



Social Return on Investment (SROI)

2012

Awo Taan Heaing Lodge — Wellness Program

FAST FACTS

Awo Taan Vision:

Nurturing Families Living in Peace

Since 1992, The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society has been providing services to women and children from all cultures who have suffered from family violence and all forms of abuse in a uniquely Aboriginal atmosphere.

Awo Taan Healing Lodge currently operates a 27 bed full service emergency shelter.

Awo Taan's mission is to provide emergency shelter and outreach services, guided by Aboriginal teachings to anyone affected by family violence.

By the numbers:

Awo Taan Healing Lodge serves approximately 240 women and 210 children per year.

Awo Taan Wellness Clinic saw 370 patients over the past year.

An estimated 60% of patients have no family doctor.

Awo Taan Healing Circles serve on average 28 women and 24 children per month

Partners:

Calgary Urban Projects Society
Elbow Valley Healing Lodge

SROI Overview:

The Social Return on Investment for every dollar invested in the Wellness Program is **\$6.03**

Social Value Created: 6.03:1

Contact Details:

<http://www.awotaan.org/>
PO Box 6084, Station A
Calgary, Alberta
T2H 2L3

*I often feel lonely and empty, but here I know there is hope.
The Healing Circle gives me a sense of direction, the strength to continue
on my journey and the encouragement to go on.*

Wellness Program Participant

Background:

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Society provides emergency shelter and supports to women and children from all cultures, who have suffered from family violence and all forms of abuse, in a uniquely Aboriginal setting. Awo Taan services address immediate needs, and then assist women and children to make healthy transitions back into the community. The goal is to end the cycle of violence through prevention, intervention, awareness, education and culture.

The Wellness Program:

As part of the healing process and transition to a healthy lifestyle, Awo Taan offers a holistic primary care Wellness Program based in an Aboriginal understanding of health that includes mind, body, emotions and spirit. In this traditional approach, healing requires a multi-faceted response including cultural and spiritual services. Healing the spirit is facilitated through visits with Elders who offer advice, counsel, guidance, teachings, healing, prayer, traditional medicines and ceremonies.

The Wellness Program consists of an onsite Pediatric and Wellness Clinic staffed by a Nurse Practitioner two days per week and a Cultural Spiritual Care Program that includes regular access to Elders and weekly day and evening Healing Circles. Child care is provided while women attend the Healing Circles. Services are available to residents at Awo Taan Healing Lodge and to Awo Taan clients and others living in the community.

Theory of Change

If Aboriginal women and children who are in shelter due to family violence have access to a holistic wellness program with onsite primary health care, support of Elders, and Healing Circles, they will experience improved wellness/healing that is inclusive of mind, body, spirit based in an Aboriginal understanding of health.

The Need:

Research shows that Aboriginal women face challenges in accessing main-stream health services including issues of racism, cultural insensitivity and lack of Aboriginal personnel. In addition, women fleeing family violence often have complex needs and

no immediately available resources.

For example, we know that women fleeing violent situations are often in need of medical attention. Families living in abusive and violent situations may not see regular health care and preventative health measures as a priority.

These families often exist in isolation, cut off from extended family, friends, and other support systems because of shame and embarrassment. Self-esteem is eroded and coping skills are impaired by constant mistreatment; survival becomes the priority. Health issues compound because of neglect. Some children experiencing violence in their homes may have delayed speech, impaired hearing, psychological and intellectual issues, and lack of social skills.

Women who are in a constant survival mode may not be aware of their personal health needs or they ignore their needs because of the fear of discovery. Often mothers are reluctant, uncertain, and undecided about approaching health professionals for fear of being blamed or losing their children.



Social Return on Investment (SROI) 2012

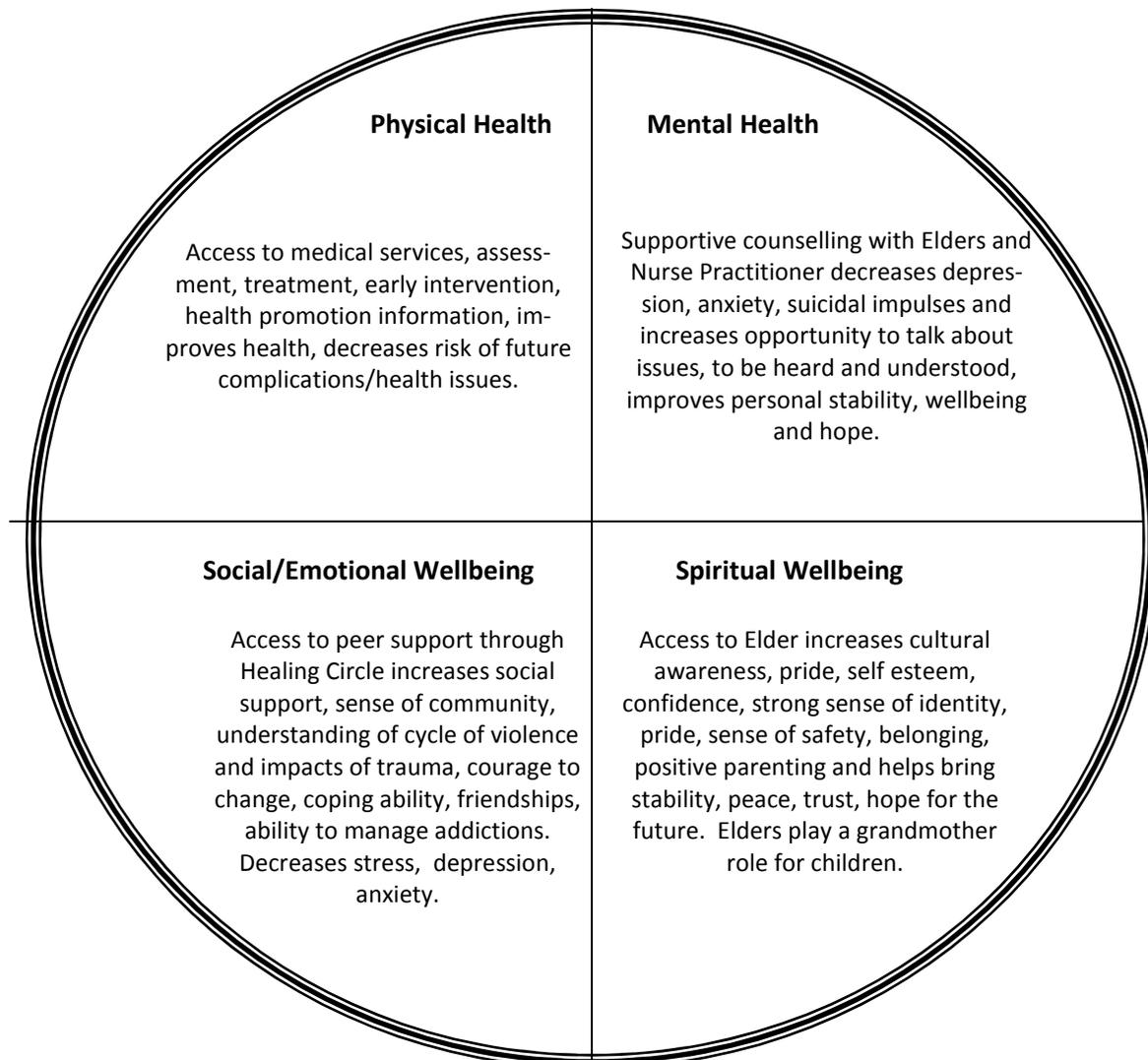
Awo Taan Heaing Lodge

The Importance of Cultural Spiritual Wellness

The importance of a holistic approach to health cannot be underestimated for these Aboriginal women and children. Underlying the family violence and abuse issues, many clients suffer unresolved grief, loss and trauma which may result in chronic health issues such as depression, anxiety or addictions. A mother's unresolved health issues can impact parenting and children's health and wellbeing. Many women have little knowledge of or connection with their Aboriginal culture. They are often alone and socially isolated. The Cultural Spiritual Care Program is essential to facilitate deeper healing of the spirit and to help women maintain mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing over the long run. The role of the Elders is foundational to Cultural Spiritual wellness. Elders provide both individual and group support, cultural knowledge, ceremonies and celebrations. Elders facilitate the Healing Circle where women can come together to form a community, find a sense of identify and belonging, support each other and decrease the isolation in their lives. Mothers benefit from some personal time as children attend their own supervised activities. Children benefit from the grandmother role provided by Elders and from the parenting support provided by Elders to their mothers.

"There is a kinship in the circle. It's magical when you're in the circle and going through so much trauma - you can release everything. The Circle brings me strength." Wellness Program Participant

Awo Taan Wellness Program Outcomes





Social Return on Investment (SROI)

2012

Awo Taan Healing Lodge—Wellness Program

Case Examples

Louise

Louise is a 19 year old Aboriginal mother of 2, single, fleeing family violence. No family, or support in Calgary, no job or housing. Receiving financial assistance through Alberta Works. She first presented to Awo Taan following surgical repair of fractures sustained during an assault by her partner. Louise was from northern AB, and saw a surgeon there. She had missed 2 appointments with the surgeon as she did not have money or a phone to reschedule, the office would not rebook and was lost to follow-up. Louise continued to have significant functional deficit related to the injury and surgery, so was re-referred to an orthopaedic surgeon. She reconnected with Awo Taan a year later, just prior to entering a treatment program for her alcohol addiction issues. Her children were apprehended 3 months prior as a result of her alcohol use. While at Awo Taan, the Nurse Practitioner was able to complete her pre-treatment assessment and referral form. By providing the service here, she did not have to wait at a walk-in clinic, nor pay the required fees to have the form completed. While attending her treatment program, she followed through with the orthopaedic surgical appointment set up for her through the AwoTaان Wellness Clinic. The Nurse Practitioner had provided a letter for the addiction treatment centre to request this, as normally participants are not

allowed to leave the program until completed. Louise does indeed require further reconstructive surgery on one wrist, and carpal tunnel decompression surgery on the other. The surgeon was respectful of her treatment program and housing issues, and was willing to wait until her program finished before booking her urgent surgery.

family abuse issues, and continued to receive the support of Elders and peers through her Healing Circle participation. Currently Gracie is on medication for her depression and receives outreach support from Awo Taan and other community based mental health services. She lives independently with roommates, but finds maintaining her sobriety a daily struggle. Gracie says that she participates in the Healing Circle “to stay strong, for my health”, because “I like smudging and the other cultural teachings”, and because “the Elders give good advice”.

Gracie

Gracie is a 25 year old single Aboriginal woman who has been participating in the Healing Circle on a regular basis for the past three years. Gracie talks about a difficult childhood, with an absent father and a stressed single mother who frequently left Gracie (the oldest) to care for her younger siblings. While her grandparents were alive, Gracie had some support, but when they died Gracie felt she had no one, became more and more depressed, and began using alcohol. Eventually Gracie became so depressed that she attempted suicide. As a result of the suicide attempt, Gracie decided to enter addiction treatment and it was at that time that she first participated in the Awo Taan Healing Circle. Her family was Christian, so Gracie had very little knowledge of Aboriginal cultural or spiritual practices. In 2010, Gracie became a resident at Awo Taan for a short time due to

Joan

Joan is a 19 year old single new mom, seen first at Awo Taan while pregnant, then again 5 months after delivering baby. The father of the baby was not involved, and was abusive. No safety concerns while in Calgary. Some family support in Calgary. Young healthy mom, needed support and connection to programs. Joan was referred to East Calgary Health Centre for immunizations for baby, which were overdue. A developmental screening exam was also done for the baby, which revealed no concerns. Joan was able to connect for other health care services and public health programs at East Health Centre. The Nurse Practitioner referred Joan to CUPS Women’s Health clinic for contraceptive needs, and to ensure follow up and support for parenting and preventive concerns.

Methodology & Limitations

The Awo Taan Healing Lodge Wellness Program SROI is based on program statistics from the Wellness Clinic and Cultural Care Program as well as feedback from staff, Elders, Healing Circle participants and client exit survey data. The client exit survey was introduced later in the project so the amount of data available was limited, though very valuable in establishing and validating wellness impacts. Wherever possible, program statistical data was used to determine the frequency of wellness impacts. In some cases, specific data regarding frequency of a particular medical intervention or wellness impact was not available and estimations were made based on staff experience. In order to avoid over-claiming, minimum estimations were made throughout the SROI. It is important to note that much of the program impact, such as the sense of community, hope, personal support and connections made in the Healing Circles or with Elders could not be represented within the SROI financial proxies. These impacts are extremely important to the clients’ overall wellbeing and ability to maintain a healthy life for themselves and their children, and were clearly voiced by participants in the Healing Circles. Therefore, the SROI is able to capture only a small part of the overall value created for those who access the Awo Taan Wellness Program. It should be understood that the value of the Wellness Program investment is much greater than that represented by the ratio.



Social Return on Investment (SROI)

2011

Awo Taan Healing Lodge—Wellness Program

Examples of Value Creation

Intervention	Value Created	Calculated Value
Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less use of walk in clinics and urgent care Less need for EMS to transport to urgent care Reduced cost to client for access to medical records Reduced cost to client for medical services Reduced cost to client for prescriptions/medication Reduced complications from untreated medical conditions Less unplanned pregnancies Reduced premature and low birth weight babies FAS prevented Less long term costs associated with developmental delays Improved health with up to date immunizations 	\$84,269
Mental/Emotional Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced stress, depression, anxiety Less need for clinical counselling/therapy Reduced suicides Reduced use of psychiatric inpatient care Reduced impact of addictions 	\$128,516
Parenting Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less need to use respite services (e.g. Children's Cottage) Reduced incidence of child abuse/neglect Less pain and suffering resulting from child abuse/neglect Reduced cost of children taken into care 	\$137,143
Total Investment \$58,074	Total Value Created	\$349,928

The SROI Ratio

The ratio was calculated using financial proxies representing the value of each identified outcome linked to an activity funded by the investment. Twenty different financial proxies were used to value the identified program outcomes. These financial proxies were then each multiplied by the number of participants experiencing each change, using the minimum professional estimate for each number. The values were then discounted for dead weight, attribution, and drop off, and a 3.5% discount rate and average inflation rate were applied. By adding these multiplied and discounted values together, the total present value of investing in the Awo Taan Wellness Program was calculated to be \$349,928. With a total investment in the Wellness Program of \$58,074, the final SROI ratio was calculated to be **6.03:1**. This indicates that for every dollar invested in the Awo Taan Wellness Program, there is a return of **\$6.03** in social value created by the program.

Therefore, at a minimum there is a significant financial value to investing in the Wellness Program. Considering that not all of the social value created through the Wellness Program was represented financially, it is apparent that the return for the investment in this program is substantial. This speaks to the importance of access to medical services and a holistic wellness approach for Aboriginal women and their children. By providing easy access to medical services, Healing Circles and the guidance of Elders, and focusing on early intervention and health promotion, Aboriginal women and their children can address their health, personal and family issues in a way that creates a positive healthy future for themselves and their families.