

Meghan Hogg, Rebecca Rogers - Women and Mental Health Position Paper

Nellie's views Mental Health as a spectrum unique to each woman and child. We believe that women and children's physical and psychological well being are impacted by social and economic realities. We understand that women and children who experience violence develop strategies in order to survive. Violence not only takes the form of physical aggression but also racism, sexism, colonialism, ableism, heterosexism, classism and any other form of dehumanizing oppression. Women's responses to trauma are diverse and unique and are often subject to being labelled as abnormal by those who do not understand their logic and necessity. The position paper presented an analysis of the impact of trauma and violence on women and children's mental health through the broadest social and psychological lens and from an anti-racism, anti-oppression framework. This discussion allowed us to understand how trauma affects people of different social, economic and cultural backgrounds such as immigrant women and newcomers to Canada, Aboriginal women, LGBTQ women and women of colour. By doing this we were able to develop strategies to begin working with a population that has historically been psychiatrized, from a foundation of equity and empowerment. The paper identified key attitudinal shifts necessary for the development and implementation of policies and services that meet the diverse needs of the women and children we serve, as well as strategies to resist the spread of psychiatric control. Secondary benefits included an opportunity for networking and strengthening of community partnerships through collaborative problem solving and sharing of knowledge. There were opportunities to identify trends in our region, and begin to develop targeted responses informed by our mutual experience and unique positions within the community.