

***Keeping Women Alive –  
Assessing The Danger***

***Report prepared for the  
Alberta Council of Women's Shelters by:***

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It is exciting to see the results of this action based research project on Danger Assessment useage in a group of Alberta shelters. Nine shelters contributed their expertise, time and ingenuity in collaboration to ensure successful project implementation over a two year period. Along the way many challenges were addressed and overcome in the pursuit of a better understanding of the dangers that women accessing shelters face. This report is, first and foremost, a testament to women's courage. It also attests to shelters' domestic violence expertise and their willingness and commitment to do whatever it takes to improve services for women.

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) wishes to convey its deep appreciation to the women whose voices are reflected here for their participation in the project and to the nine sheltering agencies for their inspiring work.

In particular our thanks go out to members of the project team including:

### ***The Shelter Executive Directors***

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Cathy Miller, Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter  
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Penny Giacomoni  
Dianne Finch  
Patti Smeenk  
Lenora Wiebe

The ACWS Shelter Information Systems Committee in collaboration with Dr. Kate Woodman (former ACWS Research and Evaluation Specialist ) provided excellent leadership and oversight of the project. The staff of the nine participating shelters working directly with the women accessing their shelters ensured our success.

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***Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell***

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell of Johns Hopkins University, who has worked tirelessly over the last 30 years to develop and research the Danger Assessment Tool. Dr. Campbell served as an advisor and mentor to the project team. It has been our privilege to work and learn with her.

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## Section I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is recognized by the United Nations as a pandemic, whose reports tell us that globally one in three women is a victim of violence. Canada is not immune.

In his book, *War on Women*, Canadian author Brian Vallee states that between the years 2000 and 2006, the number of Canadian women stabbed, shot, strangled or beaten to death by their spouses or partners was nearly five times as many as the Canadian soldiers and police officers killed over the same period in the line of duty<sup>1</sup>. When he continues his analogy on war, he remarks that women's shelters are really the refugee camps from the war at home.<sup>2</sup>

Shelters have long recognized that domestic violence deaths are preventable deaths and have worked tirelessly in their efforts to provide a responsive and effective continuum of services ranging from prevention, intervention, crisis counselling and follow-up. Statistics Canada observes that the work of shelters has made it possible for many women at high risk of femicide to find safety and to plan to minimize ongoing risk and that overall rates of spousal homicides for both female and male victims have been declining in Canada over the last 30 years (1977 - 2006).<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, thousands upon thousands of women and children around the world are alive and thriving because of the determination and courage of shelter workers who stood beside them when they were needed.

### 1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) invited Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell, an internationally recognized expert in intimate partner violence, to a training session for shelter workers on the utilization of her lethality assessment tool (Danger Assessment). The majority of shelter directors in the province attended and expressed great enthusiasm for the potential of this tool to support their work in keeping women safe.

The Danger Assessment tool was originally developed in 1985 to empower women at risk with information that reduced the likelihood of further exposure to her risk of femicide. It consists of a Calendar to assist in recall and 20 weighted questions designed to measure risk in an abusive relationship.

Following the training, some Alberta shelters began utilizing the Danger Assessment tool for women in contact with their shelter. Those shelters pioneering this work were extremely concerned about the consistently high number of women who were at risk of future assault and/or homicide when they came to shelter. As ACWS began tracking these scores provincially we saw that more than three quarters of the women in emergency shelters and more than 90% of women in second stage shelters were at serious risk of danger in their intimate partner relationship based on Dr. Campbell's Danger Assessment tool.

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<sup>1</sup> Vallee, Brian. *War on Women*. Toronto, Key Porter Books Limited, (2007) p. 29

<sup>2</sup> Vallee, p. 30

<sup>3</sup> Sauvé & Burns, The Statistics Canada 2008 report on Canada's shelters (May 2009)

Following some tragic femicides and murder suicides in the province, shelters in Alberta became increasingly active in advocating for sound risk and Danger Assessment procedures based upon strong community collaboration. ACWS sought and obtained intervener status at the Fekete Inquiry. In this case, Betty Fekete's assertions of the danger her husband presented to herself and her son were discounted despite interventions by shelter staff at the local women's emergency shelter in collaboration with a court worker. And then it was too late; with Joseph Fekete killing his son Alex and his wife before turning the gun upon himself. Shelter workers know that lives can be saved in Alberta and across Canada if women and children are believed. They see strong value in a tool that can be used to communicate with community stakeholders on the dangers women face in abusive relationships in order to ensure effective safety planning and legal interventions occur.

Recognizing that there are many different risk and Danger Assessment tools in use, all with goals to increase public safety, ACWS hosted a conference in 2006 that focused on these tools, thanks to a Community Incentive Grant from Alberta Children and Youth Services and the County of Strathcona.<sup>4</sup> It became very clear at that conference that the best safety plans are created when community providers share information derived from the various assessment tools that they are utilizing.

An outcome of the conference was a collaborative research project with Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell, ACWS and nine member sheltering agencies to examine the utilization of the Danger Assessment tool in Alberta shelters in order to:

- Inform women's shelter practice in keeping women and children safe;
- Provide accurate evidenced-based research for use by community stakeholders in keeping women and children safe; *and*
- Pilot a train-the-trainer model using Canadian/Alberta data.

### 1.3 THE CANADIAN AND ALBERTA CONTEXT

The Statistics Canada 2008 report on Canada's shelters (Sauvé & Burns, May 2009) included the following highlights. For each highlight, the comparable Alberta annual statistics are provided where available:

1. Between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008, approximately 101,000 women and children were admitted to 569 shelters across Canada.
  - Alberta shelters housed 12,387 women and children during this period, or about 12% of the total of Canadian women using shelters.
2. On April 16, 2008 (snapshot day), nearly 80% of these women and children were attempting to flee an abusive situation. The remainder were seeking shelter for reasons other than abuse.
  - Alberta's women's shelters report similar percentages on an annual basis.
3. On snapshot day, nearly half of the female victims of abuse in shelters were admitted with their children. Slightly more than one in five women did not have their children with them when

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<sup>4</sup> Presenters at the ACWS Danger and Risk Assessment Training included, Karl Hansen, Jeff Edleson, Jane Coombe, Jay Silverman, Linda Baker, Naomi Manuel and Sharon Meredith



they were admitted, and the remaining women did not have any parenting responsibilities or their situation was unknown.

- In Alberta, almost half of the total admissions to emergency shelters were children.
4. The types of abuse cited by women seeking shelter were psychological or emotional abuse, as well as physical abuse. For three-quarters of women in shelters, the abuser was a spouse or former spouse.
  5. One quarter (25%) of the women in shelters on the snapshot day were there to protect their children from witnessing the abuse being inflicted on their mother. The women also wanted to protect their children from abusive situations, such as psychological abuse (20%) and physical abuse (12%).
  6. 25% of women residing in shelters on snapshot day had reported the most recent abuse incident to the police.
    - On average, 34% of women in Alberta emergency shelters reported receiving police services. In comparison, 49% of women at second stage shelters reported receiving police services.
  7. 16% of women had laid charges against the abuser, and 15% had obtained a restraining or protection order against the perpetrator.
    - Alberta emergency shelter rates here are equivalent to the national rates; however, in second stage shelters 50% of 2007-2008 cases resulted in charges being laid, and 43% resulted in the batterer's arrest.
  8. More than 9 in 10 women who left shelters for abused women on April 16, 2008 did not plan to return to live with their spouses (Sauvé & Burns, May 2009, page 5).
    - Emergency Shelter Exit Surveys at Alberta shelters indicated that, of women who identified where they would go after this most recent shelter stay, 14% indicated that they would return to the same relationship.

Alberta's incidence of domestic violence is amongst the highest of Canadian provinces. There were a total of 170 deaths from domestic violence in our province between 2000 and 2006, for an average of more than 20 such deaths per year over that period. These figures underestimate the actual rates, since cases where no charges had yet been laid, or where the case was unsolved or labeled as a suspicious death are not included. Further inaccuracies in the count arise from the fact that different police services within the province do not count these deaths in the same way. In 2008, the RCMP reported 14 family violence deaths in their jurisdictions in Alberta.

The Premier's Roundtable on Family Violence (2004) identified a number of key areas for government action, including social change; provincial leadership; collaborative, coordinated community response to family violence, development of services and supports; and program accountability.

Thanks to funding from the Alberta Children and Youth Services' Community Incentive Fund, this research project was able to support three of the pillars of this framework for action by:

- a) Providing a framework for community collaboration through information sharing, and support for collaboration;
- b) Supporting evidence-based practices, and expanding community based action research and evaluation; and

- c) Assisting in the provision of services and supports to abused women and children through Alberta's shelter network.

Overall rates of spousal homicides for both female and male victims have been declining in Canada over the last 30 years (1977 - 2006). The work of shelters over that period has made it possible for many women at high risk of femicide to find safety and to plan to minimize ongoing risk.

Social changes have also played an important role in the reduction of the number of women killed by their intimate partners. For example, women are marrying at a later age, having smaller families and improving their financial status, potentially reducing their risk for intimate partner violence (IPV). Gun control legislation may also play a role. However, it is important to note that the rate of spousal homicide against females in Canada remains between 3 and 5 times higher than the rate for males (Statistics Canada 2008).

## 1.4 STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study used four measures: the Danger Assessment Calendar, the Danger Assessment Questionnaire, a demographics form and an Outcomes Collection form that asked women to rate their perceived level of risk before and after completing the Danger Assessment. Women who consented to participate in the study were asked to sign an Informed Consent form and, if they completed all study components, were given a \$20 grocery voucher as an honorarium. Data was collected from 509 women between November 1, 2007 and January 31, 2009 at ten research sites<sup>5</sup> across the province by shelter staff certified in the use of the Danger Assessment.

## 1.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This Executive Summary provides key outcome information from the study. The data analyses reported here are those based on Danger Assessment (DA) scores in relation to demographics, type and location of shelters, and abuse-related issues.

### 1. *Key Demographics:*

- a) Marital status: Higher DA risk levels are more characteristic of those living in a common-law or cohabiting relationship, recently separated, or single ( $p = .003$ ).
- b) Cultural background: Over half of the respondents in the study self-identified as Aboriginal (Figure 1). A significant difference in DA scores was found for cultural background groups (Figure 2), with the Aboriginal group reporting the highest risk scores, followed by the English-Canadian group and the 'Other' group ( $p = .000$ ). Aboriginal women were also significantly more likely to report increased physical

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<sup>5</sup> A Safe Place (Sherwood Park), Columbus House of Hope (St Paul), Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, Eagle's Nest Stoney Family Shelter (Morley), Phoenix Safe House and Musasa House (Medicine Hat) an on-reserve shelter, Peace River Regional Women's Shelter, Sonshine Centre (Calgary), and WINGS of Providence (Edmonton)

violence, including violence when the woman was pregnant, suicide threats, partner unemployment, and partner's use of illegal drugs or addiction to alcohol.

Figure 1: Participants' cultural background by percentage

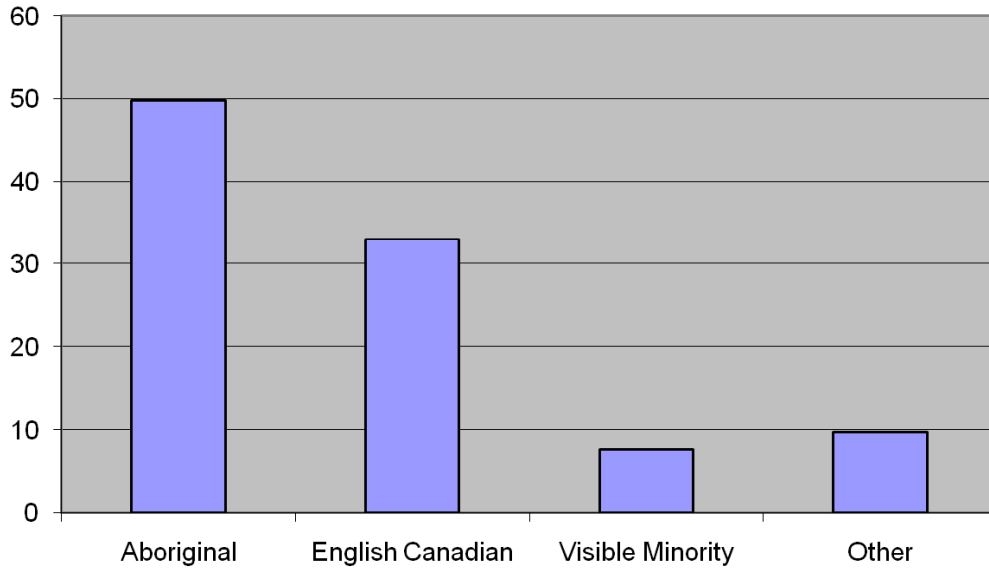
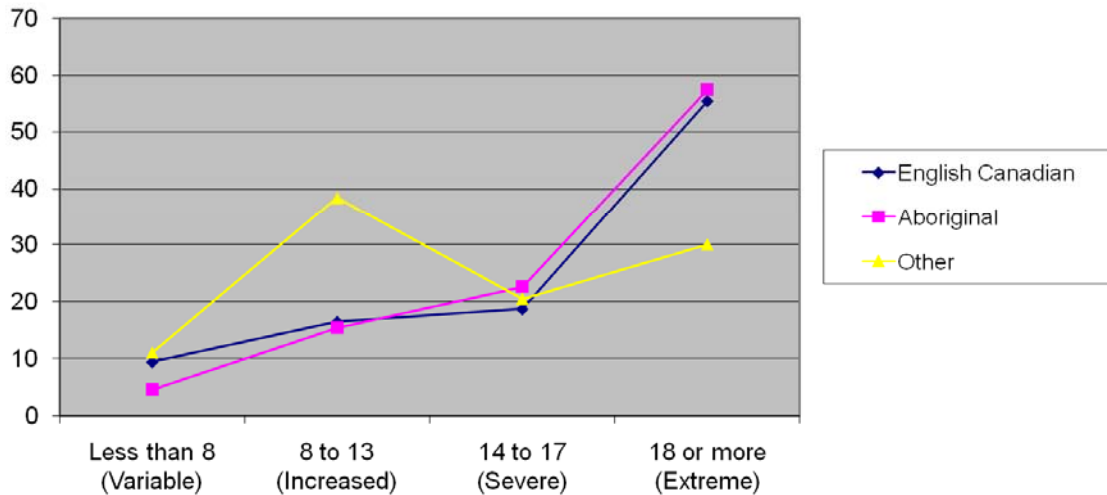


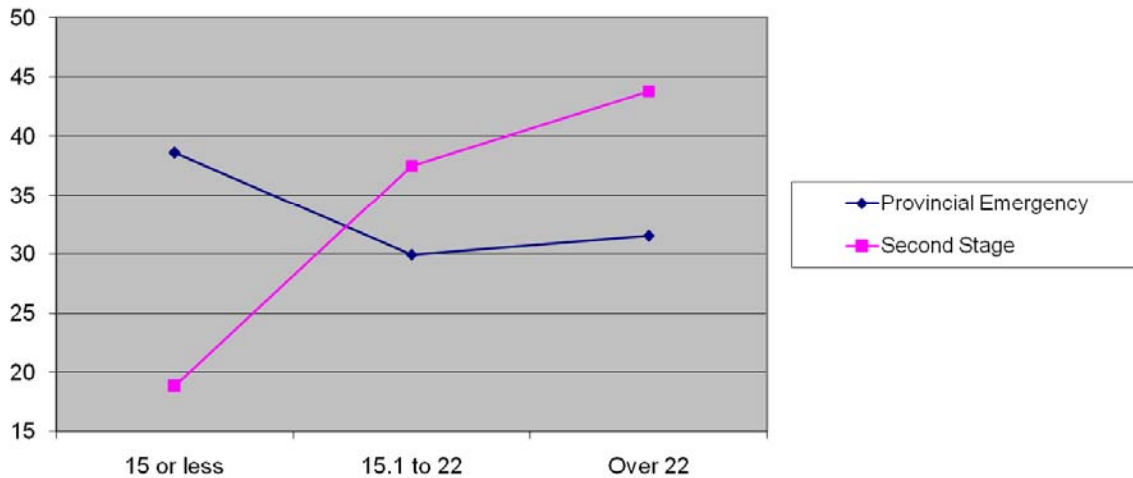
Figure 2: Participants' cultural background by DA scores



## 2. Danger Assessment (DA) Scores by Shelter Type:

- a) Significant differences were found between DA scores for emergency and second stage clients ( $p = .024$ ). A greater proportion of second stage clients scored above 22 (43.8% as compared to 31.5% of women in emergency shelters) and fewer second stage clients score 15 or less (18.8% as compared to 38.6%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: DA score by shelter type



- b) Second stage clients were more likely to report that their partner had used a weapon or threatened to use a weapon against them, and the weapon used was more frequently reported to be a gun. Women in second stage shelters were also more likely to say that they believe their partner is capable of killing them and to report increased incidences of physical violence, threats to harm the children and stalking or controlling behaviours (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Danger Assessment items by Type of Shelter

	Emergency	Second Stage
Q1. Increased physical violence?	65.9%	85.4%
Q5. Use or threat to use a weapon?	43.0%	59.6%
Q5a. If yes, was the weapon a gun?	13.8%	45.0%
Q6. Does your partner threaten to kill you?	46.9%	72.9%
Q9. Does your partner ever force sex?	48.3%	69.6%
Q10. Does partner ever try to choke you?	54.4%	68.8%
Q13. Does your partner control your daily activities?	76.7%	93.8%
Q15. Have you been beaten while pregnant?	36.6%	60.0%
Q17. Does your partner threaten to harm your children?	17.8%	65.2%
Q19. Partner stalking behaviour?	66.3%	85.4%

### 3. Frequency of Shelter Use:

- a) About 40% of participants were using a shelter for the first time, while 44% had used a shelter between 2 and 5 times and about 15% had been in a shelter 6 times or more (Figure 5).
- b) A significant relationship was found between number of emergency shelter stays and increasing risk levels on the DA ( $p = .018$ ) (Figure 6). Women who have had multiple emergency shelter stays are at particularly high risk of lethality. Safety planning with these women is of particular importance. It is important to note that Aboriginal cultural background is also strongly related to increased number of shelter stays, both for emergency shelters ( $p = .000$ ) and for second stageshelters ( $p = .004$ ).

Figure 5: Previous Stays in Emergency Shelters

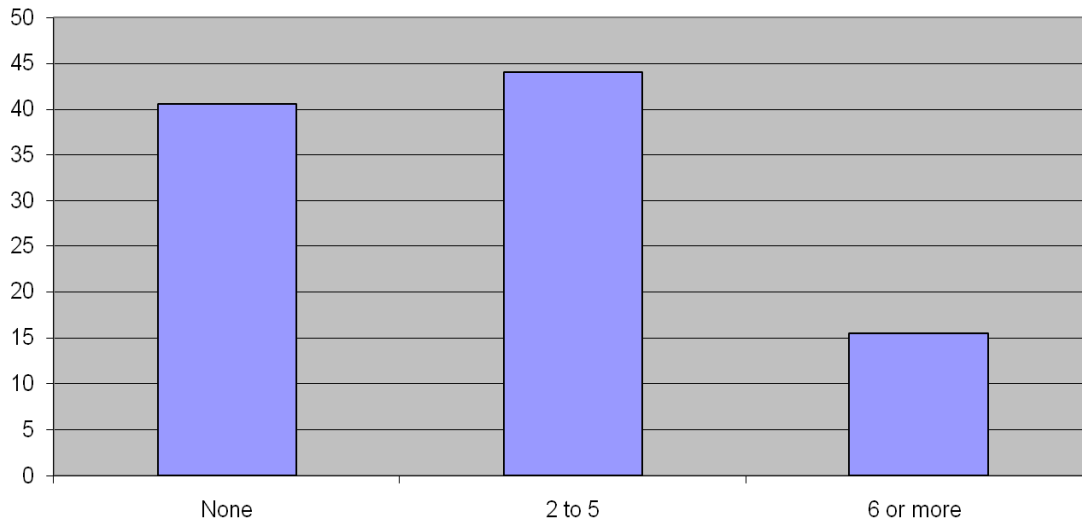
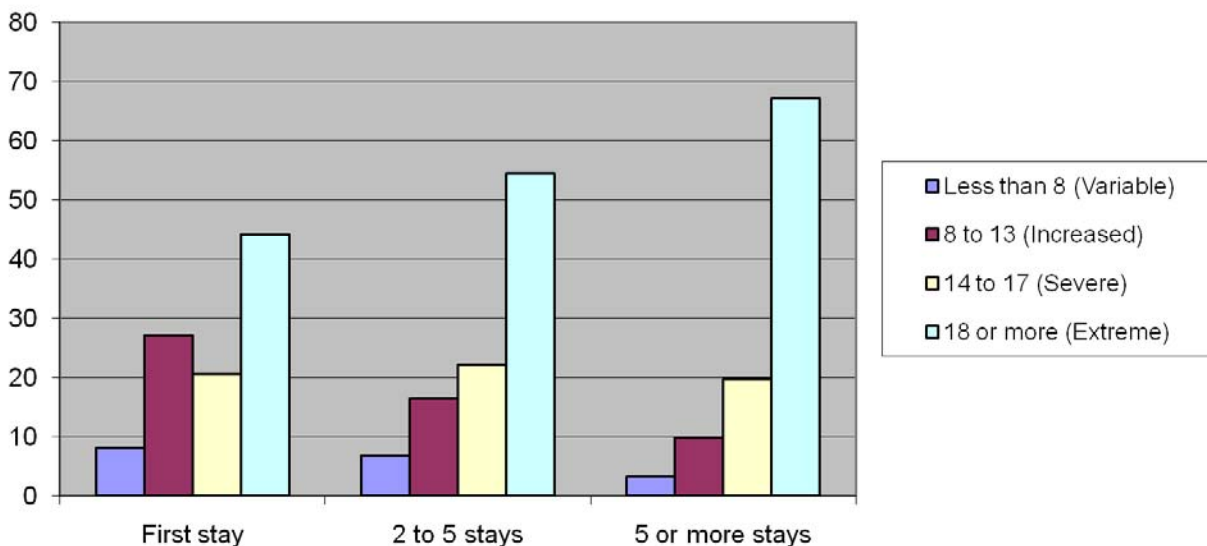


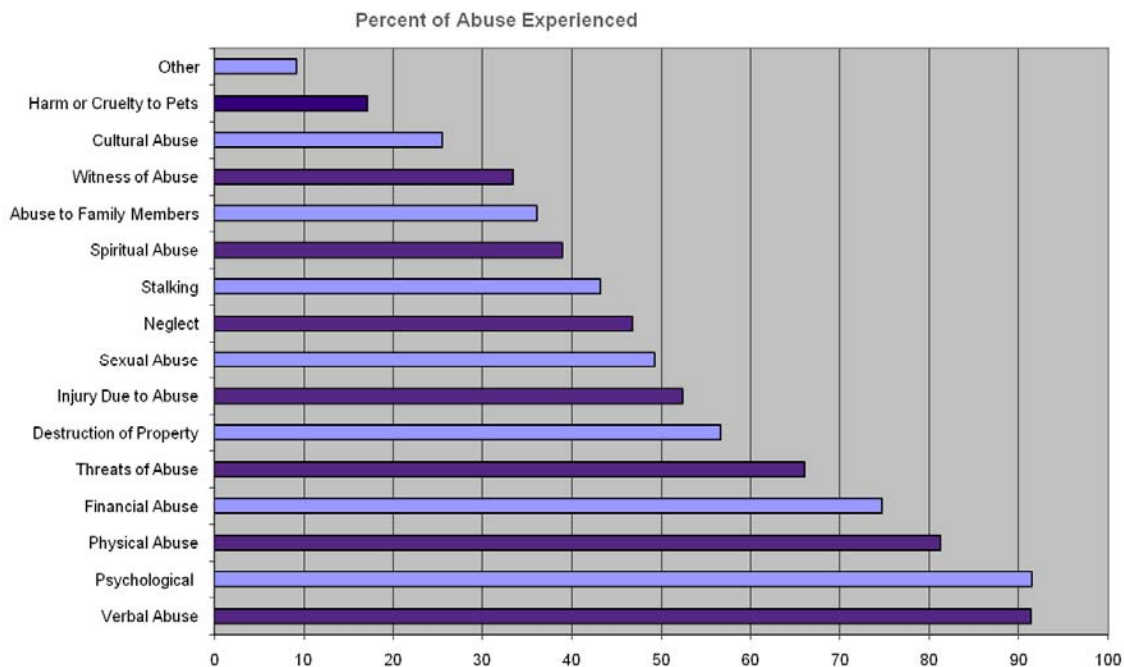
Figure 6: Danger Assessment scores by number of Shelter stays



#### 4. **Types of Abuse:**

The most frequently reported types of abuse were psychological/emotional abuse and verbal abuse, with 91.4% of participants reporting having these experiences (Figure 7). The second most frequently reported type of abuse was physical, with 81% of respondents reporting its occurrence. Higher DA scores (22 and higher) were related to more frequent reporting of sexual abuse, abuse of family members, destruction of property, harm or cruelty to pets, threats of abuse, physical injuries due to abuse, spiritual abuse, cultural abuse and stalking.

Figure 7: Types of abuse



#### 5. **Relationship to Abuser**

The largest proportion of abusers were common-law partners (46.3%) and husbands (21%). Former partners and boyfriends accounted for about another 25% of responses. Women who were separated or living apart, and those in common-law or live-in relationships, were at slightly higher risk, although this relationship was not statistically significant.

#### 6. **Length Of Abusive Relationship**

The range of reported length of the abusive relationship was from 0 to 55 years, with an average length of 5.7 years (median and mode 4.0 years). Most relationships (about 66%) were 9 years or less in length.

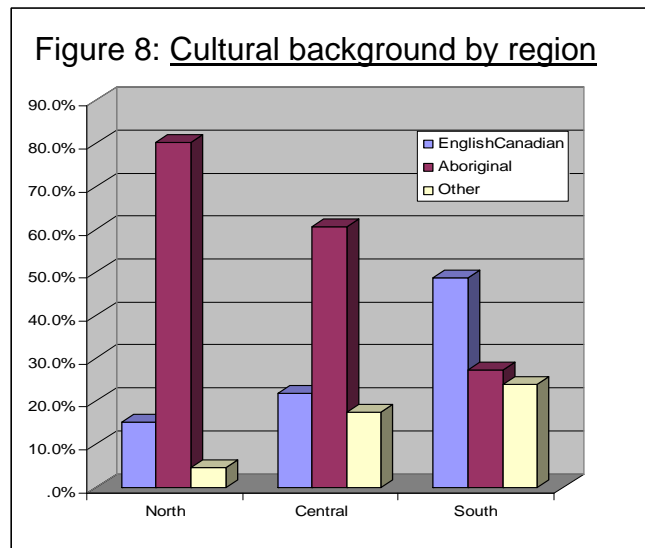
## Regional Differences

### 1. *Proportion of Aboriginal Women*

The shelter population for the Northern region of the province includes a significantly larger proportion of Aboriginal women (81.1%) than is found in either the Central region (60%) or the South (28.7%) ( $p = .000$ ).

### 2. *Proportion of 'Other' Cultural Background*

The "Other" cultural background group makes up only 4.9% of the Northern shelter group in comparison to 18% of the Central group and 23.9% of the South region group. No Northern region participants reported that they were born outside Canada, but 12.5% of Central region participants and 32.4% of Southern region participants reported being born elsewhere ( $p = 000$ ) (Figure 8).



### 3. *Number of Children*

Many of the results cited may be more influenced by the distribution of the Aboriginal population than by regional factors. For example, there was a significant regional difference in the number of children women reported as living with them prior to this shelter stay ( $p = .019$ ). The difference here appears to be primarily the larger family size in the Northern region, which may reflect the larger number of children born to Aboriginal women in Canada.

### 4. *Danger Assessment Scores by Region*

- a) Some tendency can be seen for the North region to have a slightly higher number of high-risk cases and the South region to have a higher proportion of relatively lower-risk cases, but the trend did not reach statistical significance.

- b) The responses to a number of specific questions on the Danger Assessment did vary significantly by region, as summarized below. (Note: check marks identify those regions with a significantly higher proportion of affirmative responses,  $p < .05$ ).

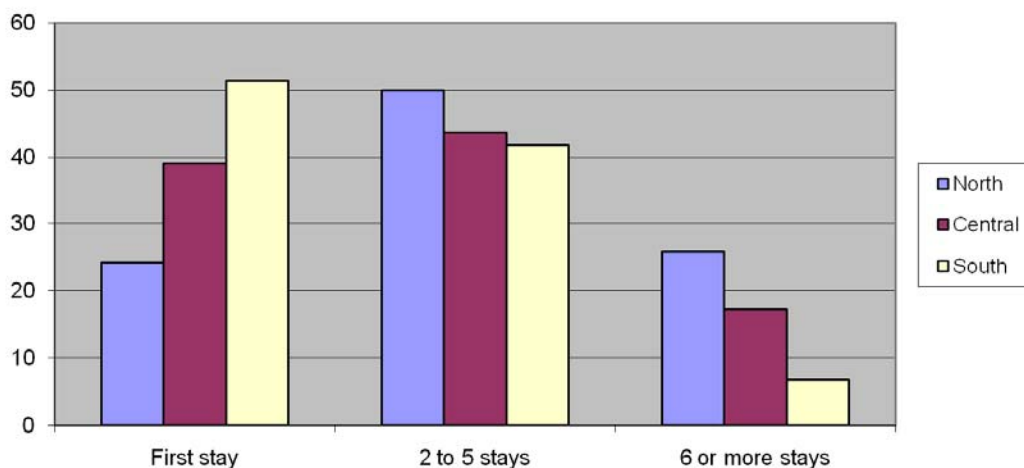
Figure 9: Danger Assessment items by region

	North	Central	South
Q2. Does your partner own a gun?	✓	✓	
Q2a. Was the gun used in an assault?		✓	
Q3. Have you left your partner?	✓		✓
Q4. Is your partner unemployed?	✓		
Q6. Does your partner threaten to kill you?		✓	
Q11. Does your partner use illegal drugs?	✓	✓	
Q16. Does your partner threaten to commit suicide?	✓		
Q17. Does your partner threaten to harm your children?		✓	

### 5. *Number of Shelter Stays by Region:*

More women at the participating shelters in the South were using the shelter for the first time (51% in the South compared with 24.2% in the North), and a larger proportion of women at Northern shelters had 6 or more shelter stays (25.8%, compared to 6.7% in the South) ( $p=.000$ ). The reasons for these differences may lie in comparative resource scarcity in the North (e.g. housing, addiction treatment, second stage shelters). The increased number of shelter stays in the North may also be related to the higher risk levels of the shelter population there and to reduced access to housing and second stage shelters.

Figure 10: Emergency shelter use by region

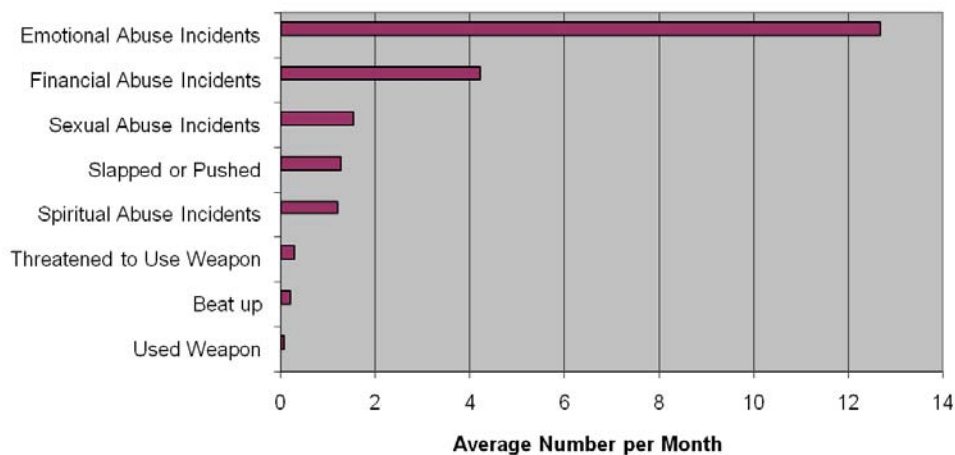




## Danger Assessment Calendar Results

The Danger Assessment (DA) Calendar is the first of two components that make up the DA tool. It is used to assist women to identify the frequency, severity and types of abuse that she has experienced in the year prior to her current shelter stay. 407 women in 7 shelters completed an average of 5.4 months of abuse history. (While some women completed more than 12 months, others completed less than a year of the Calendar because the pattern was apparent in fewer than 12 months and/or it was too painful to go back the entire year). The resulting data indicate that the average woman in this sample experiences emotional abuse at least 12 times per month, and physical abuse at least once or twice per month. It is important to note that the number of months completed on the Calendar do not reflect the length of the relationship.

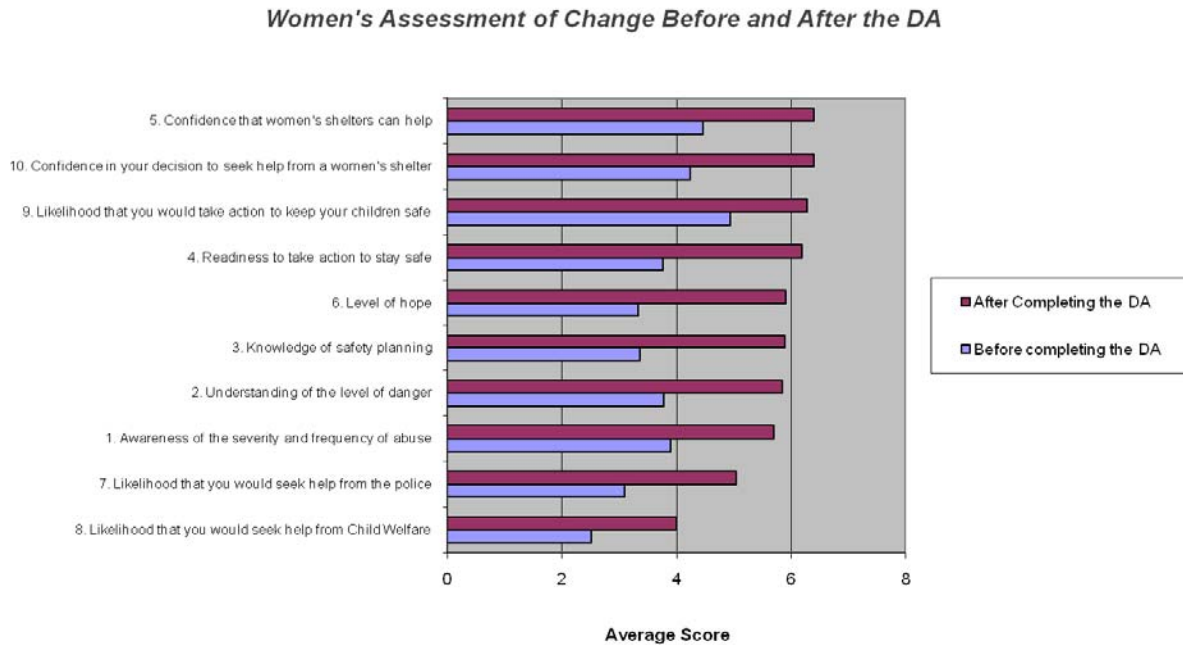
Figure 11: Number of abuse incidents per month by type



### 1. Outcomes Information Collection Form

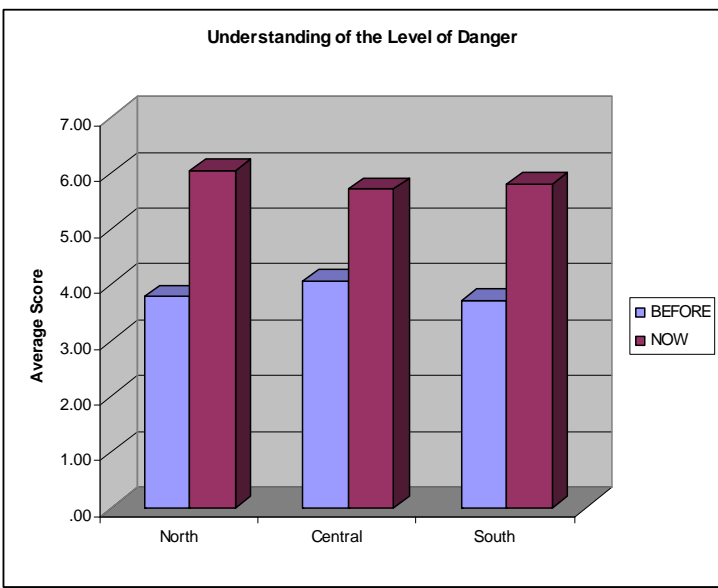
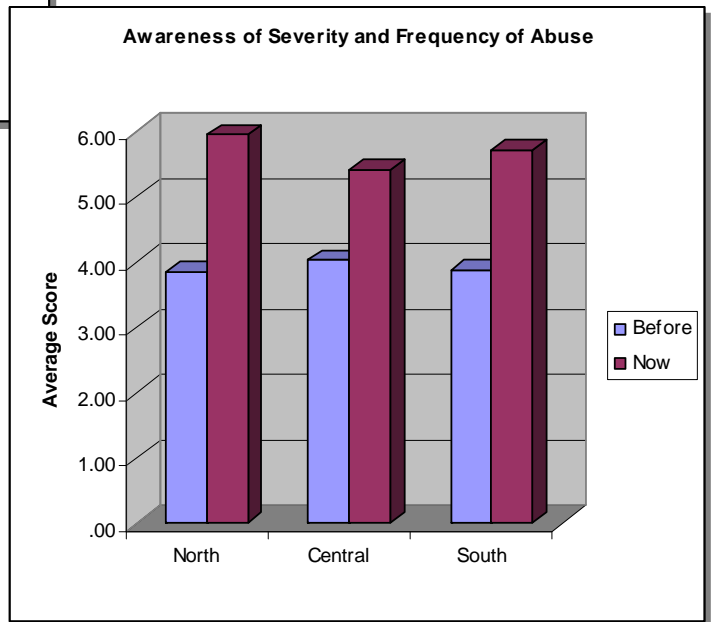
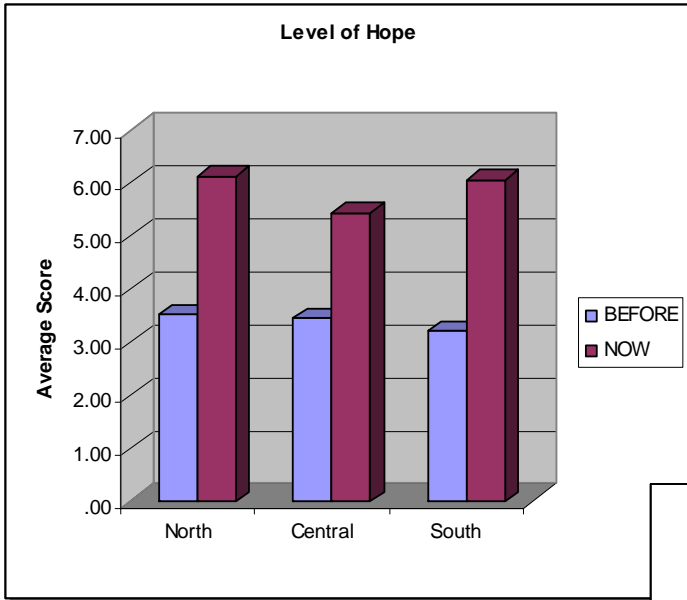
- a) Of 423 women who provided Calendar data, 30% were from the North, 27% from Central Alberta, and 43% from Southern Alberta.
- b) Overall, the experience of completing the Calendar and the 20-item DA Questionnaire had a very significant impact on women's perceptions of their risk of lethality and continuing abuse. The use of the DA significantly contributes to women's safety, in that it helps them to estimate risk more realistically and to better understand the need for safety planning for themselves and their children.
- c) The women's perception of risk changed significantly from "pre" DA to "post" DA ( $p=.000$ ) on every DA question. The average ratings on the questions also increased in every case (Figure 12).

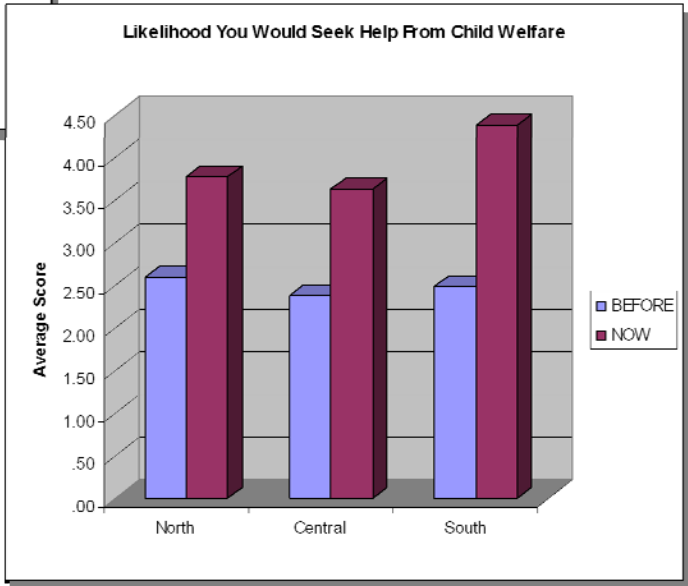
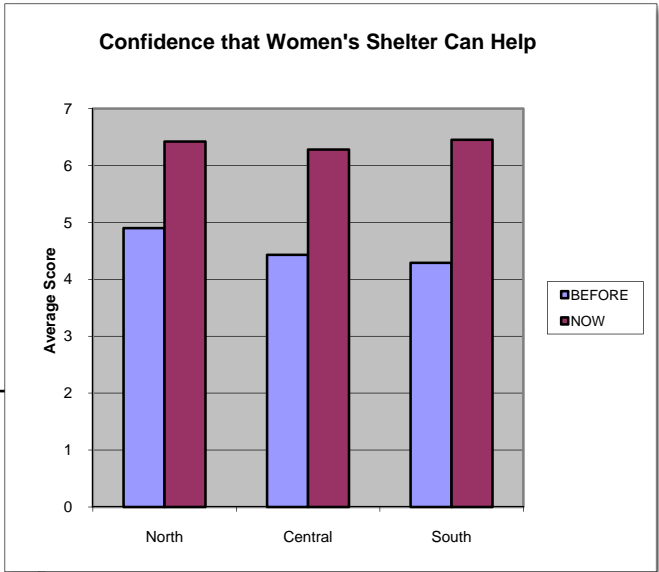
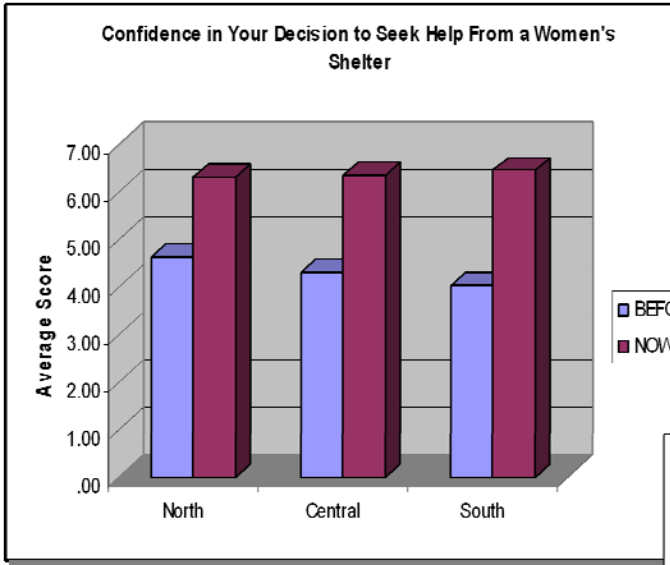
Figure 12: Changes in women’s perception of risk of lethality



- d) Women’s confidence in shelters as a source of help was relatively high prior to the completion of the DA (4.47). In comparison, women initially estimated the likelihood of their seeking help from either the police or Child Welfare as relatively low (3.10 and 2.5 respectively). After completing the DA, women said that they were much more likely to seek assistance from the police (increase in mean from 3.1 to 5.0), while their likelihood of seeking help from Child Welfare increased more modestly (2.5 to 4.0 – neither low nor high).
- e) A comparison of scores of women’s assessment of change demonstrated an increase of the average ratings before and after DA administration in each region. There were no statistically significant differences among regions when the rate of change in women’s knowledge of safety planning, readiness to take action, likelihood that they would seek help from the police and likelihood that they would take action to keep children safe were compared.

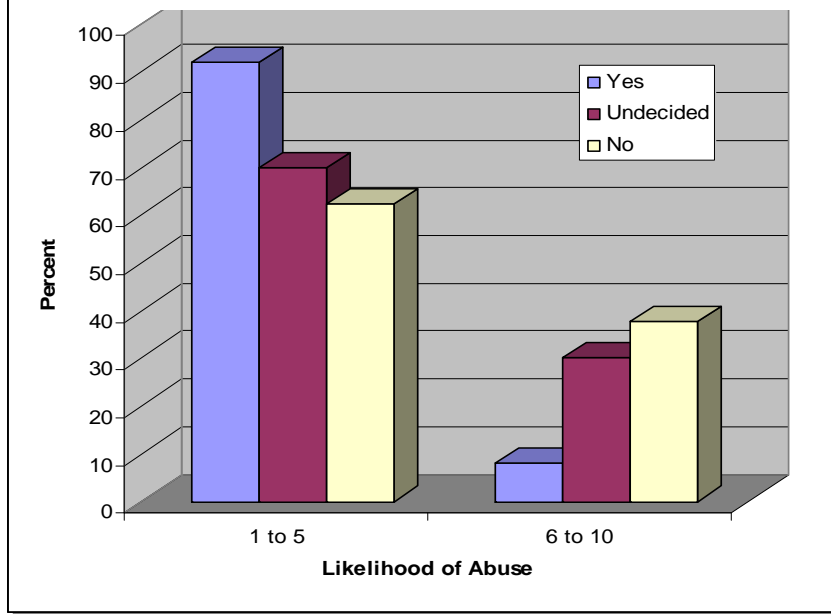
However, women in the North were more likely to demonstrate a higher degree of change in their awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse, their understanding of the levels of danger and their levels of hope. Women in the South showed a higher rate of change in their levels of confidence that women’s shelters can help, likelihood that they would seek help from Child Welfare and their confidence that they would seek help from a women’s shelter. (See charts that follow).





- f) 81.7% of women indicated that they did not intend to return to the abusive relationship. Although this figure is high, at 8 women in 10, it is slightly lower than the Statistics Canada rate for the 2008 shelter report, which showed 9 in 10 women having made this decision.
- g) There is a significant difference in DA scores between those who have made the decision not to return and those who are returning or are undecided ( $p = .009$ ). More of those who are not returning perceive a higher degree of danger of further physical abuse than those returning to the abusive relationship do.

Figure 13: DA scores by decision to return to the abusive relationship



## 1.6 DANGER ASSESSMENT RESEARCH OUTCOME TOOL QUALITATIVE DATA

### 1. *Women's Experience of Completing the DA and the Calendar*

- a) A large number of participants commented about how difficult the experience of completing the Calendar was for them. They often reported feelings of anxiety, physical discomfort, and spoke of the emotional pain entailed in this sort of recall and the wish not to have to 'keep going back'. They also frequently mentioned that completing the DA components brought regrets and self-criticism about not having acted sooner.
- b) For many other women, however, completing the DA and the Calendar was seen overall as a positive, useful experience although it was somewhat uncomfortable.

### 2. *Key Qualitative Themes*

The following themes were consistently reported on the outcomes document responses:

- a) Confirmation that they had made the right decision when they chose to leave, or that they were survivors of these experiences and no longer victims;
- b) Improved understanding of abuse, reduced minimization of risk, better awareness of risk and understanding of the escalating patterns of abuse in their relationship;

- c) Awareness of the need for personal change and/or action, and the urgency of making these changes or taking action;
- d) Changed views of the abuser, in that he is seen more clearly as the source of the problems in the relationship;
- e) Increased understanding of safety planning and the intention to implement its components;
- f) Increased awareness of the importance of children's safety;
- g) Awareness of and intention to use community resources (e.g., police and legal assistance) more often; and
- h) Key barriers to change for some women were mistrust of authority, and feelings of powerlessness to change their situation.

### 3. ***Qualitative Feedback from Shelter Workers***

Shelter Workers in all nine shelters affirmed their perspective that employing the Calendar in addition to administering the 20-item DA Questionnaire enhanced their ability to support women in better identifying and understanding the level of danger that they were in. In their words:

- Working with the women on the Calendar helped further the trust connection.
- A wonderful way to see patterns and frequency of abuse.

They also identified how difficult it was to hear the reality of women's stories, and how they recognized the pain that women were experiencing:

- It was heart-breaking to hear some of the stories.
- Some abuse was daily, so hard to put on a calendar.
- Some were too scared to look back or bring it all to the surface again.

### 4. ***Community Partner Focus Group Results***

Community Partners gave generously of their time to participate in focus groups around the province at the beginning and the conclusion of the research. Generally there was great interest expressed by all community partners in utilizing Danger Assessment results to inform collaborative safety alert processes for high risk women, a great tool to support collaboration. The suggestion was made that the Danger Assessment tool may be helpful for utilization by Victim's Services and other community service providers who have contact with women experiencing domestic violence. Other specific suggestions emerged from our Funders, and from our Justice, Education, and Alberta Children and Youth Services colleagues.

#### **Funders said:**

- Great tool to increase outcome measurement capacity at the shelter level and the broader system level.

**Justice said:**

- Results of value to prosecutors, especially in terms of building the woman's motivation to give evidence in court.
- Useful for safe visitation issues.
- Great value to police in supporting statements they gather from women.

**Education said:**

- Need to integrate shelter expertise on children exposed to family violence and risk assessment to schools.
- Wide application from health care settings to premarital courses.

**Children's Services said:**

- Information from the Danger Assessment could support more positive interventions with women and their families, especially in the context of enhanced collaborative efforts with shelters in ensuring children's safety.

## 1.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

### Practice-Focused Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** A number of the findings in this study point to the need for improved access for abused women and children to second stage shelters that allow them to remain safely housed while creating a new family future. Access to second stage shelters is particularly an issue for Aboriginal women living in the Northern region of the province. Both infrastructure and service supports should be addressed as essential components of assistance to this very high-risk population.

**Recommendation 2:** Aboriginal women are over-represented in the shelters in general and are at higher risk than the other cultural groups. This pattern has been a consistent theme for many years. An action plan needs to be developed between ACWS, their member shelters, government and community stakeholders to address these issues.

**Recommendation 3:** Women at second stage shelters were found to have higher risk levels than those at emergency shelters. This pattern probably reflects a longer history of abuse, greater severity of abuse, increased awareness and a decision to leave the abusive relationship. However, additional study is needed to fully understand this group and to identify proven and promising practices in risk reduction for this group. It is clear, however, given the elevated risk level for this group, that second stage shelters need to be secure environments to ensure the safety of the women and children in their care.

**Recommendation 4:** The use of the DA significantly contributes to women's safety, in that it helps them to estimate risk more realistically and to better understand the need for safety planning for themselves and their children. All shelters in Alberta should be encouraged to implement the DA as a "promising practice" that will assist them in both individual advocacy for women and children, as well as provincial advocacy.

**Recommendation 5:** For second stage shelters, efforts should be made to obtain the most recent DA results for a client if she has come directly from an emergency shelter. If there has been no emergency shelter stay, or if there has been a period of more than 2 months since her last emergency shelter stay, the DA should be re-administered at the second stage shelter.

**Recommendation 6:** The following additional steps toward implementation of the DA as a standard component of shelter practice should be considered:

- a) Development of a single protocol for administration of the Danger Assessment tool should be developed to support uniform application across the province;
- b) Women who are not fluent in English should, whenever possible, have an interpreter available to assist them to complete the DA. This is particularly true of the shelters in the South of Alberta where the proportion of non-English speakers is highest, due to higher rates of immigration;
- c) Shelters that are currently using the DA but did not participate in the study should be assisted to adopt the recommended protocol for administration;
- d) In general, the DA is to be administered to women early in a woman's emergency shelter stay as the basis for safety planning, especially considering that some women may leave shelter within a few days after admission. In second stage shelter settings, administration of the DA can be later, after there has been more time to develop a rapport with residents. Each shelter would develop a protocol regarding when the DA is to be administered considering length of stay, and both the benefits and barriers identified in this report by both staff and women in undertaking the Calendar and the danger assessment.
- e) Women are to be advised that if it is too upsetting for them to complete the calendar, they may stop at any time. Shelter staff should provide encouragement and support during the process.
- f) This study was unique in that it was the first to use the DA Calendar to identify incidents of non-physical abuse (e.g. verbal, emotion/psychological). This additional component should be continued. Women's responses to its inclusion resulted in comments to the effect that these types of abuse were often more hurtful to them than physical abuse was. There were also responses from women whose abuse history did not include physical abuse, who stated that including these questions validated their experience – they understood that there didn't have to be physical abuse for the abuse they suffered to be 'real'.
- g) Proven practice for the Calendar ensures that it is completed in the woman's own hand to ensure that it can be used in court.

**Recommendation 7:** The DA training manual currently in development in Alberta should reflect learnings from this project related to DA administration and be revised to be consistent with a provincial protocol when it is complete. Its contents should be consistent with the recommendations from this report concerning the importance of standardized and accurate implementation of the DA.



## Considerations for Future Research Projects

The process and outcomes of this study have been very important learning experiences for ACWS and for the participating shelters and their community partners. It has created a very substantial beginning for the development of future research and practice initiatives that will continue to build knowledge based on the work done by Alberta shelters. With these future initiatives in mind, the ACWS/shelter learning collaborative should consider the following recommendations that arise from their experiences in completing this action research project.

**Recommendation 8:** ACWS should have a stronger role in supporting research sites to monitor study protocol implementation in future studies. If research on the Danger Assessment continues, ACWS should provide support to the shelters to use both DA components in sequence - the Calendar first, followed by the Questionnaire.

**Recommendation 9:** In the forthcoming study of the province's on-reserve shelters, it will be important to ensure that confidentiality of responses is reinforced with women using the shelters, as they are concerned about individually identifiable data and/or about Children's Service or Police access to information.

**Recommendation 10:** ACWS should consider hiring an internal research position to assist shelter personnel to participate in research activities and to ensure that research design and materials are developed with ease and accuracy of analysis in mind.

**Recommendation 11:** Future ACWS Danger Assessment research projects should ensure that:

- a) A standard set of variables is collected by each shelter;
- b) The variables use a standard, optimal format;
- c) A standard protocol is in place at all shelters for the meaning and implementation of each question in the data set;
- d) All necessary information gathered in the Calendar component is recorded and entered for the analysis; and
- e) All variables in the database are linked through the use of non-identifying case numbers to permit full data analysis.

**Recommendation 12:** Continue to work toward the inclusion of more shelters in the learning collaborative, with special attention to regional representation.

**Recommendation 13:** The large Aboriginal population using women's emergency shelters is not well understood at present. Classifying these women as 'Aboriginal' loses important information on diversity within the group. Additional demographic information should be collected to reflect this diversity, including, for example, her First Nation, her current status, and her usual residence prior to coming to the shelter (e.g. on or off-reserve)

There are important differences between Aboriginal women and others that also need further exploration and clarification, and may require a different approach to assessment. Consultation with the staff of shelters that have large Aboriginal populations should be undertaken to further clarify some of these issues (e.g. should the DA be the tool of choice, given that many women in this group do not wish to complete all questions? How can assessment reflect the fact that

abusers may be more diverse – including family members and others as well as intimate partners?).

**Recommendation 14:** Further study of sub-groups within the shelter population is needed to clarify their patterns of shelter use. These sub-groups of interest include:

- a) Women whose number of stays in either type of shelter exceeds 4;
- b) Women whose length of stay in emergency shelters is very brief (2-3 days) – do they have special needs that the shelters are not meeting currently? Are they returning to an abusive relationship? Do they differ in any important way from women whose length of stay is longer?
- c) The qualitative responses for a small number of women (probably under 5%) were indicative of a sense of hopelessness and despair that they could not get the help they needed to get away from their abuser. Although the number is small, if it were extrapolated to the overall shelter population, it would include a significant number of women. Further study is needed to identify these women while they are in shelters, and to determine and provide the interventions they need to resolve what appear to be failures from the system of help.
- d) Batterers whose abuse brings women to shelter, including their demographics, any changes in behaviour after a partner's stay in shelter, their involvement in battering programs and the effects of different interventions on the woman and her family.

**Recommendation 15:** This project used a pre-post rating of women's perception of their risk of further abuse before and after completing the Danger Assessment. However, the 'pre' measure was completed retrospectively, which may have biased the outcome measurement. To more accurately measure the impact of Danger Assessment completion on women's perception of risk, the design of future studies should endeavour to include a true 'pre' assessment of women's perception of their risk before administering the Danger Assessment components.

## Section II. KEEPING WOMEN ALIVE – ASSESSING THE DANGER

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is recognized by the United Nations as a pandemic, whose reports tell us that globally one in three women is a victim of violence. Canada is not immune.

In his book, *War on Women*, Canadian author Brian Vallee states that between the years 2000 and 2006, the number of Canadian women stabbed, shot, strangled or beaten to death by their spouses or partners was nearly five times as many as the Canadian soldiers and police officers killed over the same period in the line of duty<sup>6</sup>. When he continues his analogy on war, he remarks that women's shelters are really the refugee camps from the war at home.<sup>7</sup>

Shelters have long recognized that domestic violence deaths are preventable deaths and have worked tirelessly in their efforts to provide a responsive and effective continuum of services ranging from prevention, intervention, crisis counseling and follow-up. Statistics Canada observes that overall rates of spousal homicides for both female and male victims have been declining in Canada over the last 30 years (1977 - 2006) and that the work of shelters over that period has made it possible for many women at high risk of femicide to find safety and to plan to minimize ongoing risk.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, thousands upon thousands of women and children around the world are alive and thriving because of the determination and courage of shelter workers, who stood beside them when they were needed.

### 2.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS)<sup>9</sup> invited Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell to a training session for shelter workers on the utilization of her lethality assessment tool. The majority of shelter directors in the province attended and expressed great enthusiasm for the potential of this tool to support their work in keeping women safe.

Some Alberta shelters then began utilizing the Danger Assessment (DA) tool for women in contact with their shelter. Those shelters pioneering this work were extremely concerned about the consistently high number of women who were at risk of future assault and/or homicide when they came to shelter. As ACWS began tracking these scores provincially we saw that more than three quarters of the women in emergency shelters were at serious risk of danger in their intimate partner relationship and women in second stage shelters scored well over 90% based on Dr. Campbell's Danger Assessment tool.

Following some tragic femicides and murder suicides in the province, shelters in Alberta became increasingly active in advocating for sound risk and Danger Assessment procedures based upon a strong community collaborative process. ACWS sought and obtained intervener status at the Fekete Inquiry. In this case neither Betty Fekete's assertions of the danger her husband presented to herself and her son were responded to other than by the local women's emergency

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<sup>6</sup> Vallee, Brian. *War on Women*. Toronto, Key Porter Books Limited, (2007) p. 29

<sup>7</sup> Vallee, p. 30

<sup>8</sup> The Statistics Canada 2008 report on Canada's shelters (Sauvé & Burns, May 2009)

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, see [www.acws.ca](http://www.acws.ca)

shelter and one court worker. And then it was too late; with Joseph Fekete killing his son Alex and his wife before turning the gun upon himself. Shelter workers know that lives can be saved in Alberta and across Canada if women and children are believed. The safety of women and children must come first. Shelter workers see the strong value in a tool that can be used to communicate with community stakeholders on the dangers women face in abusive relationships.

Recognizing that there were many different risk assessment tools, all with goals to increase public safety, ACWS hosted a conference in 2006 that focused on the different tools available for women and children, thanks to a Community Incentive Grant from Alberta Children and Youth Services and the County of Strathcona.<sup>10</sup>

An outcome of the conference was a collaborative research project with Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell, ACWS and nine member sheltering agencies to examine the utilization of the Danger Assessment tool in Alberta shelters.

### **2.3 THE CANADIAN AND ALBERTA CONTEXT**

The Statistics Canada 2008 report on Canada's shelters (Sauvé & Burns, May 2009) included the following highlights. For each highlight, the comparable Alberta annual statistics are provided where available:

1. Between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008, approximately 101,000 women and children were admitted to 569 shelters across Canada.
  - Alberta shelters housed 12,387 women and children during this period, or about 12% of the total of Canadian women using shelters.
  
1. On April 16, 2008 (snapshot day), nearly 80% of these women and children were attempting to flee an abusive situation. The remainder were seeking shelter for reasons other than abuse.
  - Alberta's women's shelters report similar percentages on an annual basis.
  
2. On snapshot day, nearly half of the female victims of abuse in shelters were admitted with their children. Slightly more than one in five women did not have their children with them when they were admitted, and the remaining women did not have any parenting responsibilities or their situation was unknown.
  - In Alberta, almost half of the total admissions to emergency shelters were children.
  
3. The types of abuse cited by women seeking shelter were psychological or emotional abuse, as well as physical abuse. For three-quarters of women in shelters, the abuser was a spouse or former spouse.
  
4. One quarter (25%) of the women in shelters on the snapshot day were there to protect their children from witnessing the abuse being inflicted on their mother. The women also wanted to protect their children from abusive situations, such as of psychological abuse (20%) and physical abuse (12%).

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<sup>10</sup> Presenters included, Karl Hansen, Jeff Edleson, Jane Coombe, Jay Silverman, Linda Baker, Naomi Manuel and Sharon Meredith

5. 25% of women residing in shelters on snapshot day had reported the most recent abuse incident to the police.
  - On average, 34% of women in Alberta emergency shelters reported receiving police services. In comparison, 49% of women at second stage shelters reported receiving police services.
6. 16% of women had laid charges against the abuser, and 15% had obtained a restraining or protection order against the perpetrator.
  - Alberta emergency shelter rates here are equivalent to the national rates; however, in second stage shelters 50% of 2007-2008 cases resulted in charges being laid, and 43% resulted in the batterer's arrest.
7. More than 9 in 10 women who left shelters for abused women on April 16, 2008 did not plan to return to live with their spouses (Sauvé & Burns, May 2009, page 5).
  - Emergency Shelter Exit Surveys at Alberta shelters indicated that, of women who identified where they would go after this most recent shelter stay, 14% indicated that they would return to the same relationship.

Alberta's incidence of domestic violence is amongst the highest of Canadian provinces. There were a total of 170 deaths from domestic violence in our province between 2000 and 2006, for an average of more than 20 such deaths per year over that period. These figures underestimate the actual rates, since cases where no charges had yet been laid, or where the case was unsolved or labeled as a suspicious death are not included. Further inaccuracies in the count arise from the fact that different police services within the province do not count these deaths in the same way. In 2008, the RCMP reported 14 family violence deaths in their jurisdictions in Alberta.

Dr. Jacqueline Campbell, an internationally recognized expert on intimate partner violence (IPV) and intimate partner homicide (IPH), has found that, for each femicide in Alberta, there are approximately 8 to 9 attempted femicides – incidents where the victim's injuries were severe enough to warrant justice personnel's conclusion that the incident was an attempted homicide. Thus, in Alberta, there are multiple attempted femicides per year. Approximately 190 Alberta children each year are either the first to find their mother's body or have witnessed their mother's murder or attempted murder.

The Premier's Roundtable on Family Violence (2004) identified a number of key areas for government action, including social change; provincial leadership; collaborative, coordinated community response to family violence, development of services and supports; and program accountability.

Thanks to funding from the Alberta Children and Youth Services' Community Incentive Fund, this research project was able to support three of the pillars of this framework for action by:

- a) Providing a framework for community collaboration through information sharing, and support for collaboration;
- b) Supporting evidence-based practices, and expanding community based action research and evaluation; and
- c) Assisting in the provision of services and supports to abused women and children through Alberta's shelter network.

Overall rates of spousal homicides for both female and male victims have been declining in Canada over the last 30 years (1977 - 2006). The work of shelters over that period has made it possible for many women at high risk of femicide to find safety and to plan to minimize ongoing risk.

Social changes have also played an important role in the reduction of the number of women killed by their intimate partners. For example, women are marrying at a later age, having smaller families and improving their financial status, potentially reducing their risk for IPV. Gun control legislation may also play a role. However, it is important to note that the rate of spousal homicide against females in Canada remains between 3 and 5 times higher than the rate for males (Statistics Canada 2008).

## 2.4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The earliest possible, active response to incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV) is critical to ensuring the safety of Alberta's women and children. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of all spousal homicides and attempted homicides occurred within 6 months of a previously reported incident of spousal violence (Statistics Canada Family Violence Report, 2007); and forty-seven percent (47%) of abused women who are killed by their partners had been seen in the health care system for treatment of injuries prior to their deaths. Eighty-three percent (83%) of women who are murdered by their partners were found to have been involved with public systems services somewhere, whether in criminal justice, substance abuse treatment, or child protective services (Sharps, Campbell 2002). However, in many cases, the opportunity to intervene in the escalation of IPV was missed. Prevention of these assaults, breaking the pattern of escalating violence, and ensuring accurate risk prediction are critical components of using early response opportunities to prevent further violence.

Canadian police forces and their community partners have been leaders in the development of IPV risk assessment tools and procedures. In addition to the development of a number of instruments for risk assessment, Alberta's police services are currently using the Family Violence Investigation Report (FVIR). FVIR was created with a view to raising the awareness of front-line police responders to the dynamics, contributing factors and unique characteristics of domestic violence. The report consists of 19 questions which provide police with a quick, but comprehensive checklist of behaviors and factors alerting them to situations that may warrant specific follow-up action.

Research into the risk factors for IPV has also begun to clearly identify a number of variables that are commonly found in IPV cases. In a recent review, Campbell, Webster & Glass (2008), summarized the established risk factors for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH) as including:

- Preceding incidents of IPV;
- Age differences, with the abuser older than the victim;
- Younger age of female victim (15 to 44 years);
- Cohabitation vs. formal marriage;
- Recent separation or divorce (estrangement);
- Presence in the home of a child who is not the biological child of the abuser;
- Abuser mental illness;
- Substance abuse;
- Abuser previous criminal involvement; and
- Presence of firearms in the home.

Aboriginal cultural background is also a risk factor for IPV in Canada. Canadian Aboriginal women are 3 times more likely to be victims of IPV than non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada Family Violence Report, 2005).

Risk assessment in the women's emergency and second stage shelters is a key component of identifying high-risk cases for early intervention and for educating abused women about their level of risk for ongoing abuse and possible Intimate Partner Homicide (IPH). Alberta shelters are increasingly using the Danger Assessment (J. Campbell, 1995) for this purpose. The information it provides can assist abused women to clarify their situations and provide stakeholders with needed information to improve service delivery.

The study on which this report is based was a further step toward understanding the role of risk assessment (in this case the Danger Assessment) in helping shelter clients to accurately understand their risk of lethality and to develop appropriate plans for their own safety and the safety of their children.

## **2.5 STUDY DESCRIPTION**

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) has worked to establish a research, learning and promising practice collaborative among Alberta women's emergency shelters. The intention of this development has been to build shelter capacity to implement promising practices and to identify the impact of these practices on outcomes for women using the shelters. Work has also been ongoing to further enhance the shelters' data collection capacity to provide the best possible service to abused women and their children in our province. The ACWS focus is also on enhancing women's safety, reducing their exposure to further violence, and working with community partners to further the development of a coordinated response to intimate partner violence(IPV).

The research project described here is the first in what is planned to be a series of action research projects completed collaboratively by participating shelters. The focus of this initial project is the implementation in Alberta shelters of a standard, well-supported risk assessment tool with both research and clinical utility, that can provide a 'common language' for risk across shelters and between shelters and their community partners (e.g. justice and health systems) and improve safety planning.

The Danger Assessment (Campbell, 1995) was selected as the preferred risk measurement tool for Alberta's shelters. The Danger Assessment (DA) is a 20-item test with weighted item scoring, which is designed to assess the likelihood of lethality or near lethality occurring in a case of intimate partner violence (Campbell, Webster & Glass, 2008). The predictive validity of the instrument was established in a controlled, 11-city study of 310 intimate partner femicide cases in the United States. The results of this study were used to add four new items to the DA and to calculate the appropriate weightings for items that were particularly important for the prediction of femicide. The revised instrument was then tested on a new sample of 194 attempted femicides and found to identify these cases with a high level of accuracy - 90% of cases were included under the receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve (Campbell, Webster & Glass, 2008). The current study uses this revised DA to identify the level of dangerousness for each woman in the study. Other tests of the Danger Assessment's psychometric properties have also shown positive results and support the use of the instrument.

The DA is a widely used and respected measure of IPV / IPH that is familiar to many shelter staff and has the required psychometric characteristics and research record. The author, Dr. J. Campbell (Johns Hopkins University), whose work on dangerousness assessment is internationally recognized, was therefore approached to collaborate on the study. She agreed to

do so and took an active role as an advisor on measurement, DA training, and data analysis and interpretation throughout the study, making several visits to Alberta for this purpose.

### Project Objectives

The objectives of the current project include:

- Training and certifying shelter staff to administer and score the Danger Assessment (DA);
- Implementing the DA as a promising practice at participating shelters in order to create a common risk assessment 'language' among shelters themselves and between shelters and their community partners (e.g. justice, health systems);
- Measuring the impact of DA implementation on women's perception of their level of risk for further abuse; and
- Developing a Danger Assessment Training Manual for use in the shelters.

Nine shelter agencies, which provided services in eleven shelters, volunteered to participate in this research. The participating shelters included: two on-reserve shelters, Eagle's Nest Stoney Family Shelter (Morley), and a second on-reserve shelter that did not wish to be identified; five off-reserve emergency shelters, including Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, Columbus House of Hope (St Paul), Peace River Regional Women's Shelter, Phoenix Safe House (Medicine Hat), A Safe Place (Sherwood Park); and three second stage shelters, Musasa House (Medicine Hat), Sonshine Centre (Calgary) and WINGS of Providence (Edmonton).

### Procedure

Staff members from each of the participating shelters were trained to use the Danger Assessment tool (DA), including both the Calendar and the 20-question components (Questionnaire). A trained staff member from each shelter was identified as a trainer for other staff for that shelter. Once training was complete and staff members were certified to use the instrument, two Questionnaires, a Demographics form (Appendix 4) and an Outcomes Collection Document (Appendix 2), were provided for use in addition to each shelter's standard intake form. Shelter staff members were provided with training in the use of these forms and were asked to have each participant in the study complete them, along with the Danger Assessment Calendar and questions, within the first 2 to 4 days of her stay in the shelter. Instructions were provided for how each component was to be administered (see subsequent sections of this report).

All women entering a participating shelter between November 1, 2007 and January 31, 2009 were invited to participate in the study. Two posters were put up at each shelter and staff informed clients about participating. Clients could also self-refer for participation in the study. If a woman agreed to participate, a research consent form was signed and the study materials were administered. Women who completed all of the project components (DA Calendar and questions, demographic questions, outcome questions) received a \$20 grocery voucher as an honorarium.

Action research is conducted in a learning environment rather than a 'laboratory' environment. Because it occurs in real-world settings where services are offered to large numbers of people and agency resources are limited, it often requires modification of method as it proceeds. In the current study, although a uniform protocol for the administration of the DA was provided for each shelter, there were often variations in timing and sequence of administration among shelters. The standard protocol called for the DA to be completed with a crisis intervention worker in the first 48 to 72 hours the woman was in the shelter. However, shelter resource availability and other shelter-specific factors created some variations at each site. In some cases, shelters were not



able to administer both the DA questions and the Calendar within the timelines provided in the protocol. Similarly, rather than Calendar completion preceding the 20-questions component, this sequence was sometimes reversed, particularly in the second stage shelters.

After the first several months of data collection, a preliminary data analysis was done and an additional 3 questions were added to the demographic form. The questions were:

- Prior to entering the shelter were you living with your intimate partner?
- How many children did you have living with you before coming to the shelter?
- Were you born in Canada?

As a result of the timing of this change in the demographic information, the sample sizes for analysis of these additional three questions are smaller than those for other questions (total possible  $n = 170$  for these three questions vs. the overall sample  $N$  of 509). Other than the addition of these three questions in the second phase, there were no differences between the two study phases in terms of the administration procedures or client selection. Therefore, the analyses reported in this document aggregate information from both phases.

### Section III. DANGER ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND DEMOGRAPHICS DATA ANALYSIS

The Alberta shelters that participated in the study are listed in Table 1. They included 2 on-reserve shelters (which combine emergency and second stage shelters), 5 off-reserve emergency shelters and 3 second stage shelters. Participation rates across the shelter types varied widely, with a total of 21 participants from on-reserve shelters, 50 from second stage shelters, and 438 from provincial emergency shelters. Participation rates also varied substantially among shelters within each sub-type group, as shown in Table 1 below. The variability in the participation rates is generally consistent with the proportion of women served annually in each shelter, with some exceptions. For example, at CWES and at Columbus House of Hope, study participation rates exceed the annual proportion of women served.

Table 1: Number of participants by shelter type

Shelter	Number	Percent	Percent of women served in shelter in 2008
On-reserve shelters			
Eagle's Nest Stoney Family Shelter (Morley)	15	2.9	
Shelter #2	6	1.3	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>8.3</b>
Emergency shelters			
A Safe Place (Sherwood Park)	70	13.8	
Columbus House of Hope (St. Paul)	132	25.9	
Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter CWES	158	31.0	
Peace River Regional Women's Shelter	23	4.5	
Phoenix Safe House (Medicine Hat)	55	10.8	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>84.9</b>
Second stage shelters			
Musasa House (Medicine Hat)	3	0.6	
Sonshine Centre (Calgary)	16	3.1	
WINGS of Providence (Edmonton)	31	6.1	
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>6.8</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Because of the small number of participants in some shelters, cell sizes were too small to support some statistical analyses. The results reported here are therefore based on the following groupings, depending upon the questions of interest:

1. The total sample;
2. Grouped data for emergency shelters (including on-reserve);
3. Grouped data for second stage shelters;
4. Grouped data for self-identified Aboriginal clients across emergency shelters;
5. Grouped data for self-identified Aboriginal clients across second stage shelters; and
6. Other sub-groups of interest where sample size permits.

The following sections of the report describe analyses based on total population demographics, Danger Assessment scores in relation to demographic variables, and the results from the outcomes Questionnaire.

### 3.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The demographic information collected for the sample included age, marital status, cultural background, whether the woman was born in Canada, her primary language, number of children and number of stays in a shelter. Information for each of these variables is provided below.

Age: The overall sample age range was from 16 to 66 years, with a mean of 31 years and a median of 29.5 years. One-third of the total sample was age 25 or under, another third was between 26 and 33, and the final third was ages 34 to 66. Only 10% of the sample was older than 44 years. Since young age of the victim is a known risk factor for intimate partner violence (IPV), it is possible that the relative preponderance of young women in the shelter population is a direct reflection of this risk. Most shelter occupants are also in their childbearing years and the presence of children who are not biologically related to the partner is also an acknowledged risk factor. Younger women are also at the beginning stages of career development and are therefore likelier than older women to have fewer financial resources.

Marital Status: Most participants identified themselves as either single (35.9%) or in a common-law relationship (30.3%).

Table 2: Marital Status for Overall Sample

Marital Status	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Single	171	33.6	35.9
Married	67	13.2	14.1
Common-law/live-in	144	28.3	30.3
Separated or living apart	76	14.9	16.0
Divorced	15	2.9	3.2
Widowed	3	.6	0.6
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing information</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6.5</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Living with the partner prior to coming to the shelter: Information on whether the woman had been living with an intimate partner prior to coming to the shelter was collected only in phase 2 of the study. About 77% (131 of 170) of these women reported that they had been living with their intimate partner prior to entering the shelter, while 22.9% (n=39) were not. The majority of women who were living with their partner were in common-law/cohabiting arrangements, a well-documented risk factor for abuse.

Cultural background: As was previously indicated, Aboriginal women are three times as likely as other Canadian women to be victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). Table 3 shows that almost half of the overall study sample self-identified as Aboriginal. This data is consistent with the 2008 ACWS statistics that show that 50.6% of the women in Alberta shelters are Aboriginal. In order to make statistical analysis possible, the information for on-reserve women was combined with the

overall Aboriginal data set to complete separate analyses that are reported later in this report (see section on Danger Assessment score distribution).

About 7% of the sample self-identified as visible minority and the other 9% self identified as “Other”, placing themselves in a category distinct from Aboriginal or English Canadian groups. The combination of the visible minority and other responses suggests that about 16% of women in shelters are neither Aboriginal nor English Canadian.

Table 3: Cultural background

<b>Cultural Background</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Aboriginal	237	46.6	49.8
English Canadian	157	30.8	33.0
Visible Minority	36	7.1	7.6
Other	46	9.0	9.7
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6.5</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*See corresponding figure 1 chart in the Executive Summary.*

Place of birth and primary language: Information on the ‘born in Canada’ variable was only available for women from phase 2 of the study (n=170). Of this group, 90% reported that they were born in Canada. 90.6% of the total sample (n=509) indicated that English was their primary language. About 9.4% of shelter participants reported that English was not their primary language.

Number of children: The questions “How many children did you have living with you prior to coming to the shelter?” was one of three additional demographics questions asked only in the second phase of the study (n =170). About one-third of participants had no children living with them, while half had 1 or 2 children living with them and 18.4% had 3 or more. The range was from 0 to 9 children. There were a total of 249 children who had been living with these 163 women prior to their stay in the shelter.

Table 4: Number of Children

<b>Number of Children with Them prior to Coming to the Shelter</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
None	51	30.0	31.2
1 to 2	82	45.8	50.3
3 or more	30	17.6	18.4
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>95.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing information</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4.1</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

### 3.2 ABUSE AND RELATED INFORMATION

Number of previous stays in shelter: Data describing each participant’s previous pattern of emergency shelter use is shown in Table 5. Of the women who responded to this question, about 40% were using the emergency shelter for the first time. A further 44% had been in the shelter

from 2 to 5 times previously, and a small group (15%) had been in an emergency shelter on 6 or more previous occasions.

Table 5: Number of previous stays in an emergency shelter

<b>Number of Previous Stays in Emergency Shelter</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
None	186	36.5	40.5
2 to 5	202	39.7	44.0
6 or more	71	13.9	15.4
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>90.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing information</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>9.8</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

*See corresponding figure 5 chart in the Executive Summary*

Types of Abuse Reported at Intake: A question on the demographics form used at intake asked women to indicate what types of abuse they had experienced on a checklist provided. The instructions indicated that participants should check all categories that applied. No definitions of the abuse categories were provided, but space was left for ‘other’ responses and for naming any abuse type that had not been included in the checklist. Table 6 below contains the abuse types listed in the question as well as information on the frequency and types of abuse reported for this item.

Table 6: Types of Abuse Experienced

<b>Type of Abuse</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Verbal Abuse	438	91.4
Psychological or Emotional Abuse	438	91.4
Physical Abuse	389	81.2
Financial Abuse	358	74.7
Threats of Abuse	316	66.0
Destruction of Property	271	56.6
Injury Due to Abuse	251	52.4
Sexual Abuse	236	49.3
Neglect	224	46.8
Stalking	207	43.2
Spiritual Abuse	187	39.0
Abuse to Family Members	173	36.1
Witness of Abuse	160	33.4
Cultural Abuse	122	25.5
Harm or Cruelty to Pets	82	17.1
Other	44	9.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note that only yes responses are counted for the ‘types of abuse’ question, since data were entered using the HOMES format. It was therefore not possible to distinguish a “no” response (indicating absence of a particular abuse form) from a “missing” response (indicating a choice not to answer a particular question). Since no time frame was provided in the question, these frequencies should be understood as reflecting lifetime exposure to abuse.

The most frequent types of abuse reported were psychological/emotional abuse and verbal abuse, with 91.4% of participants reporting having these experiences. The second most frequently reported type of abuse was physical, with 81.2% of respondents reporting occurrence. Financial abuse and threats of abuse were the next most frequently reported categories. More than half of the participants reported that they had suffered injury due to abuse and a similar number reported destruction of property. The 'other' category was used to report additional types of abuse such as false accusations, abandonment, confiscation of treasured possessions, isolation and intimidation. Items were assigned to an existing category where possible.

Relationship to Abuser: The responses to this question varied widely and, often, included more than one category of abuser. Because the demographics form did not provide a set of structured options (e.g. ex-partner, husband, etc), each participant used her own language and all responses were entered into the data file as text. They were then printed out, read through and categorized as clearly as possible. The results shown in Table 7 below indicate that the primary abusers reported were common-law partners (46.3%) and husbands (21%). Former partners and boyfriends accounted for about another 25% of responses.

Table 7: Relationship of Abuser to Victim

<b>Relationship to Victim</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Common-law partner	201	46.3
Husband	91	21.0
Former partner	63	14.5
Boyfriend	48	11.2
Family member (parent, in-law, uncle, aunt, cousin, etc)	21	4.8
Room mate	5	1.2
Girlfriend	3	0.6
Other (acquaintance, employer)	2	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Length of Abusive Relationship: The information about length of relationship included a substantial number of missing entries, and was not entered in a consistent format. As a result, some data was not useable and other information had to be recoded for entry into the analysis. Some responses could not be quantified (e.g., "all my life" or "I hate him"). Wherever possible, responses were re-coded as years and proportions of years. Using this approach, the range of reported length of the abusive relationship was from 0 to 55 years. The mean length was 5.7 years, median 4.0 years, and mode 4.0 years. Most relationships (about 66%) were 9 years or less. A small group of women reported that they had stayed in an abusive relationship for over 20 years (3%).

Table 8. Length of the Abusive Relationship

<b>Length of the Relationship</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
One year or less	90	17.7
Between 1 and 3 years	103	20.2
Over 3 and up to 5 years	68	13.4

Table 8. Length of the Abusive Relationship *continued*

<b>Length of the Relationship</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Over 5 and up to 9 years	75	14.7
Over 9 and up to 20 years	63	12.4
Over 20 years (55 years max.)	15	2.9
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>81.3</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>18.7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.00</b>

### 3.3 ANALYSIS OF DANGER ASSESSMENT SCORES: OVERALL SAMPLE RESULTS

In order to maximize the accuracy of the Danger Assessment (DA) total scores, only cases where all 19 scored items were completed (i.e. no missing items) were included in the analyses below (N=469). The total score information for these cases is presented separately for several variables of interest (shelter type, cultural background, type of abuse reported at intake) in the Tables below. Sample size varies slightly for the different analyses due to missing data on the variable of interest.

Danger Assessment Completion: About one-quarter of the participants reported that they had completed the Danger Assessment at a previous shelter stay, while 65.4% had not done so and a few women (1.0% were not sure). The impact of missing items on the DA total score varies considerably depending on the number of items left blank and whether or not a missed item is weighted. The distribution of missed item responses is shown in Table 9 below. Of the overall sample (N=509), 469 women answered all 19 scored items. (Note that item 20 and several follow-up questions on the DA are not included as a total score component). A comparison of items missed by cultural background showed that the 3 culture sub-groups (English Canadian, Aboriginal and Other) did not differ in the proportion of DA items answered. About 8 to 10% of each group had one or more missing items on the DA. Based on these findings, a decision was made to include only fully complete DA cases in both the overall and sub-group analysis to avoid misclassification of risk levels.

Table 9: Number of Danger Assessment Items Answered

<b>Number of items answered</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
.00	12	2.4	2.4
1.00	1	.2	.2
10.00	1	.2	.2
12.00	1	.2	.2
14.00	2	.4	.4
16.00	3	.6	.6
17.00	3	.6	.6
18.00	17	3.3	3.3
19.00	469	92.1	92.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Shelter Type by DA Completion: A comparison of DA completion by shelter type showed important differences in patterns of answering. 5% of women in the provincial emergency shelter sample (excluding the two on-reserve groups) omitted one or more DA items. This frequency rose to 18% in the second stage shelters, and to 42.9% in the on-reserve shelters. Since the on-reserve group is too small (n=21) to allow for separate statistical analysis, on-reserve DA cases with 19 items completed were merged with the overall emergency shelter group. As the Aboriginal sample for the overall study is large, at 49.5% of the group, cases with incomplete item completion on the DA could be dropped without losing significant power in the Aboriginal sub-set analysis.

Anecdotal discussion with staff from the on-reserve shelters suggested that some women, including those staying at on-reserve shelters declined to answer DA questions that they found too personal (e.g. questions with reference to sexual abuse) or that they were concerned might be used against them in decision-making about child custody. ACWS has recently received funding to collect additional data from the province’s on-reserve shelters. When that study proceeds, it will be important to ensure that confidentiality of responses is reinforced. It may also be necessary to change the administration time of the DA with this group to allow greater comfort with shelter staff to develop before the DA is administered.

Distribution of Danger Assessment Scores

This section of the report includes a review of DA total scores in relation to the demographic variables and other variables of interest for understanding the shelter population and the sub-groups within it (e.g. Aboriginal group, second stage shelter group).

The distribution of the study sample on DA total scores is shown in Table 10. Statistical testing showed no significant differences in DA total score by shelter type for this analysis. About 7% (n=32) of participants who had complete DA scores (19 items) fell into the ‘Variable Danger’ level on the Danger Assessment 20 questions component. A further 19% were in the ‘Increased Danger’ category (n=89); 21% in the “Severe Danger” category; and 53% (n=245) in the “Extreme Danger” category. Femicide can, and does, occur at any of these levels, of course, but a woman’s risk of lethality rises substantially as her score rises.

Table 10: Danger Assessment Risk Level by Shelter Type

Shelter Type	Danger Assessment Levels of Danger Categories								TOTAL	
	Less than 8 (Variable)		8 to 13 (Increased)		14 to 17 (Severe)		18 or more (Extreme)			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%	N	%
Provincial Emergency	28	6.8	80	19.4	90	21.8	215	52.1	413	100.0
Second Stage	3	7.3	6	14.6	6	14.6	26	63.4	41	100.0
On-Reserve	1	9.1	3	27.3	3	27.3	4	36.4	11	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>52.7</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Because the distribution of DA scores is heavily weighted on the high-risk end of the scale (a natural consequence of the risk factors represented in the majority of women in the shelter sample), two approaches to analysis were used in the report. The first, used in most analyses, broke the sample into the four established DA risk categories (Variable, Increased, Severe and Extreme). However, for some variables where variability was limited in the highest risk area, the



total score range was divided into thirds based on the distribution (lower third scores 15 or less; middle third scores 15.1 to 22, and upper third scores at 23 or more).

When the full range of DA scores is used (rather than risk categories), and the shelter type variable is reduced to two categories, emergency and second stage, there is a significant difference between DA scores for emergency and second stage clients ( $p = .024$ ). A greater proportion of second stage residents' score above 22, (43.8% as compared to 31.5% of women in emergency shelters), and fewer second stage clients score 15 or less (18.8% as compared to 38.6%) (Table 11).

Table 11: Danger Assessment Thirds by Shelter Type

Shelter Type	DA Total Score by Thirds						Total	
	15 or less		15.1 to 22		Over 22		N	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Provincial Emergency	173	38.6	134	29.9	141	31.5	448	100.0
Second Stage	9	18.8	18	37.5	21	43.8	48	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*See corresponding figure 3 chart in the Executive Summary*

The higher DA scores of women in second stage shelters are further clarified in Table 12. The question-by-question analysis of the differences between answers provided by emergency shelter residents vs. those in second stage shelters showed that women in second stage identified more risk factors on the DA.

For example, second stage clients more frequently reported that their partners had used a weapon or threatened to use a weapon against them, and the weapon used was more frequently reported to be a gun. Women in second stage shelters were also more likely to say that they believe their partner was capable of killing them, and to report increased incidence of physical violence, threats to harm the children, and stalking or controlling behaviors.

Questions in Table 12 that show a “ $p=$ ” value are those that were significantly different for second stage and emergency shelter residents. Although some trends are apparent in some other questions, these did not reach significance.

Table 12: **DA Items by Shelter Type**

Danger Assessment Items*	Yes/No	Shelter Type				Total	
		Emergency		Second Stage			
		n	%	n	%	N	%
1. Increased physical violence? <b>p =.006</b>	Yes	296	65.9%	41	85.4%	337	67.8%
	No	153	34.1%	7	14.6%	160	32.2%
2. Does your partner own a gun?	Yes	89	19.9%	7	15.6%	96	19.5%
	No	358	80.1%	38	84.4%	396	80.5%
3. Have you left in the last year?	Yes	344	76.8%	34	70.8%	378	76.2%
	No	104	23.2%	14	29.2%	118	23.8%
4. Is your partner unemployed?	Yes	194	43.6%	15	34.1%	209	42.7%
	No	251	56.4%	29	65.9%	280	57.3%
5. Use or threat to use a weapon? <b>p=.029</b>	Yes	192	43.0%	28	59.6%	220	44.5%
	No	255	57.0%	19	40.4%	274	55.5%
If yes, was the weapon a gun? <b>p=.000</b>	Yes	35	13.8%	9	45.0%	44	16.1%
	No	218	86.2%	11	55.0%	229	83.9%
6. Partner threatens to kill you? <b>p=.001</b>	Yes	210	46.9%	35	72.9%	245	49.4%
	No	238	53.1%	13	27.1%	251	50.6%
7. Partner avoided arrest for D.V.?	Yes	240	53.6%	28	62.2%	268	54.4%
	No	208	46.4%	17	37.8%	225	45.6%
8. Do you have a child that is not his?	Yes	224	50.2%	29	63.0%	253	51.4%
	No	222	49.8%	17	37.0%	239	48.6%
9. Partner ever forced sex? <b>p=.006</b>	Yes	216	48.3%	32	69.6%	248	50.3%
	No	231	51.7%	14	30.4%	245	49.7%
10. Does partner ever try to choke you? <b>p=.056</b>	Yes	243	54.4%	33	68.8%	276	55.8%
	No	204	45.6%	15	31.3%	219	44.2%
11. Partner uses illegal drugs?	Yes	245	54.8%	29	65.9%	274	55.8%
	No	202	45.2%	15	34.1%	217	44.2%
12. Partner an alcoholic or problem drinker?	Yes	287	64.3%	34	75.6%	321	65.4%
	No	159	35.7%	11	24.4%	170	34.6%
13. Partner controls daily activities? <b>p=.006</b>	Yes	343	76.7%	45	93.8%	388	78.4%
	No	104	23.3%	3	6.3%	107	21.6%
14. Partner constantly & violently jealous?	No	329	73.4%	38	79.2%	367	74.0%
	Yes	119	26.6%	10	20.8%	129	26.0%
15. Have you been beaten while pregnant? <b>p=.002</b>	No	162	36.6%	27	60.0%	189	38.7%
	Yes	281	63.4%	18	40.0%	299	61.3%
16. Threatens or tries to commit suicide?	No	213	47.7%	21	47.7%	234	47.7%
	Yes	234	52.3%	23	52.3%	257	52.3%
17. Partner threatens to harm your children? <b>p=.000</b>	No	79	17.8%	30	65.2%	109	22.2%
	Yes	365	82.2%	16	34.8%	381	77.8%
18. Is partner capable of killing you? <b>p=.000</b>	Yes	263	59.2%	42	87.5%	305	62.0%
	No	181	40.8%	6	12.5%	187	38.0%
19. Partner stalking behaviors? <b>p=.007</b>	Yes	297	66.3%	41	85.4%	338	68.1%
	No	151	33.7%	7	14.6%	158	31.9%
20. Have you threatened or attempted suicide?	Yes	161	36.1%	20	44.4%	181	36.9%
	No	285	63.9%	25	55.6%	310	63.1%

\* P values are shown for questions that reached  $p=.05$  or less.

### 3.4 DANGER ASSESSMENT SCORES BY ABUSE AND RELATED ISSUES

Number of Shelter Stays by DA Risk Level. There is a significant relationship between number of emergency shelter stays and increasing DA risk levels ( $p = .018$ ) (Table 13). One implication here is that women who have had multiple emergency shelter stays are at particular risk, making safety planning with these women especially important.

Table 13: Danger Assessment Risk Level by Number of Emergency Shelter Stays

Number of Times in Emergency Shelter	Danger Assessment Levels of Danger Categories								TOTAL	
	Less than 8 (Variable)		8 to 13 (Increased)		14 to 17 (Severe)		18 or more (Extreme)			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
First stay	14	8.2	46	27.1	35	20.6	75	44.1	170	100.0
2 to 5 stays	13	6.9	31	16.4	42	22.2	103	54.4	189	100.0
5 or more stays	2	3.3	6	9.8	12	19.7	41	67.2	61	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>52.1</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*See corresponding figure 6 chart in the Executive Summary*

No relationship was found between number of stays in second stage shelter and DA risk levels ( $p = .370$ ), but this lack of result may be related to the amount of missing data for the analysis (Table 14). The questions concerning stays in the second stage shelter tables have a sample size greater than 50, because some women who were currently in the emergency shelter sample had previously stayed in second stage shelters. Some women had used both emergency and second stage shelters, not necessarily always in the expected sequence.

Table 14: Danger Assessment Risk Level by Number of Second Stage Shelter Stays

Number of Times in a Second Stage Shelter	Danger Assessment Levels of Danger Categories								TOTAL	
	Less than 8 (Variable)		8 to 13 (Increased)		14 to 17 (Severe)		18 or more (Extreme)			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
First stay	6	7.3	21	25.6	17	20.7	38	46.3	82	100.0
2 to 5 stays	0	0.0	6	17.6	7	20.6	21	61.8	34	100.0
5 or more stays	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	50.0	3	50.0	6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Demographic variables that were significantly related to the number of stays in shelters included:

- Marital status – those who were married were more likely to be accessing an emergency shelter for the first time. Those who were in common-law relationships were more likely to have accessed an emergency shelter between 2 and 5 times, and single women were more likely to have accessed the shelter over 5 times ( $p = .000$ );
- Aboriginal cultural background is strongly related to increased number of shelter stays, both for emergency shelters (Table 15;  $p = .000$ ) and for second stage shelters (Table 16;  $p = .004$ ). Clients in the “other” cultural group were more likely to be accessing an emergency shelter for the first time ( $p = .000$ ).

Table 15: Cultural Background by Number of Emergency Shelter Stays

Cultural Background	Number of Times in Emergency Shelter						Total	
	First time		2 to 5 times		6 times or more			
English-Canadian	77	51.7	59	39.6	13	8.7	149	100.0
Aboriginal	56	24.7	120	52.9	51	22.5	227	100.0
Other	50	64.1	21	26.9	7	9.0	78	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>44.1</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 16: Cultural Background by Number of Second Stage Shelter Stays

Cultural Background	Number of Times in Second Stage Shelter						Total	
	First time		2 to 5 times		6 times or more			
English-Canadian	32	69.6	13	28.3	1	2.2	46	100.0
Aboriginal	32	54.2	21	35.6	6	10.2	59	100.0
Other	27	93.1	2	6.9	0	0.0	29	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>67.9</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100.0</b>

DA scores and length of abusive relationship. Analysis was completed to identify any significant differences between DA total score categories and length of the abusive relationship. The results suggest that scores within the first 3 DA risk categories tend to increase with length of relationship in this sample, although this result is not statistically significant. The mean length of relationship at each of the four DA levels was: 4.8 years (DA score below 8); 5.0 years (8-13); 6.6 years (14-17); and 5.8 years (18 and over).

Table 17. Length of the Abusive Relationship by DA Score

Danger Assessment Score	Mean	Number
Less than 8	4.77	24
8 to 13	5.02	84
14 to 17	6.60	82
18 and over	5.80	198
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.74</b>	<b>388</b>

An additional analysis was done to determine whether there were any significant differences in type of abuse reported by women who scored in the lowest third of the DA score distribution and those in the middle and upper thirds. This analysis included only cases that had complete DA's (no items omitted). As shown in Table 18, higher DA scores (scores of 22 and up) are related to more frequent reporting of sexual abuse, abuse of family members, destruction of property, harm or cruelty to pets, threats of abuse, physical injuries due to abuse, spiritual abuse, cultural abuse and stalking.

Table 18: Types of Abuse by DA Total Score Groups

Types of Abuse Reported at Intake	DA Total Score by Thirds						Total	
	15 or less		15.1 to 22		over 22		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Physical Abuse	105	29.5	114	32.0	137	38.5	356	100.0
Sexual Abuse	48	23.0	68	32.5	93	44.5	209	100.0
Psychological/ Emotional Abuse	141	35.4	125	31.4	132	33.2	398	100.0
Abuse to Family Members	45	28.3	44	27.7	70	44.0	159	100.0
Destruction of Property	60	24.3	76	30.8	111	44.9	247	100.0
Harm or Cruelty to Pets	15	20.3	22	29.7	37	50.0	74	100.0
Financial Abuse	96	29.6	104	32.1	124	38.3	324	100.0
Threats of Abuse	69	24.4	86	30.4	128	45.2	283	100.0
Injury Due to Abuse	43	18.7	77	33.5	110	47.8	230	100.0
Verbal Abuse	133	33.5	127	32.0	137	34.5	397	100.0
Witness of Abuse	29	20.4	40	28.2	73	51.4	142	100.0
Neglect	62	30.4	60	29.4	82	40.2	204	100.0
Spiritual Abuse	45	26.6	49	29.0	75	44.4	169	100.0
Cultural Abuse	34	31.2	31	28.4	44	40.4	109	100.0
Stalking	36	19.4	61	32.8	89	47.8	186	100.0
Other	8	19.0	17	40.5	17	40.5	42	100.0

*See corresponding figure 7 chart in the Executive Summary*

These results suggest that there is consistency between DA total scores and how participants answered the question about the type of abuse. Women with higher scores were also more likely than others to report having been witnesses to abuse. In contrast, the three score groups used here (lower, middle and upper thirds of the total score distribution) report other types of abuse at about the same rates (e.g., physical abuse, psychological/emotional abuse, verbal abuse).

### 3.5 DANGER ASSESSMENT SCORES AND CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Danger Assessment Scores by Age. No significant relationship was found between DA scores and age for this sample (see Table 19 below). Further analysis was completed to determine whether age would be related to DA total score if the number of age categories were reduced to coincide with research data that suggests women aged 43 and younger tend to have higher risk levels than older women. These additional analyses did not show a significant relationship between these two variables.

Table 19: Danger Assessment Risk Level by Age

Age	Danger Assessment Levels of Danger Categories								TOTAL	
	Less than 8 (Variable)		8 to 13 (Increased)		14 to 17 (Severe)		18 or more (Extreme)			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%	N	%
17 and under	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0
18 to 24	6	6.1	23	23.2	23	23.2	47	47.5	99	100.0
25 to 40	12	6.0	44	21.9	35	17.4	110	54.7	201	100.0
41 to 59	3	5.5	10	18.2	12	21.8	30	54.4	55	100.0
60 or older	10	11.5	8	9.2	23	26.4	46	52.9	87	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Cultural Background by DA Risk Levels. The examination of the relationship between cultural background and DA total scores (Table 20) uses a smaller number of cases because cultural background was not available for all cases. A significant difference was found for this analysis, with the Aboriginal sub-group reporting the highest risk scores, followed by the English-Canadian group and the 'Other' group (p=.000).

Table 20: Danger Assessment Risk Level by Cultural Background

Cultural Background	Danger Assessment Levels of Danger Categories								TOTAL	
	Less than 8 (Variable)		8 to 13 (Increased)		14 to 17 (Severe)		18 or more (Extreme)			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%	N	%
English Canadian	13	9.4	23	16.5	26	18.7	77	55.4	139	100.0
Aboriginal	10	4.5	34	15.4	50	22.6	127	57.5	221	100.0
Other	8	11.0	28	38.4	15	20.5	22	30.1	73	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As shown in Table 21, the Aboriginal clients were more likely to report increased physical violence and violence when the woman was pregnant. They were also more likely to have partners who threatened suicide and to report that their partners were unemployed, used illegal drugs or were addicted to alcohol. On the other hand, there did not appear to be any statistically significant differences among these client groups on questions related to partner's ownership or use of a weapon, presence of physical abuse such as choking and forced sex, threats to kill the woman or harm her children or presence of controlling and stalking behaviours.

Table 21. DA Items by Cultural Background

Danger Assessment Questions	Yes/No	Cultural Background							
		English Canadian		Aboriginal		Other		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
1. Increased physical violence? <b>p=.012</b>	Yes	97	62.6	171	74.7	49	60.5	317	68.2
	No	58	37.4	58	25.3	32	39.5	148	31.8
2. Does your partner own a gun?	Yes	26	16.9	50	22.0	12	15.2	88	19.1
	No	128	83.1	177	78.0	67	84.8	372	80.9
3. Have you left in the last year?	Yes	119	76.8	178	78.1	56	69.1	353	76.1
	No	36	23.2	50	21.9	25	30.9	111	23.9
4. Is your partner unemployed? <b>p=.002</b>	Yes	55	35.9	114	50.4	25	32.1	194	42.5
	No	98	64.1	112	49.6	53	67.9	263	57.5
5. Use or threat to use a weapon?	Yes	67	43.2	107	47.1	31	38.8	205	44.4
	No	88	56.8	120	52.9	49	61.3	257	55.6
If yes, was the weapon a gun?	Yes	8	9.1	24	20.2	8	16.0	40	15.6
	No	80	90.9	95	79.8	42	84.0	217	84.4
6. Partner threatens to kill you?	Yes	75	48.4	115	50.4	40	49.4	230	49.6
	No	80	51.6	113	49.6	41	50.6	234	50.4
7. Partner avoided arrest for dom. violence? <b>p=.018</b>	Yes	79	51.6	137	60.1	34	42.5	250	54.2
	No	74	48.4	91	39.9	46	57.5	211	45.8
8. Do you have a child that is not his? <b>P=.000</b>	Yes	81	53.3	131	57.7	26	32.1	238	51.7
	No	71	46.7	96	42.3	55	67.9	222	48.3
9. Partner ever forced sex?	Yes	83	53.9	107	47.3	37	45.7	227	49.2
	No	71	46.1	119	52.7	44	54.3	234	50.8
10. Does partner ever try to choke you?	Yes	88	57.1	128	56.1	37	45.7	253	54.6
	No	66	42.9	100	43.9	44	54.3	210	45.4
11. Partner uses illegal drugs? <b>p=.000</b>	Yes	84	54.9	144	63.4	20	25.3	248	54.0
	No	69	45.1	83	36.6	59	74.7	211	46.0
12. Partner an alcoholic or problem drinker? <b>p=.001</b>	Yes	94	61.4	166	73.1	40	50.6	300	65.4
	No	59	38.6	61	26.9	39	49.4	159	34.6
13. Partner controls daily activities?	Yes	119	76.8	182	79.8	60	75.0	361	78.0
	No	36	23.2	46	20.2	20	25.0	102	22.0
14. Partner constantly & violently jealous? <b>p=.012</b>	Yes	106	68.4	183	80.3	55	67.9	344	74.1
	No	49	31.6	45	19.7	26	32.1	120	25.9
15. Have you been beaten while pregnant? <b>p=.028</b>	Yes	53	35.1	99	43.4	21	27.3	173	37.9
	No	98	64.9	129	56.6	56	72.7	283	62.1
16. Threatens or tries to commit suicide? <b>p=.000</b>	Yes	64	41.8	129	56.6	22	28.2	215	46.8
	No	89	58.2	99	43.4	56	71.8	244	53.2
17. Partner threatens to harm your children?	Yes	41	27.3	43	18.9	19	23.8	103	22.5
	No	109	72.7	185	81.1	61	76.3	355	77.5
18. Is partner capable of killing you?	Yes	98	64.5	142	62.6	47	58.0	287	62.4
	No	54	35.5	85	37.4	34	42.0	173	37.6
19. Partner stalking behaviors?	Yes	106	68.4	157	68.9	51	63.0	314	67.7
	No	49	31.6	71	31.1	30	37.0	150	32.3
20. Have you threatened or attempted suicide? <b>p=.002</b>	Yes	61	39.6	95	42.0	16	20.3	172	37.5
	No	93	60.4	131	58.0	63	79.7	287	62.5

Living with Partner by DA Scores

Since this question was included in the demographics for phase 2 only, the sample size for the analysis was smaller. There was also a substantial amount of missing data for this question, making further analysis inappropriate.

### Marital Status by DA Risk Level

No statistically significant differences in DA scores were found for marital status categories, either using the risk categories or the distribution of scores by thirds. Some trends can be seen in the data, but the small cell sizes in some categories may be responsible for lack of significance. Higher DA risk levels appear to be more characteristic of those living in a common-law or cohabiting relationship, being separated, or being single.

Table 22: Danger Assessment Risk Level by Marital Status

Marital Status	Danger Assessment Scores by Thirds						Total	
	15 or less		15.1 to 22		Over 22		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Single	55	35.5	54	34.8	46	29.7	155	100.0
Married	34	53.1	17	26.6	13	20.3	64	100.0
Common-law	45	33.6	38	28.4	51	38.1	134	100.0
Separated or living apart	23	34.3	18	26.9	26	38.8	67	100.0
Divorced	9	60	3	20	3	20	15	100.0
Widowed	1	33.3	31	33.3	1	33.3	3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Danger Assessment Risk Level by Number of Children

Although a greater proportion of women with 3 or more children fall into the higher risk category (Table 23), this difference is not sufficient to reach statistical significance ( $p=.408$ ). This result is likely due to the fact that a substantial number of women with 3 or more children score in the lower danger level (e.g. less than 8).

Table 23: Danger Assessment Risk Level by Number of Children

Number of Children Prior to Shelter Stay	Danger Assessment Levels of Danger Categories								TOTAL	
	Less than 8 (Variable)		8 to 13 (Increased)		14 to 17 (Severe)		18 or more (Extreme)		N	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
None	3	6.8	8	18.2	13	29.5	20	45.5	44	100.0
1 or 2	6	7.8	22	28.6	18	23.4	3	40.3	77	100.0
3 or more	5	9.3	11	20.4	8	14.8	30	55.6	54	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>23.4</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 3.6 REGIONAL DATA ANALYSIS

ACWS and the participating shelters were interested to identify any differences in study variables between geographical regions in Alberta. The shelters were therefore divided among three regions: North, Central and South, as shown in Table 24. Some women staying in a shelter may come from another geographical location in the province. Women may choose to use a shelter away from their home area for many reasons, including, for example, intending to re-locate to avoid further abuse, having family support in another region, or looking for greater anonymity than they may have at a local, regional shelter. Regional statistics may also be impacted by the services that are available in a given area (e.g., the number of clients in second stage shelters is



related to the lack of such shelters in many communities, especially in the North). Future studies should include data on the location of the clients' residence prior to the shelter stay to clarify this issue.

Table 24: Sample Distribution by Region

City	Shelter	Number
<b>North</b>		<b>161</b>
On-reserve	On-reserve	6
Peace River	Peace River Regional Women's Shelter	23
St. Paul	Columbus House of Hope	132
<b>Central</b>		<b>116</b>
Edmonton	WINGS of Providence	31
Morley	Eagle's Nest Stoney Family Shelter	15
Sherwood Park	A Safe Place	70
<b>South</b>		<b>232</b>
Calgary	Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter (CWES)	158
Calgary	Sonshine Centre	16
Medicine Hat	Phoenix Safe House Musasa House	58
	<b>Total</b>	<b>509</b>

**Demographics by Region** (see corresponding figure 8 chart in Executive Summary)

Cultural Background: The shelter population for the Northern region of the province includes a significantly larger proportion of Aboriginal women (81.1%) than is found in either the Central region (60%) or the South (28.7%) ( $p=.000$ ). The "Other" cultural background group makes up only 4.9% of the Northern shelter group in comparison to 18% of the Central group and 23.9% of the Southern region group.

Age: There was no significant variation in age across regional groups. The majority of the shelter populations in all areas fell between the ages of 18 and 40.

Marital Status: No significant differences across regions were found for the proportion of women who had been living with their partner prior to the shelter stay, or for marital status.

Number of Children: There was a significant regional difference in the number of children women reported as living with them prior to this shelter stay ( $p=.019$ ). The difference here appears to be primarily the larger family size in the Northern region. This difference reflects the larger number of children born to Aboriginal women in Canada. However, it also supports the results re: higher DA scores and higher number of shelter stays for the aboriginal group above, since higher numbers of children is an IPV risk factor.

Table 25: Number of Children by Region

Geographical Region	Number of Children With You Before Coming to the Shelter						Total	
	None		1 or 2		3 or more			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
North	16	24.2	21	31.8	29	43.9	66	100.0
Central	5	15.6	18	56.3	9	28.1	32	100.0
South	23	30.3	37	48.7	16	21.1	76	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>31.0</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100.0</b>

“Were you born in Canada?” The results for this question showed a significant pattern of regional difference. No Northern region participants reported that they were born outside Canada, but 12.5% of Central region participants and 32.4% of Southern region participants reported being born elsewhere (p =.000).

### Danger Assessment Scores by Region

As explained earlier, the distribution of DA scores is heavily weighted on the high-risk end of the scale in this shelter population. Two approaches to analysis were therefore used. The first broke the total score range into thirds based on the distribution (lower third scores 15 or less; middle third scores 15.1 to 22, and upper third scores at 23 or more). The second made use of the four DA risk categories (Variable, Increased, Severe and Extreme). Tables 26 and 27 show the distribution of DA total scores by region from these two perspectives.

Table 26: DA Total Score Distribution by Thirds

Geographical Region	DA Total Score Distribution by Thirds						Total	
	Scores 15 or less		Scores 15.1 to 22		23 and higher			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
North	46	30.5	47	31.1	58	38.4	151	100.0
Central	33	32.7	36	35.6	32	31.7	101	100.0
South	92	43.6	60	28.4	59	28.0	211	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>36.9</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A test for significant differences in distribution for population thirds approached but did not reach significance (p=0.64). Reviewing the data, some tendency can be seen for the North region to have a slightly higher number of high-risk cases and the South region to have a higher proportion of relatively lower-risk cases. The analysis was repeated using DA risk levels, but again, no significant results were obtained (Table 27 below), though the same trends were observed.

Table 27: DA Total Score Distribution by Risk Levels

Geographical Area	Danger Assessment Risk Level Categories								TOTAL	
	Less than 8 (Variable)		8 to 13 (Increased)		14 to 17 (Severe)		18 or more (Extreme)			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
North	7	4.6	22	14.6	33	21.9	89	58.9	151	100.0
Central	6	5.9	18	17.8	21	20.8	56	55.4	101	100.0
South	22	10.4	49	23.2	42	19.9	98	46.4	211	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>100.0</b>

DA Item by Item Analysis by Region

The Danger Assessment scores for each separate item were analyzed to determine whether women from different regions of the province answered them differently in any systematic way. The responses to a number of items did vary significantly by region (see Table 28 and the following summaries for each significant item).

DA Item 2: Does your partner own a gun? (p=.003). Women in the North and Central regions were more likely to report that their partner owned a gun than women in the South. When a gun was in the partner's possession, more women from the Central region reported that it had been used in an assault against them (40.6% of those who stated that their partner owned a gun reported use of the gun). Guns were reported as being used in an assault less frequently by women at shelters in the North (75.4% 'no' response) and in the South (93.8% 'no' response).

DA Item 3: Have you left your partner after living together during the past year? (p=.004). Women from the North and South regions were more likely to report having left their partner in the last year than those in the Central area. Overall, about three quarters of women in the sample had separated from their partner in the previous year.

DA Item 4: Is your partner unemployed? The significant result here is based on a much higher rate of unemployment among abusive partners in the Northern region. The North region participants' rate of 'yes' responses to this question is at 57% compared to Central region's 38.6% and South region's 35.1%. (p=.000). This finding is congruent with the overall higher rate of unemployment in Canada's Northern communities.

Table 28: DA Item Analysis by Region for Areas of Significant Difference

DA Item	Geographical Region						Total	
	North		Central		South			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
2. Gun ownership**	39	112	23	78	26	185	88	375
%	25.8	74.2	22.8	77.2	12.3	87.7	19.0	81.0
3. Left partner in last year**	115	36	65	36	172	39	352	111
%	76.2	23.8	64.4	35.6	81.5	18.5	76.0	24.0
4. Is your partner unemployed? **	86	65	39	62	74	137	199	264
%	57.0	43.0	38.6	61.4	35.1	64.9	43.0	57.0

Table 28: DA Item Analysis by Region for Areas of Significant Difference *continued*

DA Item	Geographical Region						Total	
	North		Central		South			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
6. Does your partner threaten to kill you?*	69	82	62	39	99	112	230	233
%	45.7	54.3	61.4	38.6	46.9	53.1	49.7	50.3
11. Does your partner use illegal drugs?***	107	44	65	36	86	125	258	205
%	70.9	29.1	64.4	35.6	40.8	59.2	55.7	44.3
16. Partner suicide threats**	87	64	49	52	84	127	220	243
%	57.6	42.4	48.5	51.5	39.8	60.2	47.5	52.5
17. Threats to harm children*	25	126	30	71	43	168	98	365
%	16.6	83.4	29.7	70.3	20.4	79.6	21.2	78.8

\*p.<.05

\*\*p.<.01

*See summary figure 9 table in Executive Summary*

DA Item 6: Does your partner threaten to kill you? More of the women in the Central region group reported that their partner threatens to kill them than was the case in the other two regions (p=.028). “Yes” responses to this question were given by 45.7% in the North, 61.4% in the Central region, and 46.9% in the South region.

DA Item 11: Does your partner use illegal drugs? More women in the North and Central region shelters reported that their partners used illegal drugs (p=.000). Almost 71% of women in Northern shelters reported drug use, compared to 64% in the Central region and 41% in the South .

DA Item 16: Has your partner ever threatened or tried to commit suicide? The statistical significance here relates to slightly higher rates of partner suicide threats reported by women at the Northern shelters, and substantially lower rates at the Southern shelters. (p=.004). This result may again reflect population differences (e.g. higher proportion of partners who are unemployed, depressed, using illegal drugs in the North) and the relative lack of services there.

DA Item 17: Does your partner threaten to harm your children? A larger proportion of women in the Central region reported that their partners threaten to harm their children (29.7% vs. 16.6% of women in the Northern shelters and 20.4% of women in Southern region shelters).

### **Other Variables by Geographic Region**

Use of Emergency and Second Stage Shelters: A statistically significant difference was observed among regions on the number of times women had stayed in an emergency shelter (p=.000). More women at the participating shelters in the South were using the shelter for the first time (51% in the South compared with 24.2% in the North), and a larger proportion of women at Northern shelters had 6 or more shelter stays (25.8%, compared to 6.7% in the South). The reasons for this difference may again lie in comparative resource scarcity in the North (e.g.

housing, addiction treatment, second stage shelters). Abused women there may have fewer pathways to safety due to a lack of resources.

Table 29: Number of Stays in an Emergency Shelter by Geographical Region

Geographical Region	Number of Stays in an Emergency Shelter						Total	
	First stay		2 to 5 stays		6 or more stays		N	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
North	30	24.2	62	50.0	32	25.8	124	100.0
Central	34	39.1	38	43.7	15	17.2	87	100.0
South	107	51.4	87	41.8	14	6.7	208	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>44.6</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*See corresponding figure 10 chart in Executive Summary*

A similar pattern was apparent among women who reported that they had stayed at a second stage shelter. More women in the North region had repeated stays in these shelters (15% in the North vs. 1.7% in the South), and more women in the Central and Southern regions were in their first second stage stay ( $p=.002$ ). As the availability of second stage shelters in the North is limited, the sample size for that region was relatively small. Further study will be necessary to determine whether these patterns hold true with larger populations.

Table 30: Number of Stays in a Second Stage Shelter by Geographical Region

Geographical Region	Number of Stays in Second Stage Shelter						Total	
	First stay		2 to 5 stays		6 or more stays		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
North	6	30.0	11	55.0	3	15.0	20	100.0
Central	35	77.8	8	17.8	2	4.4	45	100.0
South	42	71.2	16	27.1	1	1.7	59	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>66.9</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Types of Abuse by Region

The format of the types of abuse question (Table 31) did not permit statistical analysis, since only 'yes' responses were recorded. However, examination of the data suggests that rates of most forms of abuse are similar across geographic regions, with a possible trend suggesting different types of abuse being more prevalent in the South as compared to North or Central regions (e.g., lower proportion of physical abuse, destruction of property, threats of abuse or spiritual abuse and higher proportion of psychological /emotional abuse or financial abuse).

Table 31: Types of Abuse by Region

Types of Abuse Reported at Intake	Region							
	North		Central		South		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Physical Abuse	110	82.1	99	86.8	180	77.9	389	81.2
Sexual Abuse	67	50.0	57	50.0	112	48.5	236	49.3
Psychological/Emotional Abuse	118	88.1	102	89.5	218	94.4	438	91.4
Abuse to Family Members	50	37.3	41	36.0	82	35.5	173	36.1
Destruction of Property	81	60.4	70	61.4	120	51.9	271	56.6
Harm or Cruelty to Pets	20	14.9	21	18.4	41	17.7	82	17.1
Financial Abuse	93	69.4	86	75.4	179	77.5	358	74.7
Threats of Abuse	91	67.9	80	70.2	145	62.8	316	66.0
Injury Due to Abuse	78	58.2	59	51.8	114	49.4	251	52.4
Verbal Abuse	122	91.0	106	93.0	210	90.9	438	91.4
Witness of Abuse	51	38.1	38	33.3	71	30.7	160	33.4
Neglect	64	47.8	60	52.6	100	43.3	224	46.8
Spiritual Abuse	57	42.5	51	44.7	79	34.2	187	39.0
Cultural Abuse	34	25.4	38	33.3	50	21.6	122	25.5
Stalking	59	44.0	46	40.4	102	44.2	207	43.2
Other	13	9.7	9	7.9	22	9.5	44	9.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 3.7 ABORIGINAL SAMPLE INFORMATION

Although some of the analyses reported here are also provided elsewhere in the report, the shelters requested that analyses for the aboriginal client group also be consolidated into one location.

Clients who reported an Aboriginal cultural background made up half of the sample for this study. Separate analyses were completed for this group to identify any significant differences between their results and those for the other half of the population served. Tables 32 and 33 indicate that about a third of the Aboriginal women in this sample received services at the Columbus House of Hope (St Paul) shelter, and that 44.5% of the Aboriginal sample were served in the Northern region of the province. Statistical comparison showed that, of the off-reserve shelters, A Safe Place (Sherwood Park), Peace River Regional Women's Shelter and Columbus House of Hope (St Paul) served populations with a higher proportion of Aboriginal clients ( $p = .000$ ).

Table 32: Distribution of Aboriginal Sample by Shelter

Shelter	Number	Percent
A Safe Place (Sherwood Park)	40	16.8
Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter	52	21.8
Columbus House of Hope (St Paul)	84	35.3
Eagle's Nest Stoney Family Shelter (Morley)	15	6.3
On-reserve shelter #2	6	2.5
Peace River Regional Women's Shelter	16	6.7
Phoenix Safe House (Medicine Hat)	9	3.8
Sonshine Centre (Calgary)	2	.8
WINGS of Providence (Edmonton)	14	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 33: Distribution of Aboriginal Sample by Region

Region	Number	Percent
North	106	44.5
Central	69	29.0
South	63	26.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A very small proportion of the Aboriginal women in the sample came from the three second stage shelters, all of which are located in the Central or Southern regions of the province (Table 34 below,  $p=.049$ ). Reduced availability of second stage shelters in the North may be driving some of this difference.

Table 34: Cultural Background by Shelter Type

Shelter Type	Cultural Background						Total	
	English Canadian		Aboriginal		Other			
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Emergency	138	32.3	221	51.8	68	15.9	427	100.0
Second Stage	19	38.8	17	34.7	13	26.5	49	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>100.0</b>

However, half of the total population for the study was Aboriginal and none of the provincial second stage shelters in this study reached a comparable level of representation in their client populations. Further study of possible situational, cultural and access barriers to fuller aboriginal service access should be examined to clarify this issue.

Analyses of the number of times women had used an emergency shelter were reported previously and showed that Aboriginal women in the North reported a significantly greater number of stays in emergency shelters. Table 35 shows the distribution of the total Aboriginal sample on

this variable, and indicates that almost one-quarter of these clients (22.5%) show 6 or more stays in an emergency shelter.

Table 35: Number of Times in Emergency Shelter

Cultural Background	Number of Times in Emergency Shelter						Total	
	First time		2 to 5 times		6 or more times			
English-Canadian	77	51.7	59	39.6	13	8.7	149	100.0
Aboriginal	56	24.7	120	52.9	51	22.5	227	100.0
Other	50	64.1	21	26.9	7	9.0	78	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>44.1</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>100.0</b>

p=.000

Those Aboriginal women who did access second stage shelter also did so significantly more frequently than their counterparts (p=.004, see Table 36 below).

Table 36. Number of Stays in Second Stage Shelter by Cultural Background

Cultural Background	Number of Times in Second Stage Shelter						Total	
	First time		2 to 5 times		6 or more times			
English-Canadian	32	69.6	13	28.3	1	2.2	46	100.0
Aboriginal	32	54.2	21	35.6	6	10.2	59	100.0
Other	27	93.1	2	6.9	0	0.0	29	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>67.9</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100.0</b>

About three-quarters of the group reported that they had been living with the abuser prior to entering the shelter (Table 37). There were no statistically significant interactions between the cultural background and the likelihood that the women lived with their partner.

Table 37. Number of Clients of Aboriginal Background Living with Partner Prior to Entering the Shelter

With Partner?	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	62	65.3	73.8
No	22	23.2	26.2
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>88.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11.5</b>	
<b>Total<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Length of Abusive Relationship: Data for the length of the abusive relationship among Aboriginal women in the sample show an average relationship length of 5.1 years, a median of 4 years, a

<sup>11</sup> Question was asked in Phase II only.



mode of 4 years, and a range of from less than one year to 31 years (n for this question was 200). These figures are not significantly different from those for the overall sample.

Number of Children: One-quarter of the Aboriginal sample reported having no children with them prior to coming to the shelter, half said that they had one or two children, and one-quarter had 3 or more children. In the latter group, only 1 participant reported having had more than 5 children with her. Again, the sample size is relatively small for this analysis, since the question was included only on draft 2 of the demographics form. No statistically significant differences were obtained when the number of children with the woman was compared across the three cultural groups.

Table 38: Number of Children With Her Prior to Shelter Stay

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
0	22	23.2	26.2
1	16	16.8	19.0
2	26	27.4	31.0
3	12	12.6	14.3
4	6	6.3	7.1
5	1	1.1	1.2
8	1	1.1	1.2
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>88.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11.5</b>	
<b>Total<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Age: Data for age was again not significantly different from the overall study population, with an average age of 30.3 years, a median of 29 years, a mode of 22 years, and a range from 16 to 54 years of age.

Marital Status: A majority of women reported being single or separated from a partner (living on their own 55% of the group). Almost 40% reported that they had been living in a common-law relationship, and only 5% were married. This distribution indicates a lower proportion of formally married women (5.1% of Aboriginal group vs. 36% of overall), and somewhat higher proportions in the single (41% vs. 36%) and common-law groups (38.6% vs. 30%) than was the case for the overall population (p=.000, see Table 39).

<sup>12</sup> Question was asked in Phase II only.

Table 39. Marital Status by Cultural Background

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Single	96	40.3	40.7
Married	12	5.0	5.1
Common-law	91	38.2	38.6
Separated or living apart	35	14.7	14.8
Divorced	1	.4	.4
Widowed	1	.4	.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>99.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.8</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Relationship to Abuser: This variable is of particular interest for the Aboriginal group because these women were more likely to report that the abuser was a family member other than a spouse. There were a total of 198 useable responses to this question from the Aboriginal sample. Of these, 124 indicated that the abuser was a common-law or ex-common-law partner (62.6%); an ex-husband 8 (4%); an ex-boyfriend 14 (7%); a husband 12 (6%), a boyfriend 8 (4%); an ex-girlfriend 9 (4.5%); or another family member 11 (5.5%), including a wide range of family relationships (parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, etc.).

Types of Abuse: The distribution here does not appear to be significantly different from those by region or for the overall study population. The most frequent types of abuse are verbal, psychological/emotional and physical, with more than 85% of the group reporting each type.

Table 40: Types of Abuse Reported by Aboriginal Sample

<b>Abuse Type</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Verbal Abuse	221	93.2
Psychological or Emotional Abuse	213	89.9
Physical Abuse	204	86.1
Financial Abuse	176	74.3
Threats of Abuse	158	66.7
Destruction of Property	140	59.1
Injury Due to Abuse	133	56.1
Neglect	112	47.3
Sexual Abuse	110	46.4
Stalking	104	43.9
Spiritual Abuse	94	39.7
Witness of Abuse	84	35.4
Abuse to Family Members	82	34.6
Cultural Abuse	63	26.6
Harm or Cruelty to Pets	40	16.9
Other	16	6.8

## Section IV. DANGER ASSESSMENT CALENDAR

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The Danger Assessment includes two components: the Calendar and the 20-item Questionnaire. The protocol for use of the tool requires that the Calendar be completed first, since the intention behind its use is to assist women to accurately recall the number and type of abuse they have experienced in the previous 12 months. A woman's responses to the 20-item component may be significantly affected by her completion of the Calendar, since she will be sensitized to the actual frequencies of abuse and will be less likely to minimize her estimates of risk.

Completion of the Calendar is a potential benefit to the woman and to her representatives in the justice system and the community, particularly if it is completed in the woman's own handwriting. In this form, the Calendar is admissible in court and can provide background information for legal proceedings. While its content may be uncorroborated, it may nevertheless open the door for women to be more willing to step into the criminal justice process. Other community workers may also find the Calendar very beneficial – some community partners have expressed an interest in training opportunities for community and housing society workers. Similarly, Children's Services representatives suggested that the tool might be useful to help women independently come to the conclusion that they need to act. A school representative also suggested that information from the DA could be helpful to assist teachers to work with children who are "[already] traumatized when they get to us. It would be wonderful to analyze the calendars and inform the school of any potential triggering events for the child. School personnel need to be better informed by the shelter."

Procedure: The period of time normally included in the Calendar was the 12 months prior to shelter intake. The participant generally completed the Calendar during an assessment interview with a shelter staff member. However, in some instances, she completed it on her own, and, in some other situations, it was done during a small group meeting with other shelter residents and a staff member. The usual procedure was to ask the woman to first place in the Calendar all of the special events that are important in her family, such as family birthdays, anniversaries, and celebrations of other kinds (e.g. Christmas, New Year's, Easter, Thanksgiving and so on) and then to indicate other 'landmarks' such as paydays or family vacations. She was then prompted by the staff member to think about what incidents of abuse had occurred in proximity to these events. Other abuse types and frequencies were then entered as the woman and the staff member discussed the woman's recall for each month.

The instructions for completion of the Calendar were provided as follows: "Several risk factors have been associated with increased danger for women and men in violent relationships. We would like you to be aware of the danger in situations of abuse and for you to see how many of the risk factors apply to your situation. Using the Calendar, please mark the approximate dates when you were physically abused. Write on each date how bad the incident was according to the following scale, ranging from 1 to 5. If *any* of the descriptions for the higher number apply, use the higher number:

- 1 = Slapping, pushing; no injuries and/or lasting pain
- 2 = Punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain
- 3 = "Beating up"; severe contusions, burns, broken bones, miscarriage
- 4 = Threat to use weapon; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury, miscarriage
- 5 = Use of weapon; wounds from weapon."

However, for the first time, these instructions also included the request that the woman record incidents of non-physical types of abuse. These forms of abuse characterize many battered women's experience and are often subjectively experienced as having equal or more severe impacts. These forms of abuse included:

E = emotional, including verbal and psychological

F = financial abuse

S = sexual abuse

SP = spiritual abuse

Since any given incident of abuse may include multiple forms of abuse, women completing the Calendar were asked to use all categories that were applicable to that incident. No limits were placed on the number of incidents that could be reported, or on the types of abuse included for a given day or incident. The data extracted from the Calendar are in the form of counts of number of incidents of abuse and present/absent categorizations for each abuse type.

#### **4.1 INFORMATION FROM THE CALENDAR**

A total of 407 women completed the Danger Assessment Calendar, reporting the timing, frequency and type of abuse prior to their shelter stay. The two shelters that provided the majority of completed Calendars were Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter (CWES) (Calgary) at 32.2% and St. Paul at 23.8%. Very small numbers of Calendars were completed at Peace River Regional Women's Shelter, at WINGS of Providence (Edmonton) and at Sonshine Centre (Calgary). The length of time represented in each woman's Calendar was variable because the shelters were dealing with resource limitations, and because some women did not wish to complete all 12 months.

As is indicated in the analysis of qualitative data for the study later in this report, completion of the Calendar was particularly difficult for some women. They spoke of focusing on trying to forget, not remember, the details of the abuse they experienced. They wanted to 'move on', not dwell on recalling events. Some reported quite intense physical reactions to the process of recall, and required substantial support to persevere in the task. These responses raise issues about the advisability of completing the Calendar early in a woman's stay at the shelter, before she has had time to settle in and feel safe with or able to trust shelter staff members.

In terms of adding other abuse types, women commented that these types of abuse were often more hurtful; and women whose abuse history did not include physical abuse felt that including this component validated their experience.

Table 41: Distribution of Participants who Completed the Calendar by Shelter

<b>Shelter</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
A Safe Place (Sherwood Park)	61	15.0	15.0
Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter	131	32.2	32.2
Columbus House of Hope (St. Paul)	97	23.8	23.8
Peace River Regional Women's Shelter	19	4.7	4.7
Phoenix Safe House (Medicine Hat)	54	13.3	13.3
Sonshine Centre (Calgary)	16	3.9	3.9
WINGS of Providence (Edmonton)	29	7.1	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The wide variation in the number of months completed (see Table 42) makes direct comparison of overall numbers and proportions of abuse types and frequencies inadvisable. The data presented below focuses, therefore, on average number of incidents per month. The average number of months completed was 5.4 (mode 3, median 4, range from less than one month to 23 months).

Table 42: Distribution of Number of Calendar Months Completed

<b>Number of Months</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
0	2	.5	.5
1	55	13.5	13.5
2	52	12.8	12.8
3	70	17.2	17.2
4	58	14.3	14.3
5	29	7.1	7.1
6	20	4.9	4.9
7	11	2.7	2.7
8	19	4.7	4.7
9	12	2.9	2.9
10	16	3.9	3.9
11	13	3.2	3.2
12	13	3.2	3.2
13	16	3.9	3.9
14	6	1.5	1.5
15	7	1.7	1.7
16	5	1.2	1.2
17	1	.2	.2

As shown in Tables 43 and 44, physical abuse of various types occurs less frequently than other types of abuse. However, it is important to note that many women report that the impact of non-physical forms of abuse is often felt as greater than that of physical abuse. Each escalation in the

severity of physical abuse corresponds with reduced frequency for that sub-type, with use of a weapon the least frequently experienced type of physical abuse. The data indicate that the average woman in this sample experiences emotional abuse at least 12 times per month, and physical abuse at least once or twice per month.

Table 43: Average Number of Physical Abuse Incidents per Month

Statistic	1.Average # Slapped or Pushed per month	2.Average # Punched or Kicked per month	3.Average # Beat up per month	4. Average # Threatened to Use Weapon per month	5. Average # Used Weapon per month
Mean	<b>1.2647</b>	<b>.5113</b>	<b>.2061</b>	<b>.2847</b>	<b>.0665</b>
Median	.0909	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
Mode	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Minimum	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Maximum	30.25	17.60	6.50	18.25	5.82
Valid	405	405	405	405	405
Missing	2	2	2	2	2

*See chart in Executive Summary – Figure 11*

Table 44: Average Number Incidents of Other Abuse Types per Month

Statistic	Average # of Emotional Abuse Incidents per month	Average # of Financial Abuse Incidents per month	Average # of Sexual Abuse Incidents per month	Average # of Spiritual Abuse Incidents per month
Mean	<b>12.6812</b>	<b>4.2110</b>	<b>1.5339</b>	<b>1.2011</b>
Median	8.7778	.1250	.0000	.0000
Mode	.00	.00	.00	.00
Minimum	.00	.00	.00	.00
Maximum	100.00	30.75	30.75	30.75
Valid	405	405	405	405
Missing	2	2	2	2

## Section V. OUTCOMES DATA COLLECTION DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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The Outcomes Data Collection Document is provided in Appendix 2 of this report. The first section of the document asks the participant to rate ten items:

1. Her perception of abuse frequency;
2. Her understanding of her risk level for further abuse;
3. Her knowledge of safety planning;
4. Her readiness to take action to stay safe;
5. Her confidence that women’s shelters can help;
6. Her level of hope;
7. The likelihood that she would seek help from the police;
8. The likelihood that she would seek help from children’s services;
9. The likelihood that she would take action to keep her children safe; and
10. Her confidence in her decision to seek help from a women’s shelter.

The woman participating was asked to rate these items on a 7-point scale (very low to very high) before she completed the Danger Assessment tool and again after she had completed it.

Eight additional items were also included so that women could clarify further how the experience of completing the DA had affected their perception of risk, their intention to return to the abusive relationship and their safety planning. The results for the first 2 of these additional 8 questions are reported starting on page 61 (questions 11 to 12), while the remainder (questions 13 to 18) are discussed in the qualitative data section beginning on page 63.

Sample: As shown in Table 45, a total of 423 women completed the outcome questions.

Table 45: Sample for the Outcomes Data Collection Document by Shelter

Shelter	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
A Safe Place (Sherwood Park)	71	16.8	16.8
Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter	119	28.1	28.1
Columbus House of Hope (St Paul)	103	24.3	24.3
Eagle’s Nest Stoney Family Shelter (Morley)	13	3.1	3.1
On-reserve #2	7	1.7	1.7
Peace River Regional Women’s Shelter	18	4.3	4.3
Phoenix Safe House (Medicine Hat)	47	11.1	11.1
Sonshine Centre (Calgary)	16	3.8	3.8
WINGS of Providence (Edmonton)	29	6.9	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The majority of these participants were using either the Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter (Calgary) or the Columbus House of Hope (St Paul).

Since no links were made in the database between client demographics and the outcomes Questionnaire, no information is available to describe any differences between those who

completed this component and those who did not, or between shelter sub-groups or cultural background sub-groups.

Since shelter location is regional, we can say that the group completing the outcomes information included 30% from the North, 27% from Central Alberta, and 43% from Southern Alberta. The cities with the highest representation in this sample were: Calgary (32%); St. Paul (24%); Sherwood Park (16.8%); and Medicine Hat (11%).

## 5.1 CHANGE IN PERCEPTION FROM BEFORE TO AFTER COMPLETING THE DANGER ASSESSMENT

The paired T-tests (Table 46 below) show that change from “pre” DA to “post” DA was statistically significant ( $p=.000$ ) for every question. The average ratings on the questions also increased in every case. This increase is generally consistent for each question, although some questions show more substantial change than others. These differences suggest that the process of completing the DA significantly increases women’s reported perception of abuse frequency, risk of further abuse, knowledge of safety planning and so on.

Table 46: Women’s Assessment of Change From Before to After the DA

<b>Question Pair Scores Pre and Post Completion of the Danger Assessment Tool</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
1a. Awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse BEFORE completing the DA	3.90	402	1.879	.094
1b. Awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse NOW	5.70	402	1.677	.084
2a. Rate your understanding of the level of danger BEFORE completing the DA	3.78	403	1.872	.093
2b. Rate your understanding of the level of danger NOW	5.85	403	1.541	.077
3a. Rate your knowledge of safety planning BEFORE completing the DA	3.37	398	1.874	.094
3b. Rate your knowledge of safety planning NOW	5.90	398	1.325	.066
4a. Rate your readiness to take action to stay safe BEFORE completing the DA	<b>3.77</b>	402	1.981	.099
4b. Rate your readiness to take action to stay safe NOW	<b>6.20</b>	402	1.275	.064
5a. Rate your confidence that women’s shelters can help BEFORE completing the DA	4.47	401	1.986	.099
5b. Rate your confidence that women’s shelters can help NOW	6.40	401	1.058	.053
6a. Rate your level of hope BEFORE completing the DA	3.33	399	1.823	.091
6b. Rate your level of hope NOW	5.91	399	1.418	.071



Table 46: Women’s Assessment of Change from Before to After the DA *continued*

<b>Question Pair Scores Pre and Post Completion of the Danger Assessment Tool</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
7a. Rate the likelihood that you would seek help from the police BEFORE completing the DA	3.10	399	2.063	.103
7b. Rate the likelihood that you would seek help from the police NOW	5.05	399	2.067	.103
8a. Rate the likelihood that you would seek help from Child Welfare BEFORE completing the DA	<b>2.52</b>	357	1.806	.096
8b. Rate the likelihood that you would seek help from Child Welfare NOW	<b>4.00</b>	357	2.297	.122
9a. Rate the likelihood that you would take action to keep your children safe BEFORE completing the DA	<b>4.95</b>	359	1.987	.105
9b. Rate the likelihood that you would take action to keep your children safe NOW	<b>6.29</b>	359	1.537	.081
10a. Rate your confidence in your decision to seek help from a women’s shelter BEFORE completing the DA	4.25	398	2.038	.102
10b. Rate your confidence in your decision to seek help from a women’s shelter NOW	6.40	398	1.083	.054

However, some problems with the research design may also have impacted these results. For example, women sitting with a staff member and being asked, in effect, whether something the staff member has done with them was effective are likely to answer positively. The format of the question may also impose some obligation on women to record an improvement in their understanding of these various components. Other possible factors affecting women’s reporting on the outcomes Questionnaire include the issue of recall – can a woman remember accurately how she would have rated items when she first came to the shelter? The detailed results in this section should therefore be interpreted with some caution.

The data on the beginning level of risk perception on some questions is of particular interest. For example, these women’s confidence in shelters as a source of help was already relatively high prior to the completion of the DA (mean 4.47). In comparison, the likelihood of seeking help from either the police or Child Welfare was relatively low (3.10 and 2.5 respectively).

After completing the DA, women said that they were much more likely to seek assistance from the police (increase in mean from 3.1 to 5.0), while their likelihood to seek help from Child Welfare increased much more modestly (2.5 to 4.0 – neither low nor high). Overall, the experience of completing the Calendar and the 20-item DA Questionnaire appears to have had a very significant impact on women’s perceptions of their risk of lethality and continuing abuse. The use of the DA significantly contributes to women’s safety, in that it helps them to estimate risk more realistically and to better understand the need for safety planning for themselves and their children.

Women’s Assessment of Change From Before to After the DA by Region (Average Scores)

Comparison of scores of women’s assessment of change demonstrated an increase of the average ratings before and after DA administration in each region. There were no statistically significant differences among regions when the rate of change in women’s knowledge of safety planning, readiness to take action, likelihood that they would seek help from the police and likelihood that they would take action to keep children safe were compared.

However, women in the North were more likely to demonstrate a higher degree of change in their awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse, their understanding of the levels of danger and their levels of hope. Women in the South showed a higher rate of change in their levels of confidence that women’s shelters can help, likelihood that they would seek help from Child Welfare and their confidence that they would seek help from a women’s shelter.

Table 47: Women’s Assessment of Change by Region – Average Scores

Women’s Assessment of Change	Region			
	North	Central	South	Overall
1a. Awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse BEFORE completing the DA	3.84	4.03	3.88	3.91
1b. Awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse NOW <b>p=.04</b>	5.95	5.41	5.71	5.70
2a. Rate your understanding of the level of danger BEFORE completing the DA	3.78	4.06	3.71	3.82
2b. Rate your understanding of the level of danger NOW <b>p=.053</b>	6.04	5.71	5.80	5.85
3a. Rate your knowledge of safety planning BEFORE completing the DA	3.32	3.61	3.32	3.40
3b. Rate your knowledge of safety planning NOW	5.88	5.79	5.98	5.90
4a. Rate your readiness to take action to stay safe BEFORE completing the DA	3.90	3.87	3.69	3.80
4b. Rate your readiness to take action to stay safe NOW	6.10	6.26	6.23	6.20
5a. Rate your confidence that women’s shelters can help BEFORE completing the DA	4.90	4.43	4.29	4.51
5b. Rate your confidence that women’s shelters can help NOW <b>p=.055</b>	6.42	6.28	6.45	6.39
6a. Rate your level of hope BEFORE completing the DA	3.51	3.45	3.21	3.37
6b. Rate your level of hope NOW <b>p=.003</b>	6.12	5.44	6.05	5.91
7a. Rate the likelihood that you would seek help from the police BEFORE completing the DA	3.25	3.15	2.97	3.10
7b. Rate the likelihood that you would seek help from the police NOW	5.05	5.02	5.08	5.05
8a. Rate the likelihood that you would seek help from Child Welfare BEFORE completing the DA	2.60	2.38	2.50	2.50
8b. Rate the likelihood that you would seek help from Child Welfare NOW <b>p=.021</b>	3.77	3.64	4.39	3.99

Table 47: Women’s Assessment of Change by Region – Average Scores *continued*

Women’s Assessment of Change	Region			
	North	Central	South	Overall
9a. Rate the likelihood that you would take action to keep your children safe BEFORE completing the DA	5.15	4.77	4.95	4.97
9b. Rate the likelihood that you would take action to keep your children safe NOW	6.15	6.26	6.42	6.29
10a. Rate your confidence in your decision to seek help from a women’s shelter BEFORE completing the DA	4.66	4.32	4.05	4.31
10b. Rate your confidence in your decision to seek help from a women’s shelter NOW <b>p=.02</b>	6.31	6.38	6.46	6.40

**Question 11: Are you planning to return to the relationship?**

Three possible responses could be provided to this question: yes, no and undecided. The distribution of the sample on this question is shown in Table 48 below. 81.7% of women who responded to this question indicated that they did not intend to return to the relationship in which the abuse had occurred. This is similar to the responses of the women who stayed in Alberta shelters in 2008 (in that sample of 1,573 women 83.8% were not planning to return) and to the Statistics Canada report, which showed 9 in 10 women having made this decision.

Table 48: Are you planning to return to the relationship?

Response	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	26	6.1	6.5
No	325	76.8	81.7
Undecided	47	11.1	11.8
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>94.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5.9</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Question 12: On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely is it that your partner will be physically abusive with you in the next year?**

Only two anchors for this Likert scale were provided, (1= very unlikely, 10 = very likely) making it difficult to know how women interpreted the mid-range on these questions. For example, they may have treated ‘5’ as a neutral point (neither likely nor unlikely), or they may have treated the question as a continuous scale with level of risk rising uniformly in 10% increments.

Table 49. How likely is it that your partner will be physically abusive in the next year?

Rating	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
1	146	34.5	39.8
2	10	2.4	2.7
3	16	3.8	4.4
4	13	3.1	3.5
5	52	12.3	14.2
6	9	2.1	2.5
7	19	4.5	5.2
8	23	5.4	6.3
9	4	.9	1.1
10	75	17.7	20.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>86.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>13.2</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

In either case, it is noteworthy that 1 woman in 5 rated the likelihood of further abuse as essentially certain (i.e. a score of 10), while another 30% rated this risk as 5 or above. Half of the women who completed this question rated their likelihood of abuse at or below 4. This group may include those who do not intend to return to the relationship and therefore consider themselves relatively safe (though they may be mistaken in this perception), as well as those who may have scored in the lower (variable) risk level on the DA.

A further analysis of the data was completed in order to clarify these possibilities. Table 50 below shows the differences on question 12 between women who said they were not returning to the partner, those who are undecided, and those who did plan to return. There is a significant difference between those who are returning/undecided and those who are staying, on their assessment of danger of further physical abuse ( $p = .009$ ). More of those who are not returning perceive a higher degree of danger of further abuse than those returning or undecided.

Table 50: How likely is physical abuse by returning or not returning

How likely is physical abuse?	Are you planning to return to the relationship?							
	Yes		No		Undecided		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
1-5	23	92.0	181	62.2	30	69.8	234	65.2
6-10	2	8.0	110	37.8	13	30.2	125	34.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*See corresponding graph in the Executive Summary – Figure 13*

As table 48 above shows, 81.7% of women indicated that they did not intend to return to the relationship in which the abuse had occurred. Although this figure is high, at 8 women in 10, it is lower than the Statistics Canada outcome on this question for the 2008 shelter report, which showed 9 in 10 women having made this decision.

There is a significant difference between those who are returning/undecided and those who are not returning on their assessment of their risk ( $p = .009$ ). More of those who are not returning

perceive a higher degree of danger of further abuse than those returning or undecided. These results provide strong support for the usefulness of “women’s voice” in identifying their own risk.

## 5.2 DANGER ASSESSMENT RESEARCH OUTCOMES TOOL - QUALITATIVE DATA

The outcomes tool also included five questions that used write-in responses. These questions are identified below, and a summary of response categories and exemplars is provided for each. Some questions are combined since the themes and exemplars from the women’s responses were very similar.

This discussion is comprised of two sections. The first section includes the results from question 13 and discusses the women’s qualitative responses to questions 14 and 15. These questions asked about women’s experience completing the questions and the Calendar portion of the Danger Assessment instrument. The second section summarizes the women’s responses to questions 16 to 18. Those questions asked women to comment about impact of completing the Danger Assessment instrument, including the abuse, the abuser, their safety and safety of their children and any future plans that they had in place in regards to their situation.

### Section 5.2.1. Women’s Responses to Questions 13, 14 and 15

#### Question 13: Did you complete the Calendar portion of the Danger Assessment? Yes, No

Table 51: Did you complete the Calendar portion of the Danger Assessment?

Response	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	345	81.6	91.3
No	33	7.8	8.7
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>89.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>10.6</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

#### Question 14: If yes, briefly describe your experience completing the Calendar and going into your abuse history in-depth.

Table 52: Sample for question 14

Response	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	311	73.5	78.7
No	84	19.9	21.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>93.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6.6</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

1. Responses to question 14 included numerous comments about how difficult the experience of completing the Calendar was for many women. They often reported feelings of anxiety, physical discomfort, the emotional pain entailed in this sort of recall, the wish not to have to 'keep going back', and regrets/self-criticism about not having acted sooner.
  - It was tiring. A lot to think about. Maybe a little depressing. A lot to do on intake.
  - It was very stressful filling it out because it brought back the memories. It was like I was living it all over again.
  - It is a place I don't like to go to. I am experiencing abuse from everyone I get close to: my partner, mother, son, I have a different feeling right now. I have turned my life over to the Lord. So I feel a little different about the abuse I have had to go through.
  - Doing the abuse Calendar was difficult, my mind went blank and I had a hard time remembering. The following days memories and feelings began to surface. I felt anxious, panicked, sadness and shame.
  - Very emotional and hurts to think about the abuse I had experienced at that time, and it felt good to go back and remember, so it won't happen again. It is shocking to realize that you are in a terrible situation and you don't even realize it.
  - It was very upsetting because I really didn't know what abuse was until I saw it on paper. I didn't think my partner was doing anything wrong but because of the Danger Assessment now I do.
  - Was hard to do considering I blocked out a lot. Makes me sick to my stomach. Brought back painful memories.
  - My experience with the Calendar portion going through the abuse was really hard. Thinking back to the many situations, how emotionally, physically, financially hurt me and my daughter were in those months. It was difficult. It's hard to go back and thinking of how horrible it really was.
  - Very hurtful to take a good look at the things I allowed him to get away with.
  - It was difficult to recall specific incidents more than a few months back - when I did this I was feeling very shocked and afraid. I wish I could recall details but realized that I usually minimized the incidents and decided to forgive and forget and move on.
  - It was a horrifying blur and I had huge walls up to prevent feeling.
  - Brings back the pain, which honestly I don't want to deal with because I'm trying to get past that and it's hard when you keep going back.
  - It is not nice to remember these things, it's not good to keep opening doors, its better to move forward and keep healing.

The fact that the experience of completing the Calendar was so difficult for these women suggests the importance of ensuring that they are provided with strong support and encouragement to get through it. Having a context for Calendar administration that includes a strong relationship with shelter staff is probably a requirement for the validity of the measure. This fact has important implications for the timeline for administration as well – possibly completion early in the shelter stay is not the optimum procedure. A later schedule for administration of the Calendar and the 20-questions might result in short-stay clients not completing the measure, but perhaps this data loss is preferable to validity issues. Alternatively, another approach to risk assessment could be used with short-stay clients. Further study of the short-stay group is required to determine whether they differ in any important ways from women who stay longer, whether the DA 20-item component could be used with them, and whether the shelter's services can be revised in any way to encourage longer stays for these women.

2. For another, smaller group of women, completing the Calendar was seen overall as a positive, useful experience although it was somewhat uncomfortable. They felt that the Calendar confirmed that they had made the right decision when they chose to leave, or that they were survivors of these experiences and no longer victims. Others reported that it helped them realize that their situation was unlikely to change. Some also found the Calendar completion too lengthy.
  - It stung a little to think back to bad times in the relationship but it reinforces the feeling and thoughts that getting out was the right thing and the best thing I have done.
  - It was hard remembering the times I was beaten up, but I also felt good about remembering because that person was no good.
  - I would say that it was like a "catharsis": I felt better and relieved after going into my history in depth.
  - Felt safe doing the calendar. I have a good feeling that I'm going to help other women in the same situation. I never told anyone about the abuse before, I kept it to myself. Talking about it was sad, but now I'm strong, I'm not afraid of the police, not afraid to talk about it. I broke my family and religion and I don't care.
  - I frequently think that perhaps there is hope that my partner will change, however, upon completion of the calendar, I am reminded that he will never change, and if so, it would take years of help in order to change.
  - I thought it was helpful, but tedious and long.
3. A number of comments were made about problems remembering specifics "that far back." Again, the number of women who mentioned this problem, in combination with comments from those who found the process too lengthy, suggests that it may be preferable to narrow the scope of the instrument by reducing the time period it covers or introducing additional cues to memory.
  - I also couldn't remember every date to be exact and there was probably more that I did not recall.
  - Fairly easy to report the abuse, just difficult to remember exact dates. There were different types of abuse, verbal, sexual, emotional and physical which all occurred at different times over the 12 months.
  - It was hard to think back far enough, to think of exact days when abuse happened.
  - It was kind of difficult to recall some of what had happened.
  - It was very difficult to remember each day and every moment. I think I was guessing.
  - When you are living with abuse you do not have time/energy to remember specific events, as you are too preoccupied with basic survival.
  - It was hard because I have a bad memory. Some things I don't remember and some things I don't want to remember.
4. Many women commented on the fact that completing the Calendar helped them to recognize that there was a pattern to the abuse they experienced.
  - Mostly abusive around money days. I never noticed the pattern until I did (the Calendar).
  - For me, the pattern was that on big check days, bills and food would be paid and things were bought for my child. Any extra turned into a beer party and old issues were brought up ... and mental and verbal abuse would start.

- By doing the calendar, I was able to acknowledge when the abuse was occurring and was able to identify patterns (i.e.) weekends and paydays.
  - It was eye opening, clarifying, and a little frightening to see the consistency of abuse revolving around family functions.
5. Patterns of escalation of violence were also frequently described, as was the associated recognition of the reality of this escalation:
- Only after completing the Calendar did I recognize the frequency and increasing severity of the abuse. Previously I thought the abuse was sporadic and without any recognizable pattern.
  - I never realized how frequently the abuse was happening. Finding out about it was awakening and really opened my eyes.
  - I was angry about how new types of abuse got added. I saw why I was so exhausted.
  - Started off with no abuse. [Then he] began swearing, hollering, intimidation, threats, emotional abuse, grabbing arms & neck, shoving, pushing down, and then extreme physical abuse & threats.
  - I realized emotional abuse was on a daily basis. I was aware to a certain degree, but to see it on paper made the abuse real.
  - I realized he was abusive more often and in more ways than I thought. Doing the Calendar made me realize how often I really am being abused. It also helped me understand even better that although he is not physically abusive, I still am being quite badly abused quite frequently.
  - I didn't think some months were bad. That I had a good month. In actuality, it was bad, horrible. It gave me an eye opener. I clued in.
6. Many women also commented that completing the Calendar helped them understand their level of risk of ongoing abuse escalation – how unsafe they really were. They also often remarked on the fact that it helped them recognize that their level of risk was higher than they had realized previously and encouraged them not to continue minimizing the risk. Sometimes these remarks were also self-critical around having exposed themselves or their children to such risk.
- It helped me realize how bad things were and how unsafe I was. It made me aware of all the danger I was in and I don't ever want to go through that again. Seeing the dates and frequency of abuse, I'm more likely to stay away from abuse.
  - It was eye opening. I have spent a lot of time trying to minimize my experiences so that I could be normal.
  - While answering the questions and hearing me tell the stories, I could hear how out of control my life had become and the danger and aggression I had been living in. It became clear how unstable and dangerous of an environment I had been living in.
  - Frightening. I never realized the severity of abuse that I've experienced and endured until I did the Danger Assessment Calendar.
  - I learned how seriously dangerous my relationship with my husband was. And that he is not going to change his behaviour.
  - I don't know; it made me feel like an idiot to see me and my baby in more and more danger.
7. Completing the DA Calendar brought home to some women the need for personal change and/or action, and the urgency of making these changes or taking action.



- I realized that I was putting the kids and me in even more danger by staying there. Everyday was getting harder to get motivated to help us get better.
- It made it pretty understood that my life was not in order and I had to take control.
- When I started completing the 1st month, I realized he had no right to treat me and my children that way. Working backwards, completing every month, I was totally furious, but yet relieved to know we wouldn't be as seriously subjected to that abuse. I am hating to still deal with him because of our children. I will be more wary, yet stronger.
- Made me more aware of my position. Made me more aware of the serious mess of danger for me and my son. Made me aware of safety precautions we can take.

**Question 15: Briefly describe your experience completing the Danger Assessment 20-item Questionnaire.**

Table 53: Sample for Question 15

Response	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	321	75.9	81.3
No	74	17.5	18.7
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>93.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6.6</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

A number of the same response categories that were present in the Calendar question were repeated here. Where this is the case, the category is repeated but fewer exemplars are provided.

1. Responses to completing the DA 20-question component were mixed, as they were with the Calendar, though with fewer references to discomfort and painful process. However, many of the comments do reinforce the suggestion that doing the DA can be a traumatic experience for some women, and that support needs to be available throughout the process as well as following it.
  - It made me feel badly because I didn't ever think I would have to do something like this, like go to the shelter.
  - I felt nervous because to tell the truth, it was really hard because I have not told anyone about what had happened before.
  - I felt very hurt and kind of sick.
  - Baffled, stunned, scared.
  - Shocking.
  - Didn't want to think back, because I don't want to remember the past at all. After doing all that it brought back memories.
  - It was extremely hard and not easy to complete because of my emotions. This process was hard and it hurt a lot; I cried.
  - Good about myself, aware of the danger, confident in a way.
  - It was very intense. Not very much fun to see what's really happening in a bad relationship.

- Like I was ratting on him. Hoping I didn't make it look worse as I had to sign that it is true. Scared if it ever got used in a court I'd be seen as embellishing.
  - The Danger Assessment was less traumatic than the abuse calendar.
  - I felt depressed. I am tired of moving and leaving everything every time he finds me. I have moved seven times in five years. I walk around with a hunting knife, bear spray and a personal key chain alarms. A certain level of disappointment and depression overcame me. Memoirs of the hurt I experienced overwhelmed me.
  - ..I am able to express my traumas (for once), fear, anxiety, etc...on paper, knowing that the info I provided will be kept confidential. Somehow, I relived these experiences while completing the DA form.
2. Some participants also provided suggestions for how women's shelters should approach helping abused women. These had primarily to do with sufficient staffing to allow women someone to talk with whenever she needed to talk.
- I know abuse isn't right. I know Women's Shelter is a safe place to be. But you have to be willing to accept help and not be scared to deal with what the abuser has done. Women's shelters I think should have a counsellor around all the time for women to talk to about everyday feelings.
  - I am pleased to know that family violence is being taken more seriously and that society as a whole will be better educated; however I am doubtful that this Danger Assessment will be the key to radicalization. I believe that this danger assessment, along with consistent education [by shelter work to educate the community] will be a powerful tool to combat the patriarchal system, which allows abuse to exist and continue.
3. Reducing minimization and improving awareness of risk were again outcomes for completion of this DA component.
- It was a scary experience. Things that happened, I always thought "Oh, we're just fighting," not really realizing the severity of most cases. Also, I minimized and made excuses a lot. [the DA] helped and heightened my understanding.
  - Made me aware of how dangerous the situation is or can be.
  - I did have to think about whether or not my husband had ever done some of these things. The first question made me realize that my danger level has increased and that I will need to be more proactive in ensuring my own safety.
  - It scared me and I am glad I got to do that because I would have never thought it would be that bad.
  - Eye opening. I really didn't realize how much abuse I was going through. Some of it was commonplace. I was used to it and didn't recognize it was a form of abuse, and that is sad.
  - Well I thought I didn't have much to say or see until I started doing it. Now it gave me an awakening to see that this relationship is not going to work.
  - I rated really high on it, so it was a "wow" eye opener, it made me think of the reality of "I could be dead".
  - I thought the abuse was only beginning and not nearly as serious. Despite the fright and shock, the fact that I did the assessment in the shelter, in safety, definitely helped ease into the realization. It was difficult remembering, but knowing the results insured I have made the right decision in permanently separating.

4. The need for personal change/action was also repeated in this question:
  - It was very emotional, and by doing the assessment I realized that only I can change things to make life better for the kids and myself.
  - Now I'll charge them. I know they will never find me unless I want to be found; I trust no one in the family.
  - It was hard realizing the risk I put my child and myself in. It was a wake-up call to the abuse.
  - See more things in him than I ever did before and why didn't I see it before?
  - I answered all the questions with thinking of how fearful I was. It made me realize even more that I can do something about it and not take any more abuse.
  - I'm not sure if my logic is correct, but when I think about Danger Assessment questions and complete it to my own experience I come to realize my situation wasn't that hopeless and I should try more to seek outside help to prevent any abuse.
  - It made me sit back and reassess my situation and make additional plans and precautions. It helped me solidify my plans to stay away from the relationship.
  
5. Some participants commented that the Danger Assessment was not appropriate for them because it did not cover the situation they were in – e.g. abuse had been perpetrated by a family member rather than an intimate partner.
  - It was not very good due to the fact that it was not a spouse abusing me but my cousin.
  - It was not very thorough with what was actually endangering me and my child.
  - It was somewhat helpful but not completely relevant to my situation as the threats and abuse were targeted at my four-year-old son and not at me.
  
6. Support for the decision to leave
  - I have more awareness and confirmation for leaving. I have increased my knowledge of abuse.
  - Being abused as a child and carrying that through in men in life that I have a very strong signal. And now knowing what to do when I might see signs. I WILL LEAVE.
  
7. Increased understanding of abuse
  - It made me more aware of different kinds of abuse.
  - I know a lot about abuse. Now I know what it does mean and I will not accept this kind of treatment anymore.
  - It scared me to see how serious this is and what actions make an abusive relationship.
  - I knew the way I lived was bad but I never knew I had rights / reason to leave.
  - I feel before I didn't know very much about abuse, now I know more than before, I can help protect myself.
  
8. Increased awareness of services
  - It made me realize there is help and A Safe Place (Sherwood Park) to go to.
  - I now know more and I am prepared better how to be safe, where to go for help, who to talk to.
  
9. Ongoing feeling that she is not safe

- I am mostly finding it hard right now—to put the questions into answer with the company of crowds I don't feel safe with. Even when I am out of the shelter and alone I don't feel safe.
- Now I am afraid. I'm getting scared for my life. This brought back memory all through my life...all I wanted was to be loved. Not hurt, hidden away, with fear inside me...
- Because I am still scared of him. I am afraid!

**Section 5.2.2 Responses to questions 16, 17 and 18.**

**Question 16a: Did answering questions on the Danger Assessment change your view of your abuser/situation? Response options 'yes'; 'no'.**

Table 54: Sample for Question 16a

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Yes	311	73.5	78.7
No	84	19.9	21.3
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>93.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6.6</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Responses to questions 16b, 17b and 18b are presented together below, since the content of the responses was thematically similar.

**Question 16b: If yes, HOW did completing the Danger Assessment change your view about your abuser/situation? If no, why do you think your view about your abuser/situation has NOT changed?**

**Question 17a: As a result of completing the Danger Assessment, have your thoughts about safety changed? Yes, No.**

**Question 17b: If yes, HOW did completing the Danger Assessment change your thoughts about safety? If no, why do you think your thoughts about safety have not changed? (See analysis on page 75)**

Table 55: Sample for Question 17a

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Yes	321	75.9	81.3
No	74	17.5	18.7
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>93.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6.6</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Question 18a: As a result of completing the Danger Assessment, will you do more or less to keep yourself and your children safe? More, Less or No change.**

Table 56: Sample for Question 18a

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
More	361	85.3	92.8
No Change	28	6.6	7.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>92.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Missing</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>8.0</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Thematic Analysis Questions 16b, 17b & 18b.**

**1. Increased understanding of the abuse and changed perception of the abuser**

Increased understanding of abuse

- If I am ever in an abusive relationship again I know when to flee; how to do it; when to ask for help. I will know the signs.
- I believe anyone deserves to be respected and treated with dignity. Any even slightest sign of abuse should be stopped and prevented by some kind of widely offered programs educating couples- preferably free.
- I used to think my abuse was not severe enough because it had not turned physical (yet)! Now I realize all abuse is severe, not just physical.
- It helped me see that no one has the right to treat me with disrespect or hurt me whether it be physically, sexually, or verbally.
- No more denying the reality of the cycle of abuse. I must put safety first and not hold false hope.

Changed perception of the abuser

- My view on the abuser is that what he did was very wrong. He's dangerous and unsafe. Before the assessment I wouldn't have the knowledge and confidence to say what I thought. So...it somewhat changed my view.
- Showed he is more dangerous than I thought.
- I know [now] that he is dangerous and that any contact with him could result in harm for me or my daughter.
- It helped me realize the danger in my life. I also became more aware of the emotional abuse I was experiencing. When I did this assessment I realized the stress in our family was not causing him to drink, but that the drinking was causing the stress in our family.
- Yes I realized he is an abusive person and that until he seeks help himself, nothing will change.
- I'm more aware - am acknowledging his behaviour rather than making excuses for his abusive behaviour.
- It has changed my view - his behaviour and how it has been unacceptable became clear, but even more that my partner / abuser would become more abusive and dangerous. I

started to understand how unhealthy he is and how my child and I deserve better than the control and violence he was holding over my head. That he is out of control.

- It showed me that if I keep going back to him it will just get worse. It showed me that he is not showing me love, that all he wanted was control. I never understood that before.
- I don't care about him or his life, I'm more concerned about my life

## 2. Increased understanding of safety planning and intention to implement its components

### Increased awareness of risk and the importance of safety planning

- I am more aware of my surroundings—noticing things going on around me. Not taking for granted that I will be safe. My spouse has been stalking me ever since I left my home and that has also certainly made me realize that I need to take things very seriously and not assume I'm safe.
- I am more aware of my surroundings and people. I choose who to talk to and befriend to feel safe. I need to know who to trust.
- I have more awareness: being alert when going out; not being alone at night; careful who I talk to; leery to trust others.
- I feel the same because whether I'm around him or not he will still continue to try to find me, although now I will probably get a protection order.
- I feel like I have to plan my safety ahead of time and I have to take caution.
- I would [make] better choices in my life, because it is all up to me. That I know now.
- Yes, because it gave me more options about my safety, made me realize that I need to react and do something.
- Yes. I will teach my son what he should do, where he should go and who to call and what numbers to use just in case something happens.
- I realize that my children's emotional safety is just as important as their physical safety.
- Now I know what to do if I don't feel safe. There is always a place to go. Now I can trust more people to keep me safe.
- Safety planning is a good start and seeing the pattern and watching for it in the future is good.

### Intention to implement elements of the safety plan

- I need a getaway bag, health number and other things.
- Be aware of the signs of abuse; not let me or my children be around negative or abusive people with a history of abuse.
- I always keep my cell phone with me.
- I will follow the safety plan I worked on while at the shelter.
- I will be careful of who I trust and not give my phone number to people.
- Phone number and address blocked -only tell a few very close friends of address -always keep door locked and bolted.
- Follow up with any and all the resources available to make sure I never fall back into that place.
- Call the police and keep money, extra keys and an old cell phone that he doesn't know about hidden. And to relocate and take some counselling for me and my kids.
- I will warn neighbours to keep an eye out for his vehicle and for anyone lurking about my property. I will price out a CCTV and look into having a camera installed outside my door. I have already begun to warn co-workers.
- Getting a P.O. box, unlisted number.

- Be aware of surroundings. [Have] police number available. Secure apartment building (don't have name on mailbox or buzzer button).
- Know thyself! Know my emergency contacts and transportation methods. Know where all documentation needed is at hand if immediate evacuation is imminent.
- Well, it really gave me a few more ideas on what to do to keep me and kids safer. For example, showing them how to use the telephone and what number to press in case of emergency.

Intention to avoid the abuser, for some, by moving

- I don't have any children. For me, safety will be to stay away and out of the way of those who are bothering me. I am scared to be by myself, in public.
- I will keep strong and still try to stay away from him as long as I can.
- I plan to stay away from him, just until I am strong enough to say "NO." I don't want him and I don't need him.
- Do not contact him whatsoever. Once in a while, I'll go visit my family or have them come and visit me.
- We need to find our own house that is hopefully away from my common-law husband.
- I need to obtain housing where I can make sure they are safe.
- Find a place in a safe area
- Don't go back to abuser. Find my own home and have limit to visitations with baby.
- I will relocate and then find friends that have my best interest in mind.
- I am leaving the province and I'm getting an EPO and charging my ex for the abuse. I will do everything in my power to keep my children safe.
- I have found a rental and I will be starting a new job. My partner probably thinks I have fled back to Toronto, where I was born and raised. There is little likelihood she will search for me in Calgary.
- Made me see that going my own way will keep me and my daughter safer. We are safer away from him. I am moving back to Edmonton.

### **3. The importance of children's safety**

- Before having my son I probably wouldn't get out of the state right away; but just looking at my son (now 2 months) I wasn't going to let him near an angry unfit person like that and let him suffer with the emotional abuse I have.
- I have to think about my child's safety and what I would do if I were in this situation again.
- I felt very angry because I allowed my children to see and hear what I went through.
- Talk to kids more about safety not only about at home but out of the house too.
- Made me realize how important and how determined I am to keep my children safe.
- More aware of different levels of abuse and how they can affect not just myself but my children too.
- I always intended to keep my child safe and have done a good job at it. My daughter was not exposed to violence and will never be. We will not be around abusive people ever again.
- Talk to others about my concerns, as well as children. Keep in close contact with caregivers (available) and make a safety plan with children and not publish address or phone number.
- To go through the courts for visitation. No contact.
- I will get restraining order and supervised visits if needed.

- When I see my boys hurting I'm hurting - I don't want them around any abuse.
- My child is safe. I came here on my own and I realize I can't get into bad relationships if I want her in my life.
- I want to protect myself and my children better. Being away from their Dad is safe. I want to be free from violence.

#### **4. Awareness of and intention to use community resources more often**

##### Awareness of resources.

- I thought my actions and safety were never enough, especially for my children, but there is help out there
- I have a plan, more support and education (tools) to guide me.
- Well I know that there are people willing to help.
- I now know that there is help out there no matter where I am.
- Knowing the cycle of abuse and recognizing the signs. To know that there is somewhere and someone out there who knows and understands and is willing to help.
- I'm learning to know more resources (Saamis, Shelter, Police etc). I got a booklet in Spanish with information about domestic violence.

##### Intention to use police and legal assistance more

- I will keep reporting to the police and ask them to remove him from my property.
- I am still in the process of getting a restraining order and I am going to pursue this until I get it.
- Use a police escort to retrieve some personal belongings.
- Be more willing to inform authorities and can ask for help.
- Get a divorce, follow through with legal papers - check that no contact still in place.
- If we are in danger I will phone police, and then deal with the situation.
- I will phone the police for help, or who-ever can help if I happen to meet or run into him by accident and if I pick up my stuff I will get a police escort.
- I have been in contact with the authorities to inform of the circumstances. Knowing there are such supportive and helpful people, such as the shelter, will enforce my rights and my children's rights to be taken seriously and protected.
- I am now more confident in trusting the police to help me with abusers. I trust the police now.

#### **5. Intention to implement personal changes**

##### The importance of personal changes

- It all came down to family and thinking about extended family. I know that I need to tell my family how I'm doing and not to hide anything that's bothering me. I have family that will support me along with friends.
- I realize this could get much worse and there is no way I should even consider going back; it could take years of change to get to that point. I am grieving the dream but know more clearly that my actions will keep us safe.
- To go with my gut instinct, to take things more slowly and not to rush into another relationship.



- I have to think about my safety. I always thought I could help my husband, but I realize that I could only help myself.
- I began to feel that I am not as helpless and weak/vulnerable as I believed and hold on to the hope that my support network (the shelters have helped me to build up) will help me learn how to keep safe until I learn how to do so for myself better.
- I plan on continuing counselling and surrounding myself with healthy, intuitive and supportive individuals. I plan on fighting for change and continuing the call for equality. I plan on not just surviving but succeeding.
- Makes me strong. Don't let anyone put you down.
- I need to stand firm on my own two feet.
- I'm getting too old for this, it's starting to affect my health like my blood pressure has gone up. My kids are still young and need me. I need peace and quiet and stability for my mind, soul and body.

#### Specific changes to self and/or lifestyle

- Take control of my own life. Being very independent. Not someone controlling me.
- I think I will take action, cultural-wise, fast more, take part in cultural events, pray, go to a sun dance rely on the Creator, put him first.
- First of all I would like to learn how to control my own emotions and avoid unnecessary violence. I also want to protect my children from witnessing any abuse and teach them that abuse is unacceptable.
- I plan to have time for only my kids in the next 6 months to year at least NO MEN.
- I want to be around positive people and safe places.
- Refill myself with positive thinking. Find a new place to live and a job.
- I plan to really get to know my next partner inside and out before placing myself in a dangerous situation.
- Go to programs; try to go to school and get a job to support myself and my kids.
- One thing is I plan not to go back, and to go for counselling and support group. A group of women who have been in abusive relationships.
- See a counsellor and go to AA meetings.
- Will look for types of counselling or advice on how to understand my weakness to the abuser and learn how to become stronger in myself to be able to not get lured back to the relationship.
- Set more boundaries, be aware of using "NO" more often. Think of the consequences of choices and setting or not setting boundaries.

#### **6. "No" responses to these questions**

##### Feels unable to obtain help from police/other authority

- My thoughts have not changed as I am continually let down by the powers of authority which have failed me and my children. The system is here to protect the white, the upper middle class and the middle class. The rest of us are slipping through the cracks.
- I don't know if I'll ever feel safe until the police find him and put him away. All I want is for him to leave me alone and to stop hurting me.
- I don't believe that I can put any confidence in the police to ensure my safety or that of my children. I am becoming more aware of my surroundings and planning for my safety.

#### Continued barriers to safety

- To not ever let him know where I am. Or move to second stage; but I am undecided about that as I have a 17 son I need to be near. I love him and he will come home; if he can't come to WINGS OF PROVIDENCE (EDMONTON) I won't go there.
- To keep my kids safe, I can't work.
- The Danger Assessment is just that, a danger assessment. It does not help you learn about protecting yourself or your children. Being able to go to group sessions with other women and learn that the way we feel will help and being able to stay in a protected place. No abused woman is safe if they have nowhere to go.

#### Was already aware and safety plan was already in place

- I always had a safety plan ready.
- I've done safety planning in the past.
- I already know how abusive they were by the way they treated me and having to go through that all the time, so I was very, very, aware.
- I think I am doing everything that I can already.
- Not much to add. It did not do anything for me.

#### Does not think she is in danger

- I feel I am not in danger and I don't have to live in fear.
- In my own mind, I would like to think that I am not in danger. I would like to think that he won't hurt me again. It's only the manipulating and emotional issues that I need to deal with.

#### Does not feel able to resist the abuser

- The scenery has changed for me, but the situation still remains the same. I still remain in contact concerning the kids. I am still not strong enough to resist and I still give in.
- I love this guy.
- For me to stay away from this abuser? We are all just human and in love for all the wrong reasons. Thank you very much.

#### Feels unable to change the situation

- It means I am aware about safety but my self-esteem is so low that who cares about safety? I am 49 years old and had enough with it all.
- I don't think my abuse situation is going to change. But now I understand how my situation looked before and now.
- Because I always knew, just couldn't get away.

#### Feels confused and unsure

- I'm so confused, but maybe it did help. It doesn't feel directed at my situation. The police were very concerned for me; this helped show there was a reason for some concern but most of my answers were no and if I didn't leave then it would have been a lower risk (although I know I had to leave for my son's sake).
- That I don't know yet but I will have to think about it very hard.

## Field notes

A number of notes were written into the outcome form by shelter staff who wished to clarify a client's situation. Most of these comments concerned the risk factors (e.g. partner recently released from prison, current pregnancy or loss of child custody) or special issues that a client was facing (e.g. learning disorder, language barrier, addiction, medical complications related to injuries sustained through abuse). These comments are not reported below, as most are also reflected in the clients' own comments. However, some comments were reflective of issues with the completion of the Danger Assessment, or other questions that could impact the accuracy of measurement. A brief synopsis of these comments is provided so that these observations can be part of the discussion of changes to the Danger Assessment protocol.

- Client's uncle was murdered by her partner while defending her. Partner has been imprisoned for murder and is now released, leaving her fearing for her safety. Since partner has been imprisoned for past year, *DA may not reflect level of danger client faces now.*
- Abuser is not the spouse/partner, but another family member.
- Client completed a small portion of the calendar, and then decided it takes too long, and she cannot recall the dates.
- Filling assessment research tool was difficult for her, low level of comprehension and literacy. Client found the research outcomes very difficult to answer. She found the questions confusing. Client had low level of comprehension and could barely read and write. Client requested writer read questions and record responses for her due to poor literacy skills.
- Staff read questions to client and explained meanings to words difficult for client's comprehension. Translated to layman's terms.
- Client was tired and feeling overwhelmed.
- Client had difficulty understanding questions.
- Client also stated that it was hard for her to remember specific dates as she has trained herself to forget about this. Otherwise she will drive herself crazy thinking about it.
- This subject was ESL- She left her partner 2 years ago. He recently moved to her town again and following 3 incidents of emotional abuse she was afraid enough to leave town. Questions on this section did not apply to her - she has left her province to get away from him. She asked for her certificate anyway. Given.

### **5.3 RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM SHELTER WORKERS**

Part way through the project, the research team assembled qualitative data from shelter workers using the danger assessment. Shelter workers identified some of the successes, challenges and innovations implemented when working with the Danger Assessment as part of this research project.

#### The Successes:

Staff from all nine shelters affirmed their perspective that employing the Calendar in addition to administering the 20 item Danger Assessment Questionnaire enhanced their ability to support

women. They were better able to identify and understand the level of danger that women were in. In their words,

“Working with the women on the Calendar helped further the trust connection.”

“A wonderful way to see patterns and frequency of abuse.”

“Many women spoke frankly. It allowed them to open up without being asked to start any one place, but rather a simple yes or no which would open up conversation more easily.”

“Seeing the awareness they had after and the client being able to recognize it. It is knowledge they will take with them for a lifetime.”

“You see change!”

“It helped us moved forward more quickly.”

#### The Challenges:

“Women tend to minimize the abuse”

“Overcoming fears about child welfare impacts.”

“It was heart-breaking to hear some of the stories.”

“Very confusing for women with low comprehension and literacy levels, even when the questions are read to them.”

In addition, shelter workers recognized that for many aboriginal women, their abuse was not from their intimate partner, so not always applicable for aboriginal women experiencing violence who come to shelter.

#### The Innovations:

A crisis worker, during a group session, invited the women to fill in their own calendars individually, but while in the community of group work. This provided them with support and encouragement. The result was notable: reluctance seemed to fade and the women encouraged one another to take on the painful task. They emerged from the session glad to have done the work.

We discovered that a few of the research shelters have created intake questions that, once answered, enable the woman to respond to the very tough 20 questions of the Danger Assessment tool.

## **5.4 RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

During the course of the project, shelter partners in Calgary, Medicine Hat and Peace River worked with ACWS to invite key community stakeholders to discuss both interim and final findings

with the Danger Assessment work. Individuals in attendance included Crown Prosecutors, police, elected officials or their representatives, Victims Services personnel, probation, a school principal, civic employees, funders, school board representatives, lifelong learning, health, children's services staff, and Metis social services. Some of their comments and observations follow:

*From the Police:*

The DA is right on; a good way to integrate practice.

Great value; and while uncorroborated, may open the door for women to be more willing to step into the criminal justice process.

Police representatives expressed great interest in the Calendar application and the potential for support for statements that police gather from women.

Police also raised the question of shelters sharing information without the woman's expressed consent if she is in fact in great danger and does not want involvement with the justice system. Raises the question of need to clarify shelter protocol and practice with respect to "duty to warn" etc., as related to implementation of the Danger Assessment.

*From Learning Institutions:*

Would be wonderful to analyze the calendars to inform the school of any potential triggering events for the child. (mentioned in two different focus groups)

Excited about the tool and how we might work more closely with shelter; have adult learning as a pathway to help.

*From Municipal Staff:*

Would like to see training on the Danger Assessment broadened to community and housing society workers

The research project is a good fit with FCSS focus on supporting evidence based practice.

*From Children's Services:*

Saw the tool as victim focused. It feels different and can be a therapeutic tool. If greater awareness triggers a response, then how do we intervene effectively as community collaborators? There is great potential to collaborate to build awareness and assist the woman.

*From Metis Social Services:*

Asking so many questions may not be the right approach with aboriginal women but rather to sit down, have tea and look at sharing information.

*From a Crown Prosecutor:*

If the Danger Assessment can help women be more steadfast, it is most welcome.

And finally from both *Probation* and *Victims Services*:

Sees tools as a self assessment. Solution focused.

Generally, stakeholders commented that they saw great potential in using this project and its results in furthering training in their community and in furthering collaboration to assist in keeping women and children safe.

## Section VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6.1 PRACTICE-FOCUSED RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** A number of the findings in this study point to the need for improved access for abused women and children to second stage shelters that allow them to remain safely housed while creating a new family future. Access to second stage shelters is particularly an issue for Aboriginal women living in the Northern region of the province. Both infrastructure and service supports should be addressed as essential components of assistance to this very high-risk population.

**Recommendation 2:** Aboriginal women are over-represented in the shelters in general and are at higher risk than the other cultural groups. This pattern has been a consistent theme for many years. An action plan needs to be developed between ACWS, their member shelters, government and community stakeholders to address these issues.

**Recommendation 3:** Women at second stage shelters were found to have higher risk levels than those at emergency shelters. This pattern probably reflects a longer history of abuse, greater severity of abuse, increased awareness, and a decision to leave the abusive relationship. However, additional study is needed to fully understand this group and to identify proven and promising practices in risk reduction for this group. It is clear, however, given the elevated risk level for this group, that second stage shelters need to be secure environments to ensure the safety of the women and children in their care.

**Recommendation 4:** The use of the DA significantly contributes to women's safety, in that it helps them to estimate risk more realistically and to better understand the need for safety planning for themselves and their children. All shelters in Alberta should be encouraged to implement the DA as a "promising practice" that will assist them in both individual advocacy for women and children, as well as provincial advocacy.

**Recommendation 5:** For second stage shelters, efforts should be made to obtain the most recent DA results for a client if she has come directly from an emergency shelter. If there has been no emergency shelter stay, or if there has been a period of more than 2 months since her last emergency shelter stay, the DA should be re-administered at the second stage shelter.

**Recommendation 6:** The following additional steps toward implementation of the DA as a standard component of shelter practice should be considered:

- a) Development of a single protocol for administration of the Danger Assessment tool should be developed to support uniform application across the province;
- b) Women who are not fluent in English should, whenever possible, have an interpreter available to assist them to complete the DA. This is particularly true of the shelters in the South of Alberta where the proportion of non-English speakers is highest, due to higher rates of immigration;
- c) Shelters that are currently using the DA but did not participate in the study should be assisted to adopt the recommended protocol for administration;

- d) In general, the DA is to be administered to women early in a woman's emergency shelter stay as the basis for safety planning, especially considering that some women may leave shelter within a few days after admission. In second stage shelter settings, administration of the DA can be later, after there has been more time to develop a rapport with residents. Each shelter would develop a protocol regarding when the DA is to be administered considering length of stay, and both the benefits and barriers identified in this report by both staff and women in undertaking the Calendar and the danger assessment.
- e) Women are to be advised that if it is too upsetting for them to complete the calendar, they may stop at any time. Shelter staff should provide encouragement and support during the process.
- f) This study was unique in that it was the first to use the DA Calendar to identify incidents of non-physical abuse (e.g. verbal, emotion/psychological). This additional component should be continued. Women's responses to its inclusion resulted in comments to the effect that these types of abuse were often more hurtful to them than physical abuse was. There were also responses from women whose abuse history did not include physical abuse, who stated that including these questions validated their experience – they understood that there didn't have to be physical abuse for the abuse they suffered to be 'real'.
- g) Proven practice for the Calendar ensures that it is completed in the woman's own hand to ensure that it can be used in court.

**Recommendation 7:** The DA training manual currently in development in Alberta should reflect learnings from this project related to DA administration and be revised to be consistent with a provincial protocol when it is complete. Its contents should be consistent with the recommendations from this report concerning the importance of standardized and accurate implementation of the DA.

## 6.2 CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH PROJECTS

The process and outcomes of this study have been very important learning experiences for ACWS and for the participating shelters and their community partners. It has created a very substantial beginning for the development of future research and practice initiatives that will continue to build knowledge based on the work done by Alberta shelters. With these future initiatives in mind, the ACWS/shelter learning collaborative should consider the following recommendations that arise from their experiences in completing this action research project.

**Recommendation 8:** ACWS should have a stronger role in supporting research sites to monitor study protocol implementation in future studies. If research on the Danger Assessment continues, ACWS should provide support to the shelters to use both DA components in sequence - the Calendar first, followed by the Questionnaire.

**Recommendation 9:** In the forthcoming study of the province's on-reserve shelters, it will be important to ensure that confidentiality of responses is reinforced with women using the shelters, as they are concerned about individually identifiable data and/or about Children's Service or Police access to information.



**Recommendation 10:** ACWS should consider hiring an internal research position to assist shelter personnel to participate in research activities and to ensure that research design and materials are developed with ease and accuracy of analysis in mind.

**Recommendation 11:** Future ACWS Danger Assessment research projects should ensure that:

- a) A standard set of variables is collected by each shelter;
- b) The variables use a standard, optimal format;
- c) A standard protocol is in place at all shelters for the meaning and implementation of each question in the data set;
- d) All necessary information gathered in the Calendar component is recorded and entered for the analysis; and
- e) All variables in the database are linked through the use of non-identifying case numbers to permit full data analysis.

**Recommendation 12:** Continue to work toward the inclusion of more shelters in the learning collaborative, with special attention to regional representation.

**Recommendation 13:** The large Aboriginal population using women's emergency shelters is not well understood at present. Classifying these women as 'Aboriginal' loses important information on diversity within the group. Additional demographic information should be collected to reflect this diversity, including, for example, her First Nation, her current status, and her usual residence prior to coming to the shelter (e.g. on or off-reserve).

There are important differences between Aboriginal women and others that also need further exploration and clarification, and may require a different approach to assessment. Consultation with the staff of shelters that have large Aboriginal populations should be undertaken to further clarify some of these issues (e.g. should the DA be the tool of choice, given that many women in this group do not wish to complete all questions? How can assessment reflect the fact that abusers may be more diverse – including family members and others as well as intimate partners?).

**Recommendation 14:** Further study of sub-groups within the shelter population is needed to clarify their patterns of shelter use. These sub-groups of interest include:

- a) Women whose number of stays in either type of shelter exceeds 4;
- b) Women whose length of stay in emergency shelters is very brief (2-3 days) – do they have special needs that the shelters are not meeting currently? Are they returning to an abusive relationship? Do they differ in any important way from women whose length of stay is longer?
- c) The qualitative responses for a small number of women (probably under 5%) were indicative of a sense of hopelessness and despair that they could not get the help they needed to get away from their abuser. Although the number is small, if it were extrapolated to the overall shelter population, it would include a significant number of women. Further study is needed to identify these women while they are in shelters, and to determine and provide the interventions they need to resolve what appear to be failures from the system of help.

- d) Batterers whose abuse brings women to shelter, including their demographics, any changes in behaviour after a partner's stay in shelter, their involvement in battering programs and the effects of different interventions on the woman and her family.

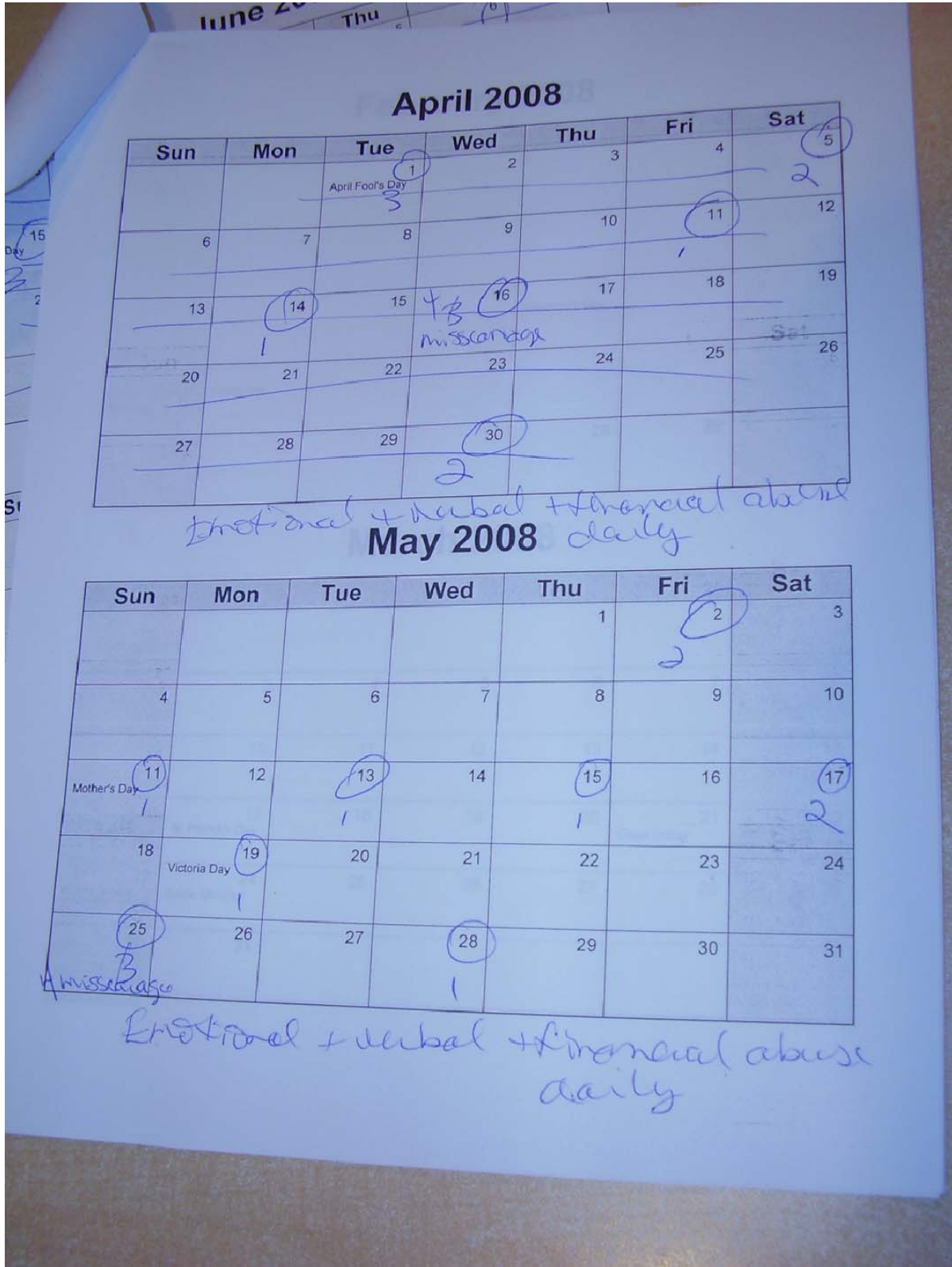
**Recommendation 15:** This project used a pre-post rating of women's perception of their risk of further abuse before and after completing the Danger Assessment. However, the 'pre' measure was completed retrospectively, which may have biased the outcome measurement. To more accurately measure the impact of Danger Assessment completion on women's perception of risk, the design of future studies should endeavour to include a true 'pre' assessment of women's perception of their risk before administering the Danger Assessment components.

## APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire and Calendar Sample

### DANGER ASSESSMENT 20 QUESTIONS

YES or NO	SCORE	QUESTION
_____	_____	1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?
_____	_____	2. Does your partner own a gun?
_____	_____	3. Have you left your partner after living together during the past year? (If you have never lived with your partner, check here _____)
_____	_____	4. Is your partner unemployed?
_____	_____	5. Has your partner ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon? (If yes, was the weapon a gun? _____)
_____	_____	6. Does your partner threaten to kill you?
_____	_____	7. Has your partner avoided being arrested for domestic violence?
_____	_____	8. Do you have a child that is not his?
_____	_____	9. Has your partner ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?
_____	_____	10. Does your partner ever try to choke you?
_____	_____	11. Does your partner use illegal drugs? By drugs, I mean "uppers" or amphetamines, speed, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", street drugs or mixtures.
_____	_____	12. Is your partner an alcoholic or problem drinker?
_____	_____	13. Does your partner control most or all of your daily activities? For instance: does he tell you who you can be friends with, when you can see your family, how much money you can use, or when you can take the car? (If he tries, but you do not let him, check here: _____)
_____	_____	14. Is your partner violently and constantly jealous of you? For instance, does he say "If I can't have you, no one can"?
_____	_____	15. Have you ever been beaten by your partner while you were pregnant? (If you have never been pregnant by him, check here: _____)
_____	_____	16. Has your partner ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
_____	_____	17. Does your partner threaten to harm your children?
_____	_____	18. Do you believe your partner is capable of killing you?
_____	_____	19. Does your partner follow or spy on you, leave threatening notes or messages on answering machine, destroy your property, or call you when you don't want him to?
_____	_____	20. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
_____	_____	<b>TOTAL</b> (note: if the client has never lived with the abuser, subtract 3 from the total score)

# CALENDAR SAMPLE



## APPENDIX 2: ACWS OUTCOMES DATA COLLECTION DOCUMENT

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**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please refer to the following scale when completing the questions below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very low	Low	Somewhat low	Neither low nor high	Somewhat high	High	Very high

BEFORE	rating
1. Rate your awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__
2. Rate your understanding of the level of danger BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__
3. Rate your knowledge of safety planning BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__
4. Rate your readiness to take action to stay safe BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__
5. Rate your confidence that Women's Shelters can help BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__
6. Rate your level of hope BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__
7. Rate the likelihood you would seek help from police BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__
8. Rate the likelihood you would seek help from Child Welfare BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__
9. Rate the likelihood you would take action to keep your children safe BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.	__

NOW	rating
Rate your awareness of the severity and frequency of abuse NOW.	__
Rate your understanding of the level of danger NOW.	__
Rate your knowledge of safety planning NOW.	__
Rate your readiness to take additional action to stay safe NOW.	__
Rate your confidence that Women's Shelters can help NOW.	__
Rate your level of hope NOW.	__
Rate the likelihood you would seek help from police NOW.	__
Rate the likelihood you would seek help from Child Welfare NOW.	__
Rate the likelihood you would take action to keep your children safe NOW.	__

<b>BEFORE</b>	<b>rating</b>	<b>NOW</b>	<b>rating</b>
<b>10. Rate the confidence in your decision to seek help from a Women's Shelter BEFORE completing the Danger Assessment.</b>		<b>Rate the confidence in your decision to seek help from a Women's Shelter NOW.</b>	
<b>11. Are you planning on returning to the relationship?</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided	
<b>12. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = very unlikely, 10 = very likely), how likely is it your partner will be physically abusive with you in the next year?</b>			_____
<b>13. Did you complete the Calendar portion of the Danger Assessment? (If yes, complete question #14; If no, skip to question #15)</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<b>14. Briefly describe your experience completing the Calendar and going into your abuse history in-depth.</b>			
<b>15. Briefly describe your experience completing the Danger Assessment (20-item Questionnaire).</b>			
<b>16. (a) Did answering questions on the Danger Assessment change your view about your abuser/situation?</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>16. (b) If yes, HOW did the Danger Assessment change your view about your abuser/situation? If no, why do you think your view about your abuser/situation has NOT changed?</b>			
<b>17. (a) As a result of completing the Danger Assessment, have your thoughts about safety changed?</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>17. (b) If yes, HOW did completing the Danger Assessment change your thoughts about safety? If no, why do you think your thoughts about safety have NOT changed?</b>			
<b>18. (a) As a result of completing the Danger Assessment, will you do more or less to keep yourself and your children safe?</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> More	<input type="checkbox"/> Less <input type="checkbox"/> No change
<b>18. (b) Please comment on what you plan to do to keep yourself and your children safe?</b>			

Office Staff Please Complete

<b>Shelter Type</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/> Second Stage Shelter
<b>Program Type</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Residential Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Outreach Services
<b>Field Notes</b>		

## APPENDIX 3: ONTARIO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEATH REVIEW COMMITTEE

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Ontario's Domestic Violence Death Review Committee is another example of a pro-active response to femicide. They have identified the following *Common Risk Factors* and consider a case predictable and potentially preventable if there are seven or more known risk factors present (see 2007 Committee report).

1. Actual or pending separation
2. History of domestic violence
3. Perpetrator depressed in the opinions of non-professionals (family, friends, etc)
4. Obsessive behaviour displayed by perpetrator
5. Escalation of violence
6. Prior threats to kill victim
7. Prior threats to commit suicide
8. Prior attempts to isolate victim
9. Access to or possession of firearms
10. Control of most or all of victim's daily activities
11. Excessive alcohol and/or drug use
12. Perpetrator unemployed
13. History of violence outside of family
14. Prior threats with a weapon against victim
15. New partner in victim's life
16. Perpetrator failed to comply with authority
17. Perpetrator was abused and/or witnessed domestic violence as a child
18. Perpetrator displayed sexual jealousy
19. Extreme minimization and/or denial of spousal assault history by perpetrator
20. History of violence or threats against children
21. Prior hostage-taking or forcible confinement
22. Other mental health/psychiatric problems
23. Victim and perpetrator living common-law
24. Child custody or access disputes
25. Presence of stepchildren in the home

# APPENDIX 4: DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

Shelter Research Code: \_\_\_\_\_

## Danger Assessment Research - Client Demographics

<b>Shelter Type</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/> Second Stage Shelter
<b>Number of times accessed Emergency Shelter (if applicable)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> This is my first time in shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Between 2 and 5 times <input type="checkbox"/> Over 5 times		
<b>Number of times accessed Second Stage Shelter (if applicable)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> This is my first time in shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Between 2 and 5 times <input type="checkbox"/> Over 5 times		
<b>Have you completed the Danger Assessment before?</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>If yes, where or with whom?</b> _____		
<b>Gender</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	<b>Age</b> _____
<b>Marital Status</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Separated or living apart <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Common law/live-in <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed		
<b>Primary Language</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		
<b>Cultural Background (check one only)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> First Nation – Status (Aboriginal) <input type="checkbox"/> French Canadian <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern European <input type="checkbox"/> First Nation – Non-Status (Aboriginal) <input type="checkbox"/> African <input type="checkbox"/> Latin, Central, & South American <input type="checkbox"/> Inuit (Aboriginal) <input type="checkbox"/> American <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern Culture <input type="checkbox"/> Métis (Aboriginal) <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean Origin <input type="checkbox"/> Western European <input type="checkbox"/> Potential for Registration (Aboriginal) <input type="checkbox"/> East & Southeast Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> English Canadian <input type="checkbox"/> East Indian Culture <input type="checkbox"/> N/A		
<b>Types of Abuse Experienced (check all that apply)</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological or Emotional Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Abuse to Family Members <input type="checkbox"/> Destruction of Property <input type="checkbox"/> Harm or Cruelty to Pets <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Threats of Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Injury Due to Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Witness of Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Neglect <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Stalking <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
<b>If other, please describe</b> _____		
<b>Relationship to Abuser (you are currently fleeing)</b> _____		
<b>Length of abuse</b> _____		