

# HEALING & WELLNESS

THIS IS A NEWSLETTER OF THE ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY



## Helping the Men Rekindle the Fire

### A visit to Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan Southwest Regional Healing Lodge

The Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan Healing Lodge is located on the Munsee-Delaware Nation, south of London, Ontario. The lodge design is based on the Medicine Wheel, with a large circular room in the centre for gatherings and ceremonies, and four attached buildings that reach out in the cardinal directions. The outlying buildings house residences for up to twenty-eight guests, a workout room, counselling and healing rooms, offices, maintenance facilities, and kitchen, dining room and lounge areas.

Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan provides healing programs for Aboriginal men, women, families and caregivers from all over Ontario. The work done at the Lodge is dedicated to the recovery of Indigenous family values and structures for the coming generations. This is done through “the provision of culturally based human development programs concentrated on rebuilding and empowering individuals and families, active on the Red Road (healing path), with a balanced healthy lifestyle and a foundation of knowledge of the original teachings” (from the Vision). The staff at the Lodge are evenly balanced between men and women. They stress that Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan is not an institutional environment, but a place where people can come to learn from one another according to Anishinabe and Ongwehonwe values and traditions. The staff clearly believes in what they have to offer, because they themselves benefit from, and are a part of, the healing environment.

[CONT'D PAGE 2]

### Men's Healing

What are the healing issues particular to Aboriginal men?

This issue covers various AHWS-funded programs that deal with men's healing.

**Editor's note:** As we were getting ready to go to press, we received the latest copy of the newspaper, *Healing Words* in the mail. The topic of their latest edition?: “Aboriginal Men and Healing.” For those interested in reading more on men's healing, this resource is available through the Aboriginal Healing Foundation at [www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)



The turtle represents Turtle Island because Turtle Island is Mother Earth. The people are holding hands because it means they will help each other with their problems. They are standing in a circle because it represents the circle of life. They could be our friends, families and strangers that either need help or are helping.

## CONTENTS

### FEATURE

Men's Healing	1-5
Za-geh-do-win	4
AHWS Makes A Difference	5
From the Ontario Native Women's Restorative Justice Program	6
Community Consultations	6
Performance Measures Plan	7
Call for 10th Anniversary Submissions	7
Sage Words	8

*In the Spirit of Healing & Wellness* is a bi-annual publication produced by the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy. It offers news, updates and information about AHWS funded projects. We welcome submissions. For more information, please contact:

Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy  
880 Bay Street, 2nd Floor  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2B6  
Tel (416) 326-6905 Fax (416) 326-7934

Website: [www.ahwsontario.ca](http://www.ahwsontario.ca)



## Biidaaban Healing Lodge: More Men Participating in Programs

Biidaaban Healing Lodge, located on the Pic River First Nation, is an AHWS funded twelve-bed residential treatment facility for Aboriginal people in the Robinson-Superior Treaty Area. Biidaaban provides holistic programs assisting families and communities to achieve healing, recovery and rehabilitation from various forms of abuse. The Lodge offers healing programs related to topics such as anger management, compulsive over-eating, grief and abandonment, residential school healing, sexual abuse, and Adult Children of Alcoholics.

Dave Fortin is the program coordinator at Biidaaban. He's noticed an increase in the number of men involved in the programming at the Lodge over the last few years. While the programs are co-ed, only about 10% of the participants in the first year were men. This has risen up to about 30 or 40% more recently, and the Lodge has now had a few groups that were all men. Dave thinks the increased participation of men reflects an increase in consciousness on the need for men's healing in Aboriginal communities. He points out two key motivating factors: men are being encouraged by women who have done their own healing work; and they are being referred through drug and alcohol treatment programs. These are natural referral points; many men are likely to address their own healing when they've had to confront an issue that has caused major disruption in their lives. At that point they're a little more open to dealing with their issues.

Dave sees a difference between men and women in their approach to healing. The Biidaaban program respects these differences by developing distinct approaches for men such as men's healing circles. The staff at Biidaaban continue to look for ways to address men's healing and wellness.

Biidaaban Healing Lodge  
Ojibways of the Pic River First Nation  
General Delivery, Heron Bay, Ontario PoT 1Ro  
Tel: 807-229-3592  
Fax: 807-229-0308  
www.picriver.com

Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan runs a holistic twelve-week men's residential healing program that takes place for one week every two months. During the first week of the program the men learn about the de-colonization process. As the course goes on, the men are encouraged to reflect and share on how their identity as men and Anishinabe or Ongwehonwe people has been disrupted through unhealthy processes. Through group discussion, cultural teachings and ceremonies, they examine their own personal and cultural history and distress patterns, and how their role as men relates to themselves, their families, and their communities. As a trusting environment is built, the men are given the opportunity to identify and release their built up stress and unhealthy patterns and behaviours through cleansing and unburdening ceremonies (such as sweat lodge and condolence ceremonies), and through healing and counselling sessions.

As the course progresses, the men learn about many topics. These include: men and their purpose, Creation and original kindness, non-violence, Aboriginal identity (clan, name, nation), the meaning of community, power and control, life stages, cycles of healing, hunting traditions, leadership, sexuality, traditional resource management, helping others to heal, and other teachings—all from an Aboriginal cultural perspective. In addition, there are other services that encourage the men to be connected in healthy ways to their physical bodies.

AHWS newsletter staff made a visit to Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan on a Thursday during the 6th week of the men's residential healing program. At this time, the men were receiving a teaching on fire and its relation to men's roles and responsibilities. In the morning they heard parts of the Anishinabe Creation Story from Anishinabe Elder Jim Dumont. This story teaches about our place in the universe, and how men's responsibilities are related to fire and are balanced with those of women, who are responsible for water. The gift of fire was explained with great care and respect for tradition, in a manner that touched everything from the Creator down to the natural world, and showed the interconnectedness of all things. The teaching style allowed the listener to make connections on many levels, ranging from symbolic and emotional to scientific and analytical. In the afternoon, the insights of the morning were made practical through a teaching and opportunity to make fire in the traditional manner, with flint. The men worked outside on their fires amid much joking and laughter, and you could taste the excitement when the fires came to life.

Throughout the course, confidence in being Anishinabe or Ongwehonwe is cultivated. The men are encouraged to meditate and reflect on their learning, and to keep a personal journal. Opportunities are provided for the men to review their learning and integrate it into their lives. They are encouraged to take and practice the knowledge they have gained from the program back to their own communities and families, and are challenged to continue working on themselves after leaving the Lodge. Participants develop a plan of care for their continued healing on the Red Road. Ultimately, this program is about finding ways to integrate the teachings in work and home lives—and about how to become more involved in our communities.

► Kii-kee-wan-nii-kaan Southwest Regional Healing Lodge  
Munsee Delaware Nation  
R.R. #1, Jubilee Road  
Muncey, Ontario NoL 1Yo  
Tel: 519-289-0148  
Fax: 519-289-0149  
www.kiikeewanniikaan-swrhl.com

## Ishkode Winini—Firekeepers Circle

Native Child and Family Services of Toronto runs AHWS-funded men's healing programs through its Mooka'am therapeutic department. Terry Rogers, from Hiawatha, is a Treatment Worker with Mooka'am and works intensively with the men. He facilitates the Partner Assault Response Systems (PARS) and Ishkode Winini Circle programs, as well as providing one-on-one counselling services for clients.

Terry's work with men is based on the understanding that many men have not had good teachers and role models in their life. As a result they've taken on behaviours and ways of thinking that are abusive towards themselves, their partners, and their families, including substance abuse, unhealthy relationships, and distorted concepts of who they are. Terry sees these behaviours as a symptom of the real problem: the men are products of environments where they were not raised to understand their roles and responsibilities. "In the Ishkode circle they get a different way of seeing the world, themselves, and what their lives can be."

Ishkode Winini means "firekeeper circle." In Ojibwe society, the traditional roles and responsibilities of men were as firekeepers. This does not just refer to physical fire, but also the fire within ourselves, our families and our communities. The circle asks the men what they are feeding and fuelling that fire with. If it's drugs, alcohol, or violence, the fire is unhealthy. In Ishkode Winini, the men are encouraged to feed the fire with good things.

Some clients are sent to the program by the courts after being charged with domestic violence, while others are voluntary participants. The program is based on Native cultural values that address the aspects of being in the Medicine Wheel (spirit, emotions, mind and body). Other wheels used in the program address topics such as child abuse, power and control, and non-violence. The program curriculum includes traditional activities such as sweat lodges, fasting camps, pipe ceremonies, talking circles, and visiting Elders and traditional teachers. Every Tuesday night the clients meet as a group, and during the week they see program counsellors. The program is designed to help men understand their ancestors and the teachings they lived by, including medicines and traditional roles and responsibilities. Everything is based on learning the value of respect—for oneself first of all, and then for one's family and community.

Terry says the traditional Native perspective on men's violence to women is very clear. In the Ojibwe nation, for example, the abuser was ostracized from their community. Terry says, "courting a woman meant you had to convince the woman's family that you could provide and live an upright life. If you were accepted, that meant that you would live with her family, so you really had to convince them. If you became abusive to the woman, her father and brothers addressed the behaviour." An abuser could not take leadership or share his pipe. Essentially, he was disgraced in the community. If he didn't change his behaviour, he might even pay with his life.

Respect for women is reflected in the traditional teachings on the drum. Terry stresses that part of the purpose of the drum is to teach the men this respect. "The drum is Grandmother Spirit. When we sit around the drum, we are supposed to refrain from vulgar language; not speak in a bad way. When the daughters are dancing it's natural for them to look at the drummers. The



Treatment worker Terry Rogers of Native Child and Family Services' Mooka'am Program

aunties can determine whether that man will be respectful in a relationship by the way they conduct themselves at the drum. If they strike that drum with a lot of force, they may strike the woman. If they're disrespectful, or speak disrespectfully around the drum, they'll be disrespectful to women."

Terry points out that in his work he needs "strong aunties—women teachers; they're the source of the work I do with the men." One of his teachers is a woman who taught him about how the men should sit around the drum. "The day I quit drinking was the day I walked into an Indian Friendship Centre and heard a woman Elder talking about traditional ways. It gave me a way of life."

Terry stresses that the Mooka'am program demonstrates how Aboriginal people need to develop their own healing programs based on traditional values. As he says, healing for Aboriginal people is "not in the modern education system. It's in our own ways. We'll make those changes. I believe the morals and ethics in those traditional teachings; they can be applicable today."

► Mooka'am Program  
Native Child and Family Services of Toronto  
464 Yonge St.  
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 1W9  
Tel: 416-969-8510  
Fax: 416-969-9251  
[www.nativechild.org](http://www.nativechild.org)

# Men and the Family

## An Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children Worker's Perspective

In February 2003, Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children (A/HBHC) workers attended the OFIFC "For the Children III" conference in Toronto, where they were able to participate in workshops on men's responsibilities in the family. Jeanne Hebert, an A/HBHC worker at Katarokwi Friendship Centre in Kingston, found the workshops interesting.

The "For the Children III" conference workshops on traditional men's roles raise difficult issues for workers struggling to help clients adapt to the world today. For example, the absence of men during the birth process in traditional Aboriginal societies is hard for many people to accept. Jeanne sees a connection between confusion about roles and the breakdown of traditional society. Traditionally the biological father didn't seem to be the main focus with newborns, because there were a lot of aunties and grandmas to help with the birthing process, and women in the extended family were the bringers of life and the first teachers. The reality today is that aunties and grandmothers often can't be there as extended families, so we depend on our community and programs to provide that support. Jeanne notes that "all the relationships have been broken, and there aren't enough healthy men in the picture."

Jeanne feels that there must be ways to build tradition back into today's society while still ensuring more male role models for babies and children. She believes that we have to make the best of what we have, rather than being victims. "The big thing is, who's really there for the kids? Who are we related to, not biologically, but in reality?" She encourages moms to provide babies with love, support, and safe role models through some kind of extended family that includes men. "We find out if there are healthy men in the extended family who can be involved, for example, an uncle." Where this isn't possible, the programs at least try to encourage links with good surrogate male role models, such as men working with Aboriginal community programs. "This is why A/HBHC is so unique—you create the resources available to create the family bonds—not just the father, but the uncle and extended family and community."

Jeanne says applying traditional knowledge to healthy families today is a process that will take time, since we need to re-discover the essence of traditions in creative ways. "If you've lost the culture, you have to live it to regain it. Culture is living, not stuck on a shelf somewhere." Jeanne feels there's not enough emphasis today on "the roles and responsibilities of the cycle of life and re-introducing rites of passage through men's programs." She feels that we need to incorporate traditional values with the children, such as getting little boys to understand men's responsibility to children. For the men who are already experiencing difficulties, Jeanne stresses the need to avoid institutional approaches. She emphasizes the "Friendship" in Friendship Centre—noting, for example, how men like to drop in and do volunteer work to get important information. Men who participate in Aboriginal programs may learn about and take ownership of their responsibilities, rather than having them imposed (or removed) by government.

For now, Jeanne will take what she can from the workshops. She agrees that it was refreshing to have the chance to look at the issues, and that more discussion and understanding in this area is needed.

► Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre  
50 Hickson Avenue  
Kingston, Ontario K7K 2N6  
Tel: (613) 548-1500  
Fax: (613) 548-1847



Jeanne Hebert (far left) with the staff of the Katarokwi Friendship Centre in Kingston

## Za-geh-do-win Information Clearinghouse

The Za-geh-do-win Information Clearinghouse is a library of information about Aboriginal initiatives in health, healing and family violence. Its purpose is to provide information to Aboriginal communities and organizations across Ontario. Za-geh-do-win researches and catalogues information about documented resources and initiatives from other libraries and clearinghouses, Aboriginal communities and organizations, and other organizations that provide information and services to Aboriginal people.

There are several ways you can request information from the Clearinghouse:

- call the toll free number at: 1-800-669-2538
- fax in the order at 1-705-692-9093
- email the order to [info@za-geh-do-win.com](mailto:info@za-geh-do-win.com)
- submit an order from the website at [www.za-geh-do-win.com](http://www.za-geh-do-win.com)
- visit the Clearinghouse on the Whitefish Lake First Nation just 20 minutes west of Sudbury

Za-geh-do-win Information Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 40, Naughton, Ontario PoM 2Mo  
tel: (705) 692-0420  
fax: (705) 692-9093  
toll free (800) 669-2538  
[www.za-geh-do-win.com](http://www.za-geh-do-win.com)

## Men's Healing Initiatives on Manitoulin

Noojmowin Teg Health Centre fills the gap in Aboriginal health services on Manitoulin Island. The agency takes a holistic approach, using a combination of traditional and mainstream approaches. Marjorie Shawande is the Traditional Coordinator and works in collaboration with dietitians, psychologists, nurse practitioners, a research evaluator and a fitness specialist.

Noojmowin Teg has delivered a series of men's wellness gatherings at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation in M'Chigeeng, in partnership with the Banaabiing Community Focus Project. Marjorie says small groups of 12-14 men have attended. The purpose of the gatherings are to "reinforce men's traditional roles and strengthen the family unit." The workshops have included traditional knowledge as well as a fitness program and a look at how to manage diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems.

Most of the men attending already have health problems. Marjorie makes the connection between the men's poor health and a need for emotional healing. "They're carrying all that grief, trauma, and anger, and they turn to food for comfort. By the

time we see them they're imbalanced. They go to the doctor, who says they're fine, but we're finding in traditional healing we can detect disease before it shows up in modern medical tests."

When asked what the men need, Marjorie refers to "learning their roles again, to value themselves as men. They've lost that role." She notes that women are often the service providers as well as the nurturers in Native communities today.

Marjorie also sees a need for trauma work with the men:

*We're finding that the trauma begins when the mother becomes pregnant. Staying in a violent relationship exposes babies to violence. The baby sees everything when you're carrying them. So they're born with anger.*

She points out that traditional teachings and ceremonies can help to release trauma:

*We've forgotten a lot of our traditional teachings, such as how to take care of the baby*

*once it's born. You have to do ceremonies to release that negativity. If the mother or father is carrying grief, you pass that on to the baby. We need to look back at our traditional roles, to bring those back in order to take care of those traumas that these men have gone through—because they're walking around with a lot of anger in them, ending up in institutions such as psychiatric hospitals and jails.*

Noojmowin Teg combines this recovery of traditional knowledge with modern services. For example, the agency provides mental health services by psychologists experienced in dealing with trauma. As Marjorie says, "It's just a beginning, and there's still a lot of work to do." She knows that a strong combination of healing services will be necessary to community recovery.

► **Noojmowin Teg Health Centre**  
R.R.#1 Sheguindah, Ontario PoP 1Wo  
Tel: (705) 368-2182  
Fax: (705) 368-2229  
[www.kanservu.ca/~mnaanooj/](http://www.kanservu.ca/~mnaanooj/)

## The MCFCS Make a Difference Recognition Award

The Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy Performance Measures Working Group has been recognized with a Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services Make a Difference Award in the area of Policy Development /Implementation.

Over the past 3 years the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS) Performance Measures Working Group has developed and implemented a Strategy-wide Performance Measures Plan.

This team has done an outstanding job to document the impact of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy on reducing family violence and improving Aboriginal health, and to support efficient and effective service delivery.

Recipients Ruby Miller, Six Nations Maternal and Child Centre, Sue Vanstone, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Pam Wheaton, Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat, Barbara Montgomery, Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services and A.J. Williams, Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy received their award from Andrea Maurice, Assistant Deputy Minister and John Fleming, the Deputy Minister of the MCFCS at a Corporate Awards Ceremony on Thursday, June 12, 2003 at Queen's Park. Additional recipients Carol Hill, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, Susan Barberstock, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres and Nena LaCaille-Johnson, Enaahitig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre were unable to attend. Congratulations is extended to this dedicated team.



(from left to right) **Award Recipients:** Ruby Miller – Six Nations Maternal and Child Centre, Sue Vanstone – Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Pam Wheaton – Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat, Barbara Montgomery – Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, A.J. Williams – Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

**Presenting the Award:** Assistant Deputy Minister Andrea Maurice, Deputy Minister John E. Fleming

# From the Ontario Native Women's Association Restorative Justice Program

The Restorative Justice Program of Ontario Native Women's Association was started in 2000. At its conception, the program was designed to bring cultural teachings about the history of Aboriginal people to Aboriginal youth who have had involvement with the justice system. Participants are in open custody facilities that are either privately run or run by the Ministry of Public Safety and Security.



Youth in custody enjoy learning Native culture

At first, the program was only offered in the city of Thunder Bay. It took a new turn in 2002/03 and is now offered in the four directions of Ontario, for each of the four seasons and within the four regions of the Ontario Native Women's Association.

The program has recently completed

the fourth learning lodge in Oakville, Ontario, which represents the southern direction and the spring season. This learning lodge was held at the Syl Aps Youth Centre, and included participation from an Elder as well as guest speakers from the Toronto area.

Youth who participated in the spring lodge were enthusiastic about their learning, and offered the following comments in their evaluations:

*I learned more about the teachings and how we lost our Native heritage to the residential schools.*

*I knew nothing or close to nothing until today and I learned how to make a tobacco pouch.*

*I feel I have a better understanding of Native spirituality and philosophy.*

Three other lodges have been hosted this year, in Sudbury, Stratton, and Thunder Bay. Youth who attended these lodges have been able to connect with Elders and youth role models, participate in Pipe Ceremonies, learn from academics and community people about Native history, and attend traditional feasts. Participants in the Western lodge, held at Kay-Nah-Chih-Wah-Nung Historical Centre, were able to tour the burial mounds and learn about the



Drumming is part of the learning lodges.

site. They appreciated the opportunity to learn local Native history. One youth noted "I had never seen or heard of any of these places."

The youth leave the program with a hunger to learn more about their history and culture. As one participant concluded:

*If there were another learning lodge I would love to attend it again. I want to learn more about my culture. I find it quite interesting. I like what goes on.*

► For further information on the Restorative Justice Program of the Ontario Native Women's Association  
212 East Miles St.  
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 1J0  
Tel: 1-800-667-0816  
cdwrj@shaw.ca

## AHWS Community Consultations

The Joint Management Committee is planning a third phase of the Strategy. In keeping with its direction to plan for an upcoming Leadership Session, the Committee developed a workplan including a series of Community Consultations to help inform the documentation on renewal of the Strategy (Phase Three). The community consultations regarding the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy were intended to facilitate discussions and input from Aboriginal organization leaders, community members, service providers and participants about the management and scope of programs and services of the Strategy. Led by the Provincial Territorial Organizations, the consultations included the Leadership of the First Nations and Aboriginal organizations, community members and staff of AHWS funded programs and services.

The community consultation questions were designed to provide information to confirm the mandate of the Strategy, and identify priorities for scope, management, and administration

AHWS programs and services.

All twelve community consultation findings generally support the mandate and main objectives of the Strategy (reducing family violence, improving Aboriginal health and promoting collaboration and integration of services and programs).

Some priorities identified through the community consultations include concern over a lack of programming for children and youth between the ages of 7-12, and a need for increased mental health programming.

The community consultations note a need to reduce bureaucracy. It was suggested that there is a need to improve communication and information sharing on a number of levels, including between AHWS and member Nations, and between First Nation and communities.

The results of these community consultations were shared with government representatives and the Aboriginal Leadership.

# Performance Measures Plan

The Strategy-wide Performance Measures Plan (PMP) has been fully implemented for the last two years with 150 projects including most Specialized projects and many Specific Allocation projects. Three tools were used to collect information on “What good are we doing?”, “How do we do this?”, and “At what cost?”. These tools were the Client Benefits Questionnaire (CBQ), Participant Count and Client Count respectively.

The 2002-03 Client Count demonstrates that 88 projects provided client-based services to more than **26,000** clients, averaging **164,400** non-residential client visits. A total of **12,514** bed days were used by seven healing lodges and eight shelters who reported on residential data.

In addition, it was found that over a three month period, 75 projects reached more than 50,000 people while undertaking participant-based education and awareness activities related to improving Aboriginal health or reducing family violence. These activities included workshops, presentations, events, circles, traditional ceremonies, and fitness and recreational activities.

Preliminary findings from the 2002-2003 Client Benefits Questionnaire completed by 2123 clients at 68 projects indicate that 50% of AHWS clients report improvements in both health status and family situations. Over 91% of clients said that their overall situations were better than before. In general, clients with a longer or more intense association with AHWS reported improvements more often than those with less association. Thirty-six percent (36%) of clients reported being involved

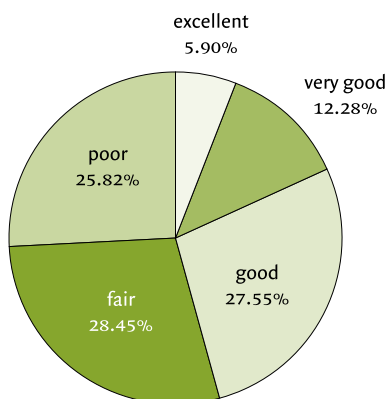
with AHWS-funded programs for longer than a two-year period.

A total of 84% of clients stated that they had learned something new at the AHWS project, (an increase of 7% over 2001/02). A total of 96% of those learning something new were able to use

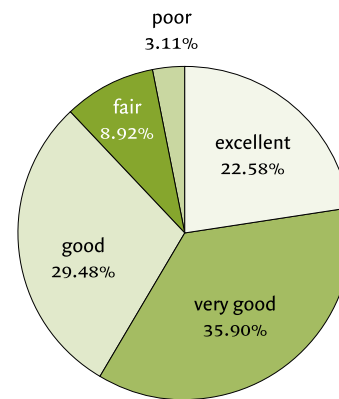
this newly acquired knowledge or skill (an increase of 6% over last year).

Clients reported that services exceeded their expectations 60% of the time. Clients also reported that these services were made available in a timely manner 95% of the time.

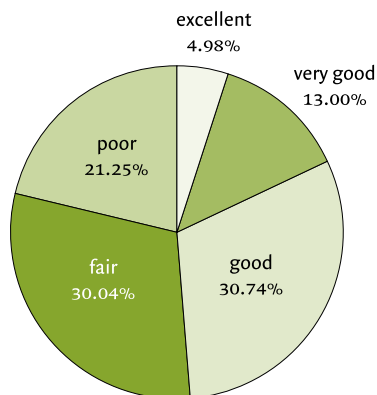
**CBQ 2002 Self-Reported Changes in Family Situation – Prior to AHWS Service**



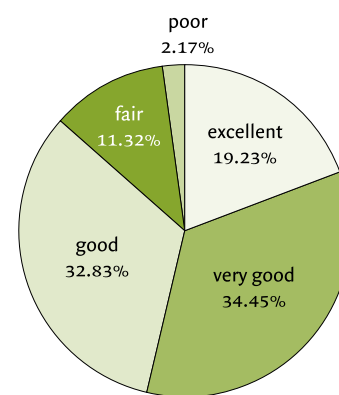
**CBQ 2002 Self-Reported Changes in Family Situation – Current Assessment of AHWS Clients**



**CBQ 2002 Self-Reported Changes in Health Status – Prior to AHWS Service**



**CBQ 2002 Self-Reported Changes in Health Status – Current Assessment of AHWS Clients**



## In the Spirit of Celebration!

The year 2003 marks the 10th anniversary of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

Join us in celebrating!

We are looking for anecdotes, articles, poems, pictures, stories, and anything else that will help us to remember our past successes and celebrate the ongoing successes of the Strategy.

Previously published material will be accepted.

This material will be published in the fall/winter 2003 newsletter.

Please send by September 15, 2003 to:

**Kim Anderson**

(519) 823-2614 Fax: (519) 823.0179  
Kim\_Anderson@sympatico.ca

# Sage Words Walking the Good Road: Dads, Uncles and Grandpas



A grandpa enjoys his role with the children

In February 2003, Allen Doxtator, a member of Oneida of the Thames, was a presenter at the “For the Children III” conference held in Toronto. Allen talked about the roles of men, and provided us with an interview. The following text is taken from this interview:

The men in our nations used to have clear roles: find food and shelter, gather wood, turn the earth so the women could plant seeds, and so on. They had to protect the people: the old and the young and the women, and respect women and children.

When European people began to be a part of our life, a lot of dysfunction came into our lives and made the men disoriented in their minds. We lost all our roles because we were put on small territories, and that changed the way we look at life. We can’t hunt and fish much anymore. The food is in supermarkets, and men are confused. There’s no place for men. We have fallen down

on our roles and responsibilities, and we still can’t protect; we have guns but their guns are still better. And so we’re constantly in that place where we’re living in fear of what’s next, what’s going to happen to our people, and our purpose is limited.

We carry our ancestors’ traumas too, so it’s a long healing path. Men think they’re being strong by hanging on to all of those traumas and using alcohol to help them be that powerful person, but we end up beating women and children and being destructive to our own people. So as time goes on, we’re not being responsible fathers and uncles and grandfathers.

What changes do men need to make? Our community has only begun to heal. We need to work with men, invite them to heal. Let them come at their own pace.

The women are on that healing path, and so are some of the men. There’s more men now than when I first started. That’s how it is with our people; it’s taking a while for us to get to where we

can look at our lives and start turning them around.

The women too, have to heal around that, and realize that it has taken time for men to get this far, to want to help out in the home. Because we were always told and shown by the white man that that’s a woman’s job. But Haudenosaunee men used to cook part of the time because when the woman’s on her moon she’s not supposed to cook.

What changes do men need to make? Our community has only begun to heal. We need to work with men, invite them to heal. Let them come at their own pace. They may take a step back at first. Men carry that respect for women—we can’t see it but it’s there. We need to get the men who are on their healing path to come in and set up places for other men.

The roles of our people are what made us good teachers. That’s why it’s important to research what we taught and who taught it, how often were we with those children when we were teaching them as they grew up. There used to be ceremonies for becoming a man or a woman. That’s part of what helps us to understand when we become that man, or that woman.

We have to deal with that anger, and look at how deep it goes so we can move on in a good way. When we start to deal with that, we will find that a lot of those teachings are easy to come by because we’re more open to learning. We have to get those layers of anger out of the way so our vision is clear and our ears are open. This will enable us to do those things we need to do to fulfill our roles as dads and uncles and grandpas.

## ABORIGINAL HEALING AND WELLNESS STRATEGY

880 Bay St., 2nd Floor | Toronto, Ontario | M7A 2B6 | Tel: (416) 326-6905 | Fax: (416) 326-7934 | Website: [www.ahwsontario.ca](http://www.ahwsontario.ca)

### Interim Manager

Kathy Wakeford  
(416) 326-6907  
[Kathy.Wakeford@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Kathy.Wakeford@css.gov.on.ca)

### Performance Measures Coordinator

Kristine Neglia  
(416) 326-6903  
[Kristine.Neglia@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Kristine.Neglia@css.gov.on.ca)

### Financial Officer

Mary Porzio (416) 326-6904  
[Mary.Porzio@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Mary.Porzio@css.gov.on.ca)

### Financial Assistant

Bonnie Dack (416) 212-1512  
[Bonnie.Dack@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Bonnie.Dack@css.gov.on.ca)

### Community Liaison Officer

Ed Bennett (416) 326-7900  
[Edward.Bennett@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Edward.Bennett@css.gov.on.ca)

### Team Lead: Policy & Evaluation

Andrea (A.J.) Williams  
(416) 326-1510  
[Andrea.Williams@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Andrea.Williams@css.gov.on.ca)

### Aboriginal Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program Coordinator

Catherine Alisch (416) 212-1511  
[Catherine.Alisch@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Catherine.Alisch@css.gov.on.ca)

### Team Lead Operations

Martin John  
(416) 326-6902  
[Martin.John@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Martin.John@css.gov.on.ca)

### Administrative Support

Kayla Smith  
(416) 326-6905  
[Kayla.Smith@css.gov.on.ca](mailto:Kayla.Smith@css.gov.on.ca)