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Aboriginal Women's Program  
Family Violence Initiative  
Evaluation Study —  
Final Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### BACKGROUND

In 1988, the federal Family Violence Initiative was established, initiating a long-term national approach to family violence prevention. The Aboriginal Women's Program<sup>1</sup>—the primary source of federal funding to Aboriginal women's organizations—has been a partner in the Family Violence Initiative since 1991. The main strategic focus of the Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative (AWP/FVI) has been to enable Aboriginal women's organizations to address family violence issues at the community level, with a focus on the extended family and the development of holistic and culturally appropriate responses.

### PURPOSE OF THE AWP/FVI EVALUATION

The Department of Canadian Heritage is signatory to the 1998 interdepartmental *Family Violence Initiative Accountability Framework* and to the *Reporting Framework*. This evaluation contributes to the federal Family Initiative five-year summary report, and offers guidance for further planning.

### THE ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S PROGRAM FAMILY VIOLENCE INITIATIVE COMPONENT

#### *The Aboriginal Women's Program*

The AWP/FVI is integrally linked to the overall objective of the Aboriginal Women's Program. The objective of the Aboriginal Women's Program is to:

*enable Aboriginal women to influence policies, programs, legislation and decision making that affect their social, cultural, economic and political well-being within their own communities and Canadian society while maintaining their cultural distinctiveness and preserving their cultural identity.*<sup>2</sup>

The AWP enables Aboriginal women's organizations to advance their perspectives and interests and play an active role within their communities through a range of activities

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<sup>1</sup> The origins of the Aboriginal Women's Program (AWP) date back to 1972, with the Native Women's Program (formerly administered by the then Department of the Secretary of State of Canada). Since the 1993 consolidation of departments, the Department of Canadian Heritage has been responsible for administering the AWP.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage Web site, [http://www.pch.gc.ca/pubs/2002/01\\_e.htm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/pubs/2002/01_e.htm).

and projects that contribute to improved social conditions, cultural retention and preservation, economic well-being and leadership development while maintaining cultural distinctiveness and preserving cultural identity. It is distinct from the Women's Program administered through Status of Women Canada, which is mandated to support action by women's organizations seeking to advance gender equality.

The AWP is an important part of the federal government's long-term, broad-based policy approach as articulated in *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*,<sup>3</sup> a plan that recognizes that "Aboriginal women have traditionally played a significant role in the history of Aboriginal people and will strengthen their participation in self-government processes," and that this role is "particularly relevant for women at the community level."<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative***

The AWP/FVI enables Aboriginal women's groups to address family violence within their communities. The AWP/FVI is built on the following premises:

- Aboriginal women play a critical role in shaping and contributing to the health and vitality of their families and communities; and
- efforts to address family violence in ways that respect the importance of cultural distinctiveness and the preservation of cultural identity are key to the prevention and reduction incidences of family violence.

Building on results achieved during the 1991-1995 Family Violence Initiative, the objective of the AWP/FVI is to:

*enable Aboriginal women to address violence-related issues within the nuclear as well as extended family within Aboriginal Communities.*

### ***AWP/FVI Activities and Priorities***

The AWP/FVI provides funding to Aboriginal women's organizations for projects that address:

*"issues surrounding violence in the extended and nuclear families in their communities and in the examination and development of holistic and culturally*

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<sup>3</sup> This action plan was created in 1998 in response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (1998) *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/gs/chg\\_3.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/gs/chg_3.html) p. 15.

*appropriate responses to family violence.”<sup>5</sup>*

The AWP/FVI is community-driven and distinct from the approaches of mainstream women’s groups that tend to be based on western models and assumptions about gender relations and violence—assumptions that may not have relevance to the traditions, values and experiences of Aboriginal women and their families. The AWP/FVI operates with the flexibility to accommodate a range of innovative, culturally specific approaches.

The AWP/FVI is a unique initiative specifically designed to enable and support the work of Aboriginal women’s organizations—in a way that encompasses the notions of extended families and communities—on family violence issues. It supports the unique contributions that Aboriginal women make to the development of community capacity that can advance individual, family and community well-being.

Various federal programs—including, for example, the activities undertaken by other participating departments in the Family Violence Initiative, the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, as well as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation—address other related dimensions of violence affecting Aboriginal peoples in complementary ways.

### ***Target Population/Reach***

National, regional and community-based independent Aboriginal women’s organizations that represent the interests of Aboriginal women are eligible for funding under the AWP/FVI. Initially, the AWP/FVI focussed on off-reserve organizations, however, this focus has not been to the exclusion of on-reserve organizations. The beneficiaries include Aboriginal women, their families, and their communities.

### ***Governance***

The AWP/FVI is administered by the Aboriginal Women’s Program, Aboriginal Peoples’ and Human Rights Program Directorate. The national headquarters office participates in the Interdepartmental Working Group of the Family Violence Initiative. It oversees the development and implementation of the AWP/FVI and is responsible for the AWP/FVI performance reporting. The regional offices are responsible for the administration and management of community-based project funding.

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage, Aboriginal Women’s Program (n.d.) *Logic Model—Aboriginal Women’s Program Family Violence Initiative*.

### *AWP/FVI Resources*

Since December 1996, the AWP/FVI receives \$215,000 through the annual Family Violence Initiative allocation. These resources facilitate the work of Aboriginal women's organizations by providing short-term project funding that allow for leveraging from other sources to occur and that "seed" further activities in Aboriginal communities.

The majority of the AWP/FVI funds are administered and dispersed through the department's regional offices. A small proportion of funding is retained at national headquarters for national projects that have broader, multi-community applications. AWP/FVI resources are also dovetailed with other funding available from the Aboriginal Women's Program. The AWP/FVI has also co-funded work with other federal FVI partners.<sup>6</sup> Aboriginal women's organizations contribute "in-kind" resources to projects as well.

### *Expected Results*

The AWP/FVI contributes to the following overall key results of the Family Violence Initiative, as they relate to Aboriginal communities:

- efficient and coordinated federal policy development and programming on family violence issues;
- enhanced prevention of and improved community response to family violence, along with the development and implementation of community activities;
- reduced tolerance for and increased public awareness of family violence; and
- reduced occurrences of family violence.

## **EVALUATION METHODS**

The evaluation methods used in this study included:

- a key document review, including a review of past evaluation reports, annual performance reports and AWP/FVI program information;
- a review of national headquarters' project system data;
- a detailed review of a selected sample of AWP funded FVI project files;
- key informant interviews with AWP national and regional staff, and selected external players;

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<sup>6</sup> For example, this occurred at the national level in the project *Mitouni Kiyamashtayw—Silence is Deep (Métis National Council of Women)*, which received funding from various Family Violence Initiative partners.

- a learning circle involving selected project recipients; and
- a review and analysis of the AWP/FVI Logic Model.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

### Relevance

In principle, the AWP/FVI continues to be consistent with departmental and government-wide priorities. It is built on the premise that fostering community participation, engagement and a sense of connection can make a difference to the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. The program design is in accordance with the following strategic priorities contained within the department's Strategic Framework:

- *connections*—fostering and strengthening connections among Canadians and deepening understanding across diverse communities; and
- *active citizenship and civic participation*—promoting understanding of the rights and responsibilities of shared citizenship and fostering opportunities to participate in Canada's civic life.<sup>7</sup>

The AWP/FVI is also consistent with *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* which emphasizes the importance of supporting healthy, sustainable Aboriginal communities; the need to find new ways to empower individuals and their communities, with a focus on ways that will promote meaningful and lasting change; the need for access to culturally relevant programs and services to help improve quality of life; and, the importance of investing in people to support individual, family and community well-being. The long-term, strategic approach of the AWP/FVI is also consistent with the priority directions set forth in *The Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session of the 37th Parliament* (January 30, 2001) which emphasizes the Government of Canada's commitment to *strengthening its relationship with Aboriginal people within all of the Government's priorities*. One such priority includes the long-term federal commitment to addressing family violence through the Family Violence Initiative.

### Impacts and Effects

#### *What are the activities and outputs of the AWP/FVI?*

The primary types of projects funded through the AWP/FVI are:

- public awareness activities (such as workshops and tools);

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<sup>7</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage (April 2002) *Strategic Framework*.



- healing and wellness strategies that support individuals, families and communities in addressing family violence;
- training and skills development events that strengthen community capacity to prevent and respond to family violence; and
- information gathering, planning and strategy development activities that help to focus, mobilize and engage community members in responding to family violence.

Many of these AWP/FVI activities incorporate traditional as well as other innovative approaches.

### *What are the short-term outcomes of the AWP/FVI?*

The many positive, short-term outcomes realized through the AWP/FVI are summarized by project category:

**Heightened public awareness:** Many of the projects that directly—or indirectly—address public awareness have helped to heighten awareness and knowledge of family violence issues within Aboriginal women’s organizations specifically, and within the broader community. In many cases, public awareness activities have included action-oriented components designed to help participants identify and engage in community-level strategies. Strengthening intergenerational connections through public dialogue about violence is another important outcome. This was evident in various projects targeted at raising awareness among young women and young men as well as youth-elder exchanges.

**Healing and wellness:** Many of the healing and wellness projects have helped individuals, families and communities progress in their healing from family violence and in their adoption of wellness strategies. Traditional healing methods and supports have enabled women living in abusive situations, or coping with abuse from the past, to strengthen their social connections, acquire new skills, develop positive relationships with their partners, children and families, and get on with everyday living. Supporting women in their efforts to heal, acquire skills, and achieve self-sufficiency, wellness and happiness is a sound path to healthier families and communities. Traditional ways of healing and promoting wellness are increasingly valued within—and outside of—the Aboriginal community and therefore contribute to the broader notions of family and community wellness.

**Training and skills development:** Projects that have focussed on training and skills development have enriched the assets available to communities to address family violence. This includes building up knowledge on family violence, as well as the acquisition of concrete skills (e.g. leadership, conflict resolution, crisis management)

within communities to address family violence issues. There is, however, a challenge in sustaining this knowledge and skills base within the short-term funding framework of initiatives such as the AWP/FVI.

**Information gathering, planning and strategy development:** Projects that have focussed on information gathering, planning and strategy development have contributed to community capacity to identify problems, open up community dialogue, develop plans and solutions and mobilize communities to address family violence. A number of these projects are ongoing, however sustaining momentum is an ongoing challenge.

**Model development:** Much has been achieved toward the development of promising practices. Information-sharing, dissemination and adoption of promising practices could be facilitated by federal investment in knowledge synthesis, information exchange and networking. It is important that knowledge be shared in ways that are culturally and practically accessible to Aboriginal communities.

### *What are the long-term outcomes of the AWP/FVI?*

AWP/FVI activities contribute to the long-term process of changes in awareness and understanding of family violence issues; increase community readiness and willingness to respond to family violence; and develop community capacity to address family violence issues. We caution that given the low level of AWP/FVI resources and the short-term nature of project funding, long-term expectations concerning this investment should be modest.

### *To what extent have different types of individuals/communities/agencies benefited from the FVI?*

The majority of the AWP/FVI funding is dispersed to Aboriginal women's organizations located in off-reserve communities. The cross-country distribution of projects varies.<sup>13</sup> Of the 84 projects reviewed, 12.3 percent (11) were from the Pacific Region; 41.9 percent (34) were from the Prairie Region; 8.6 percent (7) were from the Ontario Region; 19.8 percent (16) were from the Atlantic Region; 8.6 percent (7) were from the North and 5 (6.1 percent) were national. Cross-country coverage is difficult to achieve with the level of resources available. We also note that the national projects had components that included a multi-community focus (in that they brought together people from many communities).

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<sup>13</sup> Note: we would expect some degrees of variation given the differences in the population base of Aboriginal population and number of Aboriginal women's organizations in each region.

The current funding process and criteria are perceived to be barriers to participation. A process that would give staff some autonomy in how information is requested and provided from communities is desired (e.g. oral presentations that are documented).

There is a tension between the AWP/FVI's initial focus on off-reserve groups and the more recent focus on on-reserve groups, given the limited program resources. At the same time, there is recognition that the on-reserve and off-reserve distinction is problematic in the context of Aboriginal women's lives and the violence they experience. There is also a concern that the AWP/FVI may be missing connections to women who are in transition between on- and off-reserve communities.

Some of the key informant interviews, as well as the Learning Circle discussion questioned the relevance of AWP/FVI funding being used to support national level projects.

***Are the activities undertaken for the FVI still relevant to the target population?***

The AWP/FVI activities are still relevant to the target population. The community-driven focus and AWP's responsive, flexible approach are highly valued.

***What unintended consequences (+ and -) have occurred?***

We did not identify any unintended consequences of the AWP/FVI.

***Program Administration and Effectiveness***

***Have the AWP/FVI activities been delivered to and by stakeholders and beneficiaries in an efficient and effective manner?***

The AWP has been delivered with relative efficiency and effectiveness. Our national and regional project file review reveals that there is a lack of standardization and consistency in the approach to file documentation and record keeping across the AWP/FVI. This may compromise the capacity of the AWP/FVI to be delivered with efficiency and effectiveness.

***Concerns Regarding Resources***

There are concerns that the level of resources (both human and financial) that is dedicated to the AWP/FVI does not match the scope of the problem, the diversity of needs, or the priority of the issue within Aboriginal communities. The low level of resourcing hampers the AWP's work in several ways. First, staff do not actively promote the AWP/FVI because they believe it is unfair to promote the AWP/FVI when the resources are so limited. Second, staff refrain from collaborating with other departments

because they feel they have “nothing serious to put on the table.”

***Are the administrative & delivery practices of the Department of Canadian Heritage capable of ensuring that stakeholders and beneficiaries are aware of and can access the FVI?***

The AWP/FVI has been delivered reactively, rather than proactively. Currently, there are no standard mechanisms or sets of materials to ensure that the target groups are aware of and can access the AWP/FVI in culturally appropriate ways. We note that the AWP is currently producing a new brochure that will include information about the AWP/FVI.

We also note that staff feel limited, in that the AWP/FVI does not have the capacity to undertake the kind of social/community development work that might help organizations successfully access AWP/FVI funding and implement projects.

***Is the reporting level sufficient to meet accountability requirements?***

The AWP/FVI has experienced difficulty in obtaining project-level performance information, given the nature of the projects funded and limited resources for evaluation or performance reporting. A random review of project files unearthed limited product or performance results information. Staff and funding recipients acknowledge the importance of being able to ‘show results’, however, the following issues and barriers were identified:

- a lack of resources at both regional and project levels to monitor, document and report on project results;
- standard methods of evaluation and reporting are unsuited to, and insufficient in, supporting meaningful evaluation activity and project reporting
- the capacity within many Aboriginal women’s organizations is already stretched to the limit;
- many of the projects funded are not amenable to producing the kind of evaluation data and performance reporting information typically required by federal central agencies;
- given the nature of traditional healing strategies, it is challenging to measure, and put into words, how project funding has made a difference; moreover, many of the projects are conducted in traditional languages, using traditional concepts that are difficult to translate and put into written English or French.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### *What lessons can be learned from the AWP/FVI?*

#### *Investments Help Aboriginal Women at the Community Level*

The AWP/FVI has enabled Aboriginal women’s organizations to address family violence at the community level in a manner suitable to them. Even though the AWP/FVI represents a small financial investment, there is agreement that it has helped Aboriginal women make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and families in Aboriginal communities. Sufficient and equitable access to AWP/FVI funds—and therefore equal and equitable opportunities for Aboriginal women’s organizations across the country to make a difference— is a concern. With proactive program promotion and sufficient resources, the AWP/FVI would have much greater potential to achieve results than is currently being realized.

In many cases project work is supported by unpaid and volunteer time over and above what is identified as the organization’s “in-kind” contribution to the project. In some cases, organizations have been able to sustain their efforts only out of sheer determination and commitment, sometimes at personal cost to themselves and their families.

#### *The Benefits of a Flexible Approach*

The AWP/FVI’s flexible, community-driven approach is seen as a program strength. It allows the AWP/FVI to adapt to and meet community needs and learn from community experiences. It also fosters an innovative and creative learning environment.

#### *The Importance of Ongoing Learning and Sharing*

There is a rich cache of knowledge and practical experience that resides within Aboriginal women’s organizations. More emphasis on ongoing learning and sharing would result in greater cross-fertilization of ideas and approaches.

#### *Success Factors*

The key factors that contributed to the success of projects at the community level are provided in the following table:

Summary of Success Factors
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a focus on traditional ways of teaching, learning and healing</li> <li>• leadership</li> <li>• vision</li> <li>• involvement of elders</li> <li>• involvement of family</li> <li>• intergenerational activity</li> <li>• connection to the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commitment</li> <li>• dedication</li> <li>• determination</li> <li>• volunteerism</li> <li>• an ability to stretch resources a long way and leverage other resources.</li> </ul>
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*The Ongoing Challenges*

In many cases, success was achieved in spite of the many hurdles that Aboriginal women’s organizations in general experience. The challenges are summarized in the following table:

Summary of Ongoing Challenges	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inadequate funding</li> <li>• unrealistic expectations and time lines of funders for proposal writing, project activity and reporting</li> <li>• inadequate material resources</li> <li>• lack of funding for administration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cultural differences and barriers</li> <li>• discrimination, stereotyping and racism directed at Aboriginal women, families and communities</li> <li>• language barriers, mis-communication or no communication with officials.</li> </ul>

***What best practices can be shared between projects?***

A store of knowledge is growing and should be shared to build promising practices. Information-sharing and exchange can inspire, lend support and motivate to others, and the foster ongoing innovation. The AWP/FVI is ideally positioned to facilitate this process, through workshops, learning circles, and the use of information technology.

***What recommendations can be made regarding future directions for the AWP/FVI?***

Key informants and Learning Circle participants stressed the importance of building a positive vision and approach to family violence in Aboriginal communities which emphasizes the importance of teaching traditional values, culture and practices. Proactive and intergenerational approaches are needed. Above all, the Aboriginal ways of seeing and articulating the world are different from mainstream Canadian culture and must be recognized and understood. The use of holistic traditions and practices and the need to strengthen connections between women, their families and communities is essential.

Specific suggestions for the future direction of the AWP/FVI included:

**Target Population:** a continued focus on Aboriginal women, their families and communities and increased attention to youth while continuing to support the inclusion of the extended family in healing and wellness processes.

**Resources:** Adequate, ongoing funding is key to moving forward.

**Program principles:** The AWP/FVI program should continue to operate with flexibility to meet the different needs across the country and it should be open, transparent, and accountable to Aboriginal women’s organizations.

**Program promotion:** The AWP/FVI should be actively promoted at community levels.

**Funding process:** The funding process could be more standardized from region to region.

**Program evaluation:** The AWP/FVI should work with Aboriginal women’s organizations to develop more meaningful ways of measuring project “impacts.”

**Plan and support future opportunities for gathering, learning and sharing:** Face-to-face meetings and networking opportunities can help to maximize the project experience and the learning that results. Such opportunities would reduce the isolation that project sponsors experience and inspire and build momentum for future action. They would help departmental staff gain an understanding of project experiences and results and form the basis for identifying and disseminating promising practices.

## CONCLUSION

The AWP/FVI has made a modest—but important—contribution to the work of Aboriginal women’s organizations in their ongoing efforts to address family violence. The current level of federal investment, however, does not match the scope of the problem, or the priority of this issue for Aboriginal women’s organizations. While we can laud the “successes” achieved with a small level of investment, these successes owe much to the dedication, commitment and time invested by Aboriginal women’s organizations. These successes suggest two things. First with proper promotion, sufficient resources and more emphasis on community and social development, AWP staff would be better equipped to enable Aboriginal women’s organizations to address family violence. With improved access to information about AWP/FVI funding, and sufficient resources and capacity, Aboriginal women’s organizations could have more influence—and meaningful impact—on this issue at the community level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1.** The Aboriginal Women’s Program Family Violence Initiative (AWP/FVI) should continue its efforts to enable Aboriginal women’s organizations to address family violence within their respective communities in culturally appropriate ways—ways that include and reflect individual, family, community aspirations regarding healing and wellness.

**Recommendation 2.** For future phases of the Family Violence Initiative, the Aboriginal Women’s Program Family Violence Initiative (AWP/FVI) should strengthen efforts to engage in an ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal women’s organizations on family violence issues. This will help ensure the ongoing relevancy of the AWP/FVI to Aboriginal women and their respective communities.

**Recommendation 3.** The AWP/FVI should foster an environment of ongoing learning. Traditional and non-traditional mechanisms to improve information sharing among Aboriginal women’s organizations and between the departmental staff should be explored.

**Recommendation 4.** The AWP/FVI has the potential to have greater impacts than it currently has—impacts that would be possible to realize if the capacity to engage with Aboriginal women’s organizations and to promote and administer the AWP/FVI were increased.

**Recommendation 5.** The AWP/FVI Logic Model should be refined and performance measurement and reporting tools should be developed to better capture project performance and impacts.



## INTRODUCTION

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### *Background*

In Canada, in 1988, following pressure from women's organizations and public debate on the issue, the Family Violence Initiative was established. This step initiated a process for developing a long-term national approach to family violence prevention, which has evolved in a series of phases.<sup>14</sup> The Aboriginal Women's Program<sup>15</sup>—the primary source of federal funding to Aboriginal women's organizations—has been a partner in the Family Violence Initiative since 1991. The main strategic focus of the Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative (AWP/FVI) has been to enable Aboriginal women's organizations to address family violence issues at the community level, with a focus on the extended family and the development of holistic and culturally appropriate responses.

Since December 1996, some of the federal government's family violence activities have been funded through an annual allocation of \$7 million. This annual allocation is used to coordinate the Family Violence Initiative, collect national data, address identified gaps and operate the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Of the \$460,000 that the Department of Canadian Heritage receives:

- \$215,000 is allocated to the Multiculturalism Family Violence Initiative;
- \$215,000 is allocated to the AWP/FVI; and
- \$30,000 is allocated to the Strategic Policy and Management Branch toward evaluation and research.

The Department of Canadian Heritage also contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the Family Violence Initiative through its ongoing departmental programming and budgets.

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<sup>14</sup> The first "phase" of the Family Violence Initiative began with \$40 million in time-limited funding to provide shelters to abused women and their children. In 1991, the Family Violence Initiative expanded to \$136 million, again in time-limited funding, to increase public awareness and understanding of family violence; strengthen the criminal justice legal framework; provide prevention, protection and treatment services to Aboriginal and Inuit communities; provide emergency shelters and long-term housing; and enhance national information exchange and coordination. During this Phase the Aboriginal Women's Program received \$500,000 annually.

<sup>15</sup> The origins of the Aboriginal Women's Program (AWP) date back to 1972, with the Native Women's Program (formerly administered by the then Department of the Secretary of State of Canada). Since the 1993 consolidation of departments, the Department of Canadian Heritage has been responsible for administering the AWP.

The Department of Canadian Heritage is signatory to the interdepartmental *Family Violence Initiative Accountability Framework* and to the *Reporting Framework*, established in 1998. The Family Violence Initiative is currently preparing a five-year summary report of its achievements. As part of this process, and to guide departmental planning on future family violence activities, the Department of Canadian Heritage contracted with JamiesonHartGraves Consulting to evaluate the Aboriginal Women's Program component of the Family Violence Initiative (the AWP/FVI).

### ***Purpose of this Report***

This report presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the AWP/FVI evaluation.

### ***Organization of this Report***

This Report includes the following:

- An Overview of the AWP Family Violence Initiative Component
- Evaluation Profile
- Evaluation Findings
- Lessons Learned
- Conclusion
- Recommendations

## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE AWP FAMILY VIOLENCE INITIATIVE COMPONENT**

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### ***The Aboriginal Women's Program***

The AWP/FVI is integrally linked to the overall objective of the Aboriginal Women's Program. The objective of the Aboriginal Women's Program is to:

*enable Aboriginal women to influence policies, programs, legislation and decision making that affect their social, cultural, economic and political well-being within their own communities and Canadian society while maintaining their cultural distinctiveness and preserving their cultural identity.*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage Web site, [http://www.pch.gc.ca/pubs/2002/01\\_e.htm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/pubs/2002/01_e.htm).

The AWP enables Aboriginal women's organizations to advance their perspectives and interests and play an active role within their communities through a range of activities and projects that contribute to improved social conditions, cultural retention and preservation, economic well-being and leadership development while maintaining cultural distinctiveness and preserving cultural identity. It is distinct from the Women's Program administered through Status of Women Canada, which is mandated to support action by women's organizations seeking to advance gender equality.

The AWP is an important part of the federal government's long-term, broad-based policy approach as articulated in *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*,<sup>17</sup> a plan that recognizes that "Aboriginal women have traditionally played a significant role in the history of Aboriginal people and will strengthen their participation in self-government processes," and that this role is "particularly relevant for women at the community level."<sup>18</sup>

Currently, the Aboriginal Women's Program has two additional components to its base funding: the Family Violence Initiative (the subject of this report) and the Self-government Initiative (which enables Aboriginal women to participate fully and equitably in consultations and the decision-making process concerning self-government).

### *The Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative*

The AWP/FVI is a long-term strategic approach to address family violence issues within extended Aboriginal families. It is built on the premise that Aboriginal women play a critical role in shaping and contributing to the health and vitality of their families and communities. It is further built on the premise that efforts to address family violence in ways that respect the importance of cultural distinctiveness and the preservation of cultural identity are key to the prevention and reduction incidences of family violence within Aboriginal families and communities.

The current phase builds on the progress made and results achieved during the 1991-1995 Family Violence Initiative, which through the AWP provided support for Aboriginal women to conduct community projects to promote public education and awareness of violence within nuclear and extended Aboriginal families. An evaluation of the results of the 1991-1995 phase of the AWP/FVI emphasized that the "work in this area has only just begun." The overall objective for the current phase did not waiver from the original premises of, and commitment to this long-term strategic approach. Specifically, the

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<sup>17</sup> This action plan was created in 1998 in response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (1998) *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/gs/chg\\_3.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/gs/chg_3.html) p. 15.

objective has been to:

*enable Aboriginal women to address violence-related issues within the nuclear as well as extended family within Aboriginal Communities.*

The AWP/FVI is intended to offer Aboriginal women the opportunity to advance the development of holistic and culturally appropriate approaches, aimed at breaking down the isolation and fragmentation that Aboriginal communities may experience when confronting family violence issues, and rebuilding connections. This focus reflects the long-term nature of the problem and the recognition of the need for a long-term commitment to solutions that reflect the community development perspective.

### ***AWP/FVI Activities and Priorities***

The primary activity of the AWP/FVI is the provision of funding support to Aboriginal women's organizations for projects that address "issues surrounding violence in the extended and nuclear families in their communities and in the examination and development of holistic and culturally appropriate responses to family violence."<sup>19</sup> The projects focus may vary, according to community-identified needs. At the outset of this phase of the initiative, the AWP/FVI's intended priority focus was on projects that would produce:

- culturally appropriate models to address various family violence issues
- trained Aboriginal volunteers and community leaders
- culturally appropriate information materials
- links with mainstream service and treatment providers
- networks and partnering strategies with mainstream and Aboriginal service and treatment organizations
- raised awareness of family violence issues, and
- community/group strategies, action plans and frameworks for addressing family violence.

The AWP/FVI adheres to a community-driven approach, led by Aboriginal women's organizations which identify and propose specific projects. The AWP/FVI approach is distinct from the approaches of mainstream women's groups that tend to be based on western models and assumptions about gender relations and violence—assumptions that may not have relevance to the traditions, values and experiences of Aboriginal women and their families. Consequently, the AWP/FVI is unique in its focus on violence issues within nuclear and extended families. It seeks to enable and support efforts of Aboriginal

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<sup>19</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage, Aboriginal Women's Program (n.d.) *Logic Model—Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative*.

women to address these issues in ways that are culturally appropriate and sensitive to the experience of Aboriginal peoples and context of their communities. The AWP/FVI's intended activities and priorities are not prescriptive as the initiative operates with the flexibility to accommodate a range of innovative, culturally specific approaches that Aboriginal women's organizations may want to pursue at the community level.

The Aboriginal Women's Program is a unique initiative specifically designed to enable and support the work of Aboriginal women's organizations—in a way that encompasses the notions of extended families and communities—on family violence issues. It supports the unique contributions that Aboriginal women make to the development of community capacity that can advance individual, family and community well-being. We note that various federal programs—including, for example, the activities undertaken by other participating departments in the Family Violence Initiative, the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, as well as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation— address other related dimensions of violence affecting Aboriginal peoples in complementary ways. The key elements are described in the following table.



Initiative	Contribution to Addressing Family Violence Issues of Concern to Aboriginal Peoples
Family Violence Initiative <sup>20</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation delivers the Shelter Enhancement Initiative and works with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to construct on-reserve shelters</li> <li>• Correctional Service of Canada addresses Aboriginal offender family violence issues through research, culturally specific treatment programs and staff training</li> <li>• The Department of Justice Canada reviews, researches and reforms criminal justice legislation policy, funds community-based projects and supports public legal education and information</li> <li>• The Department of Canadian Heritage enables Aboriginal women’s organizations to address family violence in culturally specific ways at the community level, with a focus on both nuclear and extended families</li> <li>• The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs provides funding to First Nations’ communities for projects on family violence and provides operational funding for emergency shelters</li> <li>• Health Canada researches the population health consequences of family violence and develops prevention resources</li> <li>• Royal Canadian Mounted Police supports community-based workshops on victims’ issues, sexual assault and relationship violence and assists communities in problem-solving family violence issues</li> <li>• Statistics Canada improves national level data on family violence</li> <li>• Status of Women Canada supports projects that lead to systemic changes and focusses on violence against women and the girl child</li> </ul>
National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention	<p>The National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Department of Justice Canada, complements <i>Gathering Strength—Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan</i> by focussing on the prevention of crime in the community and the improvement of community safety through a balance of situational crime prevention and social development approaches, delivered in partnership with communities, including NGOs. The strategy’s priority focus includes children and youth, Aboriginal peoples and women’s personal safety.</p>
Healing Foundation	<p>The Healing Foundation funds projects which address the legacy, including intergenerational impacts, of sexual and physical abuse suffered by Aboriginal people through the residential school system.</p>

<sup>20</sup> This list only includes those departments whose programs also contribute to the Aboriginal dimension of the FVI.

### ***Target Population/Reach***

National, regional and community-based independent Aboriginal women's organizations that represent the interests of Aboriginal women are eligible for funding under the AWP/FVI. Initially, the AWP/FVI focussed on off-reserve organizations, however, this focus has not been to the exclusion of on-reserve organizations. The beneficiaries include Aboriginal women, their families, and their communities.

### ***Governance***

The AWP/FVI is administered by the Aboriginal Women's Program, Aboriginal Peoples' and Human Rights Program Directorate. The national headquarters office participates in the Interdepartmental Working Group of the Family Violence Initiative. It oversees the development and implementation of the AWP/FVI and is responsible for the AWP/FVI performance reporting. The department's Corporate Review Branch is responsible for the evaluation of the AWP/FVI. The regional offices are responsible for the administration and management of community-based project funding.

### ***AWP/FVI Resources***

The AWP/FVI receives \$215,000 through the annual Family Violence Initiative allocation. The AWP/FVI allocation is intended to facilitate the work of Aboriginal women's organizations by providing short-term project funding that allow for leveraging from other sources to occur and that "seed" further activities in Aboriginal communities. This evaluation found that Aboriginal women's organizations contribute substantial "in-kind" resources, especially volunteer or unpaid hours, to plan and implement the projects. The majority of the AWP/FVI funds are administered and dispersed through the department's regional offices. A small proportion of funding is retained at national headquarters for national projects that have broader, multi-community applications. We note that the Aboriginal Women's Program may also dovetail AWP/FVI resources with other funding available from the Aboriginal Women's Program. The AWP/FVI has also co-funded work with other federal FVI partners.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Expected Results***

The AWP/FVI contributes to the following overall key results of the Family Violence Initiative, as they relate to Aboriginal communities:

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<sup>21</sup> For example, this occurred at the national level in the project *Mitouni Kiyamashtayw—Silence is Deep (Métis National Council of Women)*, which received funding from various Family Violence Initiative partners.

- efficient and coordinated federal policy development and programming on family violence issues;
- enhanced prevention of and improved community response to family violence, along with the development and implementation of community activities;
- reduced tolerance for and increased public awareness of family violence; and
- reduced occurrences of family violence.

## EVALUATION PROFILE

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### *Evaluation Issues*

The evaluation focussed on the following issues:

<b>Relevance</b>	Does the AWP/FVI continue to be consistent with departmental and government-wide priorities?
<b>Impacts and Effects</b>	What are the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the AWP/FVI? To what extent has the target population benefited? Are activities still relevant? Have there been any unintended consequences?
<b>Program Administration and Effectiveness</b>	Has the AWP/FVI been administered and delivered in an efficient and effective manner? Are administrative and delivery practices appropriate?
<b>Lessons Learned and Future Direction</b>	What lessons can be learned from the AWP/FVI? What practices can be shared? What are the recommendations for the future?
<b>Logic Model Analysis</b>	In addition, we were asked to review and analyze the AWP/FVI Logic Model.

### *Evaluation Methods*

The evaluation methods used in this study included:

- a key document review, including a review of past evaluation reports, annual performance reports and AWP/FVI program information;
- a review of national headquarters' project system data;
- a detailed review of a selected sample of AWP funded FVI project files;
- key informant interviews with AWP national and regional staff, and selected



- external players;
- a learning circle involving selected project recipients; and
- a review and analysis of the AWP/FVI Logic Model.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

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The evaluation findings are presented by evaluation issue and related questions.

### *Relevance*

***Does the AWP/FVI continue to be consistent with departmental and government-wide priorities?***

***Key Finding: In principle, the AWP/FVI continues to be consistent with departmental and government-wide priorities.***

### *Consistency with Departmental Priorities*

The Department of Canadian Heritage's mission statement focusses on the development of a more cohesive and creative Canada.<sup>22</sup> The Aboriginal Women's Program is the primary vehicle through which the department supports Aboriginal women's organizations in their efforts to influence the social, cultural, economic and political well-being of Aboriginal communities and Canadian society more generally. The AWP/FVI provides a specific funding mechanism through which the efforts of Aboriginal women to address family violence—a problem with myriad social, justice, and health dimensions that influence safety, security and well-being at individual, family and community levels—are enabled.

The AWP/FVI is built on the premise that fostering community participation, engagement and a sense of connection can make a difference to the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities. The AWP/FVI supports the creation of culturally and community appropriate solutions to family violence and supports the use of traditional methods and cultural expression in this process. The program design is therefore in accordance with the following strategic priorities contained within the department's Strategic Framework:

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<sup>22</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage (April 2002) *Strategic Framework*.

- *connections*—fostering and strengthening connections among Canadians and deepening understanding across diverse communities; and
- *active citizenship and civic participation*—promoting understanding of the rights and responsibilities of shared citizenship and fostering opportunities to participate in Canada’s civic life.<sup>23</sup>

### *Consistency with Government-wide Priorities*

*Gathering Strength—Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan* emphasizes the importance of supporting healthy, sustainable Aboriginal communities. It stresses the need to find new ways to empower individuals and their communities, with a focus on ways that will promote meaningful and lasting change. The plan further recognizes that Aboriginal people need access to culturally relevant programs and services to help improve quality of life. Furthermore it acknowledges the importance of investing in people to support individual, family and community well-being. The AWP/FVI—which enables Aboriginal women to address an issue of high priority within Aboriginal communities—is therefore consistent with the spirit and intent of the action plan.

The long-term, strategic approach of the AWP/FVI is also consistent with the priority directions set forth in *The Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session of the 37th Parliament* (January 30, 2001) which states:

*As a country, we must be direct about the magnitude of the challenge and ambitious in our commitment to tackle the most pressing problems facing Aboriginal people. Reaching our objectives will take time, but we must not be deterred by the length of the journey or the obstacles that we may encounter along the way.*

*The Government is committed to strengthening the relationship with Aboriginal people....it will work to ensure that basic needs are met for jobs, health, education, housing and infrastructure. This commitment will be reflected in all the Government’s priorities.<sup>24</sup>*

### *Consistency with the Family Violence Initiative*

The Family Violence Initiative represents a long-term federal commitment to a long-term problem. The issue of family violence in Aboriginal communities is reflected in various elements of the Family Violence Initiative, primarily at the departmental level. In particular, the AWP/FVI works toward the following anticipated key result of the Family

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<sup>23</sup> Department of Canadian Heritage (April 2002) *Strategic Framework*.

<sup>24</sup> *Speech from the Throne to Open the First Session of the 37th Parliament of Canada*. [http://www.sft-ddt.gc.ca/sftddt\\_e.htm](http://www.sft-ddt.gc.ca/sftddt_e.htm)

Violence Initiative:

*enhanced prevention and improved community response and the development and implementation of community activities—by strengthening ties with other players, influencing the development and adoption of effective family violence policies and programs, and encouraging the allocation of resources to address family violence issues.<sup>25</sup>*

### ***Impacts and Effects***

***What are the activities and outputs of the AWP/FVI?***

***Key Findings: The primary activity of the AWP/FVI is the provision of project funding to Aboriginal women’s organizations working mostly at the community level. Several national level projects which have sought to mobilize and engage people at the community level in family violence issues have also been funded.***

***The primary types of projects funded are: public awareness activities (such as workshops and tools); healing and wellness strategies that support individuals, families and communities in addressing family violence; training and skills development events that strengthen community capacity to prevent and respond to family violence; and information gathering, planning and strategy development activities that help to focus, mobilize and engage community members in responding to family violence.***

***Many of these AWP/FVI activities incorporate traditional as well as other innovative approaches. Much has been learned and, with greater emphasis on knowledge synthesis, this work can make a substantial contribution to the development of shareable promising practices.***

The primary activity of the AWP/FVI has been to provide project funding to enable Aboriginal women’s organizations to address family violence issues affecting their families and communities. The AWP/FVI has operated with a degree of flexibility to enable eligible Aboriginal women’s groups to initiate their own solutions to family violence as appropriate within the contexts of their cultures and communities.

To obtain an overview of the types of projects that have been supported through the AWP/FVI, we reviewed departmental project system data of the Grants and

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<sup>25</sup> Family Violence Initiative. *Accountability Framework*.

Contributions Information Management System (GCIMS), which was available at Headquarters for then 84 projects identified as being linked to Family Violence Initiative funding from 1997/98 to 2000/01.<sup>26</sup> Many of these projects are multi-dimensional and may incorporate more than one element, however, they can be roughly grouped into five categories.

**Public awareness:** These projects focussed on the development of public awareness information materials, tools and workshops. Some public awareness projects focussed on public awareness at the community level; others targeted their specific community members (e.g. youth, Aboriginal women, elders). They represented approximately 32 percent (27) of the 84 projects identified.

**Healing and wellness:** These projects focussed on the development of healing and wellness approaches, strategies and tools and/or the implementation of those strategies. Healing and wellness approaches included the use of both traditional and innovative methods such as circles, retreats, workshops, peer support, artistic expression, and life skills development. They represented approximately 35.7 percent (30) of the projects funded.

**Training and skills development:** These projects focussed on providing skills for dealing with family violence issues to paid community workers and volunteer service providers. Training and skills development projects focussed on topics such as crisis management skills, conflict resolution, working with dysfunctional families, and leadership development, among others. They represented approximately 9.5 percent (8) of the projects funded.

**Information gathering, planning and strategy development:** These projects focussed on gathering information and research on family violence, as well as the development of plans and strategies. These types of projects include community-specific needs assessments, surveys, resource gathering, talking circles and planning workshops. They represented approximately 19 percent (16) of the projects funded.

**Model development:** These projects focussed on research and developmental aspects of model development to address family violence. The topics varied and included ways to

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<sup>26</sup> These figures are based on national headquarters' project system information, which includes a brief description of each project, as provided at proposal/approval stage. The data in this section represents information available on funded projects, as identified by AWP as being linked to FVI funding. We suggest caution in using these figures, as they have not been verified through a review of regional files. We further note that in some cases there may be more than one source of funding (from the AWP) and so the total funding value for the projects identified exceeds that of the AWP/FVI annual allocation. Also, other projects funded through the AWP may include family violence components, however, these are not included in the above figures.

address family violence in urban settings, alternative justice, and sentencing alternatives. They represented approximately 3.6 percent (3) of the projects funded.

The Learning Circle suggests that the knowledge gained in many of the projects funded in the five categories listed above could make a substantial contribution to the development of promising practices if shared, synthesized and disseminated.

Project funding amounts ranged from \$3,300 for the development of public awareness materials to \$38,000 for a multi-community site project that included public awareness and other components such as healing and wellness support. The average project funding amount was \$16,097.00. Almost half (42 percent) of the projects were funded at \$10,000.00 or lower. According to Learning Circle participants, projects rely heavily on “in-kind” support from within their organizations to implement their activities.

### *What are the short-term outcomes of the AWP/FVI?*

***Key Finding: The short-term outcomes are generally positive in nature.***

In answering this question, we rely heavily on anecdotal evidence provided through the key informant interviews and Learning Circle discussion. This evidence suggests that many positive, short-term outcomes have been realized. The following summarizes the key points by project category.

**Heightened public awareness:** Many of the projects that directly—or indirectly—address public awareness have helped to heighten awareness and knowledge of family violence issues within Aboriginal women’s organizations specifically, and within the broader community. In many cases, public awareness activities have included action-oriented components designed to help participants identify and engage in community-level strategies. According to Learning Circle participants, strengthening intergenerational connections through public dialogue of violence is another important outcome. This was evident in various projects targeted at raising awareness among young women and young men as well as youth-elder exchanges. Both key informant and Learning Circle participants stressed the need for ongoing community awareness and dialogue on family violence issues.

**Healing and wellness:** Many of the healing and wellness projects have helped individuals, families and communities progress in their healing from family violence and in their adoption of wellness strategies. Participants at the Learning Circle provided examples of how traditional healing methods and supports have enabled women living in abusive situations, or coping with abuse from the past, to strengthen their social connections, acquire new skills, develop positive relationships with their partners, children and families, and get on with everyday living. They stressed the importance of

acknowledging—and celebrating—each step that every woman, family member, and community takes. Dialogue with other women and connection to other family members and people in the communities is also a key aspect of healing and wellness. Supporting women in their efforts to heal, acquire skills, and achieve self-sufficiency, wellness and happiness is a sound path to healthier families and communities.

The Learning Circle key informants noted how traditional ways of healing and promoting wellness offered through their projects are increasingly valued within—and outside of—the Aboriginal community. Many of the projects have focussed on assisting Aboriginal women to overcome the myriad effects of family violence, but have done so in ways that involve the family and the community. These projects also contribute to the broader notions of family and community wellness. For example, some projects have included activities that seek to engage—rather than alienate—the woman’s partner or other family members.

**Training and skills development:** Projects that have focussed on training and skills development have enriched the assets available to communities to address family violence. This includes building up knowledge on family violence, as well as the acquisition of concrete skills (e.g. leadership, conflict resolution, crisis management) within communities to address family violence issues. There is, however, a challenge in sustaining this knowledge and skills base within the short-term funding framework of initiatives such as the AWP/FVI. For example, factors such as the high costs of travel (particularly in northern or remote regions) make it difficult for training to be ongoing. As well, staff/volunteer turnover in the field of family violence works against such activities having effects beyond the very immediate or short-term time frames.

**Information gathering, planning and strategy development:** Projects that have focussed on information gathering, planning and strategy development have contributed to community capacity to identify problems, open up community dialogue, develop plans and solutions and mobilize communities to address family violence. A number of these projects are ongoing. There is, however, a challenge in sustaining this momentum and implementing ideas when funding is limited and is only of a short-term nature.

**Model development:** The initial hope of the AWP/FVI was that projects would be able to create culturally appropriate models that could be examined and adapted elsewhere. Key informants and Learning Circle participants believe that the potential for shared learnings has not yet been realized. There are many key learnings to be shared among and across projects. Key informants and Learning Circle participants are of the view that much has been achieved toward the development of promising practices. Information-sharing, dissemination and adoption of promising practices could be facilitated by federal investment in knowledge synthesis, information exchange and networking. It is important



that knowledge be shared in ways that are culturally and practically accessible to Aboriginal communities.

***What are the long-term outcomes of the AWP/FVI?***

***Key Finding: Short-term project funding, as provided through the AWP/FVI, is one of many integral factors that contribute to change. Long-term outcomes are dependent on many factors that are beyond the exclusive influence of the AWP/FVI, such as the strength of capacity and determination within Aboriginal women’s organizations to address family violence, as well as external factors, such as other sources of support and the larger processes of community mobilization and development.***

At this stage, there is a very generalized sense that AWP/FVI activities continue to support and engage individuals, families and communities in action on family violence issues, and therefore continue to contribute to the long-term process of change. This includes contributions to changes in awareness and understanding of family violence issues; community readiness and willingness to respond to family violence; and community capacity to address family violence issues. We caution that given the low level of AWP/FVI investments and the short-term nature of project funding, long-term expectations concerning this investment should be modest. Furthermore, the achievement of long-term outcomes (such as healthier communities) is dependent on many factors including the strength of capacity and determination within Aboriginal women’s organizations to address family violence, the existence of other sources of funding and support and the extent of community mobilization and development. While short-term project funding can play an important role in catalyzing, motivating and mobilizing action, it is not a given that it will directly result in any sustained, or long-term impacts.

***To what extent have different types of individuals/communities/agencies benefited from the FVI?***

***Key Finding: Community-based Aboriginal women’s organizations are the primary beneficiaries of the AWP/FVI. These include organizations from both on-reserve and off-reserve communities. The AWP/FVI has enabled them to work with their respective constituencies and target populations on family violence issues. At the project level, the primary beneficiaries include individual Aboriginal women and their families. In several projects, the primary beneficiaries have been youth.***

***The cross country disbursement of project funding—and***



*consequently the beneficiaries—has varied from year to year.*

*There is a perception that organizations with limited capacity may be ineligible for project funding, given factors such as due diligence requirements and related funding criteria and processes.*

*There is a perception among key informants and Learning Circle participants that national level organizations have greater access to AWP/FVI funding than they should.*

The majority of the AWP/FVI funding is dispersed to Aboriginal women's organizations working at the community level. The majority of these organizations are from off-reserve communities. Our review of departmental project system data suggests that the cross-country distribution of projects varies.<sup>13</sup> Of the 84 projects reviewed, 12.3 percent (11) were from the Pacific Region; 41.9 percent (34) were from the Prairie Region; 8.6 percent (7) were from the Ontario Region; 19.8 percent (16) were from the Atlantic Region; 8.6 percent (7) were from the North and 5 (6.1 percent) were national. We note that cross-country coverage is difficult to achieve with the level of resources available. In addition, coverage may vary because there is no active promotion of the AWP/FVI. We also note that the national projects had components that included multi-community focus (in that they brought together people from many communities).

Our key informants suggested that the current funding process and criteria may be a potential barrier, by screening out some organizations that do not have the capacity to meet current "due diligence" requirements. All key informants understood why such requirements were needed. They expressed concern that some groups may not have the requisite capacity and would find meeting the requirements very difficult. Staff key informants would prefer a process that would give them some autonomy in how information is requested and provided from communities (e.g. oral presentations that are documented).

Many key informant interviewees identified a tension between the initial focus on off-reserve groups and the more recent focus on providing funding to on-reserve groups, given the limited program resources. At the same time, there is recognition that the on-reserve and off-reserve distinction is problematic in the context of Aboriginal women's lives and the violence they experience. Movement between the urban environment and the reserve is common and reflects a cultural difference in how Aboriginal people understand and apply the concepts of "living" here or there, and of extended family.

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<sup>13</sup> Note: we would expect some degrees of variation given the differences in the population base of Aboriginal population and number of Aboriginal women's organizations in each region.



Women who are experiencing family violence, may leave their communities in times of difficulty and have to return for reasons of homelessness and difficulty living in other settings. There is a concern that the program may be missing connections to women who are in transition between on- and off-reserve communities.

Some of the key informant interviews, as well as the Learning Circle discussion questioned the relevance of AWP/FVI funding being used to support national level projects.<sup>14</sup>

An underlying problem that limits the extent to which various Aboriginal Women's organizations can participate in and benefit from the program is lack of awareness. AWP/FVI undertakes little promotional activity to ensure that Aboriginal women's organizations are aware of, and can access, program funding. To some extent this is a "catch 22" situation. AWP/FVI project resources are very limited and staff fear that promoting the AWP/FVI will raise expectations beyond what they can deal with, even if potential partnerships or other ways of leveraging resources were available.

***Are the activities undertaken for the FVI still relevant to the target population?***

***Key Finding: Overall, the AWP/FVI activities are still relevant to the target population.***

The primary activity of the AWP/FVI—funding projects that include a community and culturally appropriate focus in addressing family violence—is still relevant to the target population and the underlying premise is still sound. Learning Circle participants indicated that they appreciate the community-driven focus and the responsive, flexible approach with which the AWP/FVI operates. The principles of community focus and flexibility are also principles valued by AWP staff in their interactions with organizations.

***What unintended consequences (+ and -) have occurred?***

***Key Finding: We did not identify any unintended consequences of the AWP/FVI.***

***Program Administration and Effectiveness***

***Have the AWP/FVI activities been delivered to and by stakeholders and beneficiaries***

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<sup>14</sup> We were unable to speak with representatives of any national organizations to obtain their perceptions and we also note that national projects have tended to have a multi-community orientation.

*in an efficient and effective manner?*

***Key Findings: In responding to inquiries and working with applicants, staff have been efficient and effective.***

***From an administrative perspective, areas identified for improvement include a more standardized and consistent approach to file documentation and record-keeping across the AWP/FVI. Standardization and consistency will also facilitate future performance reporting and evaluation exercises.***

***There are concerns that the level of resources (both human and financial) dedicated to the AWP/FVI does not match the scope of the problem or the priority of the issue within Aboriginal communities.***

#### *Efficiency and Effectiveness of Delivery*

Our key informant interviews and the Learning Circle discussion indicate that the AWP staff have, within the confines of the AWP/FVI, responded with relative efficiency and effectiveness. Once groups come into contact with the AWP, staff members explain the project funding process, eligibility criteria, and related requirements. Where there is a good “match” between the organization’s ideas and the AWP/FVI, staff work with the organization to develop its proposal. If there is not a good “match” (e.g. the idea does not meet the funding criteria), staff indicate they make referrals to other sources of funding. As a result of this process, ideas that make it to the proposal stage have already been vetted and to our knowledge, no formally submitted proposals have been rejected.

Our national and regional project file review reveals that there is a lack of standardization and consistency in the approach to file documentation and record keeping across the AWP/FVI, which may compromise the capacity of the AWP/FVI to be delivered with efficiency and effectiveness. For example, several of the files reviewed were either incomplete or contained a host of documentation that achieved the same purpose. Unification of forms for the AWP/FVI, such as a generic proposal, evaluation and final report templates may assist organizations and improve file documentation.

#### *Concerns Regarding Resources*

There are concerns that the level of resources (both human and financial) that is dedicated to the AWP/FVI does not match the scope of the problem or the priority of the issue within Aboriginal communities. Learning Circle participants indicated that many of their organizations operate on volunteer time and are already stretched to the limit.

Without sufficient federal funding, they are finding it increasingly difficult to address this issue.

Staff key informants also identified a mismatch between the priority rhetoric and the resources provided. Split across all regions, the \$215,000 allocation does not go very far in meeting the diversity of needs and issues involved in addressing family violence. The low level of resourcing hampers the AWP's work in several ways. First, staff do not actively promote the AWP/FVI because they believe it is unfair to promote the AWP/FVI when the resources are so limited, and they would not be able to meet expectations if they were raised at the community level. Second, although some staff see the need for, and expressed a desire to, work with other federal departments collaboratively on this issue, they refrain from initiating the process as they feel they have "nothing serious to put on the table." In short, it was generally felt that if the government is in fact seriously committed to enabling Aboriginal women to address family violence in their communities, there would be more resources to follow through on this commitment.

***Are the administrative & delivery practices of the Department of Canadian Heritage capable of ensuring that stakeholders and beneficiaries are aware of and can access the FVI?***

***Key Finding: The current administrative and delivery practices of Department of Canadian Heritage are limited in their capacity to ensure that stakeholders and beneficiaries are aware of and can access the AWP/FVI. Consequently, the AWP/FVI has been delivered reactively, rather than proactively..***

Currently, there are no standard mechanisms or sets of materials to ensure that the target groups are aware of and can access the AWP/FVI. The Department of Canadian Heritage Web site text on the Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative contains minimal descriptive information and simply refers individuals to their nearest regional office. In some cases, key informants report they have regional brochures that contain information about the AWP/FVI.

In addition to the low profile of the AWP/FVI in print and electronic media, we note that it is not actively promoted by staff. Staff key informants identified three primary reasons for not promoting this initiative. First, they find it unconscionable to promote this program when there is such a serious need for family violence programming yet only a very small pool of resources to be shared amongst Aboriginal women's organizations. Staff are concerned that even the smallest amount of promotion would generate many inquiries for funding, and they are reluctant to "raise hopes" which may have to be dashed. Secondly, the existing AWP/FVI promotional material (e.g. brochures) are not accessible in the languages of the communities that the AWP serves. A third, and related

concern raised by staff key informants is that even if more organizations knew about the AWP/FVI or how to access funding, staff do not have the time to undertake the kind of social/community development work that might help organizations successfully access AWP/FVI funding and implement projects.

We also note that the AWP is currently producing a new brochure that will include information about the AWP/FVI.

***Is the reporting level sufficient to meet accountability requirements?***

***Key Findings: Current processes for evaluation, performance measurement and reporting are inappropriate for the types of projects being funded and could be improved to better meet accountability requirements.***

The AWP/FVI has experienced difficulty in obtaining project-level performance information, given the nature of the projects funded and limited resources for evaluation or performance reporting. Moreover, the majority of the project files are located in the regions, and national headquarters does not, as a matter of course, receive copies of final reports or products.

To determine what type of information could be available, we randomly selected 20 files for review. Of the 13 files received, we found few project reports on file. The files reviewed tended to provide primarily activity-related information, rather than product or performance results information.

Key informants and Learning Circle participants recognize the need to “show” results, but identified several issues and barriers to fulfilling this need, including the following:

- a lack of resources at both regional and project levels to monitor, document and report on project results;
- standard methods of evaluation and reporting are unsuited to, and insufficient in, supporting meaningful evaluation activity and project reporting and there is a lack of appropriate indicators to reflect the nature of the types of projects funded and a lack of measurement and reporting tools suitable for the kinds of projects that are being funded, especially for projects that use traditional concepts, methods and languages;
- the capacity within many Aboriginal women’s organizations is already stretched to the limit and without support/assistance it is unlikely that evaluation and performance reporting can be improved;

- many of the projects funded are not amenable to producing the kind of evaluation data and performance reporting information typically required by federal central agencies;
- given the nature of traditional healing strategies, it is challenging to measure, and put into words, how project funding has made a difference; moreover, many of the projects are conducted in traditional languages, using traditional concepts that are difficult to translate and put into written English or French.

We further note that some AWP/FVI regional staff interviewed were not familiar with the Logic Model prior to us contacting them, which suggests that the Logic Model itself may have had limited distribution, and limited application and relevance in program management, funding and performance reporting.

*It is important that expectations be measured in the meaningful ways they [projects] affect peoples' lives, such as enabling them to attend a program, learn to read, speak in front of the group, get a job, take pride in one's accomplishments... funders consider these kinds of achievements as valid and important steps in moving away from past and present realities of violence to wellness and healing. It also needs to be recognized that the kinds of changes the women expect their efforts to achieve take time, usually beyond the one-year project deadlines imposed by funders.*

—Learning Circle Report

## LESSONS LEARNED

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### *What lessons can be learned from the AWP/FVI?*

#### *Investments Help Aboriginal Women at the Community Level*

The AWP/FVI has enabled Aboriginal women's organizations to address family violence at the community level in a manner suitable to them. Even though the AWP/FVI represents a small financial investment, there is agreement that it has helped Aboriginal women make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals and families in Aboriginal communities.

That said, there are concerns that Aboriginal women's organizations do not have sufficient and equitable access to AWP/FVI funds—and therefore equal and equitable opportunities across the country to make a difference.

Overall, there is a sense that with proactive program promotion and sufficient resources, the AWP/FVI would have much greater potential to achieve results than is currently being realized. Key informant interviews and the Learning Circle discussion underscored the vital role that Aboriginal women's organizations play in communities. However they state they are chronically under-resourced for the work that needs to be done. In many cases project work is supported by unpaid and volunteer time over and above what is identified as the organization's "in-kind" contribution to the project. While project funding helps organizations address family violence, it is not sufficient. In many of the projects that were part of the Learning Circle, the organizations have been able to sustain their efforts only out of sheer determination and commitment, sometimes at personal cost to themselves and their families.

#### *The Benefits of a Flexible Approach*

The AWP/FVI is based on a flexible, community-driven approach. Key informants and Learning Circle participants believe that this flexibility is a program strength, because it enables the AWP/FVI to adapt to and meet community needs and learn from community experiences. Moreover, it can foster a learning environment that is innovative and creative versus one that is rigid and dogmatic.

#### *The Importance of Ongoing Learning and Sharing*

The Learning Circle demonstrated the rich cache of knowledge and practical experience that resides within Aboriginal women's organizations. It suggests that more emphasis on ongoing learning and sharing would result in greater cross-fertilization of ideas and

approaches.

### *Success Factors*

The Learning Circle provided insight into why the AWP/FVI projects have been successful despite the limited amount of investment. The key factors that contributed to the success of projects at the community level include:

- a focus on traditional ways of teaching, learning and healing
- leadership
- vision
- involvement of elders
- involvement of family
- intergenerational activity
- connection to the community
- commitment
- dedication
- determination
- volunteerism
- an ability to stretch resources a long way and leverage other resources.

### *The Ongoing Challenges*

In many cases, success was achieved in spite of the many hurdles that Aboriginal women's organizations in general experience. These hurdles also have an impact on the organizations capacity to address family violence. These include:

- inadequate funding
- unrealistic expectations and time lines of funders for proposal writing, project activity and reporting
- inadequate material resources
- lack of funding for administration
- cultural differences and barriers
- discrimination, stereotyping and racism directed at Aboriginal women, families and communities
- language barriers, mis-communication or no communication with officials.

Overall, it must be recognized that the type of work that Aboriginal women are doing to address family violence in their communities is intensive. For example, finding the right community resource people is not just a simple matter of picking up a phone or sending an e-mail as it is in the non-Aboriginal community. In the North, the high cost of travel to bring people together represents an additional hurdle.





### *What best practices can be shared between projects?*

***Key Finding:*** *It is clear that many innovative and promising practices are being implemented through AWP/FVI projects. Information first needs to be shared and synthesized as part of a process of working toward best practices. Within this context, there is a place for traditional and non-traditional ways of sharing information.*

While many of the AWP/FVI projects share common features, such as a focus on public education and awareness or healing and wellness, they use a range of creative and innovative approaches to address the issues. Key informants and Learning Circle participants are of the view that a store of knowledge is growing and should be shared to build best practices. They see benefits to information-sharing and exchange, such as inspiration and support to others, motivation for action, and the fostering of ongoing innovation. The AWP/FVI is ideally positioned to facilitate this process. Key informants offered these ideas to facilitate information sharing.

- Innovative approaches (not just face-to-face meetings) to sharing information among AWP/FVI regional staff—this could include, for example, discussions on how others problem solve issues such as participation barriers (e.g. language, literacy), and approaches to evaluation and project reporting.
- Community workshops to cover specific “technical” topics—workshops could be held in the regions and cover such topics as proposal writing, project evaluation and reporting.
- Learning circles to share information and identify promising practices—a practical, skills-based component could be attached to such circles. For example, a learning circle on family violence healing strategies could include a practical component on traditional techniques, strategies and tools.
- Information technology to enhance the information sharing capacity—could include, for example, a Web site or use of chat lines.

Ongoing learning and opportunities for exchange are an important first step in the identification and diffusion of best practices.

### *What recommendations can be made regarding future directions for the AWP/FVI?*

Key informants and Learning Circle participants made a number of suggestions regarding the future directions of the AWP/FVI. The key informant interviews and Learning Circle

discussions stressed the importance of building a positive vision and approach to family violence in Aboriginal communities. This means emphasizing the positives, such as the value of teaching traditional values, culture and practices, rather than the negatives, such as focussing on images of violence and despair. Learning Circle participants also spoke about all the things they still had to overcome and, most importantly, how healing needs to come from within and move beyond to the community. Proactive and intergenerational approaches are needed as part of the healing process.

Above all, it is important that people recognize and understand that Aboriginal ways of seeing and articulating the world are different from mainstream Canadian culture. The recognition of this is critical to addressing issues such as family violence. The use of holistic traditions and practices and the need to strengthen connections between women, their families and communities is essential. Aboriginal women are turning their communities into healthier communities by viewing things through a holistic perspective.

*Aboriginal people have been surrounded by and dealing with the negatives around violence issues, for many years..... it is time to reflect healing and wellness in the parameters of the Family Violence Initiative. This is the real path of change.*  
— Learning Circle Report

Within this context, specific suggestions for the AWP/FVI were made on the topics discussed below.

**Target population and reach:** The AWP/FVI should continue to enable Aboriginal women's organizations to focus on Aboriginal women, their families and communities. Many key informants stated the need to increase the AWP/FVI's attention to Aboriginal youth. They would like to involve both young men and young women in an educational campaign around family violence to ensure that the responsibility for addressing the issues is shared by both genders. Future efforts should, therefore, more fully reflect the growing population of Aboriginal youth and, at the same time, continue to support the inclusion of the extended family in healing and wellness processes.

**Resources:** Adequate, ongoing funding for this work is key to moving forward. According to Learning Circle participants, projects often take longer to get going in Aboriginal communities, because of the process of communication that is needed at the community level, as well as issues that relate to location, isolation and coordination. Projects that are funded for one year often only begin to show results as they end, leaving the communities anxious to do more work, without any resources to keep the healing moving forward. Project funding that lasts more than one year is easier to evaluate and captures a more accurate picture of impacts and outcomes.

**Program principles:** The AWP/FVI must continue to be open and flexible in its support

for, and recognition of, the different needs across the country, particularly regarding the needs of more isolated, remote and northern communities. Aboriginal Women’s Program operations must be open, transparent, and accountable to Aboriginal women’s organizations.

**Program promotion:** The AWP/FVI should be actively promoted at the community level. A more proactive approach would be helpful. Promotion and communication strategies should be relevant to, and accessible by, Aboriginal communities. Written materials (whether in print or on the Web) are not necessarily the best approach—face-to-face communication can have better results. The need to improve promotion and communication is of particular concern in remote and isolated communities.

**Funding process:** The funding process could be more standardized from region to region. At the same time, in order to best meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal communities, there is a need for some flexibility.

**Program evaluation:** The AWP/FVI should work with Aboriginal women’s organizations to develop more meaningful ways of measuring project “impacts.” When evaluating the success of a project, funding organizations may value different things than a community does. Evaluation frameworks and calls for proposals should be more reflective of what communities see as important and what they regard as valuable and appropriate indicators of success.

**Plan and support future opportunities for gathering, learning and sharing:**

Face-to-face meetings and networking opportunities can help to maximize the project experience and the learning that results. They can reduce the isolation that project sponsors experience and they can inspire and build momentum for future action. They can provide opportunities for departmental staff to gain an understanding of project experiences and results. They can also form the basis for identifying and disseminating promising practices.

*Learning circles should be open to all projects funded through the Aboriginal Women’s Program component of the Family Violence Initiative and be held more frequently so more projects and groups have the opportunity to participate. As well, ongoing communication with officials who are accessible and able to understand Aboriginal culture and values is critical. Better communication means better results, which means healthier Aboriginal women, families and communities.*

— Learning Circle Report

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## CONCLUSION

The AWP/FVI has made a modest—but important—contribution to the work of

Aboriginal women's organizations in their ongoing efforts to address family violence. The current level of federal investment, however, does not match the scope of the problem, or the priority of this issue for Aboriginal women's organizations. While we can laud the "successes" achieved with a small level of investment, these successes owe much to the dedication, commitment and time invested by Aboriginal women's organizations. These successes suggest two things. First with proper promotion, sufficient resources and more emphasis on community and social development, AWP staff would be better equipped to enable Aboriginal women's organizations to address family violence. With improved access to information about AWP/FVI funding, and sufficient resources and capacity, Aboriginal women's organizations could have more influence—and meaningful impact—on this issue at the community level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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***Recommendation 1. The Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative (AWP/FVI) should continue its efforts to enable Aboriginal women's organizations to address family violence within their respective communities in culturally appropriate ways—ways that include and reflect individual, family, community aspirations regarding healing and wellness.***

The underlying premises of the AWP/FVI are still relevant and valid. Strengthening community capacity by enabling Aboriginal women's organizations to address this issue is in keeping with federal government priorities regarding Aboriginal peoples—as stated in *Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* and in the Speech from the Throne—and it is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People*. The AWP/FVI is consistent with the long-term federal mandate under the Family Violence Initiative and is in accordance with the Department of Canadian Heritage's strategic priorities that emphasize fostering and strengthening community connections and promoting active citizenship and civic participation. The AWP/FVI acknowledges the specific dynamics and challenges of addressing family violence within Aboriginal communities and it supports the unique expertise and substantial contribution that Aboriginal women's organizations make to solving these issues. Through this support, the AWP/FVI contributes to the positive momentum that is building for change.

***Recommendation 2. For future phases of the Family Violence Initiative, the Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative (AWP/FVI) should strengthen efforts to engage in an ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal women's organizations on family violence issues. This will help to ensure the ongoing relevancy of the AWP/FVI to Aboriginal women and their respective communities.***

Annual meetings, for example could be held to refine the focus and priorities of the

AWP/FVI. Based on this evaluation, the discussion on the focus and priorities for the immediate future could include:

- a continued focus on community-driven, culturally specific approaches;
- the current thrusts of the AWP/FVI—healing and wellness; training and skills development; information gathering, planning and strategy development; and the development of culturally/community “specific” approaches;
- greater emphasis on traditional and non-traditional ways of information sharing and networking to share key learnings and promote promising practices;
- a renewed focus on young Aboriginal women and men.

***Recommendation 3. The AWP/FVI should foster an environment of ongoing learning. Traditional and non-traditional mechanisms to improve information sharing among Aboriginal women’s organizations and between the departmental staff should be explored.***

The Learning Circle illustrated the wealth of knowledge and practical insight that Aboriginal women’s organizations have to offer and are willing to share in relation to family violence. The AWP/FVI has the opportunity to facilitate sharing of that knowledge and insight across communities. The goals would be to support innovation and enhance the adoption of promising practices. The AWP/FVI should work with Aboriginal women’s organizations to find ways to identify, document and share promising practices.

The AWP/FVI should also implement innovative ways of sharing information among national and regional AWP/FVI staff.

***Recommendation 4. The AWP/FVI has the potential to have greater impacts than it currently has—impacts that would be possible to realize if the capacity to engage with Aboriginal women’s organizations, and to promote and administer the AWP/FVI were increased.***

Increased investment to support program delivery and project funding could also improve the opportunity for partnership development, collaboration, and leveraging of resources, including volunteer effort.

***Recommendation 5. The AWP/FVI Logic Model should be refined and performance measurement and reporting tools should be developed to better capture project performance and impacts.***

The AWP/FVI Logic Model should be amended to reflect and refine AWP/FVI, as envisioned for the next phase of the Family Violence Initiative.

The short-term, facilitative nature of AWP/FVI project funding provided, combined with the methodological and practical challenges of developing suitable measurement and reporting tools (especially for projects that use traditional concepts, methods and languages) poses practical dilemmas for performance measurement and reporting. Conventional methods may be too costly to implement, and in the end, unable to provide an accurate or fair picture of project outcomes. The AWP/FVI should explore and implement alternative ways of gathering and communicating project performance information, such as the use of non-print media strategies to capture performance stories, and clustered qualitative reviews and evaluations to synthesize insights and results.

In revising the Logic Model and in developing performance measurement and reporting tools, the AWP/FVI should consult with Aboriginal women's organizations to ensure they can be practically implemented.

## Management Response and Action Plan

### Overall Conclusion

Canadian Heritage, Aboriginal Peoples' Program finds the Aboriginal Women's Program - Family Violence Initiative evaluation to be consistent with the ongoing observations of the Department and recipients. The evaluation findings has confirmed the actions that Aboriginal Peoples' Programs anticipated were needed to address pressing issues to improve the delivery of this important Initiative and enhance the benefits to both PCH and Aboriginal womens' groups.

Evaluation Recommendations	Management Response/Action(s)	Implementation Schedule
<p><b><i>Recommendation 1</i></b>                      The Aboriginal Women's Program Family Violence Initiative (AWP/FVI) should continue its efforts to enable Aboriginal women's organizations to address family violence within their respective communities in culturally appropriate ways - ways that include and reflect individual, family, community aspirations regarding healing and wellness.</p>	<p>The AWP/FVI guidelines are being revised and will better reflect the objectives of the Initiative. The guidelines will be distributed to PCH staff and will be made available to the Aboriginal women's organizations. The guidelines will stress the focus of the AWP/FVI for culturally appropriate approaches by Aboriginal women's groups in addressing family violence issues. References will be included on access information sources, such as the Learning Circle, related to examples of types of activities that embody this approach.</p>	<p>Publication of guidelines in both official languages - March 31, 2003.</p>



Evaluation Recommendations	Management Response/Action(s)	Implementation Schedule
<p><b><i>Recommendation 2</i></b> For future phases of the Family Violence Initiative, the Aboriginal Women's Program - Family Violence Initiative (AWP/FVI) should strengthen efforts to engage in an ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal women's organizations on family violence issues. This will help ensure that ongoing relevancy of the AWP/FVI to Aboriginal women and their respective communities.</p>	<p>The Department found the Aboriginal Women's Learning Circle to be a very effective learning and sharing exercise for both PCH staff and Aboriginal women participants. The report of the Learning Circle will be placed on the PCH/APP website.</p> <p>A brochure will also be developed synthesizing the findings of the Learning Circle. Increased program awareness will enhance the dialogue with both PCH staff and Aboriginal women's organizations to facilitate the development of better project applications.</p>	<p>Report on the website by December 2002.</p> <p>Distribution plan March 31, 2003.</p>





Evaluation Recommendations	Management Response/Action(s)	Implementation Schedule
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> The AWP/FVI should foster an environment of ongoing learning. Traditional and non-traditional mechanisms to improve information sharing among Aboriginal women’s organizations and between the departmental staff should be explored.</p>	<p>A key to improving information sharing is better project reporting. APP will investigate alternate forms of non-traditional/traditional project reporting that satisfy Treasury Board requirements. APP will examine ways of developing and distributing a periodic summary of project information to facilitate the ongoing learning process for both PCH staff and Aboriginal women’s organizations. APP will work with the FVI Clearinghouse on improving its capacity for information sharing with and access by Aboriginal women’s groups.</p>	<p>Action plan by March 31, 2003.</p> <p>Action plan by March 31, 2003.</p> <p>Develop an action plan with the FVI Clearinghouse by January 31, 2003.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> The AWP/FVI has the potential to have greater impacts than it currently has - impacts that would be possible to realize if the capacity to engage with Aboriginal women’s organizations and to promote and administer the</p>	<p>The evaluation clearly states that Aboriginal women’s organizations are primarily volunteer driven and therefore have ongoing information and learning needs. APP will develop an information</p>	



Evaluation Recommendations	Management Response/Action(s)	Implementation Schedule
<p>AWP/FVI were increased.</p>	<p>package that will identify key Federal information sources to assist PCH staff and Aboriginal women’s organizations to identify potential Federal partners. APP will develop a self-learning approach for its PCH staff to assist in improving their relationship with off-reserve Aboriginal women’s community groups.</p>	<p>Develop information package by March 31, 2003.</p> <p>Action plan by March 31, 2003.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b> The AWP/FVI Logic Model should be refined and performance measurement and reporting tools should be developed to better capture project performance and impacts.</p>	<p>APP agrees with this finding. By using the findings of the Learning Circle and the evaluation, better and more specific outputs and indicators can be developed to reflect the needs of the Aboriginal women within the parameters of Federal objectives. The revised logic model will recognize the learning spiral necessary to maximize the AWP/FVI effectiveness and efficiencies. The enhanced data and information collection being developed will provide an enriched data source for the measurement of performance in the short term and identify a better assessment of appropriate long term</p>	<p>Revise logic model by March 31, 2003.</p>



<b>Evaluation Recommendations</b>	<b>Management Response/Action(s)</b>	<b>Implementation Schedule</b>
	outcomes.	

## Appendix A—Evaluation Methods

### DOCUMENT REVIEW

In order to identify constructive and practical ways to improve performance measurement, data collection and performance reporting, we conducted an initial review of the documentation which assisted in developing and refining of the evaluation method and tools.

### FILE REVIEW

Using a master list of funded projects provided by national headquarters, we requested a sample of 20 AWP/FVI national and regional project files. In developing the sample, we categorized the funded project list by type of project and region. We then selected the files randomly.

The distribution of files requested and received is shown in Table 1.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Requested</b>	<b>Received</b>
British Columbia	2	1
Northern	4	0
Prairie	7	4
Ontario	2	1
Quebec	1	1
Atlantic	3	3
National	1	3
Total Files	20	13

Table 1: Distribution of Files Requested and Received by Region

Not all of the files were received within the study period. In some cases, files were “archived” and not easily accessible within the data collection period (February and March 2002). Two of the files received (not identified in the table) were not files that had been requested and therefore were not reviewed.

Among the files reviewed, there was a great range of contents. All of the files contained a recommendation and contract document, several contained the original proposal that had initiated the request for funding, and the letter of approval sent to the organization funded. Only two files reviewed contained examples of information products generated or disseminated as a result of the granted project. Also results-based information, such as evaluations, reports, and other required closing documentation, was scant.

As well, two, and sometimes three different file numbers appeared on the same file. This, as well as the incomplete nature of the files, made it challenging to properly identify the file. The review suggests that a unified file management process across regions (including standardization of forms given to groups seeking funding) should be considered.

### **AWP/FVI INTERVIEWS**

We conducted telephone interviews with a AWP staff in the regions as well as in person interviews at national headquarters.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted within a pre-set protocol. Each potential interviewee was sent an e-mail, or was contacted by phone to establish their interest in participating and, accordingly to set up an interview time. All interviews were assured confidentiality. There were three attempts to make contact with each interviewee to set up interviews. If contact could not be established within this time frame or if messages (after three attempts) were not returned, the contact was dropped from the list. As well, several of the interviews were rescheduled the initially set up date. This was often only a day or two later, but interviewees cited year-end workload as the reason in all cases where a request to reschedule was made.

Prior to each interview, we sent the interviewee a copy of the AWP/FVI Logic Model and asked that it be reviewed in



preparation for the interview. As well, each interviewee was asked if they wished to receive a copy of the interview guide prior to the interview. A total of four interviewees indicated that they wanted both the Logic Model and the guide. Two interviewees requested that interviews be conducted with colleagues (also on the interview list) and held via speaker phone. These requests were granted and a total of four interviewees were spoken with in this way. Prior to the interview, interviewees were reminded of the confidential nature of the interviews, that they were not required to answer any or all of the questions, and that interviews would be transcribed as they spoke. Interviewees were also told that they should set aside 40 to 50 minutes for the exercise.

In total of 29 federal interviews were identified. Within the study period we were able to conduct in-depth interviews with twenty-one (21) officials, primarily from the Department of Canadian Heritage (national headquarters and regional offices). We also obtained some information through correspondence with other federal partners in the Family Violence Initiative. We made 3-4 attempts to contact national Aboriginal women's organizations however we only received one response and due to the interviewee's schedule and commitments it was not possible to conduct an interview.

As well, the evaluation methodology had originally called for five interviews with Aboriginal women's groups that had applied for, but did not receive AWP/FVI funding. As per the findings of the interviews, there were no groups formally rejected for funding in any of the regions where staff had been interviewed. This resulted in the category (did not receive funding) being dropped from the sample.

Notwithstanding the problems around scheduling interviews and year-end commitments, the interviewing process went smoothly. Interviewees within Canadian Heritage were quick to respond to e-mails and telephone calls. Every person interviewed in the regions (staff and managers) commented on how valuable they thought it was to have been offered a chance to provide feedback about this initiative.

### **LEARNING CIRCLE**

We conducted a Learning Circle on March 16th and 17th , 2002, the Aboriginal Women's Program, Family Violence Initiative

component, of the Department of Canadian Heritage, hosted a Learning Circle at the Odawa Friendship Centre in Ottawa.<sup>1</sup> The Learning Circle was an opportunity for selected Aboriginal Women's organizations, which had received project funding from the Aboriginal Women's Program, to meet and share information about their project and experiences. This process provided valuable qualitative insight. Twenty-one (21) organizations from across the country were invited. All had received project funding from the Aboriginal Women's Program. Together, they represented the diversity of types of project funding through the Family Violence Initiative, including healing and wellness, training, education and awareness, information-sharing and capacity-building activities. There were projects that address the needs of Aboriginal people living in both urban and rural communities.

A total of 14 projects from organizations based in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, the Western and Prairie Provinces, and Ontario were represented. As well there was a representation of several languages and cultures.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Learning Circle methodology, project selection, facilitation and report writing was prepared by JamiesonHartGraves Consulting.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately seven of the projects invited were unable to attend due to year-end preparations, scheduling, and difficulty sparing a staff member to attend, or as in the case of Quebec and the Atlantic region, personal circumstances.

## APPENDIX B—LOGIC MODEL ANALYSIS

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### INTRODUCTION

The FVI/AWP Logic Model was created in 1998/99 in keeping with the interdepartmental Family Violence Initiative Accountability Framework. It built on previous work undertaken by the AWP in the previous phase of the Family Violence Initiative. According to AWP program managers, the intent was to put in place a flexible program that would enable eligible Aboriginal women’s groups to initiate their own solutions to family violence, as appropriate within the contexts of their cultures and communities. In designing the Logic Model, the attempt was therefore broad in order to anticipate (and therefore encompass) a range of activities and outputs that could emerge at the community level.

We reviewed the FVI/AWP Logic Model and consulted with AWP FVI staff, to determine the degree to which the Logic Model fits with the actual operations of the AWP FVI over the evaluation study period. In conducting the analysis we sought to address the following questions:

- Does the information presented reflect the actual operational “history” of the FVI/AWP during the current phase?
- Is there an indication that the information would, or could, have relevance in the future?
- Is the information presented plausibly linked throughout the Logic Model?
- Is the information presented in practical/achievable terms, given the existing resource profile?

### REFLECTION OF THE ACTUAL OPERATIONAL “HISTORY” OF THE AWP/FVI

Our analysis of AWP projects indicates that the Logic Model encompasses all of the project types and activities funded, primarily in the areas of public awareness, training and culturally and community appropriate approaches to family violence. It also encompasses a range of other activities, notably model development, linkages to mainstream services, and



production/dissemination of written material, that have occurred less often.

## **RELEVANCE**

Many aspects of the current Logic Model remain relevant for the future. In particular, public awareness, training, and the development of holistic, culturally and community appropriate approaches have ongoing relevancy. Key informants indicated that a focus on the extended family remains critical and a constructive, forward looking approach that builds on the positives—rather than dwells on negatives of family violence—is desired.

Links, networks and partnerships between Aboriginal services and “mainstream” services has not occurred during this phase and does not appear to be a priority for the future. It is interesting to note that some of the Aboriginal women’s organizations have opened some of their services or activities to non-Aboriginal people and are confident that these approaches have much to offer the non-Aboriginal world.

Greater emphasis on youth and family violence, as well as approaches that recognize the unique position of Aboriginal women and are inclusive of the family are seen key as priorities.

Partnerships and network building also remain important priorities. At a practical level, they can help leverage a broader set of assets for project work, reduce isolation, build connection and synergy, and result in improved practices(e.g. through the sharing of promising practices).

## **PLAUSIBLE LINKS**

Overall, key informants view the Logic Model as too ambitious, given the current state of knowledge and practice, and in particular, the relatively small levels of investment that AWP/FVI can make at the project level. Two examples stand out:

- The Logic Model indicates that the AWP/FVI will produce “models” of culturally appropriate approaches to family violence. AWP staff have noted that the intended emphasis was on the development of culturally appropriate approaches, rather than models per se.



- The Logic Model also indicates that the AWP/FVI will support partnerships and networks. To some extent, this has happened through national multi-community projects and at the project/community level, but the sustainability of such activity is questionable. For example, one project reviewed was designed to bring together a range of support workers from isolated communities. While deemed successful as a “one-off” event, it was clearly beyond the scope of the project to support ongoing networking and support. Staff/volunteer turnover in this field is also an issue, along with the fact that in some communities support is provided informally as opposed to through formal institutional structures. Networking via technology, while promising, is still challenging in many communities and is not viewed as a complete substitute for in-person exchanges.

#### **PRACTICALITY AND ACHIEVABILITY**

Key informants indicated that some discreet elements of the Logic Model are practical and achievable, but overall, the most striking feature of the Logic Model is its very breadth and scope. From a programming perspective, the original rationale for a broad Logic Model was to ensure flexibility. Yet from an evaluation and performance measurement perspective, it has resulted in a Logic Model that may be seen as overly ambitious and not achievable, given the resources invested in the AWP/FVI. Designing a Logic Model that balances practicality and achievability would be more desirable.

#### ***Activities Analysis***

The Logic Model identifies one broad activity:

*To support off-reserve Aboriginal women’s groups in addressing the issues surrounding violence in the extended and nuclear families of their communities and in the examination and development of holistic and culturally appropriate responses to family violence.*

Comments:

- The FVI/AWP is accessible to Aboriginal women’s organizations whether on or off reserve.
- Not all Aboriginal women’s organizations may meet the eligibility criteria for funding: Aboriginal women’s organizations must meet specific criteria (including due diligence provisions) in order to be eligible for funding.
- The focus on extended and nuclear families remains important.
- The focus on holistic, culturally and community appropriate responses to family violence remains important.

**OUTPUTS ANALYSIS**

The Logic Model identifies seven categories of outputs. Our analysis of each category follows in Table 1.

<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
Culturally appropriate models to address the various family violence issues within the off-reserve Aboriginal community affecting women, men, children, youth and elders as well as the family (nuclear and extended).	An analysis of the projects funded through the AWP/FVI reveals that Aboriginal women’s organizations have focussed on the development of culturally appropriate approaches rather than models per se.
Training of Aboriginal volunteers and community leaders.	An analysis of the projects funded through the AWP/FVI reveals that trained Aboriginal volunteers and community leaders in family violence prevention has been, and would appear to continue to be, an important output.
Culturally appropriate information materials for all segments of the off-reserve Aboriginal community.	AWP/FVI resources and capacity to support the production of culturally appropriate information materials is limited. Projects have tended to focus on more interactive forms of public awareness (e.g. workshops, conferences, dialogues, etc.) than on products per se. The production and dissemination of information materials pose challenges that need to be considered, such as target audience definition, cultural and linguistic diversity, and the appropriate distribution/dissemination mechanisms. The relevancy of written materials may also be questioned; alternative formats (oral, visual, multi-media, workshops) may be more appropriate.  See also column above on focus on Aboriginal women’s organizations, both on and off reserve.



Outputs	Analysis
Develop links with mainstream service and treatment facilities through culturally appropriate bridging mechanisms to facilitate their use and relevance to Aboriginal clients.	Projects funded through the AWP/FVI have tended to focus on the development of culturally specific and appropriate services and treatment facilities for Aboriginal clients, rather than on links to mainstream services. Developing links and bridging mechanisms with mainstream services have been found to be inconsistent with community wishes/needs and therefore hasn't occurred, nor has this been identified as a priority for the future. It is interesting to note that two of the projects present at the AWP/FVI Learning Circle have had non-Aboriginal clients, who were interested in applying Aboriginal healing strategies, and access Aboriginal services.
Establish networks and partnering strategies with mainstream and Aboriginal service and treatment organizations.	As noted above, projects funded through the AWP have focussed on networks and partnerships within and across Aboriginal service and treatment organizations, as opposed to with mainstream treatment services.
Raise the awareness in off-reserve Aboriginal communities on family violence issues and the impact of family violence on Aboriginal families.	Awareness-building has been a prominent feature of work supported in this phase of the FVI. There is general agreement that awareness-raising is and will remain an important priority.
Development of community/group strategies, action plans and frameworks for addressing family violence issues.	To some extent, this has, or is occurring, particularly through AWP/FVI support at the national level. Information-sharing and networking, however, could be more widely supported and developed.

**Table 1: Output Analysis**

**TARGET POPULATION/REACH ANALYSIS**

The Logic Model identifies the following target population/reach:

*Off-reserve Aboriginal women's organizations.  
Beneficiaries and clients are the off-reserve Aboriginal people, their families (nuclear and extended) including the particular needs of various segments of the populations such as women, men, children, youth and elders.*

Comments:

- The broad focus on women and their families, including the extended family remains very relevant
- We note that the Logic Model states that the program focusses on off-reserve, but in practice on reserve Aboriginal women's organizations are not excluded from but are eligible for, and have received funding. This broader focus appears desirable, but there are potential problems in extending the target population/reach within the current resource profile
- The broad focus on women and their families, including extended family members (men and women, boys and girls) remains relevant.

#### **SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS ANALYSIS**

The Logic Model identifies seven short-term effects that correspond to each of the seven Outputs. The short-term effects would need to be revised to match the revised scope of activities and outputs. Similarly the long-term effects would need to be revised in accordance with the outputs and short-term effects. Ideally, both the short-term and long-term effects should be assessed for measurability.

#### **INDICATORS ANALYSIS**

The performance indicators would need to be revised to match the revised scope of activities and anticipated short-term and long-term effects. The indicators should be reflective of, and more suited to measuring the expected effects and results of the activities. Data sources will also need to be identified and procedures put in place to ensure that information is collected. Ideally, the indicators should be developed in consultation with Aboriginal women's organizations.