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shame on fly-in reserves

Native violence explored

BY CHRISTOPHER HARRIS
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THE sad cycle of domestic violence has moved high up on the political and social agenda in recent years. But one aspect of violence at home is just now becoming a widespread subject for discussion.

Morningside on CBC Radio presents a special report this morning (repeated tonight on *The Best of Morningside*) about family violence on native reserves, specifically on the fly-in reserves of Northern Ontario.

A recent study revealed that eight out of 10 native Ontario women will be abused in their lifetimes — four times the non-native average. Yet on the reserve, as elsewhere, it has been taboo to speak out about the problem. And tragically, many women can escape violent relationships only by leaving the community and becoming, in effect, exiles.

Shelters, counselling and education are beginning to address the situation, but the problem isn't going away in a hurry. And chillingly, some women are being told that if they are good Christians they should forgive their husbands and accept their beatings as part of being a dutiful wife.

"He'd hit me, throw me around, tear my clothes, rape me... I would say I was raped many times in that marriage," is how one woman, now living safely in Thunder Bay, describes her grim wedlock.

There is always a danger with this sort of documentary that listeners, and not just the overtly racist ones, may assume this scale of domestic violence to be some flaw inherent in native culture rather than a symptom of the grotesque poverty and despair that's rampant on many reserves. That broader context isn't explicitly provided in the documentary, but is implicit throughout.

The documentary was prepared by Ashley Wright, at CBQ in Thunder Bay, and produced by Steve Wadhams and Reter Raffo.

On a lighter note, *Swinging on a Star* has been proving itself this season — its second — as one of the foremost broadcasting showcases for Canadian folk and country artists. Hosted by affable singer-songwriter Murray McLauchlan, the show this month is offering some of the biggest Canadian stars of the past two decades.

Last weekend, a spirited performance by Bruce Cockburn was featured, while this weekend one of the newer star bands, the Cowboy Junkies, takes to McLauchlan's stage.

On the following show (March 30 at 11:05 p.m. EST on CBC Stereo and March 31 at 4:08 p.m. EST on CBC Radio), the seldom-heard **Joni Mitchell** joins McLauchlan for a special taping in Vancouver (without the usual live audience). It is said to be Mitchell's only Canadian appearance to launch her new album, *Night Ride Home*.

The two, who are old friends, play some music and talk about their mutual love of painting, about the bizarre fact (if fact it is) that Mitchell's recordings can't be found in the record stores of Saskatoon, her home town, and her views on the record industry. A low-key yet affecting duet of Mitchell's old hit song *The Circle Game* is the show's highlight.