

# *Nanda Gikendan*

***“To Seek Knowledge”***

## **Community Education and Engagement Project**



## **Final Report**

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

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## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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### **Acknowledgements**

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

# Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Final Report

Mending the Sacred Hoop (MSH) is a Native American program founded in 1993 to address violence against Native women at both individual and institutional levels. We organized to change the way the criminal justice system, service providers, and community responded to Native women who had been battered, working with multidisciplinary teams on policy change and serving the local community with advocacy for Native women and intervention groups for Native men who batter. Mending the Sacred Hoop began our national work in 1995, when the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) approached us to assist Tribes across the country in addressing violence against Native women in their communities. In 2006 we organized Sacred Hoop, a Tribal domestic violence coalition that organizes on violence against Native women issues throughout the state of Minnesota.

Mending the Sacred Hoop’s approach to organizing builds upon the strengths of community in addressing violence against women. Education and organizing create an informed and active population to further the efforts of institutional and legal reforms. People need to be informed about the issue and understand the dynamics of intimate partner violence in order to change social standards and tolerance. Organizing brings people together to discuss a common issue and decide on action steps to address the problem. MSH designed the Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project as a way to raise awareness of violence against women and to involve the Duluth community in ending violence in intimate partner relationships.

The Nanda Gikendan Project arose out of what MSH has seen working with Tribes nationally and the results of our two local research projects auditing the criminal and civil justice responses to Native women who have been battered or have reported sexual assault<sup>1</sup>. Both our national work and local research projects showed a need for community awareness and organizing.

We established a series of 10 monthly forums to educate community members and service providers on violence against Native women and incorporated traditional Ojibwe teachings as discussion points on how to end the violence. Our goals were to raise local awareness of the issue with community members and local service providers, while collecting ideas for creating a public awareness campaign to further raise awareness and educate the community.

MSH used the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Ojibwe as themes for each of the community forums: **Honesty, Humility, Courage, Wisdom, Respect, Generosity, and Love**. While there are some variations on the teachings (such as Courage for Bravery and Generosity for Truth), these teachings were chosen for their applicability to addressing intimate partner violence. Each forum was 3 hours long with introductions, a 20 minute presentation on the theme, a feast, and group activity. Each theme was presented by a guest speaker from the Native community to frame the traditional Ojibwe cultural and social structures underlying the teaching for that month. Each

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<sup>1</sup> Community-based Analysis of the U.S. Legal System’s Intervention in Domestic Abuse Cases Involving Indigenous Women: <http://www.mschoop.org/resources-pdf/Native%20Women%20%20Research%20Project.pdf> and the Safety & Accountability Audit of the Response to Native Women Who Report Sexual Assault in Duluth, MN: <http://www.mschoop.org/manual-pdf/Safety%20And%20Account.pdf>.

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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teaching was used to determine where we are today in the levels of domestic and sexual violence in the community, to examine dominate culture beliefs that support the violence, and to illustrate how we can reclaim traditional practices as a means of ending intimate partner violence. Local service providers interfacing in the lives of women who have been battered or sexually assaulted were also invited to present on services that they provide in the community. Each group activity was designed to enhance understanding of the teaching or the issue being discussed. Forums were advertised via fliers posted at various service provider offices and meeting places throughout the community. We also posted information on our web site to let people know about the monthly schedule of events and details regarding each month’s theme. Local service providers and community members were also notified by email to increase participation.

### Monthly Themes and Schedule:

**February: Kick-Off Meeting**

**March: Honesty**

**April: Humility**

**May: Courage**

**June: Wisdom**

**July: Respect**

**August: Generosity**

**September: Love**

**October: Changing Perceptions**

**November: Closing Forum**

### Kick-Off Meeting (February)

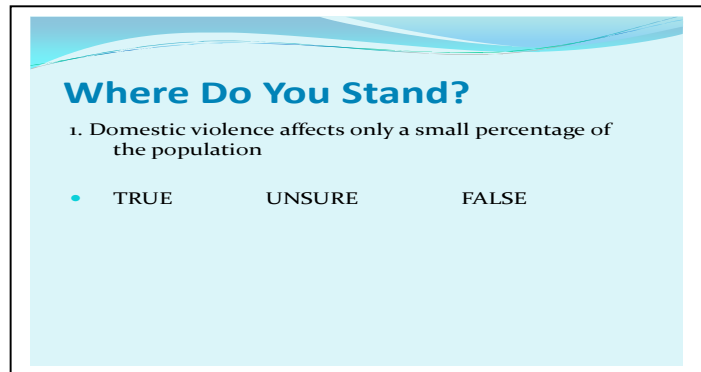
Once we received notification of the grant we began notifying service providers and community members of the upcoming project. We invited members of the Native community, the Duluth American Indian Commission, American Indian Community Housing, Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Thunderbird/Wren House staff (residential treatment homes), CAIR (Center for American Indian Resources), PAVSA (Program to Aid Victims of Sexual Assault), Fond du Lac Human Services, and the Mending the Sacred Hoop Board of Directors to the Kick-Off Meeting. At this event we disseminated the program overview, project goals, and monthly themes and presented on additional issues we were seeing in the community.

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

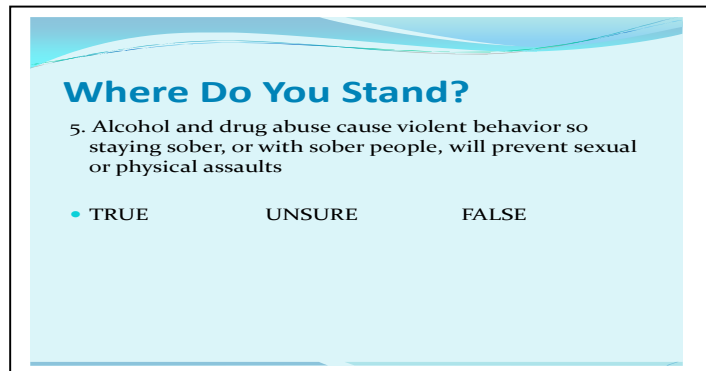
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### **Honesty: Talking about Power and Control (March)**

We began this meeting on Honesty with the “Where Do You Stand?” activity to begin a discussion of perceptions of domestic and sexual violence. Each slide presents a question about domestic and sexual violence and asks participants to take a position of True, False, or Unsure (standing in respective areas of the screen). MSH then facilitated a discussion around reasons such positions were taken in order to examine common perceptions and beliefs about the violence.



Bystander scenarios adapted from “Mentors in Violence Prevention” a project by Jackson Katz, followed “Where Do You Stand”. Each scenario asks participants to play the role of witness to an incident of intimate partner violence and then discuss what they would do in such a situation and why. We found a dramatic difference in what men and women participants said they would do when it came to obvious uses of physical force: most women said they would seek additional help, while men said they would physically restrain the person perpetrating violence in the scenario. When scenarios included objectifying women and emotional abuse, however, both men and women stated that they would try to support the victim. One difference between men’s and women’s responses was that women participating in the activity reported that they experience many situations where women degrade one another. Additionally, they would use shame to get the perpetrator in the scenario to stop. In the discussion that followed, we asked participants to identify bystander interventions that would be helpful. Ideas included: distracting and defusing the situation by allowing the perpetrator to save face, while de-escalating the situation; ways to support the victim; talking about these issues with our youth; peer policing/Guardian Angel type of community organizing; “If we are silent we are condoning”; conflict resolution skills; and establishing healthy boundaries.



Tina Olson was our closing speaker for this forum. Tina has worked with Mending the Sacred Hoop since its inception in 1993 as a local intervention program working with the Fond du Lac Tribe, St. Louis and Carlton Counties. She also worked as an on-call advocate for the Safe Haven shelter in Duluth (formerly the Woman’s Coalition) for a number of years. Tina framed Honesty as “It takes courage to be honest with and about yourself and to be honest to other people.”

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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The discussion was framed around how little we really think of the word honesty. We often act as teachers to our children, but our adult behavior quite often includes lying to get out of work, using ‘white lies’ to avoid phone calls, or making an excuse to avoid responsibility. These actions speak louder than the lip service we pay to honesty.

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

***Tina Olson***

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

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

### **Humility: Knowing our Limits (April)**

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

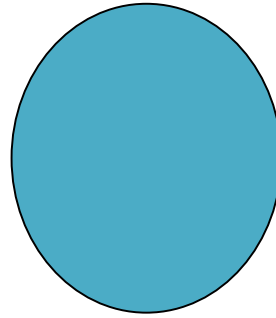
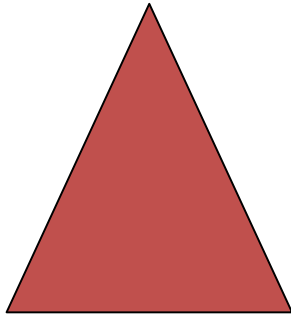
The community forum focusing on Humility began with defining it (above) and examining battering: why men batter, and how someone who uses violence to achieve control and maintain power over an intimate partner is on the opposite end of the continuum from being humble; they are thinking mostly of themselves when in a relationship—their decisions, their desires. Abusive and controlling behaviors rest upon beliefs about dominance. To illustrate this, we drew a triangle and circle on the white board and explained the triangle represents the belief in dominance and power, while the circle represents harmony and balance. Traditional Native teachings brought us up to strive for balance, while the dominant culture social norm is to strive to be “# 1”. We then discussed ways in which this belief can support violence in intimate partner

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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relationships by brainstorming examples of dominating behavior and “being #1”. Participants then listed examples of balance and living cooperatively and where they learned these values.

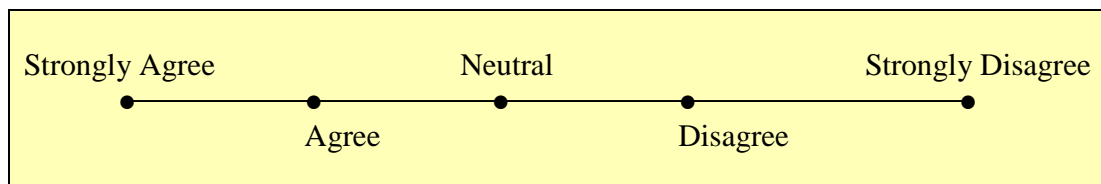
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This discussion was followed by a section of our community survey created to uncover perceptions and beliefs that support intimate partner violence. Survey questions were meant to examine beliefs about: “Decision Making in Relationships”, “Behaviors in Relationships”, and “What is Violence”. We reviewed the results and had a group discussion on the topics.

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



The forum concluded with Jeremy NeVilles-Sorell speaking about what it means to be a man working to end violence against women. Jeremy has been with Mending the Sacred Hoop since 1994 and also has also coordinated the Duluth Family Visitation Center for the safe exchange of children between parents where there has been domestic violence. He also operated the children’s program at Woman’s Transitional Housing Organization (later changed to Women’s Community Development Organization) and facilitated Native men’s batterer intervention groups. In his presentation, Jeremy defined humility as not thinking you are over your partner in a relationship, as well as needing to understand women’s anger in reaction to men’s violence against women and sexism in general.



## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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

*Jeremy NeVilles-Sorell*

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### **Courage: Speaking Up Against Violence and Abuse (May)**

The forum on Courage focused on engaging the community in discussing “What can I challenge in my community?” We started by handing out the other half of our community survey to assess the community’s perceptions and beliefs about relationships (“Having a Relationship”, “Sexual Relationships”, and “Gender Roles in Relationships”). After the survey was completed we debriefed responses to set the premise for the Carousel Exercise group activity. This activity involves writing questions on large sheets of paper for each group or table to respond to questions within a 2 minute time frame, writing 4-6 answers on post-it notes, and passing the paper onto the next group/table. We had six groups so the questions we asked were:

1. *What does courage look like addressing domestic violence?*
2. *What awareness and beliefs can I challenge?*
3. *What professions or programs can I engage that exist on our community?*
4. *What kind of materials or tools would help in challenging domestic violence?*
5. *What do I need to change/challenge in my personal beliefs?*
6. *What can I challenge within my family about domestic violence?*

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





## Nanda Gikendan "To Seek Knowledge" Project

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### *What can I challenge in my community?*

#### ***"What does courage look like addressing domestic violence?"***

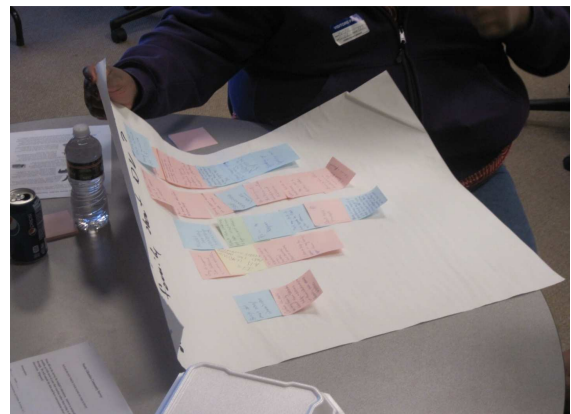
- That a person can change his or her life / break the cycle of violence in the family
- Putting strong messages out there (i.e., he goes to sweat lodge once a week vs. he beats his wife once a week)
- Courage to love yourself
- Challenging stereotypes of gender roles, jokes and remarks
- Participating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

#### ***"What awareness and beliefs can I challenge?"***

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

#### ***"What professions or programs can I engage that exist on our community?"***

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



#### ***"What kind of materials or tools would help in challenging domestic violence?"***

- Hotlines, websites, groups, walks
- Booklets, brochures, pamphlets, posters explaining what domestic violence is / Videos: speaking out, empowerment videos, YouTube videos

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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- Support and crisis lines (such as 211- Resource Connect)
- Awareness education and prevention / Actual role plays and hands on learning
- Teaching the old ways to preserve respectful values



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

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

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

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



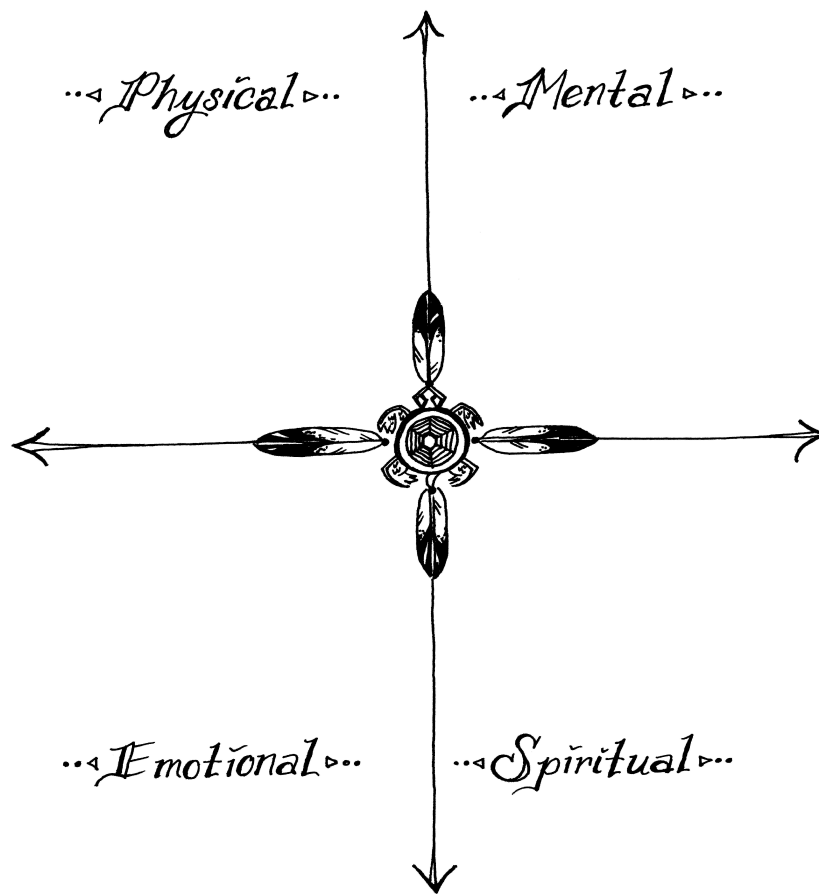
## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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At closing we asked one of our guests from the Santee Sioux Tribe in Nebraska (advocates that we know and who were in town attending a different training) to talk about courage. Misty spoke of her personal journey living in a violent relationship and what it's been like staying with her partner as he makes personal changes. She spoke about the silence she kept and how scary it was to reveal the abuse, and the challenges dealing with friends and family after deciding not to leave the relationship. Misty talked about the dynamics of intimate partner violence and how difficult (or impossible) it is to regain trust in the relationship, but also talked about how you establish new boundaries and

essentially are forming a new relationship. She added that her partner has not assaulted her for many years and is taking the courageous step of not only completing a batterer's intervention/non-violence program but is learning to facilitate groups for other men who batter (Mending the Sacred Hoop provided this facilitator training for members of the Santee Sioux Nation. Those who attended received certification on the "Duluth Model Curriculum" that is required by Nebraska state standards.) It was a very powerful story; we were honored that Misty shared it with us as this was the first time she had spoken publicly about her journey.



### **Wisdom: Understanding domestic and sexual violence (June)**

We began this community forum by showing MSH's *Native Videos Examining Domestic Violence* depicting incidences of abuse and power and control. We asked participants to look at the eight tactics listed on the Power and Control Wheel (see page 23) and identify as many as they could from the videos, listing them on post-it notes. Kali Moen, a volunteer with the Nanda Gikendan Project designed a Medicine Wheel (above) showing the different parts of “self” that should be equally attended to if humans are to live in balance. Post-it notes were collected and placed on the wheel under each corresponding category (mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual) to identify the type of abuse identified in each video. The main intention was to illustrate that abuse affects a person on multiple levels. Additionally, people often are not able to identify all power and control tactics or their effect; by using the medicine wheel and placing the tactics in four areas they were easily recognized by both Native and non-Native people.

Dawn LaPrairie was our speaker on the theme of Wisdom. Dawn is a former domestic violence advocate who worked as a legal advocate for Safe Haven, when the program was known as the Women's Coalition, and a shelter advocate for Dabinoo 'Igan (operated by the American Indian Community Housing Organization) who now teaches at Fond du Lac Ojibwe school. Dawn

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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began by speaking about the Ojibwe concept of Wisdom: how it comes from experience and learning from the world around you to know “how things are”; knowing the truth and coming to a place of possessing wisdom. Dawn explained the language and the interconnectedness of Ojibwe vocabulary where the word for truth is based on the word for drum (the heartbeat of our Nation(s)), and in turn, that is based the word for heart.

**De bwe’ = the truth**

**Debwe’win = drum**

**Dewi’ = heart**

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

*Dawn LaPrairie*

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Participants then identified some characteristics of wise people and practiced “speaking from the heart”, using drawings instead of words to express important lessons.

***What are some characteristics of wise people?***

*Serene*

*Patient*

*Truthful*

*Honest*

*Responsible*

*Courageous*

*Heart*

*Loving*

*Humble*

*“Do not ask questions – watch and listen – wisdom cannot be learned it must be experienced.”*

### **Respect: Working towards social equality (July)**

We understood that we would have to approach this teaching from many different angles, as Respect has many meanings and its definition can be deeply personal. We went around the room asking participants to identify and discuss what respect meant to them. We wrote the definitions on the board around a circle so that a visual image was created illustrating how each participant’s definition of respect was connected.



## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project



### *Defining Respect*

We followed “Defining Respect” with two activities. The first asked participants to stand in a circle. Each would then throw a ball to another person in the circle, but before they threw it they had to say the catching person’s name out loud. After the first round was done, another ball was introduced and participants were instructed to start again, but they had to continue to throw the ball to the same person. If the ball was dropped the group had to start over until the circle was completed. At first the throwing was chaotic, with the ball being dropped many times, then the group began to work together, and listen to each other so that the balls made it all the way around without falling. We debriefed by discussing the importance of respecting everyone in the circle and in order to have a respectful community, everyone present must be considered before an action is taken, or that action will not be successful.

The second activity forum participants engaged in began with a ball of yarn. They were instructed to hold on to a piece of the yarn, and then toss the ball to another person across the circle, eventually creating a web in which all participants were connected. We threw a beach ball into the middle, and the group had to keep it up in the air using only the web. In debriefing this activity, group participants found that they had to work together and individually to achieve the goal, and discussed that in the excitement of keeping the ball in the air, some people pulled too hard, some lost focus, or took it upon themselves to pull too hard, which hurt others holding on to the web. The lessons identified were that respectful relationships require an acknowledgement of our connection to one another; in order to live in a respectful community a person must consider the impact on the community before an action is taken so that no one is hurt by another’s good intentions. The closing discussion during this meeting was around the Equality Wheel (see page 24), and how equality in relationships can be articulated and recognized.

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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*Respect is remembering that we are all connected*

community about intimate partner violence.

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

This activity was followed by a discussion of the importance of being generous with our knowledge because this gives permission to others in the community to do the same, and deeply connects us in the work to end violence against women.

### **Love: Defining healthy relationships** (September)

At this meeting community forum participants screened “Listen to the Grandmothers”, a film produced by Tribal Law and Policy Institute. The film provides participants with an historical framework of violence against Native women, examines traditional responses to that violence, and how traditional cultural views can be combined with modern life to create a comprehensive and

### **Generosity: Generous with our knowledge** (August)

During this meeting, participants engaged in a discussion of the many definitions of generosity. We focused on how generosity is not limited to the giving and receiving of items—for the purposes of our meetings, the group could look at generosity through the lens of sharing information. The group was then challenged to come up with statements to counter negative messages about relationships, and how they might speak to people in the





## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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inclusive community response to domestic violence. After the film, the group discussed how the teaching of love encompassed all of the other teachings that have been covered in previous community forums and that the elders in the film shared their stories, both personal and traditional, out of love for their communities. The discussion continued with the members of the group talking about their own acts of love and new ways they could show love to the community, making it a safer place for Native women and children.



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

### **October: Changing Perceptions** (Domestic Violence Awareness Month)

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We wanted to incorporate this into the October community forum by creating toolkits for participants to use in sharing with friends, family, and other community members what they have learned about domestic violence throughout the Nanda Gikendan process. Dawn LaPrairie addressed issues of domestic violence and working with children. She used videos to present the impact on children and facilitated a discussion of the ways we, as a community, can bring back our teachings into our daily lives to have strong healthy families. After the presentation we gave out “Stone Soup” toolkits so people could host their own Domestic Violence Month events to talk about domestic violence



## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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with their friends and family. We told the story of “Stone Soup”: a traveler comes into a destitute town where the villagers hoard what little they have, keeping it to themselves and thus perpetuating their starvation. The traveler tricks them into sharing what they have to create a soup that will feed them all. The villagers were taught to cooperate for the benefit of the community. We then reviewed and provided a brief demonstration of the material in the toolkit (taken from previous community forum activities): the bystander scenarios, bookmark activity, “Faces of Violence” digital stories and discussion guide, “Native Videos Examining Domestic Violence” and discussion guide, and (of course) a soup packet. Each participant build their own kit based on material they felt confident in using. This event concluded the educational portion of our Nanda Gikendan series.



### **In Conclusion:**

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

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

The initial forum changed from conducting an assessment to establishing key partners in spreading the word about the project. We had wanted to have a mix of community people and professionals in attendance so various perspectives could be shared. As professionals we often view the lives of the people we work with as moldable if they follow our theories and principles. On the other hand, when we find ourselves in need of services and resources, we feel that service providers don't understand our true needs and place irrelevant requirements upon us. To help bridge this gap, we hoped that services providers would attend and have their constituents attend as well, so outreach could be broad. The assessment tool we developed was a survey on

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## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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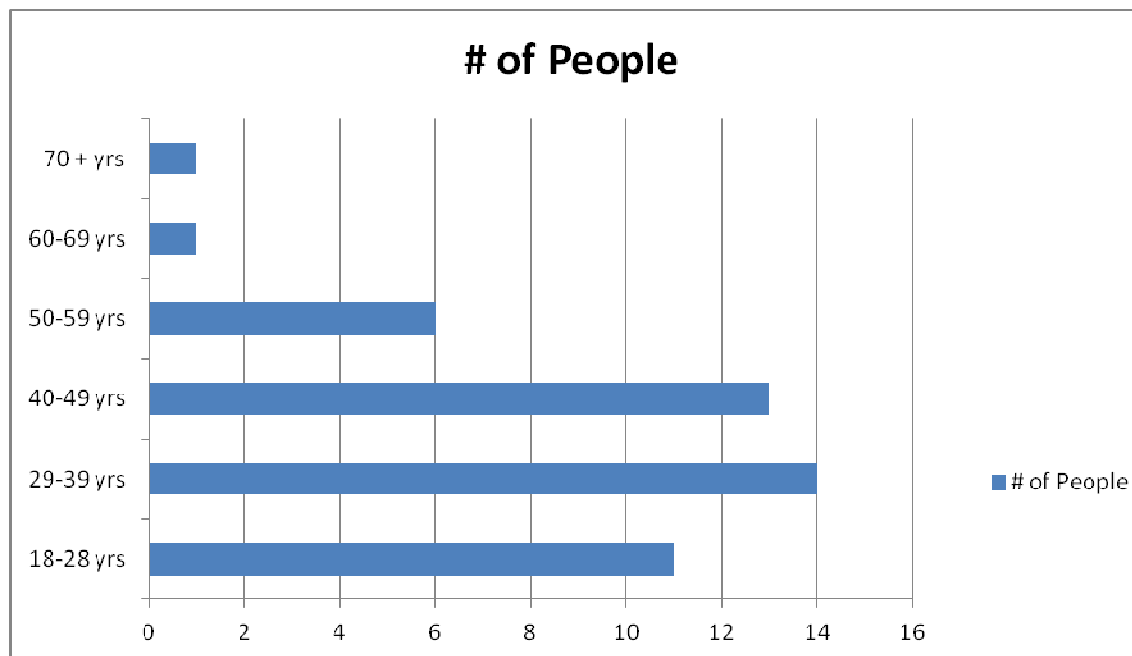
perceptions of relationships, conflicts, and violence. Survey categories included: demographics, having a relationship, having a sexual relationship, gender roles in relationships, decision making in relationships, and behaviors in relationships. The seven monthly meetings based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings were carried out as planned. The ninth forum was switched to coincide with Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October) to assist participants in engaging in community awareness activities as part of reaching our goal of building a pool of peer educators. The final meeting was a report of the overall findings and celebration of our project.

### Insights from Nanda Gikendan Public Awareness Surveys

These surveys were designed to measure the community’s perceptions and knowledge of domestic and sexual violence in order to identify areas of need in terms of further education and awareness.

#### Demographics:

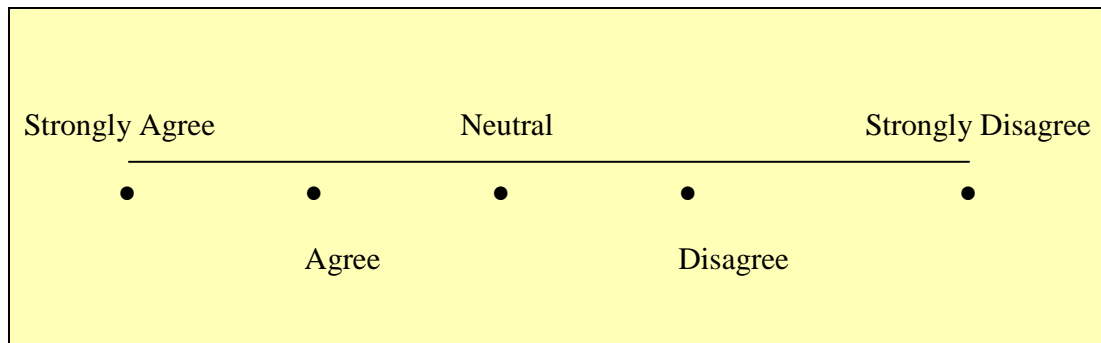
Overall we received 46 surveys responses. As the trial time in completing the survey was greater than 15 minutes we decided to split the survey into two parts, categories A-C and D-F, with a demographic page on each. 8 men and 38 women were surveyed with a fairly diverse age spread. 44 identified as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



## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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We used a scale measurement tool to gauge participant’s responses to questions in each of the survey categories: relationships, gender roles, decision making, behaviors, and violence. Responses could range from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”. After compiling the data we analyzed it for trends and cross referenced sections in order to draw conclusions about community perceptions, beliefs and knowledge of domestic and sexual violence.



### Having a Relationship:

This section of the survey was designed to gain insights into beliefs and attitudes on dating relationships.

The first question asked was, “I feel it is important to be dating or in a relationship all of the time”. 68% of survey participants disagreed with this statement. 33% of respondents were undecided; no participants agreed with the statement. This leads us to believe that people feel it is not important for individuals to continually be part of a romantic relationship. Yet when we asked “My friends think it’s important for me to be in a relationship”, 10% of respondents agreed with the statement. This told us that even if it is not important to the individual to be part of a romantic relationship, the social pressure from an individual’s peer group may influence someone to enter a relationship in order for them to fit in with their social network.

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

### Having a Sexual Relationship:

This section of the survey was designed to uncover perceptions and beliefs around sexual relationships (either actual or desired). Survey statements included talking about sex with friends, families, and partners and the parameters of sexual relationships.

When asked if “all relationships start with the intent of having sex” 65% of respondents disagreed, with 37% strongly disagreeing. Responses to this statement coupled with the fact that

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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most respondents preferred long-term relationships, show that, for survey respondents, relationships are more about companionship than sex.

### Gender Roles in Relationships:

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

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

Men’s beliefs regarding strict gender roles in relationships are a factor in battering, supporting the use of control tactics and violence to maintain power over an intimate partner. Survey results in this section leave us with the question of the basis for gender role conformity. If pressure to conform to strict gender roles doesn’t come from family or friends, then is it internal pressure caused by external societal messages about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman in a relationship?

### Decision Making in Relationships:

This section of the survey was intended to gain an understanding of the ways in which people perceive conflict and resolving conflict in relationships

We began by asking respondents if “all relationships have conflict and it’s healthy and important to the growth of the relationship.” 63% agreed, 30% were undecided, and those strongly agreeing or disagreeing were equal at 3.5%. When participants were asked if they feel they have the “necessary skills to handle conflict and negotiate respectfully” 63% responded with “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. When these results were compared with responses to the statement, ‘When fights or arguments occur both people are at fault because it takes “two-to-tango”’ results were nearly equal thirds between disagree, undecided, and agree. In debriefing responses to this survey statement with participants, we found that responses largely depended on the type of conflict: some said it depended what the argument was about and others wanted to reserve the



## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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right to not “drop the issue” if they were not satisfied with the outcome. Responses to “it’s more important to understand my partner’s point of view first” in order to resolve conflict showed 40% of respondents were undecided, while 19% disagreed. Respondents felt they had the necessary conflict resolution skills, but the results show difficulty in applying those skills. For instance, many were unsure if considering their partner’s point of view in an argument was important or valid.

### Behaviors in Relationships:

This section focused on perceptions and beliefs surrounding abusive behavior and physical acts of violence. It was designed to pose the question “what is violence” without being overt and potentially off-putting. This section of the survey showed a wide range of responses and many participants held conflicting beliefs.

The survey began with the statement “I feel it’s important to be able to share thoughts about family and friends with the person I’m with.” Responses were unanimously agree/strongly agree (some responded “strongly disagree” but when we debriefed survey participants stated they stated they misread the question.) Again, this points to the desire for strong relationships.

When asked if “name calling was just as abusive as slapping or pushing” 75% agreed or strongly agreed, and 81% believed that “someone can be controlling without using insults or physical force.” We then asked more direct questions related to physical and sexual violence. 67% agreed that “if a woman stays in a relationship that is abusive, the woman is not at fault for being abused” and 70% believed that “if a person gets hit once by a partner that they will be hit again.” Responses showed that participants believed that domestic violence is not the fault of the victim and also that if there has been previous violence in a relationship, the violence often continues. However, responses also showed evidence of prominent social myths in that “a woman will claim rape if she was caught cheating” (55% of respondents either agreed or were undecided), while 55% agreed with the statement “Women will call the police in order to win a fight”, identifying a call to 911 not as cry for help, but as a tactic women use to gain “one up” in the relationship.

When survey questions focused on unhealthy relationship dynamics survey participants consistently identified relationship violence in its physical, emotional, and verbal forms, but when asked to identify such dynamics as they apply to their own personal relationships, responses were not as consistent.

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

## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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Overall MSH is extremely pleased with the results of the Nanda Gikendan Project, but we did experience challenges with our initial plans. We wanted each meeting to start with a Native leader (elder, organizer, respected community member) to speak on a teaching related to the monthly theme for the opening 20 minutes before we followed it with a 40 minute presentation on domestic and sexual violence issues. We solicited help with recruiting speakers from attendees at the kick-off meeting, but were unable to secure presenters for the entire project. One presenter we rescheduled twice, while other speakers we invited were not available at the times of our events. We opted for an ad hoc approach, recruiting speakers month-to-month and using MSH staff as back-up. At our community forum in May the theme was Courage: Speaking Up Against Violence and Abuse. We asked a guest from Nebraska (an advocate MSH staff has known for years) to speak. She delivered a powerful personal story of her experience with intimate partner violence that worked out very well with the theme. Another unforeseen challenge was getting a local service provider to speak at each event. We had the Native women’s advocate from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project speak at one forum and a youth worker from Life House spoke at another (and also attended all but one of the events). At other times, scheduled speakers from local service providers were unable to attend. We also underestimated the amount of staff time needed to implement and complete the project (designing and advertising the forums, speaking at forums, facilitating forums, compiling survey data and creating the final report). Additionally, toward the end of the project, attendance dropped to about one-third of our beginning averages. We might have increased our outreach efforts and gained additional interest by reporting on what had happened in the project thus far to maintain high attendance. If we were to do it again we would look at a shorter series of community forums: 4-5 sessions, hosted in the spring and fall.

A successful project outcome was that Mending the Sacred Hoop was able to raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence in the Duluth community and its impact on Native women. At the beginning of the project, we surveyed forum participants to assess the community’s understanding of domestic and sexual violence. As the forums and the survey continued we found that it was not that our community was uneducated on the topic, but rather that they lacked the ability to articulate the issue. We realized we needed to start at a basic level, so that the community could understand all of the elements of domestic and sexual violence. For instance, when we asked the participants if they perceived such violence as wrong, we would be met with resounding agreement, but when we asked deeper questions about domestic and sexual violence answers were not so definite. Educating the community on the tactics of Power and Control (page 23) developed participants’ understanding of non-physical power and control tactics (such as minimizing and blaming, financial control, use of children, etc.) so that they would be able to identify intimate partner violence beyond physical assault. We balanced this by looking at the Equality Wheel (page 24) for examples of behaviors that exist in healthy and well balanced relationships.

Another successful outcome were the connections and relationships developed by participants who would have not necessarily interacted outside of the group. Forum attendees were diverse, including community leaders (such as members of the American Indian Commission), service providers from local agencies, residents of alcohol and drug treatment programs, survivors of domestic and sexual assault, as well as Duluth community members, both Native and non-Native.



## Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project

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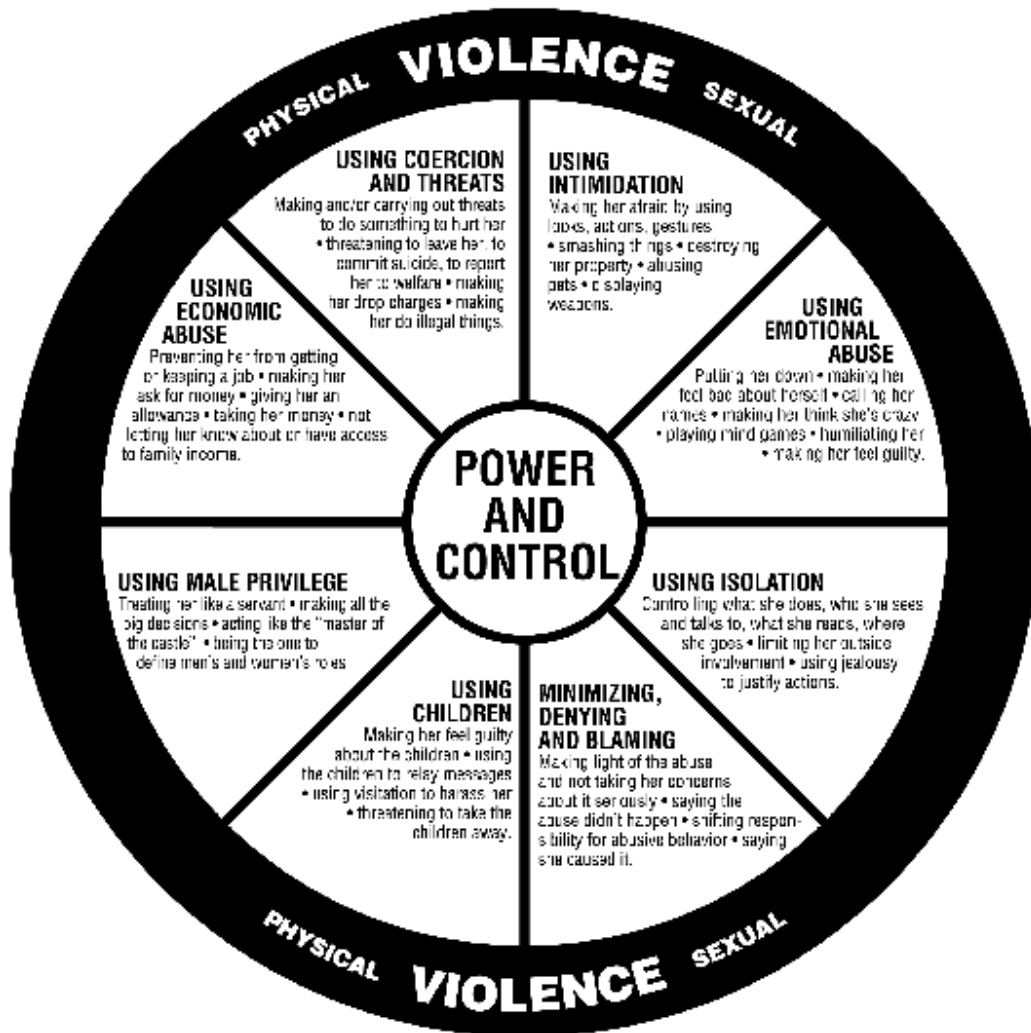
Community forum participants attended one another’s events, provided support to one another, and used their personal expertise to benefit and assist other participants when they were facing difficulty. For instance, a young Native woman attending a forum was having difficulty with her medical insurance, and was struggling to fix the issue. Another forum participant worked at the clinic from which the young woman was seeking treatment and personally made the contacts and guided her through the process from the inside. More people have come into our office to visit and we’ve been invited to participate in other community forums. This tells us that people understood the purpose of the traditional teachings and wove together relationships that relieved feelings of isolation and reinforced a sense of community.

With the Nanda Gikendan “To Seek Knowledge” Project Mending the Sacred Hoop set out to assess community awareness of domestic and sexual violence, provide community education on the issues, and engage people as active participants in a larger effort to address and end violence against women in our community. We wished to create an active public campaign to increase understanding of violence against women. Too often, public awareness efforts are based on the desires of the lead organization; they decide what message to convey based upon their perceptions of the knowledge deficiencies of the public, and make a handful of products to spread about the community. While creating a poster or disseminating a program brochure can inform a community of an issue or service there is no interaction to really stir discussion and action.

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

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

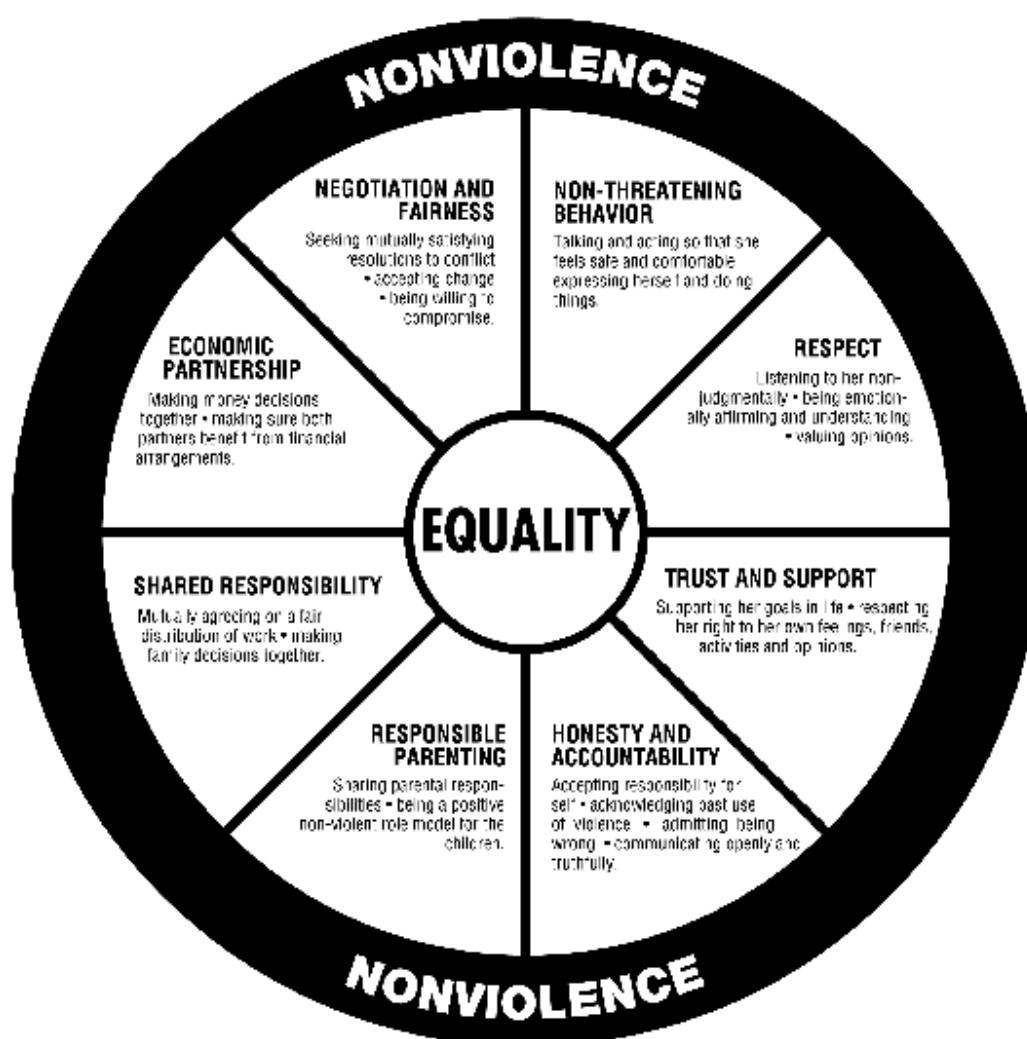
*Power & Control Wheel*



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*Equality Wheel*



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