

RE-INTRODUCING THE WOMEN'S SHARING CIRCLE ISABELLE AUBE



Guy Dancause introduces Isabelle Aube, President Native Way Training Services who works as a professional facilitator, presenter and keynote speaker. She recently joined the Women's Sharing Circle team as a host. Isabelle outlines the vision for the newly re-vamped Women's Sharing Circle, an interactive online community where women from all backgrounds share experiences and help each other succeed.



EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

prevention, intervention and recovery from workplace abuse.

by Linda Crocket

"Education is the most powerful weapon
you can use to change the world"

- Nelson Mandela

Knowledge is key to prevention of abuse, offering alternatives for cultivating healthy and happy work environments. The prevalence of workplace bullying, lateral violence, and/or mobbing, are bitter realities in our workplaces today and all professions are affected. With our growing level of intelligence and multi-media resources, the skills and tactics of an abuser have become more sophisticated, complex, and difficult to address. Today bullying is no longer just a personality conflict. We have far too many women suffering in silence and feeling hopeless in their workplaces. The goal of this article is to provide a brief overview of bullying, lateral violence and mobbing.

By enhancing awareness, offering tools of prevention, intervention, and tips for recovery, we are empowering women.

The definitions, tactics and risk factors of workplace bullying and lateral violence are the same. The causes may vary.

Workplace bullying: is the repeated targeting of an individual in the work environment, over a period of time, by a peer, group of peers, or leader. It is wilful, deliberate, hostile activities that threaten harm. These are patterns of behaviour intended to offend, harass, intimidate, ridicule, insult an individual. We also see acts of sabotage towards the person, their reputation, credibility, and social relationships. The question about those who bully is around their level of awareness. Many do not know any other way, grew up in a hostile environment i.e.: domestic violence or addictions, and/or were trained to manage staff this way. There are many other causes for workplace abuse that need to be acknowledged.

Lateral Violence: is bullying between peers (equals) in their workplace status. This abuse occurs in all cultures and describes the way people in positions of powerlessness, covertly or overtly direct their dissatisfaction inward toward each other, toward themselves, and toward those less powerful than themselves.

In Aboriginal communities many refer to workplace bullying as lateral violence.

"Internalized oppression is this turning upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people, the distress patterns that result from the racism and oppression of the majority society."

- Suzanne Lipsky

Lateral violence in Aboriginal communities often stems from past oppression, colonisation, intergenerational trauma, and the ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination. The oppressed oppress others. In the workplace Aboriginal employees are often working with relatives which can be a positive or bring added complexity. For example, sometimes the abuser, whether in a leadership position or a peer, can also be a sibling or other relative that the target(s) of abuse lives with.

Mobbing*: is a form of bullying where two or more offenders will turn on one or more targets in the workplace. The mobbing group can be formed of people from any status within the workplace, as can those being mobbed.

Mobbing Example: Eva was shunned by her team of 5 colleagues when one member started a rumour about her. The entire team refused to speak or respond to her. She was ostracized every day for 4 months. This team of educated, mature professionals maintained constant silence and refused to explain what she was accused of. Eva transferred to a new team down the hall. Unfortunately the toxic behaviour followed to her. Though she was innocent Eva was removed from her position without cause. After a total of 9 months of this abuse and dismissal, Eva was too distraught to file a complaint. She

*The word mobbing is preferred to bullying in continental Europe and in those situations where a target is selected and bullied (mobbed) by a group of people rather than by one individual. However, every group has a ringleader. If this leader is an extrovert it will be obvious who is coercing group members into mobbing the selected target. If the ringleader is an introvert type, he or she is likely to be in the background coercing and manipulating group members into mobbing the selected target; introvert ringleaders are much more dangerous than extrovert ringleaders. From *Bully On Line*.

resigned from her hard earned permanent government position after 2 years on long term disability.

Workplace bullying, lateral violence, and mobbing affect all ranks of employees. Research indicates that those in various roles of leadership tend to be the main offenders misusing or abusing their power. But we have also seen cases of practicum students and new hires being abusive to their workplace supervisors.

Bullying is the abuse of power and power comes in many forms.

Workplace bullying, lateral violence, and mobbing share many characteristics. Here are just a few examples:

- gossip, rumours, backstabbing,
- betrayal of trust, humiliation, demeaning, oppression,
- threats (verbal and non verbal), lies,
- ostracizing, blaming, shaming, sabotaging, cruelty,
- withholding important information and/or positive feedback, and/or taking credit for the targets' work.

What are the similarities between harassment and workplace bullying? See www.abrc.ca Information about Bullying Section for a free handout.

Tip: workplace bullying or lateral violence cannot be explained by one theory or resolved with one solution. Each case is unique and complex. Employers and/or employees need to work with qualified workplace bullying professionals. Always check credentials, experience, and references, when hiring anti-bullying professionals.



"Reclaiming our Power" by Angela Fumagalli The young girl represents the empowerment of women to live in full color.



"The Survivor" by Angela Fumagalli The elderly woman represents the survivors from Canada's residential schools.

What can each of us do professionally and personally?

Leaders and staff members would do well to learn about bullying, lateral violence and mobbing. Prevention is about being aware of the signs, risk factors, causes and prevalence of bullying and lateral violence. Having language to identify, report and determine appropriate consequences will help build a sense of safety in your workplace. Individuals can attend a community workshop or invite a professional to present a workshop in the workplace.

Ensure that your workplace policies, code of ethics, complaint process, and your job descriptions are clearly defined, current, monitored and reviewed annually. It is important that your workplace addresses these matters promptly, consistently, respectfully, and provides a fair and supportive process. Here are two examples: when job descriptions are not in place and/or vague, or policies are outdated or non-existent, risk factors for workplace bullying increase. Employers and staff members can advocate for a working group to implement ap-

propriate policies and procedures.

Talk to someone you trust, someone who will support you. It is important to have clarity. Do not isolate yourself. See a workplace bullying consultant, and/or counsellor. Your emotions need to be respected and addressed, this is best with a supportive family member, friend, doctor, or counsellor. Remember you are not alone, there is hope and solutions.

Tip: the resource of mediation is not recommended by the Alberta Bullying Research, Resources and Recovery Centre (ABRC). Bullying is about an imbalance or misuse of power. To prevent bias ABRC recommends hiring 3rd party professionals to investigate, assess and offer recommendations.

All parties need to keep a record of any negative interactions experience, including names of witnesses. It is important to report facts only. Remove emotion, assumptions, hearsay and judgements.

All employees need to maintain healthy work habits and personal boundaries. Eat, sleep, exercise and continue with activities that make you feel happy. This balance will be essential. Employers need to promote and offer resources for healthy workplace standards. Allow your employees to contribute ideas about team building activities or events.

Employers need to role model accountability, healthy workplace practices, and fairness, by demonstrating strong leadership skills. Encourage leaders to attend regular leadership training programs. Practices are forever changing and improving so regular training and monitoring is advised. Your leaders set the tone for the work place environment. When hiring leaders, ensure they have the experience, training and that support will be available for them. Remove and/or avoid the practice of an authoritarian or laissez faire leadership style. These leadership styles will create problems for your staff.

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new".

- Socrates

Statistically more women suffer from various forms of abuse than men. Women of minority cultures are at an even higher risk of abuse. Women in the workplace face additional challenges. Knowledge of workplace bullying, lateral violence and mobbing will help prevent abuse, promote positive interventions, and shorten recovery periods for women in the workplace.

Empowering tip: know yourself well. What specific behaviours trigger you most? What are your own reactions to this abuse? What part of your reaction belongs to the workplace abuser, and what part belongs to wounds from your past? You can empower yourself in the most amazing way when you heal your own wounds and know yourself well. This experience can teach you a great deal about

yourself, be open to the learning. This way you can potentially prevent and/or intervene more quickly in the future. Knowledge empowers us in many ways.

Reach out for information and support.

Women no longer need to suffer in silence or secrecy.

Let us all remove isolation from the tool box of offenders.

In numbers our strength becomes positive power.

Please note that this article is a general overview. Each case of bullying is unique therefore this is not intended to provide personalized advice on how to deal with workplace bullying, lateral violence and/or mobbing, and is not intended as a solicitation to purchase services from the author. Linda R. Crockett, MSW, RSW President of the Alberta Bullying Research, Resources and Recovery Centre (ABRC) is solely responsible for its content. For more in-depth information on the topics of bullying and/or harassment, please contact a qualified professional with the appropriate credentials, experience and references.



BULLYING AND LATERAL VIOLENCE – A MULTI-LAYERED STORY LINDA CROCKETT



Linda Crockett
Founder, Executive Director,
Alberta Bullying Research Resource and Recovery Centre

Isabelle Aube interviews Linda Crockett, President of the Alberta Bullying Research, Resources and Recovery Centre, for the Women's Sharing Circle. Linda explains the importance of education about bullying, prevention and intervention methods, and that there are recovery resources available. She also provides advice about how to deal with lateral violence and bullying in the workplace, the community, and schools.

