



THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY
OF MANITOBA, INC.

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New Healing Program for Indigenous Men Shows Early Signs of Success

All seven Indigenous men taking part in a healing program for victims of childhood sexual abuse and trauma successfully completed the first run of 14 sessions, eight of which were led by an Indigenous Elder, at the John Howard Society of Manitoba in May.

“I grew up thinking the abuse was normal,” said one participant during one of the final sessions. “And now I know how to reflect on myself and see opportunities in different situations,” he added.

Session topics include “building safe coping skills,” “self-compassion,” “gender socialization, masculinity and inclusion,” “spirituality and finding meaning,” and planning for the next steps. Eight of the sessions were led by Elder Ervin Hilts, an Indigenous Elder with the Parole Board of Canada.

“I have been looking for this program my entire life,” said a participant who experienced inter-generational trauma and is currently incarcerated. To deal with the abuse he suffered, he spent his life in a rural community consuming drugs and alcohol “anytime he could.” “I now have new ways of thinking about myself,” he said upon completion of the program.

The healing program is in the first year of a three-year a pilot project funded by the Department of Justice Canada and its Victims Fund.

Now with the first round complete, Melissa Nolin, the caseworker for the program, is now accepting referrals for participants in the next set of sessions which begins on July 9, held at the John Howard Society building in Winnipeg.

“It’s just been amazing,” said Nolin. “Participants *want* to attend the program. Most arrive early for the sessions.” She heard participants say they can count on each other for support and that participants in the group feel like “family.”

Sharon Perrault, manager of programs at the Society, said “The goal is to develop and refine a service that can address the needs of men affected by childhood sexual abuse—especially those who have been in conflict with the law—and provide positive avenues of response.” They expect to develop program materials that can be used with similar groups across the country.

People interested in taking part in the second series of 14 sessions should contact program caseworker, Melissa Nolin, mnolin@johnhoward.mb.ca, or call 204-775-1514, extension 316.

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