quite often public awareness efforts based on the desires of the lead organization. They are the ones to decide what message to convey, guess at what areas people needs information on, and make a handful of products to spread about the community. While creating a poster or disseminating a program brochure can inform a community of an issue or service there is no interaction to really stir discussion and action.

By using surveys and involving the community in discussions we were able to share what we know and learn from the community how to spread knowledge on domestic and sexual violence. The thoughtfulness of the survey, forums, and discussion topics followed by further analysis and interpretation of the data was a critical step in assessing gaps because not everyone will engage in violence against women work. We know there are some standard facts to share about domestic and sexual violence and we discovered through this project that education for the community had to go beyond the basic education of how to identify tactics and name violence. Participants told us what tools they need, or would be most likely to use. They also gave recommendations for additional institutions (schools, prisons, homeless shelters, etc) to work with in spreading awareness. Reflection, practical application, vocabulary, and conversation material are the items most requested and that we will look to develop.

We are truly blessed with solid group of community members who shared openly and honestly about themselves and the community we live in. To them we give a Chi-Miigwetch for helping make social change.

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Programmatic outcomes: specifics for the DSACF final report

The goal for the Nanda Gikendan project was to: *Create a Highly Educated Community on Violence against Women Dynamics and Responses*¹.

The priority areas were to:

Support initiatives that strengthen and/or promote civic engagement

Increase bridging social capital by encouraging inclusiveness

Undertake studies on matters that impact civic issues or public policy

Build upon collaborative efforts to strengthen service results

Address underlying causes of community problems or are preventive in nature

The objective was to educate community members on domestic and sexual violence the services and resources available, educate non-native community and service providers on violence against Native women, utilize Ojibwe teachings to guide intervention and prevention strategies, develop a cohesive network of direct service providers; and establish a base for recruiting peer educators. The initial forum details the process and gets initial assessment of the baseline of knowledge, followed by 7 meetings based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings, the 9th forum will be assessing the change in knowledge or perceptions along with gathering future needs, and the final gathering will wrap up the training and honor those who have participated.

Our Community Partnerships included: the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Program to Aid Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence (PAVSA), Safe Haven Shelter (SH), and Life House (LH). Each provided varying levels of support for our project.²

DAIP aided the effort by posting fliers and sharing with Native people using their services. The Native woman's advocate attended a couple meetings and spoke at the August meeting on the service she provides for women and her work with St Louis and Carlton Counties and the Native communities of Duluth and Fond du Lac reservation.

AICHO had staffing issues, being short staffed (then trying to train in new staff) and later their shelter director left for a new job, so they were unable to commit to a presentation but we did fax and email our notices to them.

PAVSA also received notices and on the night that they were scheduled to present on their services the advocate had to back out due to an urgent issue.

¹ Response to “Describe your overall goal(s) regarding the situation described above. What are the objectives or ways in which you will meet those goal(s).” of the DSACF Grant Application

² Response to “What is your organization's relationship with other organizations working with similar missions? What is your organization's role relative to these organizations?” of the DSACF Grant Application

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SH has mainly been the on-going relationships of know staff from the years of doing domestic violence work. Some of our staff have volunteered there and most recently MSH has done training on the effects of violence on children for their volunteers.

We are forging a formal relationship with Life House as we enter into proactive and preventative areas of addressing violence against women. Individuals know staff at their program and have facilitated groups for youth years ago. We believe that many of the youth on the streets came from violent homes and are vulnerable to further abuse or becoming violent and controlling in their intimate relationships as well.

The benefits and impact we expected was to have a more highly educated community on issues on domestic violence³. We feel we educated many community members about domestic violence and shared resource material so they can further pass on what they learned in our forums. We have documented 62 different participants attending over the duration with 147 total attendees. We had five people offer to volunteer for us⁴. Four met with staff to discuss projects, three worked on projects contributing a total of 78 hours of volunteer time. One of the volunteers we ended up hiring for a local project, Cultural and Linguistics grant, and she also went on to speak at a future Nanda meeting.

Since the completion of this project we are taking components and approached into existing work as well as applying them to a future project⁵. The staff we hired to coordinate the Cultural and Linguistics’ grant from the Office on Violence Against Women has infused the educational approach into groups she has organized for sexual assault survivors. The hope is to recruit more community women into being trained as sexual assault advocates thus adding to our overall vision of having a highly educated community. That project still continues to provide advocates with facilitation skill development and culturally competent services. Currently we are preparing an application to First Nations Development Institute for their Native Youth and Culture Fund program to extend our effort to native youth specifically combining education and prevention. We did not receive funding from the Office on Violence Against Women for the Engaging Men and Youth Grant yet we plan to resubmit in July of 2012 as we will data demonstrating the success of our local effort.

We attempted to start with pre/post-testing and realized that the way we train and present the issues was not driven in ways that lends itself easily to that evaluation format⁶. We opted for doing the “Where Do You Stand” activity that engages people into discussion while having a true and false fact base element to it. Additionally, we created a multi-faceted survey tool to examine attitudes and perceptions the gather information on attitudes about relationships and during many of the events we facilitated discussions and collected feedback on what steps people

³ Response to “How will the proposed activities benefit the community, being as clear as you can about the impact you expect to have?” of the DSACF Grant Application

⁴ Response to “What do you want to happen as a result of your activities? Please describe your criteria for success.” of the DSACF Grant Application where we wanted more people to get involved in the work

⁵ Response to “What are the long-term funding strategies (if applicable) for sustaining this effort?” of the DSACF Grant Application

⁶ Response to “How will you measure these changes?” of the DSACF Grant Application

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would actually take to get involved and tools they would use. We would still like to create specific pre/post test measures but foresee that being part of the educational tools steaming from this project. The Nanda Gikendan project lead us to get much more information than anticipated to help us best design for peer-to-peer presentations for open community discussion for use by the average person.

Goal: 200 community members	Achieved: 147 community members (62 different people)
Goal: 50% attend five or more	Achieved: 7 attended five or more
Goal: 20% attend all ten	Achieved: 0 (however, we had 4 people attend seven)
Goal: 10% get involved	Achieved: 5 volunteered (78 hours of volunteer time)
Goal: 05% peer educators	Achieved: 1 documented (8 kits disseminated)

During our final meeting we presented on the overall outcomes for the year. Staff, Board, community members, and service providers were invited to review the results and discuss next steps⁷. From our evaluation of the project⁸ we realize that the longer the project to more outreach needs to happen to sustain a large turnout. Another option would be to have condensed phases where activities are happening throughout one month for a few weeks quarterly. Certainly, from our most devoted attendees they were most interested in seeing the events continue. From the survey results and activities conducted through this project we plan to develop self-reflection tools, small group discussion scenarios, to accompany the digital stories and tool kits we created with this project that we further address attitudes and perceptions that contribute to violence against women.

⁷ Response to “Who will be involved in evaluating this work (staff, board, constituents, community, and consultants)?” of the DSACF Grant Application

⁸ Response to “What will you do with your evaluation results?” of the DSACF Grant Application