



MAPLEGATE
HOUSE FOR WOMEN

Elliot Lake Women's Group
Strategic Plan

2015-2020

Acknowledgements

The board and staff of Maplegate House for Women are committed to providing a safe place for women and children to heal from the violence in their relationships.

We acknowledge that each woman that uses any of our services is honouring us with their trust. We take that responsibility seriously and thank them for that confidence.

MapleGate House for Women 2015-2012 Strategic Plan

A. Introduction

Elliot Lake Women’s Group has been offering services to the community since 1982, operating under different brands.

The Women’s Crisis Centre was formed as a shelter for abused women in June of 1982 and was later incorporated under the charitable umbrella of the Elliot Lake Women’s Group in December of 1987. In those times, the uranium mines were active and Elliot Lake was booming as a result of the mining industry. There were close to 30,000 people living in the community at the time, and abused women needed a safe haven that they could access readily. Our five founding board members recognized this need and were integral in the formation of this agency. These members included Doug Strong, Roger Denis, Kathy McCarty, Linda Wilkins and Marion Kennedy.

In 2007, we unveiled and launched our new Maplegate brand. We wanted to move in a new direction, as we work towards increasing public education strategies and transforming attitudes, reflecting a more inclusive, community based approach. We are encouraging community members to help us achieve change and stop the violence before it actually happens.

Our programs and services include the Maplegate House for Women (a shelter for abused women) as well as various outreach and transitional services that we offer for our own clientele and community members within Elliot Lake and surrounding areas.

We are community members who are dedicated to providing advocacy and support to women and children in need. We help our clients achieve change through **protection, prevention and partnership.**

The Elliot Lake Women’s Group has developed a strategic plan for the next five years to help guide the organization as it continues to serve the Elliot Lake community.

B. Our Current Services

In House Services

- A safe, comfortable and secure facility
- 24/7 shelter and crisis line
- Emergency transportation within our catchment area which is Iron Bridge to Spanish and up to Elliot Lake
- Transitional and outreach services

“I appreciate that the shelter can provide services for a wide age range given there are a number of seniors in our community.” (External partner)

- On going support services after discharge
- Housing advocacy
- Support counseling
- Community and Social Service Referral
- Breakfast club
- Hamper program
- Guest Night dinners
- Budgeting
- Welcome bags
- Therapeutic programming – such as spa nights
- Career supports – such as resume writing
- Self employment advocacy preparation
- Permanent pet therapy on site
- Pet shelter for residents’ pets
- Transitional supports

Transitional Support

Our Transitional Support Staff help clients with various tasks that assist them in finding safe and independent living arrangements. They provide:

- System navigation – referrals to appropriate supports and resources in the community
- Harm reduction awareness & planning, advocacy & supplies
- Advocacy and support for social housing; financial and legal systems
- Housing Application Forms
- Confidential crisis and abuse counseling, including follow-up and evaluation

Outreach Services

Whether giving presentations or bringing guest speakers to Elliot Lake, our goal is to raise public education and awareness on important issues that effect our clients and our community members.

“Progressive leadership with a vision to be accessible to all within the community.”
(External partner)

We provide advocacy within educational, social and legal systems to Elliot Lake and surrounding area – from Spanish through to Thessalon.

Maple Keys: Opening Doors to

- Harassment-free work environments
- Foundations for growth and self-esteem
- Essential life skills
- Violence-free childhood
- Assertiveness

C. Vision, Mission and Philosophy

	VISION: Women and children free from abuse and violence.
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	MISSION STATEMENT The Maplegate and Elliot Lake Women's Group provides and promotes safety for women and children.
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	PHILOSOPHY We believe that women and children should live free from abuse and violence. Women have the right to be safe. Women have the right to choices and to develop their potential to determine their own lives.
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Five-Year Vision

Maplegate will be a leader in collaboration in the community, and will work with other community leaders to address violence against women and social injustice, including with youth, families, LGBTQ, the First Nations and the Mennonite community.

We will provide trauma-informed supportive housing, expanding the shelter's capacity, and will provide a men's shelter, and transitional housing for women and men.

D. The Context – Trends in the Elliot Lake Region

An Older Community

Elliot Lake has a population of 11,200, of which about 52% are married or common-law couples and 5% are lone parent families, mostly women-led.

Elliot Lake, through Elliot Lake Retirement Living, promotes itself as a retirement home and it is reflected in the demographics. The largest segment of the population are 60-75 years old, with

35% of citizens are 65 and older, which is more than double the Ontario average of 14%. Only about 12% of the community members are immigrants which is significantly lower than the Ontario average of 28.5%. About 7.5% are francophone.

Large Aboriginal Community

The self-identified Aboriginal population is 6.5% of community members, which is a much higher proportion than the Ontario average of 2.4%. It is almost certainly an under-estimate, as several Aboriginal organizations in Canada have documented the under-reporting of Indigenous people in census activities.*¹ Nearby Aboriginal communities include:

The following First Nations are all part of the Robinson Huron Treaty area:

- Whitefish Lake First Nation
- Wikwemikong Unceded
- Serpent River First Nation
- Mississauga #8 First Nation
- Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation

The following First Nation is part of the Manitoulin Island Treaty area:

- Whitefish River (Wauwauskinga) First Nation

Métis: Elliot Lake borders the Métis Nation Ontario Regions 4 and 5 including:

- Region 4: Historic Sault Ste. Marie Métis Council, North Channel Métis Council
- Region 5: Sudbury Métis Council, North Bay Métis Council, Mattawa Métis Council

The diversity of the population in the Elliot Lake area underlines the need for ensuring accessibility of services to the full range of women and children who are dealing with violence in their lives.

Community partners, board and staff identified concerns of homelessness and the need for affordable housing as a key issue in the context.

Ongoing opportunities for new or closer collaborations among community agencies is important in ensuring effective and high quality services for women and children in need, and for working together to understand and prevent violence.

(Source: 2011 NHS, catalogue no. 99-010-X201105, which should be treated with caution as the National Household Survey replaced the mandatory long form census and was not as accurate)

Residential Treatment Program in the community

Camillus Centre, operated by the St. Joseph's General Hospital Elliot Lake is a provincially wide known and respected adult residential treatment program that uses an abstinence approach. Sadly not all people who go into the program are able to maintain their goals and are asked to

* In some instances (such as the Inuit population in Ottawa), the actual Aboriginal population has been credibly demonstrated to be more than double the Statistics Canada estimate.

leave the program before completing the program. For the women they can be directed to Maplegate while they wait to travel back to their home community. There are no services for the men and have been found on the street while they wait for the bus to return to their home community.

Sexual Violence response in Elliot Lake

There have been a number of cases that Maplegate has dealt with around sexual violence where the women, after a sexual assault, have had to go into Sault St. Marie to receive services including having the rape kit administered. Service providers in Elliot Lake, including the medical professionals, have understood the importance of doing a rape kit properly. However, the concerns over the victims as they sit in a police car for over two hours is suggesting that a new approach has to be considered to responding to sexual violence.

E. The Context – Internal Trends

Harm Reduction Approach

The Elliot Lake Women's Group strives to ensure that women who seek services from the Maplegate House for Women programs and also have co-occurring substance use or mental health issues receive appropriate responses.

Elliot Lake Women's Group has introduced harm reduction strategies to reduce the medical, personal and social risks and harms associated with substance use, particularly for the individual, but also for society. Not unlike the purpose of safety planning for women remaining in abusive situations, harm reduction strives to enhance Clients' safety while still using and to reduce negative repercussions. In essence, harm reduction strategies ensure Clients survive the various stages of their journey with minimal negative effects until such time as they achieve their ultimate goal: abstinence.

Denying service on the basis of substance use or mental health issues is a form of institutional oppression that compromises women's health and safety, re-victimizes them, and validates their abusers, an outcome that is decidedly counterproductive and antithetical to the ELWG's mission, philosophy, service mandate and goals. A harm reduction approach enhances both women's safety and service delivery.

Trauma Informed Approach

The Elliot Lake Women's Group applies trauma-specific intervention programs that generally recognize the following:

- The survivor's need to be respected, informed, connected, and hopeful regarding their own recovery
- The interrelation between trauma and symptoms of trauma such as substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, and anxiety
- The need to work in a collaborative way with survivors, family and friends of the survivor, and other human services agencies in a manner that will empower survivors and consumers

7. Strategic Directions

Strategic Direction 1: Enhance the capacity of (the Maplegate Women’s Shelter) to respond to the needs of women and their children.

Goals:

1.1 Strengthen the program framework for Maplegate

- a) Trauma informed approach
- b) Enhanced harm reduction approach
- c) Strengthen internal systems and processes (e.g. hampers, etc)
- d) Enhanced referrals and programs for children who are in the shelter

1.2. Increase the diversity of women that access Maplegate

- a) Expand the number of women served. (Reach and maintain a 100% occupancy rate)
- b) Respond to the specific needs of Aboriginal women
- c) Respond to the specific needs of LGBTQ
- d) Expand work with Mennonite women

Strategic Direction 2: Maplegate is a leader in community collaboration around VAW (community capacity).

Goals:

2.1 Increase the co-ordinated social service response in our region.

- a) Support and develop the Hub model

2.2 Increase the knowledge and information about VAW in the community

- a) Build and communicate a shared knowledge base
 - o Communication strategy
- b) Enhanced police capacity
- c) Youth Engagement

2.3 Increase the capacity of the community services to respond to VAW

- a) Co-ordinated community events
 - o International Women’s Day
 - o Take Back the Night
 - o December 6th
 - o Youth Advisory Group
 - o Engage teachers

Strategic Direction 3: Maplegate, working with community, builds services and programs to respond to the systemic causes of VAW.

3.1 Increase the capacity of the community to respond to the needs of men.

- a) Men's shelter and other programs

3.2 Increase the capacity of the community to respond to provide second stage and transitional housing

- a) Supportive social housing for men and women

3.3 Increase the capacity of the community to respond to sexual violence in Elliot Lake that is respectful of women.

3.4 Establish a trauma informed recovery place for women with mental health issues

- a) Will focus on this in the fifth year of if an opportunity should arise.

Strategic Direction 4: Organizational capacity to meet the Strategic Directions.

Goals:

4.1 Consistent and strong governance practices

- a) Board operations
 - o Use the consensus model
 - o Rotate the meeting chair
- b) Board recruitment process

4.2 Appropriate Management Structure

4.3 Strengthen systems and process

- a) Volunteer program
- b) Appropriate management structure
- c) Update by-laws and policies
- d) Educational fund for staff and board to build capacity from inside and ensure succession (2nd year)

4.4 Diversified Funding

- a) For the Shelter
- b) for new initiatives