

Toolkit aims to prevent elder abuse

North Shore News July 11, 2011 9:58 AM

Vancouver Coastal Health's Amanda Brown honours producer Micheal Auger, of Indigital Media Inc., for his role in creating a toolkit for health care workers to prevent, recognize and respond to elder abuse among First Nations communities at a recent event at the Tsleil-Waututh Nation community centre.

Photograph by: NEWS photo, Cindy Goodman



A new toolkit developed by Vancouver Coastal Health is aimed at breaking the cycle of elder abuse in First Nations communities across Canada.

According to a written statement, the National First Nations Re: Act Manual is for home and community care, and health care workers to prevent, recognize and respond to abuse of older and vulnerable First Nations adults. It's an off-shoot of the 2008 provincial guide.

Abuse of older adults has been identified as a serious problem within the aboriginal community, says Amanda Brown, director of the Re: Act Program, in the statement.

Factors including overall poor health status, loss of traditional role and respect in the immediate and extended family structures and lack of community elder-specific health and social services, are believed to be reasons aboriginal elders are susceptible to becoming victims of elder abuse. A recent study suggests more than half of aboriginal female elders interviewed revealed they had been or were victims of more than one type of abuse.

To stem the cycle of abuse, health care providers who serve these communities need to know how to connect in a culturally appropriate way with First Nations elders in order to respond to crisis situations, says Brown.

Development of the toolkit was made possible by a \$50,000 contribution agreement from Health Canada.

The newly expanded national version of the toolkit is interactive and includes videos depicting a co-ordinated community response to scenarios of abuse and elders discussing the issue. It also includes posters and brochures, a quiz and relevant provincial and territorial resources.

The case scenarios were filmed using First Nations actors and crew, including elders who had a passion for the subject. First Nation artists and designers also contributed to the information package. The toolkit was launched at an event June 13 at the Tsleil-Waututh Nation community centre.

Under the Adult Guardianship Act, health authorities in B.C. are mandated to receive and investigate reports of abuse, neglect and self-neglect of vulnerable adults.

The manual is available in both English and French. For more information, visit www.vchreact.ca/aboriginal_manual.htm.

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