



Building Opportunities for Women (B.O.W.)

*Financial contribution from
Avec le financement de*



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Connecting to Community after Intimate Partner Violence

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KH Innovations Conference, Toronto

13:30 EST 02/10/25



presents:

Innovations in Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Trauma- and Violence-Informed Health Promotion

A NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Oct 1–2, 2025



Sudbury YWCA Geneva House is located in N'Swakamok. The work of the BOW Program takes place on the traditional territories of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek First Nation and Wahnapiatae First Nation. We recognize the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this presentation,
participants will know more about:

- ▶ The establishment of the BOW Program as a virtual and in-person group support for women in Northeastern Ontario
- ▶ The significance of participant-led methodologies for addressing intimate partner violence in the context of Northeastern Ontario
- ▶ The importance of program evaluation and participants' responses to the BOW Program

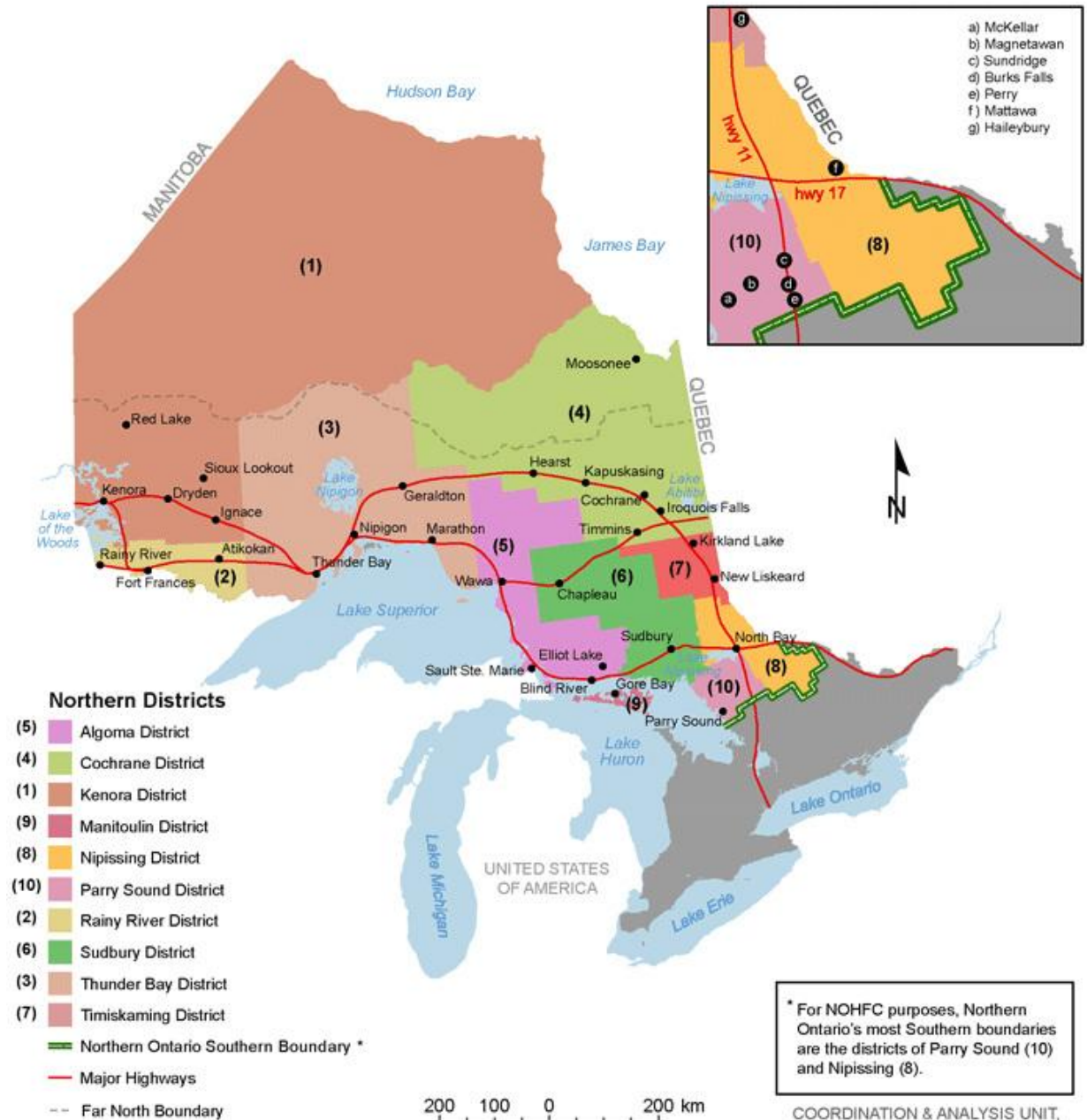
What is the BOW Program?

- ▶ The BOW Program is a 12-week support group for women 16+ who self-identify as having experienced, or feel they are at risk of experiencing, intimate partner violence.

What is the BOW Program?

- ▶ With the ultimate goal of health promotion, participants learn about gendered violence, and personal, social and financial awareness and skills
- ▶ Trauma-informed and culturally relevant approaches applied
 - ▶ Remote or in-person delivery to 10-15 people at a time
 - ▶ Skilled facilitation over 12 weeks
 - ▶ Referrals and resources

Where is the
BOW Program
located?



Who are the participants?

- ▶ Self-identified women, ages 16-84
- ▶ Formal education: < gr 10 - postgraduates
- ▶ Language: English, French, Urdu, Luganda, Gujarati, Hindi, Farsi and Spanish
- ▶ ~ 30-40% of participants self-identify as Black, racialized, Indigenous
- ▶ Commonalities: isolation from peers, family, and local services; unsure how to improve access to education, housing and healthcare; interest in learning more about gendered violence

The BOW Program
reached
111 participants
between
2023-2025

- ▶ Group 1 - 14 registered, 9 completed
- ▶ Group 2 - 9 registered, 5 completed
- ▶ Group 3 - 6 registered, 6 completed
- ▶ Group 4 - 6 registered, 6 completed
- ▶ Group 5 - 11 registered, 9 completed
- ▶ Group 6 - 6 registered, 5 completed
- ▶ Group 7 - 36 registered, 25 completed
- ▶ Group 8 - 23 registered, 20 completed
- ▶ Group 9 - 30 registered, 25 completed
- ▶ Group 10 --
- ▶ Group 11 --

The BOW Program Curriculum

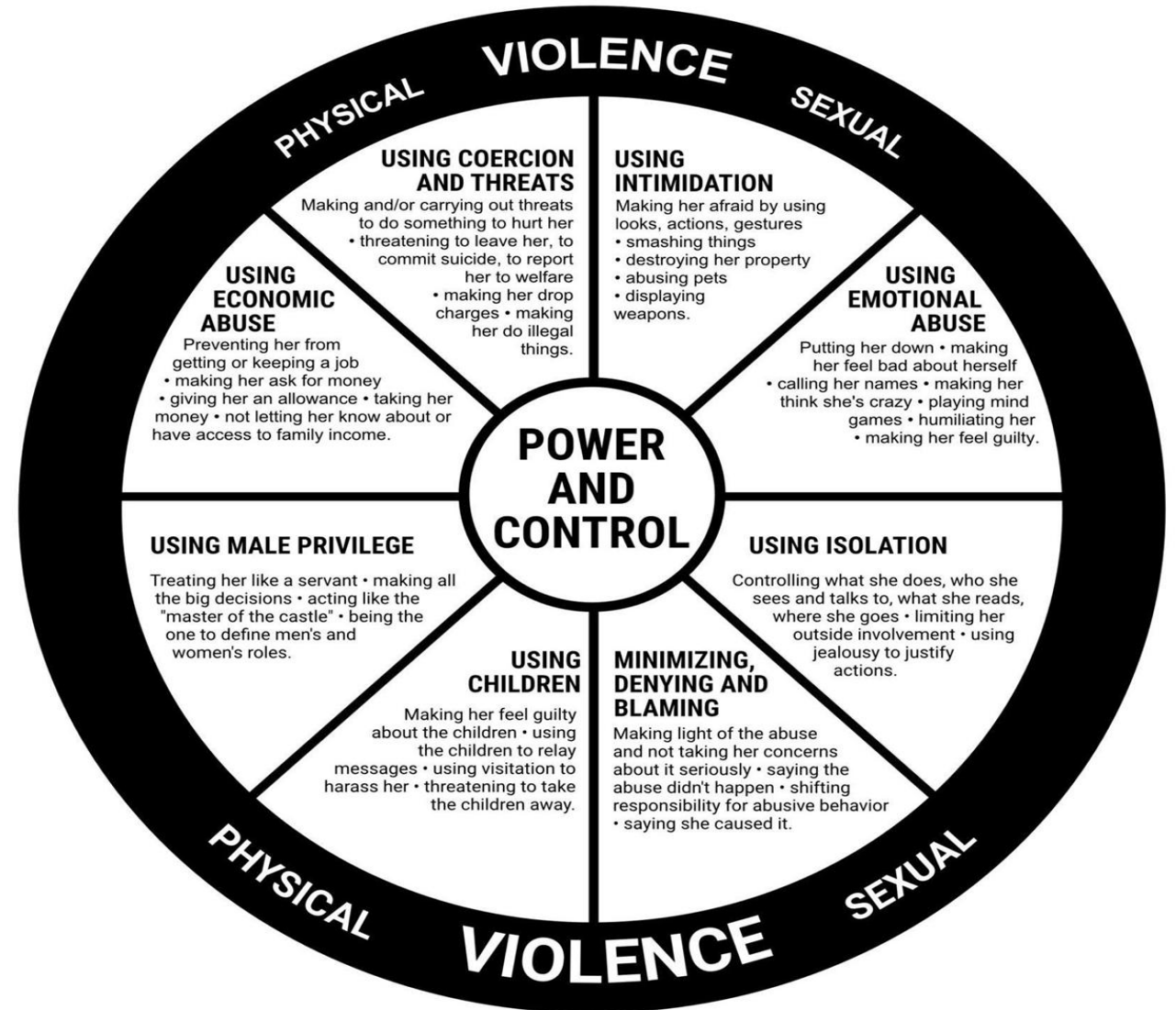
- ▶ Week 1: Introduction and goal-setting
- ▶ Week 2: Identify abuse and unhealthy relationships
- ▶ Week 3: Staying safe and free from abuse
- ▶ Week 4: Stress management and relaxation
- ▶ Week 5: Communication skills
- ▶ Week 6: Responding to change

The BOW Program Curriculum

- ▶ Week 7: The change challenge
- ▶ Week 8: Self-esteem - feeling good about ourselves
- ▶ Week 9: Looking at our labels
- ▶ Week 10: Decision making
- ▶ Week 11: Budgeting and survival on a low income/financial literacy
- ▶ Week 12: Affirming ourselves

The BOW Program Curriculum

Example of one workshop's visual content

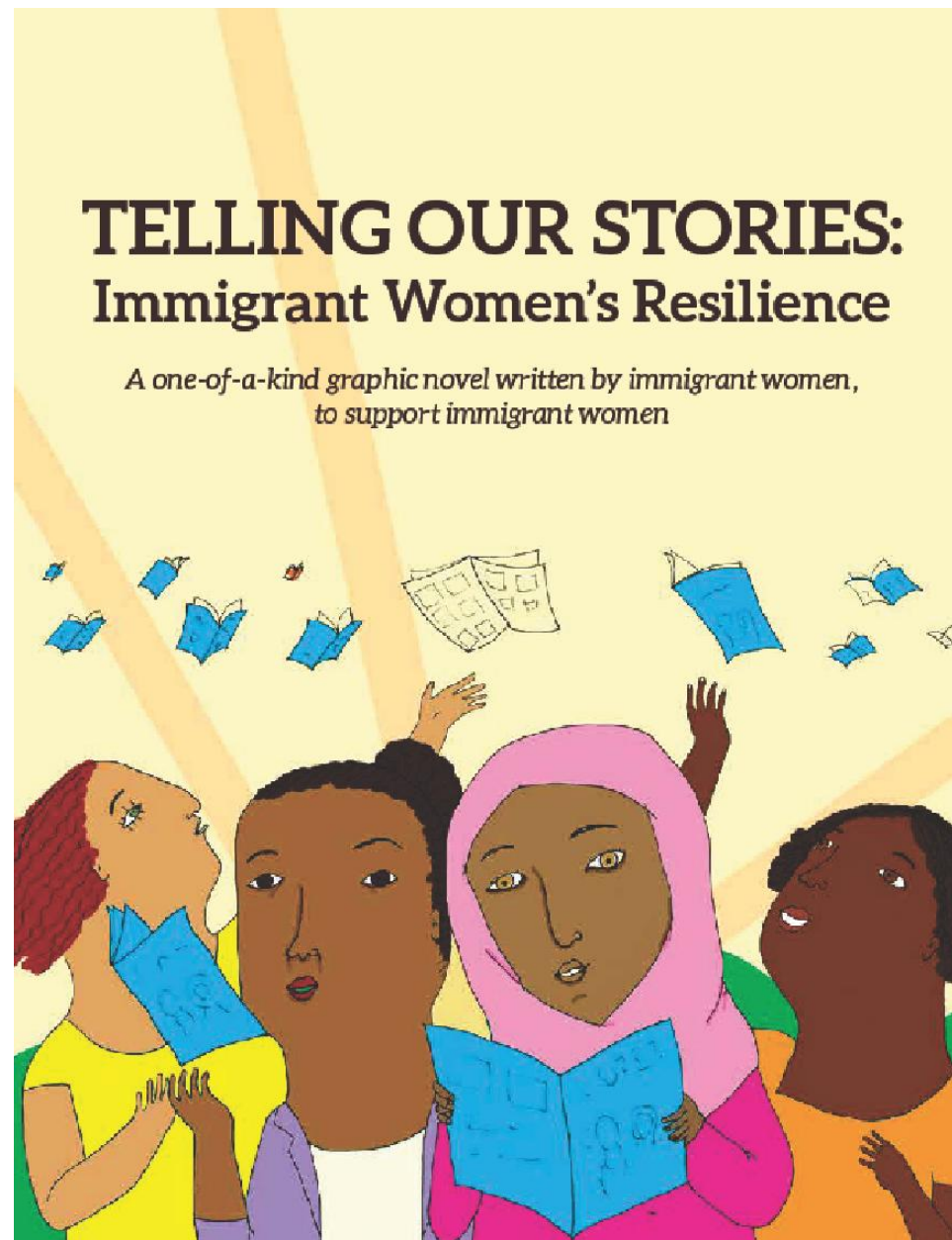


DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.TheDuluthModel.org

The BOW Program Curriculum

Telling Our Stories:
Immigrant Women's
Resilience
(Ontario Council of Agencies
Serving Immigrants, 2017)



Participant-led Methodologies

The BOW Program Methodology is premised on the importance of:

- ▶ Connection
- ▶ Reflection
- ▶ Skill-building

These elements are built into the curriculum, an ongoing program evaluation and a qualitative research intervention

Connection

- ▶ Meaningful connections are essential to empowering participants to get the most out of the group, to access services they are entitled to in the community. “What did you like most?”:
- ▶ “Learning your own worth”; “To share with different people” (Group 4)
- ▶ “Feeling support for newcomer and woman issues” (Group 3)

Self-Reflection

▶ Opportunity for self-reflection:

Participants express improved confidence to test their knowledge and beliefs. For example:

- ▶ “[I learned] Decision making and [how to be] responsive to the change”...and “How strong I am and how I love to help others (Group 5)
- ▶ “I was looking for a safe space to, you know, rebuild...explore new opportunities...I’ve started planning for, for doing my education. And I feel more confident now.” (Group 9)

Skill-Building

- ▶ Skill-building: The format of the BOW Program allows for focused thematic discussions into which resources can be introduced. Participants are prompted to offer suggestions about skills and topics they want to know more about. For example, many participants indicated the workshops help them learn:

“How to be confident”

(Multiple participants, 2022-2025)



Participant-driven methodologies are reflected in:

- ▶ Curriculum development
- ▶ Facilitation
- ▶ Program evaluation

Curriculum development:

Participants
require BOW to
be responsive -
program
evaluation

“I didn’t realize until I was much older that I had been in abusive relationships...I grew up in a house where there was violence around,... when I got married... it was just the norm... you’re not getting hit, but you’re being bullied, you’re being manipulated for your money, you’re being gaslit, you’re being... like, this is still abuse.”(Group 9)

Curriculum development:

Responsive to
experience and
new results from
program evals

“And then the financial literacy piece, like teaching you how to budget properly, teaching you... Like, nobody ever taught me about interest rates on credit cards. So, like, if I had been a 30-something or a 20-something woman, and had been able to learn about that, we may not have ended up bankrupt.”

(Group 9)

Facilitation:

Helps
participants
make
connections
independently

“The one thing that helped me was not learning directly from just the facilitator. There were most topics where there was a collaborative discussion, and rooms with participants of the program. So, that helped me... to learn from the views of individual women who were partaking in the program.” (Group 9)

Program Evaluation:

Reflects impact
of the BOW
Program

“One person in program told me ‘I am enough. I am loved, I am valued’, and... she said to me that I am precious, you know? ... I’ve never received such positive words before, and that actually helped me. In fact, it was a great experience. I was able to tell someone else that they feel loved, they are loved. They are kind. That was a big, ... That was a big thing for me.”

(Group 9)

Program Evaluation:

Reflects impact of the BOW Program

- ▶ “After the BOW, I got to realize that not every word from my husband or my spouse is... is normal. There are some that is actually affecting my mental health... after the program, I was able to communicate it to my husband, .. he doesn't beat me, you know. He knows how to talk down on me, and... like, make me feel bad or worthless. So I was able to communicate what I learned from the program to him. And, to be sincere, he was... he was... he apologized, and, you know... And promised to make amends.”

(Group 9)



Project Impact, 111 participants:

- ▶ 90 % participants report changes in knowledge and/or skills
- ▶ 90% participants report changes in behaviour
- ▶ 82% participants report improved health outcomes

Conclusions

- ▶ The BOW Program is not a substitute for individual and institutional accountability for ending violence in Northeastern communities
- ▶ The BOW Program helps participants reconnect to community after intimate partner violence and some feel it could even be preventative

Conclusions

- ▶ Participant-centred methodologies for addressing intimate partner violence help create and maintain flexible, responsive and effective programs

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