Tips for supporting Aboriginal clients

Victim-survivor safety is always paramount

- *Listen and learn from First Nations people to understand their experiences and fears*
- *Acknowledge their bravery in speaking about domestic abuse and coercive control – confirm it is not their fault – nobody should threaten, harass, humbug or abuse them*
- *Work to increase a victim's self-confidence in small steps – constant denigration erodes self-esteem and ability to control choices and actions*
- *Call out the behaviour – be specific on actions, impacts and highlight resistance*
- *Understand preferences to utilise First Nations law, traditional conflict/dispute resolution processes first and 'mainstream' systems second. Create dialogue on what this might look like*
- *Understand that even if a criminal charge is not laid, this does not mean a victim has not been enduring coercive control*

Support rebuilding of traditional culture, kinship practices and family ties

- *Self-determination: incorporate an individual's own solutions in safety planning practices. They are experts in managing their own risks*
- *Acknowledge clear traditional roles in kinship structures and ways of living are not abuse*
- *Develop greater understanding of Aboriginal family obligations and ties, skin systems, and roles played by relatives*
- *Holistic healing-focused models: where safe and appropriate, incorporate a role for offender. Focus on healing rather than exclusion or punishment. Engaging perpetrators is critical for behaviour change*
- *Proactive education in community about available support services*
- *Address risk factors e.g. alcohol or substance misuse*

Cultural awareness training for staff

- *Strengths-based approach: involving/partnering Indigenous communities in shaping program and service responses (e.g. ACCOs)*
- *Develop Indigenous-led programs that address broader wellbeing, community empowerment and cultural growth*
- *Ask "Are we seen to be culturally 'safe' by the users of our service and broader Aboriginal community? How might we reform our practices and/or approaches?"*
- *Consider how to adapt mainstream approaches in a culturally responsive way e.g. cater for children & families, presence of Women Cultural Bosses, sacred women's objects, provide practical supports - even assisting with errands can provide critical breathing space*