

# Success for Survivors in California: Connection not Separation

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National Indigenous Women's Resource Center

# Success for Survivors in California: Connection not Separation



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# Who We Are

*The mission of the Full Frame Initiative is to change systems so that people and communities experiencing poverty, violence and trauma have the tools, supports and resources they need to thrive.*

- Organizations effective with highly marginalized people share a **common DNA**: Full Frame practice.
- Many more organizations face barriers.
- FFI helps remove these barriers through partnerships - government, nonprofits, funders, researchers and communities.
- Change can happen in years, not generations.



# The Five Domains of Wellbeing

Full Frame practice means:

- Focusing on **people**, not **problems**.
- Supporting **Five Domains of Wellbeing**.
- Recognizing and addressing tradeoffs.



# New Project, Overlooked Question



## Project goals:

- Begin to **fill knowledge gap** about what is survivor success.
- Spark new cross-stakeholder conversations.
- **Learn from success**, not just crisis.
- Equip the field with data for, and surface opportunities for, change.
- Create cultural and linguistic access to **increase cultural relevance** of project.

# Project Approach

- Significant Moment Reflection and Appreciative Inquiry.
- Capturing **voices authentically**.
- Focus on **exploration, learning and innovation**, not traditional evaluation of program effectiveness.

*Guided by a National **Advisory Council** - 21 experts from diverse disciplines, representing California and national perspectives, including NIWRC.*



# Project Nuts and Bolts

- National literature review (27 sources in U.S. and U.K.).

## Phase I:

- 25 workshops with survivors; 21 with practitioners in DV and other service settings.
- Cultural and Linguistic Access Pilot (Pilot) to increase community capacity and cultural relevance.
- 12 interviews with policy advocates and funders.

## Phase II:

- 15 community conversations with approximately 90 stakeholders.



# Focusing on Success

## Practitioner Workshops:

1. **Single moment** when it felt right for a survivor you work(ed) with.
2. What did s/he do and/or others do to **make moment possible**?
3. What happens **in between** these great moments? Who / what helps him/her keep going?

## Survivor Workshops:

1. **Single moment** when it felt right for you (and your family).
2. Who / what **made that moment possible**? What did you do?
3. What do you do in between these great moments? Who / what helps you **keep going**?





# Cultural and Linguistic Access Pilot

- One-day Train-the-Trainer.
- 12 participants representing Latina, Native American, and seven Asian communities.
- First **experienced** the workshop process; then **customized** process and content to be culturally relevant.
- 5 “Pilot” workshops conducted:
  - 2 Native American in English, 1 ไทย (Thai), 1 普通话 (Mandarin), 1 Español (Spanish).



# General Findings

- Survivors and practitioners **more similarity within each group, than between two groups.**
- Experience in workshop most similarity between survivors and practitioners.
- DV is central for all groups **except survivors.**
- **Findings held true across geography, mainstream and culturally specific communities.**
- **Service delivery systems limit practitioners' (policy/funders') perspective and scope.**
- Practitioners **eager to translate project findings into improved response for survivors.**



# How Survivors Define Success

- **Connection not separation!** (>55%), and achieving something of value for self and others (“I did it!”).
- “I did it!” ≠ “I left”. Only **7%** of moments related to changes in relationship.
- **Flipping the narrative:** changes in abusive relationship sometimes occurred *after or as a result of other success*.



# Survivor's Moments of Success

Graduating from college. It was huge for me. I felt like I had never completed anything in my life, and this felt like something I had accomplished for myself.

DV was always the predominant issue in my life until this moment with my daughter. She didn't like to touch people. [But that day,] holding her hand, for the length of time, was extraordinary... I felt a joy I had never experienced ... [And it was after that that] I left my abuser for the last time and never went back.

[I was] in my kitchen at our house in Arkansas with my husband, and he was taking the day off work just to stay home with me, and we were dancing in the kitchen.



# How Practitioners Define Survivor Success

- **Breakthroughs and transformations in abusive relationship: from “victim” to “survivor”.**
- **Access to services and professionals.**
  - **90%** of moments happened in formal services context.
- **Recognize survivors’ efforts and informal connections *enable* success, but **overemphasize role of formal systems.****



# Practitioner's Moments of Survivor Success

I was sitting in my office and she [client] said "I'm not going to let him control me anymore" and she stood firmly when she said it.

She lifted her head, unfolded her body. She looked strong and coming back into herself. She had been frail before. Now she looked like she had her hands back on the wheel.

The common theme in getting to success is various services leading to empowering that individual, so you see the transition from being a victim to a survivor ...



# Commonality: The Workshop Process

- Survivors and practitioners identified workshop experience as positive; very different from ‘business as usual’.
- Find **value in reflecting on when things go well** and want more time, space, and tools to do so.
- Survivors and practitioners rarely have support to examine success.
  - Survivors are asked - what’s wrong? what do you need? Not - what’s going well? what do you already have?
  - **Practitioners feel constrained and drained by crisis mode context.**

This is making me go back to my room and think of all the other things that make me happy. Not just that one thing [we talked about]. There are a million things that make me happy.  
- Survivor in workshop



# Lessons from the Pilot

- Survivors in this study are *far more alike* than different.
- Noteworthy difference is **role of God/faith** in *enabling* moments of success - #1 for Pilot, #5 for non-Pilot.
- Culturally-specific programs' emphasis on community and informal connections has **wide reaching relevance**.
- Challenging to include survivors not connected to formal services - **perpetuates "us" vs "them" divide**.

We can learn to see each other and see ourselves in each other and recognize that human beings are more alike than we are unlike.

- Maya Angelou





# Opportunities for Action

Identified with help from almost 100 people in the field (Phase II) ~

1. Create a Taskforce of diverse stakeholders to translate project findings into shared definition of survivor success and related metrics.
2. Develop a Train-the-Trainer to equip the field to systematically learn from what goes well.
3. Provide skill development for practitioners to more explicitly support survivors' informal connections and identify assets/resources outside of formal services.



# Thoughts? Questions? Answers?

- Findings **affirm** what you already know?
- Spark **new ideas** or thoughts for working with survivors?
- **Challenge** what you believe or have heard?
- How can you **integrate findings** into your daily work?



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## HOW DO SURVIVORS DEFINE SUCCESS?

A NEW PROJECT TO ADDRESS AN OVERLOOKED QUESTION

When you start with problems you get programs.  
When you start with strengths you get possibilities.  
—Lupe Serrano,  
former Executive Director of Casa de Esperanza



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# Thank you!

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