

# Breaking Barriers, Building Support

**A Prevention-focused Service and Policy Framework  
to Address Intimate Partner Violence in Alberta's  
African, Caribbean, and Black Communities**

## Framework Report



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

# Land Acknowledgement

Africa Centre acknowledges that what we call Alberta is the traditional and ancestral territory of many peoples, presently subject to Treaties 6, 7, and 8. Namely: the Blackfoot Confederacy – Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika – the Cree, Dene, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Stoney Nakoda, and the Tsuut’ina Nation and the Métis People of Alberta. In addressing intimate partner violence prevention, we recognize that this issue transcends cultural boundaries and affects individuals from all communities, including those of Indigenous descent. We acknowledge the disproportionate impact of intimate partner violence on Indigenous peoples in Canada, stemming from historical trauma, socio-economic disparities, and systemic inequalities. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of our struggles and committing to collaborative efforts toward healing and reconciliation, we aim to foster a community where all individuals, regardless of background, can access the support and resources needed to thrive. We offer this acknowledgment as a gesture of reconciliation and gratitude to the Indigenous peoples whose lands we inhabit.”

## About This Document

This document describes a collaborative and community-based research and development project to create a framework for social change through culturally responsive and contextually appropriate interventions addressing intimate partner violence within African, Caribbean, and Black communities in Alberta.

This project was funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

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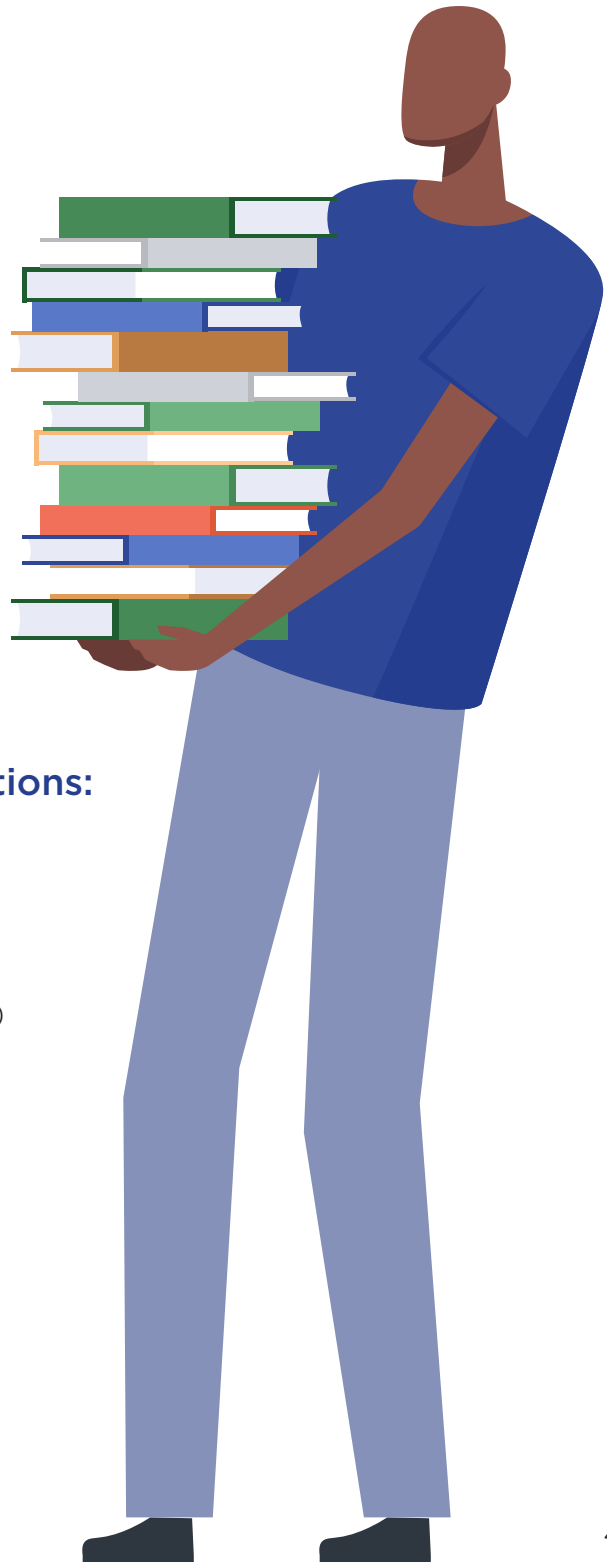
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## Key Terms and Concepts

Term	Description
<b>2SLGBTQ+</b>	An acronym for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other gender or sexual identities.
<b>ACB</b>	Is an abbreviation of “African, Caribbean, and Black.”
<b>Collectivism</b>	The project uses collectivism in reference to cultures that prioritize the group rather than the individual. Collectivist cultures tend to value maintaining relationships, harmony, interdependence, conflict avoidance, and community. This is often in contrast to the individualistic nature of many Western cultures.
<b>Diaspora</b>	Refers to individuals who are scattered across the globe living or born outside of their original/ancestral community within African descent groups.
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	Throughout this report both Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) are used. Domestic Violence is often used to refer to violence that occurs between people within a domestic situation (who live together)— including extended family members, children, parents, and spouses. Intimate Partner Violence is a more specific term referring to violence within a romantic, sexual, or dating relationship.
<b>Financial Literacy</b>	Refers to the ability to understand and use skills related to finance. In this project, it is used in relation to manage one’s personal finances which includes budgeting, investing, navigating the taxation system, etc.  Research supporting this project highlighted the interconnection between IPV and finances and socio-economic factors.
<b>First Generation immigrant</b>	Refers to someone who is foreign-born living in Canada.
<b>Gender Relations</b>	Refers to “the ways men and women interact, the socially prescribed roles which govern these interactions, including access to spaces and resources and voice in decision making.” Gender relations have largely been filtered through a “... Eurocentric Western way of knowing, way of thinking, way of being, and so, within the African, Black, Caribbean communities, that is certainly informed in how we engage with one another” (Idi, 2023).

<b>Gender Roles</b>	Refers to the set of imposed behaviours, expectations, and attitudes for men or women as determined by a particular culture’s norms and traditions.
<b>Intersectionality</b>	<p>Is a theory, policy approach, and a method of praxis and research. Originally, the theory was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, but influenced by many scholars and activists before and after, to analyze the way Black women were positioned in American law. Crenshaw developed the term to account for the gendered experience missing from Critical Race Theory at the time.</p> <p>The term has evolved significantly since its original usage. Intersectionality serves as a lens to understand how the social and political identities of a group of people, or an individual, “intersect” to produce unique experiences of discrimination/oppression and privilege. It acknowledges that identity is complex and consists of many vectors of difference – race, age, sexuality, gender, (dis)ability, socio-economic status, etc.</p>
<b>Intimate Partner Violence</b>	<p>Any behaviour by a person within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm to the other person in the relationship.</p> <p>IPV may sometimes be referred to as ‘domestic violence’ or ‘family violence’, although these terms also encompass violence by and against other family members (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2015).</p>
<b>Patriarchy</b>	Refers to a social system in which men maintain control over or occupy positions of power in political, economic, and social institutions and spheres. It is predicated on the belief that men are superior to women and that attributes, characteristics, or qualities viewed as feminine or related to women are inferior or weak. Like other larger social structures, patriarchy permeates all aspects of life and shapes relationships, gender roles, beliefs, values, and how people make sense of themselves and the world.
<b>Second Generation immigrant</b>	Refers to someone who is born in Canada to at least one foreign-born parent.

# Foreword

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This project exemplifies the spirit of community, academic, and public collaboration towards the generation of meaningful solutions to social problems. Intimate partner violence (IPV) affects every class, race, religion, and other social intersections. It exists across space and time, and impacts can have physical, psychological, emotional, and social impacts. The effects on women (and men), children, and families could also be intergenerational. Therefore, its existence in our marginalized Black communities is not surprising. What is surprising and saddening are the limited and culturally deficit support systems and resources for tackling this serious problem in such communities.

This project intends to make a significant contribution to this gap. More importantly, we hope it would mark a pivotal shift in the way intimate partner violence is approached in Alberta's Black communities. Our focus is pointedly framed in the outputs of this project— Better Than the Cure; our focus is on prevention. There is a lot to be learned, unlearned, and passed on across forums that could make remarkable changes that could avert serious and long-term consequences that could demand very costly intervention. Our project is indeed the first in many regards.

First, we emphasized the need to put intimate partner violence in its place as a social problem rather than simply a challenge located in families or among couples as Black communities thrive as communal people. The community is crucial to the survival as well as the thriving of individuals and families. Thus, we actively engaged community leaders, religious leaders, resource persons, and role models in conceptualizing and developing the various outputs that this project generated.

Second, we were mindful of crucial issues of language that are often taken for granted in the Western context. For those whose first language or mother tongue does not reside in the mainstream, the language of IPV can be harsh, distant, and non-relatable to their experiences. This is especially the case for newcomers from Africa with a vast diversity of cultures and languages. For instance, we have focused on healthy gender relations as the crucial determinant of intimate partner violence.

Third, our goal was to present a positive message, offering an open invitation to everyone, especially men, who are often excluded in forums where we seek solutions for intimate partner violence. Men have a crucial role to play in addressing intimate partner violence— given their status in the family as well as their roles as community and religious leaders.

Fourth, we involved both community-based and mainstream agencies. This collaboration enabled us to draw insights from the grassroots to professionals of diverse backgrounds. We owe a debt of gratitude to the service providers within and outside our communities who participated in this project. Their insights point to the fact that difficult social problems like intimate partner violence must be managed on many fronts. This collaboration among service providers was invaluable in sharing perspectives and relevant promising practices. I wish to express my deep gratitude to the Africa Centre for taking a leadership role in this project, which is, in effect, one more initiative to nurture the longstanding partnership with the University of Alberta and its researchers. The pivotal shift in concept and design of this



project and the novel outputs it yielded are clear indicators of the importance of community-academic partnership in generating and mobilising knowledge.

I wish to thank Canada's Federal Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) for providing the funding along with support at various junctures to make this project happen. We look forward to even more fruitful collaborations in the future.

**Dr. Philomina Okeke-Ihejirika, PhD, MSc, M.Ed, B.Ed**  
**Professor, Women and Gender Studies, University of Alberta**  
**Director, PRAN**



# Introduction

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Breaking Barriers, Building Support: Empowering African, Caribbean, and Black Communities in Alberta Against Intimate Partner Violence (IPV Project) is a project funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (2021-2024) completed in collaboration between the Partnership for Research by African Newcomers (PRAN), the University of Alberta, and Africa Centre. The IPV project was created in response to research that found:

1. Most studies about immigrant women experiencing IPV has focused on the Greater Toronto Area (GTA);
2. Policies and services do not fully account for the diversity, complexities, and unique challenges that Black Canadians — especially Black women and girls — face, and;
3. That many intimate partner violence (IPV) intervention and prevention programs narrowly focus on women, neglecting the broader context of family, community, and social marginalization (Okeke-Iherjirika 2020).

While research indicates that existing services and policies do not meet the needs of immigrant women experiencing IPV, this knowledge also tends to pathologize immigrant women and communities by blaming their cultures for their victimization. However, IPV is not unique to any culture, place, or time.

With this knowledge, the Africa Centre, Dr. Philomina Okeke-Iherjirika, and Dr. Sophie Yohani began this project to create an IPV prevention-focused service and policy framework that:

1. Includes Black Canadian women, men and other representative diverse groups in design and delivery,
2. Includes cultural and contextual knowledge,
3. Centres anti-Black racism,
4. Shares agency and voice with women, girls, and their communities as knowledgeable change agents with unique insights of problems (Okeke-Iherjirika 2018).

## Project Scope

Black women and girls often experience IPV at higher rates than their white counterparts because of systemic racism, barriers encountered in employment, education, and finances, and migration and resettlement challenges (Carter & Rossi, 2019; Devoe & Smith, 2003; Hulley et al., 2023; Nnawulezi & Sullivan, 2014; Waller et al., 2022). Many victim-survivors of IPV also point to the shortage of culturally sensitive services as a barrier to accessing help. Implementing culturally sensitive and adaptive services that also tackle anti-Black racism is crucial for developing successful IPV interventions and prevention strategies for Alberta's Black women and girls.

The purpose of this project was to develop, implement, and test a culturally appropriate, community-based, IPV prevention-focused, service delivery and policy framework for Alberta's African, Caribbean, and Black communities (ACB communities). The project objectives included creating and implementing a framework that:

1. Collaborates with ACB community members, leaders, and service providers;
2. Engages with the broader context of IPV in Canadian ACB communities;
3. Increases awareness and education on IPV in Alberta's ACB communities, with a focus on harmful gender norms, anti-oppression, agency, and policy and service gaps amongst community members, leaders, and service providers;
4. Explores four focus areas that impact IPV (gender relations and roles, parenting, training and employment outcomes, and financial management) and;
5. Prioritizes women and girls but includes men and boys.

## Working Group

A working group was formed to facilitate the development, implementation and evaluation

of a comprehensive framework and toolkit to address intimate partner violence in families of the African, Caribbean, and Black community in Alberta. The working group brings together a diverse range of expertise and perspectives. Members include:

### Community Leaders:

Individuals with leadership roles within African descent communities. They offer insights into community dynamics, concerns, and needs, acting as liaisons between the working group and the community.

### Front-line Service Agencies:

Representatives from organizations actively involved in providing support services related to IPV and mental health. They provide real-world perspectives, share experiences from the field, and contribute to the relevance and practicality of the framework.

### Academic Partners:

Representatives from the University of Alberta contributing academic research perspectives of the entire society (macro perspective). Their research expertise and data analysis ensured that the framework is informed by evidence-based practices.

### Africa Centre and Pan-African Collaboration for Excellence (PACE):

Members from the partnering organizations involved in both academic and community-focused aspects of the initiative. As working group members they had coordinating roles, ensuring effective communication and collaboration between academic and community-based perspectives.

The working group met periodically during the two-year project. These meetings created a platform for open discussion of:

### Case Studies:

Examining real-life scenarios to inform the development of practical solutions.

## Research and Data Review:

Analyzing relevant data and research findings to inform decision-making.

## Application of Shared Knowledge:

Incorporating successful practices from within and outside the community.

The working group advised in the project design and development of the logic model and framework by identifying potential deliverables and content tailored for program and service providers and participants/recipients. Once the project team made progress with the framework and materials, the working group met to review work in progress and provide feedback where adjustments were required.

This coalition served as a collaborative and multidisciplinary body, bringing together various stakeholders to drive the development and implementation of a framework for positive systemic change in Alberta's African, Caribbean, and Black communities.

# Understanding IPV in African, Caribbean, and Black Communities in Alberta

## Research Summary

This project was founded on the research of Dr. Philomina Okeke-Iherjirika, Dr. Sophie Yohani, associated academic partners, and research assistants. An overview of essential research initiatives and their findings is presented here to illustrate the local setting

of the project.

The 2018 report *Addressing Domestic Violence in Post-Migration Gender Relations: A Prerequisite for Building Sustainable, Resilient Immigrant Communities* highlighted the findings of a scoping review focused on the connections between Domestic Violence (DV), settlement, and gender relations. The review found that scholars and agencies tend to pathologize the experiences of immigrant women from the global south, and determined that many existing services and policies: treat immigrant women's experiences as homogenous, fail to meet immigrant women's needs in dealing with their experiences of abuse, occasionally perpetuate or even trigger domestic violence (DV) such as those that tie women's immigration status and sponsorship to their male partners.

## Shifts in Settlement

Migration and resettlement journeys present many challenges for newcomers. While Gender Relations are always shifting, changes in gender relations during and post-migration impact DV. Most decisions regarding migration (such as timing, logistics, and destination) are made in the private sphere, where men may have more power than women (Yeboah et al., 2015, pp. 7-19; Pottie et al 2005, pp. 101-111; Piper 2008). After migrating, women are expected to rebuild family and community ties, while men typically have access to more social and economic opportunities than women. Resettlement often requires or causes shifts in previously held cultural worldviews and social hierarchies— not just gender relations (Chadya, 2003; Kevane, 2004; Okeke-Iherjirika, 2004; Robertson & Berger, 1986).

Many within immigrant communities may view the Canadian system as one that supports women at the expense of men. This false perception of systemic compassion towards women can challenge the traditional authority of men in many communities and contribute to men feeling unwelcome or undermined in Canada, which can increase

tension and become a triggering factor for conflict and violence at home. Socio-economic factors can also contribute to DV. The Canadian government and job market often do not recognize degrees, certificates, and work experiences obtained from outside of Canada. This, combined with discrimination based on place of origin, skin colour, and accents, results in many immigrants being underemployed and having to accept lower-wage work (Thurston et al. 2013). Black African immigrants struggle with the realities of anti-Black racism, possibly experiencing it for the first time, coupled with financial stress and decreased social support in a nation where they were told they would thrive. Furthermore, the underemployment of immigrant women can effectively remove even the option of leaving an abusive relationship. The opinions of friends, family, church, and/or community leaders also influence or limit immigrant women's choices. When members of the community do not recognize abusive relationships as abusive or suggest that marriage must be maintained, regardless of the cost, immigrant women are even less likely to believe that leaving the relationship is a viable option.

## Seeking Support

Referring to population-level data measuring immigrant women's DV experiences, immigrant women may be reluctant to disclose their experiences of DV in population surveys due to the sensitive nature of the topic, past negative experiences accessing formal supports due to language barriers, confidentiality concerns, and discriminatory and racist practices in service delivery. While it was not the focus of the scoping review, same-sex couples experiencing DV are likely to be further marginalized through similar barriers experienced by immigrant women in heterosexual relationships.

Previous research shows that most victim-survivors of DV will first turn to informal support like community members, family, and religious/spiritual advisors before accessing formal support (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2015).

Less than one in four (22%) will report to the police and even fewer will access shelters and related supports (Statistics Canada, 2011). The scoping review cites several reasons immigrant women choose informal instead of formal supports, such as western-centric DV approaches that utilize a "rescue and prosecute strategy", fear of stigmatization, self-blame, belief that children should be raised in two-parent households, belief in marriage sanctity, mandatory charging of abusive partners, language barriers, among others (Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2013; Kanagaratnam 2013).

While some women do not wish to leave their partners because of cultural values and beliefs, others are dependent on them financially or for their immigration status; thus, mandatory charging and removal of the abusive partner from the household do not correspond with immigrant women's situations. Sponsorship breakdown on humanitarian and compassionate grounds is another unrealistic option for women who were originally sponsored through the family class sponsorship, especially when application criteria include providing proof of the abuse via police reports or medical records as immigrant women are even less likely to have reported the abuse to the police (Alaggia et al. 2009).

The review offers recommendations to improve policies and services aimed at addressing DV and supporting victim-survivors. These recommendations are explored in the Theme and Theories section of this report.

## Interventions

A 2021 scoping review of IPV interventions for immigrant populations in G7 nations, including Canada, was produced to support the development of the IPV project. The review investigated four types of interventions: education and awareness, service and resource provision, collaborative partnerships and networking, and mental health and counseling. Several limitations



were noted — key demographic information to describe study participants were missing, most intervention strategies focused on women despite the role that men play in migration, a lack of information on queer and gender-diverse immigrant experiences and interventions. While the benefits of joint/couple interventions were noted in several studies, few services integrated such strategies. Men were mostly absent from the research, but when men were involved, interventions were integrated into the community at significantly higher rates.

To design and introduce responses to effectively address IPV in immigrant communities, policymakers and service providers must not only become aware of the ways that racism and stress from experiencing racial micro-aggressions can impact family life and contribute to IPV, but also consider how unconscious biases and stereotypes of immigrant communities affect access and delivery of services. For example, conversations about immigrant communities often portray IPV as a “disease” produced by or as a maladaptive behaviour innate to immigrant cultures. This is a false, but commonly used, talking point used to discuss the Islamic faith. Non-Muslims may believe that in the practice of Islam violence against women and girls is permitted and possibly encouraged. Beliefs like this stigmatize and isolate entire communities, which can cause many immigrants experiencing IPV to feel unsafe and reluctant to contact services/supports outside of their culture or community. In addition, involving law enforcement may present more risks as many victim-survivors of IPV do not report, possibly due to negative experiences with law enforcement in Canada or in their countries of origin. Victim-survivors who are people of colour may fear that their partner will experience racialized violence at the hands of law enforcement or the judicial system.

Addressing IPV within immigrant populations requires an understanding of individual factors, including post-migration stress, social

isolation, changes in socioeconomic status, loss of culture, etc. Many immigrants come from collectivist or group-oriented cultures; therefore, including victim-survivors as well as other supportive community members in designing IPV interventions is essential. Strategies that bring together collectivist cultures and individualistic approaches can increase the effectiveness of interventions. Other strategies include offering IPV education in the first language of the participants to increase knowledge retention, self-esteem, and confidence. Offering online programming with features for anonymous participation can encourage open discussion of stigmatized/taboo topics.

Additional recommendations and strategies included in the scoping review can be found in the Themes and Theories section of this report.

## **Gender Relations**

A third study that contributed to the conception of this project, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) study on Gender Relations in African immigrant families in Alberta, took place from 2017-2021. The PAR study involved a survey, focus group interviews, an interactive theater piece, and resulted in several manuscripts. While the primary focus of the study was gender relations more generally, it provided relevant insights on tension points and the complexities of post-migration life. Survey results found:

- African immigrants are well-educated, but income varies greatly among the community.
- Typically, husbands are the primary income earners pre- and post-migration.
- Financial decision-making is typically a shared responsibility.
- Immigrant-serving agencies should be more attentive to the perspectives and lived experiences of African immigrant parents.
- Communication with extended family is frequent among most African immigrants and many send money to their extended

family, which can contribute to tension in the home.

- African immigrant women are less likely to seek support when concerned for their safety.

These results paired with the previous work of the research leads, determined that an additional literature review and a set of focus group interviews would enhance the development of the IPV project.

The project team conducted a literature review in 2022 to examine the current state of knowledge of IPV in Black Canadian populations and information on prevention/intervention practices. The review, *Intimate Partner Violence: A Rapid Narrative Review Focused on Black Canadian Populations*, analyzed six Canadian studies. Most studies were based outside of Alberta and centred women as victims. The specific demographic of two studies were Black individuals, while the other studies included Black people within the study group. None of the studies included gender-diverse people or same-sex relationships, however, the literature review added to our knowledge of IPV and prevention strategies. Some of the common themes discussed in studies relating to IPV in Black communities included issues with stereotypes, education and employment, and the role of men.

## Themes and Theories

The research forming the foundations of the IPV project highlighted the diverse experiences within and the complex nature of IPV in African, Caribbean, and Black communities across Canada. IPV must be analyzed and addressed in relation to larger systemic and external factors like anti-Black racism, shifting gender relations, unique cultural considerations, and socio-economic precarity. The project team summarized the above research into several key messages:

- Our communities are diverse, and our

strategies and interventions should reflect that diversity. One strategy will not work in every situation— we need to use a variety of strategies and interventions to end IPV.

- Incorporate immigrant cultural knowledges in strategies and interventions. This can be accomplished, in part, by actively engaging with community and religious leaders and community organizations within immigrant communities.
- Understand individualized factors like post-migration stress, social isolation, socio-economic status, etc., that impact IPV and tailor interventions accordingly.
- Diversity of genders and sexualities should be considered in the development of IPV interventions, an underrepresented group in both research and IPV strategies currently.
- Include men and boys in IPV prevention, interventions, and strategies— both in design and as service recipients.
- There is need to understand and address: how anti-Black racism contributes to stress, followed by tension in relationships and even IPV, how racism constructs some cultures and people as inherently violent, and how these constructs can alienate survivors, perpetrators, and whole communities.
- Adapt interventions and strategies from an individualistic model to a collectivist one as many immigrant cultures are group-oriented or collectivist. This means establishing community partnerships to include survivors, members of the community, and community-based organizations in intervention and strategy design.

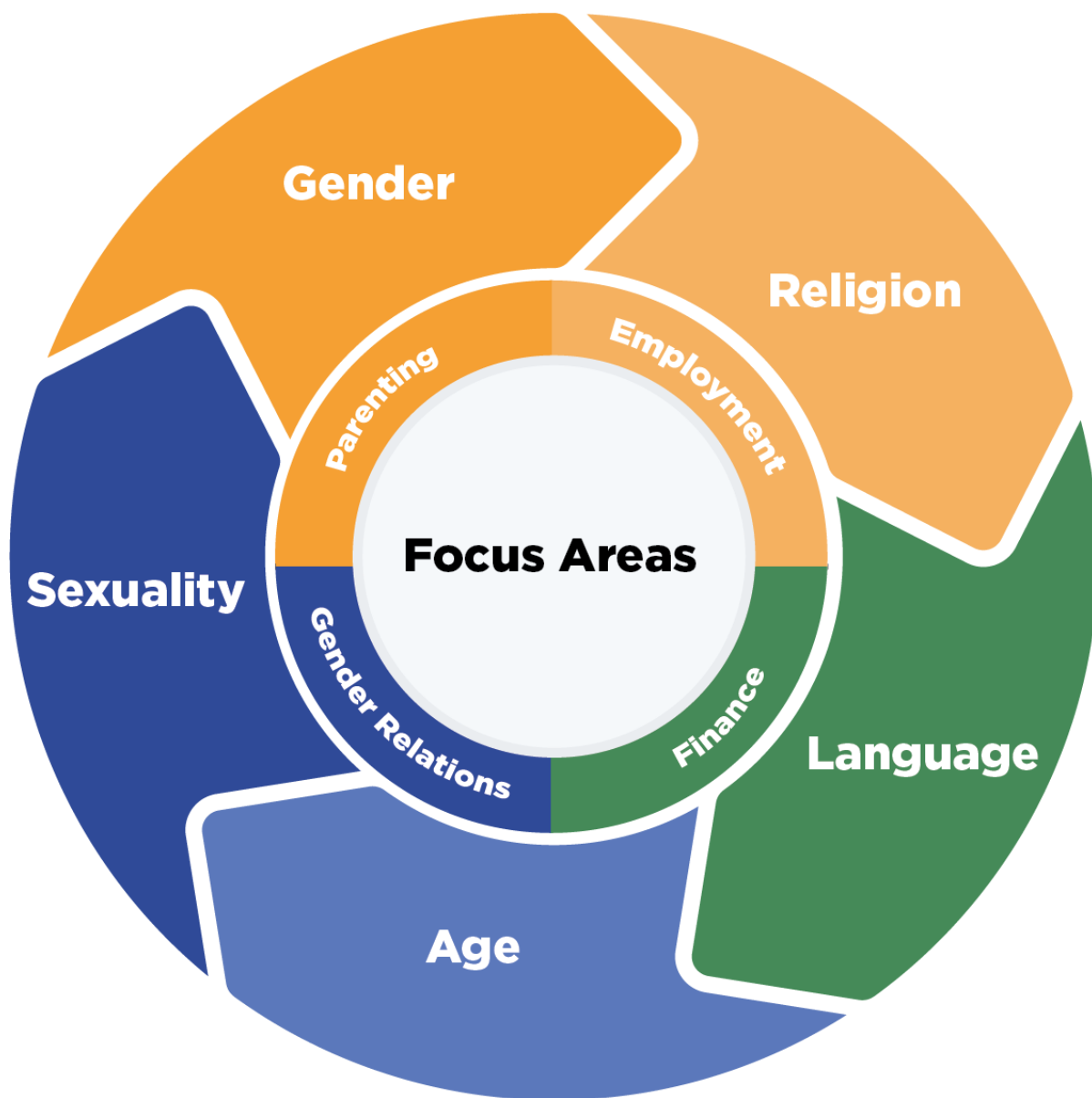
From here, several themes emerged which shaped the IPV project:

- Intersectionality, IPV, and Black communities
- Gender Relations
- Parenting, Financial Management
- Education, Training and Employment

After a second review of the research and consultation among the working group, the project expanded to include a focus on men and empowering female elders. These themes are outlined in the Logic Model section of this document.

## Relevant Context and Factors of IPV

Research emphasizes that IPV does not occur in isolation. It is impacted by and also impacts the ordinary circumstances of everyday life. The four focus areas are employment, finance, gender relations, and parenting. Interventions into IPV should target these areas first. We must also keep in mind that each of these focus areas works differently for people based on their age, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. These differences require an intersectional approach to strategies.





## Stereotypes and Constructs

In Canada, many stereotypes plague racialized communities. Attempts to address IPV in ACB communities can also be influenced by these stereotypes and unconscious biases.

### Perceptions of Black Women

Stereotypes of Black women as “loud” or “aggressive” act to dismiss Black women’s credibility as victim-survivors and has led to police using excessive force against them (Duhaney, 2021). Black women’s experiences are dismissed due to perceptions of drug use (Tam et al., 2016). Some stereotypes are far more subtle, appearing to be a positive character trait rather than an obvious negative one. The “strong Black woman” stereotype is one such example. When internalized, women are more likely to silently endure the abuse they are subjected to, believing that there is strength in their silence (Duhaney, 2021, p. 11). This perception of strength accepts and overlooks violence against Black women because it assumes that they can “take it”, therefore it does not need to be addressed. Many of these stereotypes also reinforce the belief that Black women (and men) are inferior, inherently violent, and prone to crime (Duhaney, 2021, p. 14). These beliefs continue to minimize violence perpetrated against Black women— either casting them as deserving of violence or made to endure it.

### Community Insights on Stereotypes

To complement the research summary, the project team engaged in conversations about how these stereotypes present themselves and their impact on people experiencing IPV in ACB communities. Religious leaders, academics, and front-facing workers shared perspectives of how both misconceptions and assumptions of community values can contribute to IPV. Below are excerpts of podcast conversations exploring themes that stereotype ACB communities.

### Religious Misconceptions

Religious misconceptions can reinforce harmful gender role narratives. This can contribute to the marginalization of Black individuals, particularly women, who are already disproportionately affected by IPV.

***“Because we always hear the man is the head of the home, et cetera, et cetera. The woman is expected to submit, and people take the scriptures, they take the Quran, they take any religious text, and they take it out of context, to use it as a way of control and manipulation to exert control over somebody else.”***

***-Dee Adekugbe, Pastor (Idi, 2023c)***

Another addressed the assumption that the Islamic faith condones domestic violence. The speaker emphatically shared with the audience,

***“I would say right off the bat that people have the assumption that Islam condones intimate partner violence, and that couldn’t be further from the truth. The ultimate role model in Islam is the Prophet Muhammad himself, and time and time again, we’ve seen that he’s intervened in situations where there was intimate partner violence and tried his utmost best to prevent it as much as possible and then was also proactive in telling people that you have to be kind, merciful, and gentle with your spouses.”***

***-Navaid Aziz (Idi, 2023b)***

### Anti-Black Racism

Anti-Black racism multiplies the challenges faced by survivors of intimate partner violence. Systemic racism and discrimination create additional barriers to accessing support and resources, resulting in a lack of trust in law enforcement and social services, further isolating victims.

Mainstream interventions for IPV typically do not acknowledge or address the unique experiences of Black individuals facing intimate partner violence. The intersectionality of racism and violence means that Black victim-survivors often face skepticism or dismissal when they seek help, compounding their trauma and hindering their path to recovery.

***“I think with Black and Caribbean communities, the barriers are a lot more cause we’re going to talk about in the systems piece, but racism plays a huge role in the success of the community. And so, I think it’s more of having a connection with the African, Caribbean, the Black communities, and then having connections.”***

***-Hagir Sail (Idi, 2023d)***

## **Independence of Black Women**

Black women are portrayed as inherently strong and self-sufficient, which can lead to a dangerous dismissal of their vulnerability and need for support when facing IPV. The societal expectation that Black women should be able to ‘handle’ such situations on their own can result in a lack of empathy and resources, further isolating victims from seeking support.

***“I think, you know, when we think of historically how Black men have been out of the home, and Black women did not have the same luxuries as White women were, where they also had to work, Black women have not always had the luxury of relying on Black men. And so, because they haven’t had that luxury, they haven’t been as dependent on them as their White women counterparts.”***

***-Dr. Patrina Duhaney (Idi, 2023a)***

## **Cultural Mistrust of Mental Health Therapy**

The mistrust of therapy within ACB communities is complex, often stemming from past discrimination and cultural insensitivity within the healthcare system. Historical and systemic racism have created therapeutic environments that lack culturally responsive practices, contributing to a hesitancy in seeking mental health services.

***“When we want to talk about dealing with the visibility of therapists who are African, Caribbean, or BIPOC therapists that look like them, have shared experiences and have knowledge of where they’re coming from. And that access is very important and to know.... this is where I could find someone who could understand the unique experiences***

***of my community...Normalizing therapy and the discussions around mental health, I find that that’s really a big challenge for our population.”***

***-Zainab Giwa (Idi, 2023f)***

***“There is a lot of mistrust generally in reaching out to the different sectors for support. We know this from research, and we know this from reports from community members, just even in the current project that we’re involved in, that there is a general mistrust based on [a] history of, let’s say experiences with racism.***

***[A] history of perhaps not feeling that they received adequate culturally sensitive support. It’s histories of feeling as if they were treated in a very stereotypical manner.”***

***-Dr. Sophie Yohani (Idi, 2023e)***

## **Leadership**

Intergenerational relationships can play a positive pivotal role in shaping responses to IPV, influencing leadership among youth and young adults to foster resilience and support of community members to begin normalizing conversations about healthy relationships.

***“Traditionally we associate wisdom with age and experience...Some of the work that I do talks about natural leaders. [These natural leaders can be elders as well as some younger individuals], who from a young age, they had particular qualities [that set them apart, for example], they liked to sit and spend time with their elders....***

***...They were considered trustworthy. They were honest. They were individuals who wanted to learn about [their] culture and who they were. As they grew up, probably people gravitated towards them. And so, they held people’s information with respect and care. And those qualities were [traditionally] nurtured in the community...So, it’s like an apprenticeship, a lifelong apprenticeship, where you are learning and growing within that [community]. [I believe we have these young people in our communities, and we could take the time to nurture and support their leadership qualities to address IPV].”***

***-Dr. Sophie Yohani (Idi, 2023d)***

## Education and Employment

There is often a direct correlation between higher education, employment, and increased earning potential. These outcomes can also influence a relationship. For example, an abusive partner may prevent or attempt to prevent their partner from attending school. This is to isolate or control them, as limited education may decrease employment opportunities, causing financial dependence. Post-secondary education encourages and fosters critical thinking. A deficit or absence of critical thinking leaves people vulnerable to attempts to conceal knowledge of their legal rights. An abusive partner may attempt to provide their partner with misinformation about the law and their rights to discourage them from seeking help through the criminal justice system (Tam et al., 2016). Many members of ACB communities are highly educated, however, their international degrees and certificates are routinely disregarded by Canadian institutions. They are then forced to take 'survival jobs,' lesser or unrelated roles than their previous careers, resulting in de-skilling and underemployment. This experience of devalued credentials can have financial and psychosocial impacts, which affects relationships.

## Strategies to Counter Stereotypical Narratives

While many factors prevent Black women from seeking help from formal services, fear of discrimination and cultural insensitivity remains a common theme across several studies. Anti-racist policies and efforts would impact rates of IPV for Black men and women. Increased cultural knowledge amongst service providers to deliver culturally competent programs would encourage more Black women and men to engage with formal supports. This could be facilitated through collaboration between community-based organizations and more mainstream service organizations. Additionally, because of the relationship between education, skills, language proficiency, and IPV, skill development programs are vital (Tam et

al., 2016). Also needed are dedicated safe spaces for Black men to unpack perceptions of masculinity, receive support to deal with life stressors and the impacts of anti-Black racism, and interact with healthy male role models.



# Community Views on IPV

To understand the current Alberta context, the IPV project team engaged community members from major demographic groups to learn more about the nature of IPV, its implications, and potential paths forward. Funded by a Killam Research Fund Connection grant, four focus group discussions (FGD) were held involving (1) youth, (2) adult women, (3) adult men, and (4) community leaders. Using a Participatory Action Research framework, the project team collaborated with an advisory committee of community leaders and immigrant-serving service providers to gather additional input to enhance the project.

## Youth

The youth discussion explored the role of community leaders, de-stigmatization and normalization, perspectives of men, culturally rooted solutions, financial and educational barriers, mental health, and impacts on children.

<b>Youth described IPV as:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitated by an imbalance in power dynamics between partners and isolation from family and friends (a tactic often used by perpetrators)</li> <li>Physical, mental, emotional, and verbal abuse</li> <li>A cycle of control and manipulation</li> </ul>		
<b>Potential causes of IPV:</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="399 835 889 1161"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External stressors</li> <li>Differences in values</li> <li>Childhood experiences</li> <li>Substance use</li> </ul> </td> <td data-bbox="889 835 1516 1161">           External stressors— employment, financial troubles, racism— could cause someone to “take their stress out” on their partners, especially if they are unfamiliar with coping strategies. Perpetrators may have been exposed to IPV as a child, which could normalize violence for them or prevent the development of conflict resolution skills.         </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External stressors</li> <li>Differences in values</li> <li>Childhood experiences</li> <li>Substance use</li> </ul>	External stressors— employment, financial troubles, racism— could cause someone to “take their stress out” on their partners, especially if they are unfamiliar with coping strategies. Perpetrators may have been exposed to IPV as a child, which could normalize violence for them or prevent the development of conflict resolution skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External stressors</li> <li>Differences in values</li> <li>Childhood experiences</li> <li>Substance use</li> </ul>	External stressors— employment, financial troubles, racism— could cause someone to “take their stress out” on their partners, especially if they are unfamiliar with coping strategies. Perpetrators may have been exposed to IPV as a child, which could normalize violence for them or prevent the development of conflict resolution skills.		
<b>Complicating Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited education</li> <li>Financial instability/dependence</li> <li>(Fear of) not being believed</li> <li>(Fear of) being shunned by the community</li> <li>Distrust of police</li> <li>Dominant narratives of masculinity</li> <li>Exclusion of men in conversations/resources/service provision</li> </ul>		
<b>Strategies to prevent and intervene in IPV in Black Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community education aimed at destigmatizing, discussing, and seeking help for IPV</li> <li>Engaging community and religious leaders</li> <li>Including victim-survivors in designing community interventions and campaigns</li> <li>Offering programming to men on healthy coping and masculinity</li> </ul>		

## Adult Women

Women discussed the role of family and community, cultural norms and definitions, language, migration, and gender roles.

<p><b>Adult Women described IPV as:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often begins with verbal abuse and then escalates to sexual and/or physical abuse</li> <li>• Participants identified gaslighting and sharing nude images of a partner as “very common” examples of abuse</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Potential causes of IPV</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalization of violence</li> <li>• Women being viewed as property</li> <li>• Gender roles</li> <li>• Substance abuse</li> <li>• Issues of control</li> <li>• A lack of marriage counselling pre- and post-migration</li> <li>• Financial insecurity (and subsequent stress)</li> </ul>	<p>Women noted that marriage does not account for the variability and changing dynamics that accompany migration and that there is no adequate preparation for how migration impacts domestic relationships. Perpetrators may have been exposed to IPV as a child, which could normalize violence for them or prevent the development of conflict resolution skills.</p>
<p><b>Complicating Factors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victim-blaming</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Unfamiliarity with available supports and safe spaces</li> <li>• English terms specific to IPV are often difficult to interpret and/or non-translatable</li> </ul>	<p>Western approaches to IPV tend to be focused on the individual, which does not integrate well with collective cultures. Survivors may fear being ostracized because they sought help without consulting their family. In some communities, dissolving a marriage may be viewed as worse than IPV. This perception may cause community members to be hesitant to help because they might be portrayed as helping to break up a family. Many services focus solely on the survivor. By addressing IPV in the survivor’s experience alone, we obscure perpetration. The abuse becomes something passive, something that happened to someone rather than something someone did to someone else. This prevents addressing the root causes of IPV and preventing future occurrences.</p>



<b>Strategies to prevent and intervene in IPV in Black communities</b>	<p>Community education aimed at destigmatizing, discussing, and seeking help for IPV</p> <p>Engaging community and religious leaders</p> <p>Including victim-survivors in designing community interventions and campaigns</p> <p>Offering programming to men on healthy coping and masculinity</p>
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**Adult Men**

The men’s discussion focused on mental health, stigma and masculinity, intergenerational trauma, and effective communication.

<b>Adult Men described IPV as:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical, emotional, or verbal</li> <li>May involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematically reducing a partner’s access to various resources and necessities,</li> <li>An unequal division of labour</li> <li>Belittling or shaming</li> </ul> </li> <li>A controlling partner will isolate and ensure that their partner is completely dependent on them. An example is preventing them from pursuing education, so that their partner will have no choice but to stay in an abusive situation.</li> </ul>	
<b>Potential causes of IPV</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication issues</li> <li>Exposure to and normalization of violence in childhood</li> <li>External stressors</li> <li>Economic hardship</li> <li>Anti-Black racism</li> <li>Lack of conflict resolution skills</li> <li>Men’s socialization</li> </ul>	<p>According to the group, men are taught to respond to slights and disrespect with violence, which encourages them to use violence against their partners when their partner “disobeys or disagrees with them”.</p>
<b>Complicating Factors</b>	<p>Dominant narratives of masculinity exist within the culture of origin and the host country. These narratives work to prevent men from expressing vulnerability or talking about stigmatized topics that may portray them as “weak” or tarnish the family’s reputation or image.</p> <p>Another barrier to ending IPV is that it is often minimized in comparison to historical traumas experienced by Black communities (war, famine, enslavement, segregation, etc.)</p>	
<b>Strategies to prevent and intervene in IPV in Black communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counselling services for individuals and couples</li> <li>Peer-to-peer and community (involving elders) support programs</li> <li>Holding ourselves and each other accountable for the well-being of the community</li> <li>Service providers should collaborate with survivors and acknowledge them as active knowers of their situation and capable of making decisions</li> </ul>	

## Community Leaders

Key themes from the community leader discussion include shifting gender roles, responsibility of leaders, collaboration between formal and informal systems, family welfare, and training and awareness.

<b>Community Leaders described IPV as:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical and/or emotional abuse committed by either partner in a relationship</li> <li>An abusive partner may try to socially isolate their partner or use religious texts to justify their actions</li> </ul>
<b>Potential causes of IPV</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normalization of violence</li> <li>Impact of changing gender roles</li> <li>External stressors like post-migration difficulties</li> </ul>
<b>Complicating Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many immigrants migrate to thrive, but the reality when they arrive is much different.</li> <li>De-skilling and anti-Black racism lead to underemployment and financial difficulties that aggravate stress and potentially contribute to tension at home.</li> <li>Adjusting to a new place with a different culture and worldview may also cause “culture shock,” and men may feel a loss of control within the family.</li> <li>Combined with a lack of community support (especially in child rearing) due to more individualized lifestyles in Canada, can become a major source of stress for newcomers.</li> <li>Barriers that prevent victim-survivors from seeking support:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shame</li> <li>Victim-blaming</li> <li>Fear that it will impact their immigration status</li> <li>Normalization of violence before migration</li> <li>A desire to keep their family together</li> <li>Financial dependence, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Strategies to prevent and intervene in IPV in Black communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshops on anger management and coping with stress</li> <li>Training and counseling for newcomers (to ease resettlement)</li> <li>Training of community leaders</li> <li>Education efforts aimed at dispelling myths, victim-blaming, and stigmatization</li> <li>Collaboration between formal and informal support systems— especially in programming for men</li> <li>Utilization of cultural mediators in mainstream services</li> </ul>

## Role of Men in IPV Prevention

As indicated in the Research, Themes and Theories, and Logic Model sections of this report, the project evolved to include a concerted effort to actively engage men and boys in initiatives aimed at preventing intimate partner violence. Men and boys were included in conversations, interactive sessions, and in the content design of several of our podcast episodes, videos, and pamphlets. These group conversations allowed them to engage in dialogue, and feedback from the groups underscored the importance of their involvement in IPV prevention efforts.

The research portion of the IPV project illuminated the fact that men and boys are absent from research on and in intervention strategies for IPV. However, when men and boys are involved, interventions are better integrated into the community. In one study included in the literature review, 45% of men indicated that they believed they had a vital role to play in preventing intimate partner violence (Lorenzetti et al., 2022). Men take on important roles in families, communities, cultures, and religions. These intersections provide a space to include and engage men in dialogue about IPV and healthy relationships to create interventions addressing IPV from an Afrocentric perspective. Furthermore, while women are expected to rebuild family and community ties once they have migrated, men typically have more access to social opportunities. Therefore, in some post-migration contexts, men may be a stronger point of contact for intervention strategies. However, engaging men and boys can be difficult due to dominant narratives of masculinity, stigmatization, and fear of being perceived as abusive or inadequate.

Dominant narratives of masculinity are harmful as they often prevent men from seeking formal support for their mental health, healthy communication, and community well-being despite men's recognition of

the role they play in ending IPV. These widespread generalizations of masculinity frame vulnerability as weakness, and value strength, control, power, and invincibility at the expense of emotional intelligence and healthy emotional development (Lorenzetti et al., 2022). Men might also fear being perceived as violent or abusive if they attend workshops, events, or programs aimed at preventing IPV. Given men's roles in society, community, and family, it is vital to engage men and boys, to understand their introspections, and draw upon existing community strengths and practices when seeking solutions. Therefore, the next phase of the IPV project will create purposeful space for men and boys to freely express their perspectives, reflect on dominant discourses of masculinity, and support each other in building skills and knowledges vital to promoting healthy relationships healthy communication skills to alleviate this issue forward.

Addressing the needs of Black communities includes shifting culturally responsive approaches to meet the intersecting identities of the population. Many communities prefer culturally aware communal approaches to support and services, which are under-resourced in comparison to mainstream individualized support services. This need is also influenced by the quality of the experiences survivors of IPV have had accessing existing services, citing cultural insensitivity, discrimination, and re-traumatization (Lorenzetti et al., 2022). Approaches that include and engage men and boys to actively shape their role in prevention, intervention, and dismantling harmful stereotypes of masculinity are critical components of community-driven solutions addressing IPV.



# Framework for Prevention

## Logic Model

To identify the themes, settings, inputs, and relationships central to developing the intimate partner violence framework, a logic model was created to support the project. The process involved comprehensive literature reviews summarized in previous sections, extensive research, and stakeholder consultations. Experts in the field were then consulted to gather insights and validate findings. Based on this information, a draft model was created, incorporating feedback from both professionals in the field, and individuals with lived experience of intimate partner violence. The definitive version of the model (Refer to Appendix) emphasizes a multi-faceted approach that addresses individual, relational, community, and societal factors.

## Theory of Change

Drawing on research and collaborative discussions with local stakeholders, a significant factor contributing to the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) within ACB communities in Alberta is the lack of a culturally appropriate, comprehensive, prevention-focused service delivery and policy framework. Building upon this understanding, the IPV project theory of change proposes a participatory action approach that actively engages all stakeholders to address this issue.

Leveraging Africa Centre's successful COVID-19 mental health intervention in Edmonton's Black communities, this project expands efforts to include IPV community education and awareness. Information, resources, and community conversations target persistent harmful gender norms

and attitudes, social inequities, gaps in policy guidelines, and networking among stakeholders. The IPV project scales Africa Centre's prevention-focused framework by actively engaging Black communities across the province in its development and implementation.

Engagement was guided by meaningful and equitable partnerships, establishing reach, integration, and impact. Central to the project approach is empowerment of community leaders and religious figures, particularly women and girls, who will play key roles as knowledge holders and change agents in research teams, project advisory committees, and as resource personnel, ensuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences.

The project brings together a range of stakeholders, including formal and informal organizations within ACB communities in Alberta, fostering collaboration and collective action towards IPV prevention. To have community and religious leaders serve as authentic messengers and support channels in IPV prevention efforts, it is a priority to equip them with the necessary resources and training to effectively address IPV.

To assess the effectiveness of interventions and adjust for maximum impact, the project collects data to evaluate usage, experiences, and viewpoints of diverse audiences, community and religious leaders, and other stakeholders. Overall, the objective is to create a culturally appropriate, comprehensive IPV prevention-focused service delivery and policy framework that effectively addresses the unique challenges faced by Black Canadian populations in Alberta.

## Factors to Consider when Implementing the Framework

In general, IPV is viewed as a private problem in ACB communities. Over time, this viewpoint has created barriers to engaging the community. In many cases, this topic is considered taboo and shameful for community members to discuss in public settings. Throughout the project, the team found that efforts to change this ‘private issue’ mindset to a community problem that requires community solutions can be accomplished, in part, through creating inclusive phrases and contextually and culturally informed resources to convey information and facilitate these hard discussions.

When brought together with other women from their community and led by a community member working in the field of IPV, women were more receptive to speaking about their experiences of IPV and demonstrated interest in having the sessions being an ongoing form of community support and resourcing.

In some cases, there was more engagement in the project than anticipated and in other cases, there was significantly less engagement. Interactive sessions with many participants were highly engaging, with excellent conversation and knowledge sharing. People were open to being vulnerable. Many participants expressed a desire for recurring sessions, but limited resources prevented the project from realizing this for communities. Most people and support services addressing IPV are at limited capacity and prioritize crisis and emergent victim-survivor support. Scheduling times that work for the greatest number of participants to contribute to project deliverables proved to be challenging.

- Use inclusive language and terms when engaging with diverse groups. For example, in some contexts using phrases like “healthy relationships” will invite

engagement and initiate discussion rather than “gender-based violence”, “intimate partner violence”, or “domestic violence”. Be intentional in creating resources and communications that use non-violent language.

- Moreover, it is crucial to recognize the importance of conducting conversations in the community’s first languages, as nuances and cultural understanding may be lost in English translations. Utilizing accessible languages fosters a sense of safety, comfort, and comprehension that may be lacking in interpreted or translated discussions.
- The project struggled to engage specific demographics, such as the 2SLGBTQ+ community as mentioned above.
  - \* Many 2SLGBTQ+ organizations are predominantly white spaces with policies that have been criticized for their impact to Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) communities. 2SLGBTQ+ organizations created for and by Black, Indigenous, and people of colour tend to have access to fewer resources, funding, and capacity than their predominantly white organizational counterparts. Additionally, given the increased rate of hate crimes and emerging right-wing protests against the 2SLGBTQ+ community, many community members may not feel safe or might be preoccupied with surviving, especially those who are also racialized. Given the laws and social climate of one’s country of origin, the ACB queer community may be hesitant or mistrustful of our events.

# Reflections

The IPV project achieved many successes through a community-based, evidence-informed, collaboration featuring innovative awareness campaigns, community empowerment, and interactive sessions.

The collaborative approach involved stakeholders from various sectors: community members and leaders, experts (front-facing workers, researchers), and community organizations. These collaborations have taken various forms, including facilitators for events, podcast guest speakers, and spreading resources while advertising events. For instance, partnerships with organizations like Hands Lifting Hearts and the Somali Association have been instrumental in engaging women in our initiatives. The breadth of organizations, individuals, service providers, ILEs, and community members mobilized through these collaborations significantly extended our reach.

The project team's commitment to community outreach was exemplified by their efforts to extend engagement beyond the usual locales of Calgary and Edmonton, successfully conducting an in-person youth engagement event in Red Deer. This initiative, though not initially included in the proposal and workplan, was made possible through the effective mobilization of network connections and resources, demonstrating the team's adaptability and dedication to inclusive community involvement.

In addressing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) within Alberta's ACB communities, the project team prioritized the creation of a space that was both safe and reflective of the community's lived experiences. This was achieved by adhering to several guiding principles that facilitated meaningful engagement. Key among these were establishing a safe space and language accessibility.

Several factors contributed to the creation

of safe spaces. Wise Women sessions were organized based on language and region (of origin) and facilitators were selected due to their ability to communicate effectively in the common first language of each group, their experience in the field of IPV, and the community they belonged to. This fostered a sense of familiarity and comfort. As mentioned previously, IPV and many of the terms related to it do not translate well into other languages. By collaborating with a facilitator with experience in the field, first language, and the community, potential interpretation issues were avoided. Language accessibility extended to the language used to advertise for the event and talk about difficult issues. The project used language like "Healthy Relationships" as terms like "domestic violence", "IPV", or "abuse" reduced engagement due to stigma or topics considered as taboo to discuss. Hosting sessions at partner organizations rooted in specific communities and language accessibility allowed the project to facilitate focused dialogues that encouraged community-specific strategies for intervention. These sessions served as a platform for unpacking lived experiences and exploring diverse forms of mutual support. The act of being vulnerable with one another and offering support was not only a means to address IPV, but also an exercise in community building.

Outreach to Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) garnered considerable interest in our project. Both African, Caribbean, and Black-led organizations and more mainstream entities have shown enthusiasm. Throughout the project term, we worked to become visible within communities and among other service providers engaged in similar work. This effort involved a deep dive into understanding how to best serve our communities, acknowledging that not all services recognize the uniqueness of our communities or the need for tailored strategies. As a result, the project has gained traction among other SPOs, with a keen interest in learning how to adopt our resources, harness youth participation, and incorporate ACB heritage into responsive

support. This accomplishment is largely due to the Africa Centre's Enhancing Gender Equity Program manager and coordinator's intentional outreach and active participation in board spaces.

A notable outcome has been the heightened interest in collaboration. We've received multiple requests to collaborate with other SPOs, indicating a collective drive towards unified community support. The project has opened doors for community members to actively participate, fostering a sense of ownership. Facilitators from the participating communities have collaborated with us, providing facilitation, feedback on workshops, and aiding in outreach efforts. Sessions led by youth and women have instilled trust within these demographics, with dedicated individuals in each group supporting engagement and recruitment efforts. Moreover, participants have expressed a desire to learn more about fostering healthy relationships.

Creating safe spaces has led to increased expectations for continued engagement and support, which are often curtailed by funding limitations. The work extends beyond traditional hours, requiring flexibility in scheduling to accommodate those we serve. Consistent funding and continued programming are essential for sustaining these efforts. Collaboration with other services offering additional support, like counselling and trauma-informed responses, is vital. Referring participants to resources like Alberta Black Therapists Network (ABTN), and leveraging the expertise of facilitators from organizations, as in our Wise Women interactive sessions, are steps towards building capacity and ensuring that facilitators are well-equipped to address arising issues.

Providing clear communication of expectations and levels of engagement have been pivotal factors. Community members, who often juggle work and other commitments, bring invaluable knowledge, time, and talents

to the table. It is crucial to acknowledge the contributions of academics and professionals by offering due respect and fair compensation.

Funding delays and budget allocation issues posed significant hurdles at the beginning of the project, affecting implementation, engagement, and participation. The project's pace had to be expedited as it was already "underway" when the manager came on board. This acceleration led to continuity challenges, particularly during recruitment and transitions, resulting in missed connections within the community.

To date, there is continued inquiry and desire among participants for the interactive discussions to become recurring sessions. The funding allocated for the project was not sufficient to operationalise this, and it is important to note this as a limitation. A sense of abandonment was felt due to the lack of follow-up activities, highlighting an area for improvement in maintaining safe spaces for continued support. We have learned that there are many community members ready to unpack their experiences and be supported/ lend support in community and there are also many who want to be part of the development and implementation of creative solutions.

Engaging specific demographics, such as the Black queer community, has proven difficult due to low registration for workshops and limited collaboration capacity from organizations, which are critical for safety, trust, and relationship-building. Black-led and serving organizations seek to participate in capacity-building and collaborative development activities, however with limited operating resources, they are compelled to focus on crisis response and service provision to the community.



# Future Strategies for IPV

In reflecting on the conclusion of this project, it is evident that addressing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) necessitates a shift from viewing it as a private ordeal to recognizing it as a community-wide concern. Exposing the myths surrounding IPV is crucial, as is fostering community solutions that consider the impact on individuals, children, and the broader community. This includes tackling stigmatization associated with ‘breaking up the family’ and exploring both individual-based and collectivist support systems. Language plays a pivotal role; stigmatizing terms and translation challenges in various mother tongues can hinder open discussions about IPV and Domestic Violence (DV). Community-led research and engagement initiatives are needed to move forward with implementing interventions addressing IPV in ACB communities. The groups involved in dialogue have expressed a desire to continue these conversations regularly, highlighting the need for ongoing engagement.

Securing additional resources is imperative to fulfill the objective of establishing safe spaces for collaboration and co-design. Future strategies should prioritize engaging with ACB communities from a strength-based perspective that acknowledges and validates lived experiences. Embracing the collectivism of ACB communities will enhance community empowerment, resilience, and the development of accessible, culturally responsive solutions.

Collaboration among academics and front-facing support organizations has brought together research and practical application in ACB communities. Emerging from the findings of this project, is the potential for a noteworthy initiative focusing on engaging men and boys in Black communities as allies in preventing IPV and addressing culturally

responsive service gaps in the sector working to end IPV.

Continued funding will sustain the awareness, collaboration, and action the project has initiated throughout Alberta’s ACB communities. Streamlined mental health resources has allowed for more efficient support systems. These foundations will support rapid implementation of future phases of the IPV project. The establishment of the Men’s Hub has been a significant step forward in acknowledging the need for spaces and inclusive approaches to end negative stereotypes of masculinity. Similarly, the Wise Women Leaders Cafe’s has proven capable of becoming a valuable ongoing community engagement.

## Additional Resources

The IPV Project page is hosted on the Africa Centre website. Visit the resource page to access toolkit components to prevent IPV, additional research material, and some of the Black-led, Black-serving organizations that work with ACB communities.



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# Toolkit

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As part of a toolkit for intervention and prevention of IPV in African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities in Alberta we engaged community members, leaders, and experts across fields to mobilize knowledge. With in-depth discussions on gender relations, engaging men, mental health, financial literacy, religion, and more, the toolkit is a resource for individuals and organizations seeking to deepen their understanding of the complexities and experiences related to intimate partner violence in African descent communities.

Each resource underscores the significance of collaborative partnerships, featuring insights from scholars, community leaders, elders, mainstream agencies, and marginalized groups. The conversations delve into the challenges of engaging communities in discussions about intimate partner violence, emphasizing the imperative of inclusive dialogue and shared goals.

Utilizing mixed media as a system of tools to prevent IPV stemmed from the recognition that effective prevention requires comprehensive understanding and open dialogue. The toolkit aims to offer insights and perspectives that will be beneficial to a wide audience, including individuals, organizations, scholars, community leaders, and anyone eager to deepen their understanding of intimate partner violence within ACB communities. The content provides valuable perspectives to encourage a proactive approach to prevention and foster a community-wide commitment to positive change.



# Enhancing Gender Equity



**Remember**  
that different target groups require different strategies.

**Consider**  
specific indicators that reflect our progress.

**Factor**  
in the resources required to achieve our goal at each step of the process.

## Interactive Sessions

Our framework is centered on the goal of equipping participants with the knowledge and skills needed to prevent Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and foster healthy relationships. This involves a multifaceted approach, including raising awareness about the intricacies of IPV, empowering participants to assert control over their well-being, promoting positive relationship behaviors, and addressing the pervasive stigma and discrimination associated with these issues. Additionally, our framework involves guiding participants in identifying available community resources, fostering active community engagement, and establishing a secure and supportive space for open dialogue and learning. Through these comprehensive efforts, our aim is to cultivate a well-informed, resilient community dedicated to the promotion of healthy relationships.

## Pamphlets and Handbook

Designed for community members, leaders, and service providers, we created a handbook and a series of pamphlets to disseminate the key messages from the research stages of our project. Each pamphlet explores a factor, or several interlocking factors, related to IPV that impact ACB communities. Pamphlets include What is IPV, Gender Relation and IPV, Parenting and IPV, Bringing Men into the Conversation on IPV, Role of Systems, and Culturally and Contextually Adaptive Prevention. The Handbook includes extended versions of each pamphlet, an introduction, and a list of suggestions.

## Podcast

A broadcasted 11-part podcast series, “Better than the Cure: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence,” launched on August 30, 2023. With in-depth discussions on gender relations, engaging men, mental health, financial literacy, religion, and more, this podcast promises to be a valuable resource for individuals and organizations seeking to deepen their understanding of the complexities and experiences related to intimate partner violence in African descent communities. Each episode underscores the significance of collaborative partnerships, featuring insights from scholars, community leaders, elders, mainstream agencies, and marginalized groups. The conversations delve into the challenges of engaging communities in discussions about intimate partner violence, emphasizing the imperative of inclusive dialogue and shared goals.

The series aims to offer insights and perspectives that will be beneficial to a wide audience, including individuals, organizations, scholars, community leaders, and anyone eager to deepen their understanding of intimate partner violence within ACB communities. The episodes provide valuable perspectives to encourage a proactive approach to prevention and foster a community-wide commitment to positive change.

## Videos

Working with an animation studio, segments of the podcast were used to create short, informative videos that simultaneously educate and promote the podcast. There are five animated videos in total, featuring:

- Dr. Philomina Okeke-Iherjirika discussing gender relations,
- Navaid Aziz using the Arabic word “darb” to unpack misconceptions and interpretations of the Qur’an to demonstrate that Islam does not condone IPV,
- Dr. Patrina Duhaney addressing the importance of enhancing language programs and incorporating prevention services into key integration areas like employment and education to prevent IPV,
- Joseph Luri discussing men, stigma, and the culture of togetherness, and
- Adebayo Chris Katiti exploring intersectionality and IPV.

## Obinokor Talks

“Obinokor”, a term originating from the Igbo culture of Nigeria, denotes a woman who has reached a pivotal point in her life—an embodiment of wisdom and experience that transcends mere numerical age. Unlike a traditional elder appointed by age alone, the Obinokor is distinguished by her wisdom, earned through a lifetime of experiences and a profound connection with the cultural values of the Igbo community. In celebration of the profound wisdom and guidance embodied by the Obinokor in Igbo culture, inspired by Dr. Philomena Okeke-Ihejirika, our program launched an enlightening series titled “Obinokor Talks.” The events serve as a platform to honor the significance of an Obinokor,

Our first Talks, held in 2022, included a storytelling session highlighting the lived experiences and wisdom of the Obinokor, an interactive discussion, live cultural performances, and several guest speakers. Our 2024 Talks celebrated the completion of our IPV project, served as the official launch of our deliverables, and featured speakers across disciplines.

## Social Media Campaigns

The IPV Project launched several social media campaigns to invite community participation and promote awareness of the need to collaborate for community-minded, culturally responsive ways to address IPV.

To view, download, and connect to project resources, please visit:

<https://africacentre.ca/enhancing-gender-equity/>