

COMMUNITY

Saulteau
First Nation

Project:

A Round Dance to strengthen cultural ties and traditional practices in an Aboriginal community

Saulteau First Nation, Chetwynd, BC

The Saulteau First Nation is located at the east end of Moberly Lake, which is about 100 km southwest of Fort St. John on Highway 29 in British Columbia. The community is also near Chetwynd, B.C. in the Northeast region of BC. There is one reserve, East Moberly Lake, spread over 3025.8 hectares, with a population of approximately 900 people. The Saulteau First Nation is affiliated with the Treaty 8 Tribal Association, whose territory includes Fort Nelson to Mcleod Lake, and stretches up to Grande Prairie in Alberta.

In the early fall of 2014, under the direction of Kelly Dunn, Director of Family and Social Development, the community conducted a two day “Train the Trainer”

workshop on human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The purpose of the training was to equip leaders and community workers with knowledge about the definition of human trafficking and indicators to watch for. In addition information was presented about how to assist and support emerging trafficked persons in the community. Participants also provided input on activities to

“A Round Dance,” explains Kelly, “is usually conducted in Winter, before the Spring, and it happens indoors. Everyone can participate as it is an opportunity for cleansing, healing and renewal; people dance in a circle as drummers beat their drums. It is a day filled with prayer, songs, the giving of gifts, and a feast. The impact in the community is long lasting; it creates renewal, healing, refreshes the sense of community and is a reminder of who we are as a people together.”



Presenters and organizers of the Train the Trainer workshop on Human Trafficking: Left to right: Victor Porter, Carrie Paquette, Melissa Hyland, Kristan Willis, and Jaret Hunter.

help implement learning about human trafficking among community members, and effective ways to raise awareness about this issue. Activities also included strengthening cultural ties and traditional practices for community members, including youth who may be vulnerable and easy to exploit.

One of the activities that the community held after the two day “Train the Trainer” workshop on human trafficking and sexual exploitation was a traditional Round Dance.

A broad invitation is sent out within Treaty 8 First Nations to invite anyone to participate in the Round Dance. The Round Dance often has a memorial theme to remember and honour loved ones who have passed on.

“*In the Round Dance we are all equal,” adds Kelly. “And for me, equality is the stronger symbolism, the overarching theme in the Round Dance. It is that sense and experience of being equal, to have equal value, rights and power, the best antidote against human trafficking and exploitation. The exploitation of another person requires first and foremost a situation of power imbalance, of vulnerability. The Round Dance reminds us of our equal status, strengthens our spirits, and renews our respect for our dignity and the dignity of everyone in the community.*”