



BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance & Counselling Programs

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NATURAL DISASTERS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Impact of the BC Forest Fires

The forest fires that burned in BC this past summer (some of which are still burning as we write this in early October) were the worst in this province's history. Over 700 fires destroyed hundreds of homes and forced thousands of people to leave their homes. A province-wide state of emergency was declared at the beginning of August and extended several times before it expired in mid-September. B.C. Finance Minister Gary Collins has said the total bill for this season's firefighting effort will be about \$545 million, 10 times the budgeted amount.

Research shows that natural disasters can trigger feelings and memories of past trauma for survivors of abuse. This is being confirmed by the experience of anti-violence workers in communities that were particularly affected by the fires. Natural disasters can also lead to an increase in the incidence of violence against women. While it is still too early to assess whether rates of violence have risen in BC, it is quite clear that survivors are experiencing increased stress and re-traumatization. Anti-violence workers have been providing much needed support throughout this difficult and chaotic time. For many communities, the fires have

been yet another blow in a period of dramatic government cutbacks and changes to legislation and high unemployment. Some anti-violence workers are concerned that due to the cost of fighting the fires, there may be even less money left for services that have already been deeply cut. *article continues on page 3...*

Debra Bell and Angie Todd-Dennis at the **Strategizing for Safer Communities For BC Aboriginal Women Forum** held in Vancouver in June. See page 9 for more information and photos.



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Please contribute updates, articles, photos, etc by mail or email to BCASVACP, Attention: Newsletter, or email Sarah at sarleav@radiant.net.

article continues from cover page...

Reports from the Front Line

Suzanne Harrington, an STV counsellor in Kelowna, has a view of burnt hillsides from her office window. She reports that all of her clients mention the fire when they come in for counselling. The burning of the trestle bridges in the Kettle Valley near Kelowna seemed to have an especially intense and personal impact on many people in the area. Suzanne finds that for many survivors, the fires have triggered memories of old traumas, and increased feelings of powerlessness; women are having difficulty coping. People have been evacuated—some have even been evacuated twice—and have lost much of their sense of security and stability. Suzanne is concerned about the impact the fires may have on women with illnesses related to trauma, such as chronic stress and fatigue. The fire has also created feelings of powerlessness and helplessness for workers—a reminder for Suzanne of how vital the Counsellor Support Plan is for STV counsellors.

Ruth Sauer is a counsellor in a sexual assault program in Cranbrook, where the air was full of smoke for over a month during the summer. Residents were on evacuation notice for a long period of time, which led to high levels of anxiety; many clients were having trouble sleeping and were feeling fearful. It seemed “surreal” to continue with everyday activities. As in Kelowna, clients felt vulnerable, out of control and powerless. It was difficult for them to come to counselling sessions when they were worried about leaving their homes at all. Ruth found that while the fires were active, people were “in a holding pattern, coping and putting on a brave face.” She believes that the impact of the fires will become clearer as time goes on.

“Here the fires were around us and smoke was in the air. We could see billows of smoke often and everyone was nervous and worried and checking fire status constantly. Some folks were on evacuation readiness or alert and the city was full of fire fighters, but no homes were lost. It meant we stayed close to home with hoses ready and precious things packed but it was nothing like Kelowna where thousands had to leave their homes. Many of our clients showed escalated fear and distress and some of course were badly affected by the smoke and ash in the air. There were often reports of seeing the flames or of small fires close to homes that were quickly put out. Then the rain came and the cool nights and the relief was palpable. It seemed that for weeks on end the fires were the first and last topic of

discussion. When the fear had gone it was like suddenly realizing that you were pain free after coping for weeks with a miserable headache or back pain. You carry on, but the sudden absence of pain makes you realize how hard you had been working to do just that.”

Carol Ross SVAP Coordinator, Nelson

Recommendations by the BCASVACP

For more than five years, the Association has been working on the issue of disasters and violence against women. In a 1999 report (see “Resources” below) we identified five key areas where action must be taken to address the issue of violence against women in the wake of disaster:

- Anticipating and responding to women experiencing or at risk of personal violence must be included in the mandate of provincial emergency authorities.
- Increased education, training, and awareness programs and resources are needed to close the knowledge gap in this area.
- The ability of antiviolence women’s services to continue functioning or to recover as fully and immediately as possible must be enhanced on a priority basis.
- Formal and informal mechanisms increasing communication and interaction between antiviolence women’s services and emergency managers are needed to develop a fully integrated system.
- Increased disaster readiness must be fully supported to prepare women’s services throughout the province for all contingencies arising from an environmental or technological disaster.

The BCASVACP will continue to connect with programs across the province to offer support and to hear from workers about the impact of the fires. We encourage programs to contact us to share observations, concerns and/or questions.

Resources

Emergency Preparedness In British Columbia: Mitigating Violence Against Women In Disasters, prepared by Elaine Enarson for the BCASVACP, 1999. Educates planners about women’s vulnerability to violence and disaster and the critical role women’s services can play in the immediate

crisis and post-disaster recovery periods. Includes specific recommendations to the emergency planning community regarding the needs and capacities of women and women's services during emergency preparedness and response. Available at www.endingviolence.org/publications/73/emergencypreparedness.doc. *It Can Happen to Your Agency! Tools for Change: Emergency Management for Women's Services*, by the BCASVACP, 2000. This workbook helps agencies develop an emergency response plan. Available at www.endingviolence.org/publications/71/WomeninDisastersWorkbook.doc.

For a global perspective...

Fact Sheet on Gender and Natural Disasters, on the Pan-American Health Organization website: www.paho.org/english/hdp/hdw/genderdisasters.PDF

Saving Women's Lives in Times of Crisis on the Saving Women's Lives website: www.savingwomenslives.org/factsheet_crisis.htm

Unsung Heroines: Women and Natural Disasters on the USAID website: www.usaid.gov/wid/pubs/ib8.htm

More on Violence Against Women after Disasters

"North American case studies and accounts from field workers and responders suggest that sexual assault and domestic violence are likely to increase in the aftermath of disaster. Little research is available about Canadian women's experiences in disasters but the experiences of other communities suggest that provincial emergency authorities should anticipate increased violence against women.


The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake offers many lessons. A City of Santa Cruz report noted that women lacking income, affordable housing, reliable transportation, child care, and other resources after the quake were especially vulnerable to men wanting to renew violent relationships. Many anti-violence agencies were damaged or destroyed and their resources redirected away from direct service in the urgency to meet new needs created by the earthquake. Yet abused or sexually assaulted women needed their services more than ever as the incidence of rape and relationship violence increased. For example:

- reported domestic violence rates increased nearly 600% in the four months after the quake and reported sexual assaults rose 300%;
- requests for restraining orders rose 50% after the quake;
- domestic-violence related homicides dramatically increased when 3 women were murdered by their partners in the two months after the quake;
- five months after the quake, a survey of service providers found protective services for women, children, and elderly sixth among 41 unmet needs.

Similar patterns have been reported in the wake of Hurricane Andrew in Miami, the 1993 Missouri River floods, Red River flooding in the U.S. and other disasters impacting widely divergent societies

A 1997 study of 77 domestic violence programs in Canada and the U.S. found that crisis calls increased to agencies which were severely impacted by natural disasters. Most programs lacked disaster plans and were not integrated into local emergency management systems. Staff and volunteers struggled to keep these community-based agencies open, repair damages to offices and to their own homes, staff crisis lines, operate shelters, and continue providing other critically-needed services to women hit both by disaster and violence."

—FROM AN UNPUBLISHED PAPER BY TRACY PORTEOUS, 2002

"There is no simple causal model to explain the increase in violence against women in a disaster scenario. Elements like fatigue, powerlessness, uncertainty, and a loss of control commonly reported by both women and men may play a role. The socialization of genders may also play role in how we deal with these feelings, and therein may lie a portion of the problem. We see property being looted in post disasters contexts and similarly, woman are often "looted" in these times, treated as property and used as tools for insecure men to act out upon." 

—FROM CREATING SAFETY FOR WOMEN IN POST DISASTER CONTEXTS BY HILARY MYRON, ELAINE ENARSON AND TRACY PORTEOUS, 2002

ASSOCIATION INITIATIVES, PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Alternative Approaches to Training Project

The Association would like to express deep appreciation to all of the STV Counsellors and Administrators who have contributed to the success of the Alternative Approaches to Training Project that the Association undertook on behalf of STV Counselling programs this spring. We appreciate, in particular, the time and energy you invested in completing the survey about training needs. We are thrilled to report that over 80% of programs submitted their completed surveys! As a result of your thoughtful feedback, we are now in the final stages of compiling the most comprehensive report to date on the unique training needs of STV Counsellors in BC! We would also like to thank those of you who have joined the STV Counsellor Listserv, as well as those who took part in the "Guest Expert" Online Discussion Forums. Your participation and feedback in relation to these pilot projects has helped us to gather very important information about the feasibility of online approaches to training. Thank you! The Alternative Approaches to Training Project will be completed by the end of this year. We look forward to sharing the project findings with you at that time. In the meantime, if you have questions please feel free to contact Caroline White, Project Coordinator either by using our toll-free line for members (1-877-633-2505), or by calling (604) 633-2506. ☒

Feminist Management Certificate Program

By Adrienne Chan



Adrienne Chan

Formerly known as the Women's Sector Management Development Project, this program has been developed by, and is owned by, the BCASVACP, the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, and the Justice Institute of BC.

Twenty women attended the first session of the program, June 10-20, 2003. It was a successful and worthwhile ten days for the participants!

We are in the process now of revising some portions of the material and preparing for the next session in the fall.

The June days introduced material never used before, used material from management sources in different ways, as well as adapting material into a feminist framework. The modules attempted to balance both content and process, and a depth of material. This is something we are still working on. During the first module, participants discussed feminist management principles and the challenge of feminist practice. This included examining power, our roles, issues of cultural competence, and structures of organizations—the making of feminist organizations. The second module dealt with human resources and labour relations including: best practices, a competency model, behavioural interviewing questions, and practices of progressive discipline. Legislation was reviewed as it applied to employment practice. The third module worked with decision-making models and the idea of what constitutes feminist decision-making. Ethical decision-making was a part of the discussion. The fourth module was about the risks of caring, healthy work environments and organizational change, including topics such as vicarious trauma and the health of the organization. There was a mix of presentation, small group discussions, role-plays and large group discussion throughout the modules.

Association Initiatives continued...

We received many comments on the skills of the facilitators, the usefulness of content, and how to use the material in the workplace. The majority of participants talked about how much they valued the experience, the need to connect with one another and have dialogue. We received many comments that said "Excellent," "Effective facilitation," "High level of knowledge" (facilitators/instructors), and "found the tools very practical."

We also received comments on how to improve the program: how to create a better balance of process and content, places where we might be more diverse in presentation and interactive styles, places where we might go more in depth, the sequencing of the modules and how the facilitators might change or improve their process. As a result of feedback, we have also included in the fall program a day on feminist supervision.

The participants worked very hard while they were in Vancouver for the program. They demonstrated a huge commitment to their work and to the field. We appreciated the candour, leadership and strength of the participants who were simply an amazing group of women! The feedback that they have given us is also invaluable for the future development of this and other programs. We're still managing a work in progress!

We look forward to sharing the outcomes of the fall training with you in a future newsletter. ☐



Community Coordination for Women's Safety Project

this project is managed by the
BCASVACP

December 31, 2003, will mark the end of the first phase of the CCWS Project. We are optimistic about obtaining funding to continue supporting coordination across the province, and we hope to have good news to share with you soon!

Community Development Highlights

The CCWS Project has connected with almost eighty communities since we began our work in July 2001. The communities on this list may have received support from project staff for their coordination initiative, participated in a regional discussion group, and/or attended the community leadership training (some communities are listed due to their membership in a multi-community coordination initiative):

100 Mile House, Abbotsford, Alert Bay, Armstrong, Atlin, Beaverdell, Boundary, Burnaby, Burns Lake, Campbell River, Castlegar, Chetwynd, Chilliwack, Christina Lake, Clearwater, Comox, Courtenay, Cranbrook, Creston, Dawson Creek, Dease Lake, Elkford, Fernie, Fort St James, Fort St John, Golden, Good Hope Lake, Grand Forks, Greenwood, Houston, Invermere, Kamloops, Kaslo, Kelowna, Kitimat, Langley, Lytton, Lillooet, Lower Post, Lumby, Masset, Mackenzie, McBride, McLeod Lake, Mission, Moberly, Morriceton, Nanaimo, Nelson, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Oak Bay, Penticton, Powell River, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Princeton, Port Coquitlam, Queen Charlotte City, Quesnel, Revelstoke, Robson Valley, Rock Creek, Saltspring Island, Sechelt, Smithers, Spences Bridge, Squamish, Terrace, Trail, Tumbler Ridge, Valemont, Vancouver, Vanderhoof, Vernon, Victoria, Williams Lake.

The Campbell River, Nanaimo, Courtenay/Comox and Powell River VAWIR Coordination Initiatives Joint Meeting was held in Courtenay on September 15. The



BCASVACP Member's Toll-Free Line!
1-877-633-2505

four initiatives collaborated with each other and with CCWS to develop the agenda and background materials, plan the meeting logistics, explore possible funding, and advertise and coordinate registration. CCWS Regional Coordinators facilitated a solutions management workshop at the meeting, providing participants with an opportunity to practice skills for identifying, analyzing, and resolving issues in their communities that impact the safety of women experiencing violence. Many thanks to Daphne Wilson, Powell River; Michelle Novakowski, Nanaimo and Michele Clark, Campbell River.

Communities across the province have been discussing the need for concrete tools to track the impact of changes that are occurring in their communities such as cuts to services and weakening of the Crown charging policy. The Women's Contact Society in Williams Lake has received funding from Status of Women Canada to gather statistics and develop a tracking tool to document the impact of the change in the Crown charging policy locally. CCWS Regional Coordinators are assisting the project in an advisory capacity and will share the process and results with other interested communities.

Responding to the Mission Tragedy

This past summer, after Bryan Heron shot and killed his wife Sherry Heron and her mother Anna Adams in the Mission Memorial Hospital, CCWS staff joined with our managing partner, the BCASVACP, and the BC Women's Hospital to reach out to anti-violence and health workers in Mission.

The group has been working together to connect with and offer support to front-line workers directly impacted by the tragedy. The group has also been working to identify service gaps or other safety issues leading up to and after the tragedy. Where possible the group is working to remedy these safety issues. CCWS staff also consulted with the Deputy Chief Coroner to discuss options for individuals and community groups in the Mission area to present evidence or request standing at a potential inquest.

Results from Cross-Regional Discussions

The findings of the January Cross-Regional Discussion Groups on protection orders were presented to CCWS Working Group members along with a commitment that they would bring these issues forward within their sectors. In addition, the Discussion Group Summary was distributed directly to relevant staff within the Victim Safety Unit, MPSSG, and to key community-based provincial organizations. BC Women in Action used the summary in the delivery of training workshops around the province. The BC Institute Against Family Violence and the MPSSG are now in the process of incorporating recommendations from the summary into their User Manual on safety planning and victim risk assessment for spouse assault victims.

Focus Groups on Women Who Face Particular Discrimination

Working Group member Joan Meister of Pacific DisAbleD Women's Network collaborated with CCWS to plan and chair a focus group with women with disabilities, which was held September 17. This group will assist the CCWS project in developing resources for coordination initiatives that will increase participation by people with disabilities, as well as enhance the ability of coordination initiatives to address violence against women with disabilities. Focus group participants also had an opportunity to learn more about CCWS and violence against women coordination. CCWS Staff have also been collaborating with Working Group Member Ninu Kang, Director of Family Programs at the multicultural organization MOSAIC, as well as Setsuko Hirose and Perminder Flora, immigrant women's advocates at MOSAIC, to plan for a focus group. This focus group, "Immigrant Women's Experiences with Violence and Oppression", will provide an important opportunity for immigrant women working as advocates to connect and develop recommendations to improve the situation for immigrant women experiencing violence as well as for the advocates. Findings from the focus group will be used to make recommendations for future CCWS work that will address partnerships between multicultural organizations, their women-serving advocates and various system responders.

Association Initiatives continued...

The CCWS Working Group

Working Group member Mike Chadwick of the BC Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police, as a result of collaboration with CCWS staff, has been able to: provide information to the MPSSG Police Services Division that supported their commitment to keeping current practice in violence against women cases despite policy changes; streamline Saanich police procedure to avoid timing difficulties that interfere with the enforcement of police undertakings; support ongoing work to make municipal and RCMP policies consistent in the area of violence against women.

Two new members have joined the Working Group, and will be attending our October meeting: Anita Pascoe, Provincial Program Coordinator at Pacific Association of First Nations Women, and Al Macintyre, Chief Superintendent RCMP "E" Division and Deputy Criminal Operations Officer, and member of the BC Association of Chiefs of Police.

Documents Available

Please contact Sarah to request a copy. Some of these documents are also posted on our website, www.endingviolence.org.

Case study on The Myth of Mutual Battering

The Use of K.G.B. Statements in Violence Against Women in Relationships Cases

Summary of Cross-Regional Discussions On Peace Bonds And Other Criminal And Civil Protection Orders, January 21& 23, 2003

List of Acronyms for use by coordination initiatives

List of Provincial Organizations Working in the Area of Violence Against Women

Upcoming Events

Community Leadership Training, October 20-22: Our popular skills-based training for coordination initiative leaders is full, and we have a waiting list for our next session which we hope to offer in the spring of 2004 if we are successful in obtaining ongoing funding.


Provincial Forum on Coordination, November 27-28: Contact Sarah for more information on this exciting opportunity to hear from BC and international leaders in violence against women coordination.

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Strategizing for Safer Communities For BC Aboriginal Women

The BCASVACP partnered with Pacific Association of First Nations Women and BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre to hold the *Strategizing for Safer Communities for BC Aboriginal Women* forum in Vancouver on June 2 and 3. On the first day of the forum, Aboriginal women who work in the area of violence against women and who are affiliated with one or all of the forum partners, met to identify and discuss related issues, gaps and barriers to safety and healing from violence for Aboriginal women, and to strategize for solutions. On the second day of the forum, provincial health and provincial anti-violence organizations, as well as cross-sectoral funders and policy makers who have decision making authority, joined the Aboriginal women to listen to the issues and solutions identified in Day One. Following, all participants joined to strategize how best to use collective resources to address the issues and build accessible and relevant responses to violence against Aboriginal women.

Over 25 Aboriginal women representing at least 25 different organizations and community groups, and from approximately 20 different communities across BC, convened on Day One. Many of these women work on a daily basis with other Aboriginal women and speak

from both personal and professional perspectives. An additional 25 participants representing relevant social policy ministries, provincial health organizations and anti-violence organizations, joined on Day Two. Both days of the forum were facilitated by Doreen Sterling, an Okanagan woman with strong beliefs in the holistic approach to healing, who uses the Medicine Wheel Teachings to deal with inter-related issues of abuses, addictions and recovery.

The report from the forum, *The Start of Something Powerful*, includes a list of preliminary recommendations in a number of areas: Programs and Services, Provincial Aboriginal Women's Organization, Training and Education, Policy and Research. The report will be distributed to those who attended the conference and posted on the BCASVACP website: www.endingviolence.org. The three partner organizations who initiated the forum have been working since June to solidify partnerships to move forward with some of the recommendations. 

More photographs next two pages.

Strategizing for Safer Communities



- Ability to identify
- De-normalize
- Public campaigns
- Involve whole community
- Give tools
- Community Pictor
- Role Models
- Self-healing /
- End Stigmatization
- Cultural Shift
- Culturally relevant (for First Nations)
- Video, confer
- Women's
- Capacity
- Removal of



Debra Bell



Maggie Matlipi

For BC Aboriginal Women...

Anita Pascoe, Lorna Quatell, Darlene McGougan and Jan Finch



- POLICY
- REPORTING INCIDENTS
 - MOVING AWAY FROM CRISIS MANAGEMENT
 - EDUCATE CULTURAL SENSITIVITY SHOULD BE MANDATORY
 - ~~PROVIDE~~ ^{PROVIDE} BASICS FOR CLIENTS TO ACCESS SERVICES
 - ACTION FOR LONG TERM SOLUTIONS FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S HEALTH

bin Bridge, Rita Barnes and
lian Granley-Hertz

Marilyn Vickers

FAMILY LAW LEGAL AID: A MATTER OF JUSTICE

By Alison Brewin, Program Director
West Coast LEAF

"It is a matter of justice! Legal aid for women is not only a matter of equality as it is one of rights."

*Claire L'Heureaux-Dubé,
Recently retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada*

Many years ago, West Coast Legal Education and Action Fund identified access to legal aid in family law matters as a key to women's equality. The inability to assert her rights when her marriage breaks down can have a devastating impact on a woman and the children she cares for. The development of the "father's rights" perspective in family law has allowed our legal systems to ignore some fundamental realities in women's lives—women are the primary caregivers of children, women are more likely to abandon professional and economic benefits in order to facilitate that relationship, and women are more likely to end up in poverty after marriage breakdown than their former partners.

West Coast LEAF has consistently asserted its concern that the mandate of the last *Legal Services Act*—to provide legal aid to those in need—was not being met by the government with respect to women, whose family law legal aid needs are overwhelming. That was before the budget cuts of Spring 2002 and the amendment of the Legal Services Society Act to accommodate those cuts.

Legal aid funding in British Columbia has been declining steadily for the past two decades but took a very sharp nosedive in the spring of 2002 when the provincial government announced a 40% cut to the Legal Services Society budget. A complete restructuring of legal aid has taken place since then, with the most severe cuts happening to family law and poverty law. Sixty community law offices have been closed and replaced with seven regional offices.

In addition, all family law matters where violence is not an issue have been eliminated from coverage, all sum-

mary advice services are gone (replaced by a website with basic legal information), and poverty law matters are no longer covered. Where violence is an issue, legal aid will only be provided to help get restraining orders or vary custody orders.

The nature of family law makes it very difficult to find an effective opportunity to intervene and make broad equality rights arguments: *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms* doesn't apply to private disputes; the high conflict nature of the issues often results in a series of interim hearings rather than tidy appeals; and it is the experience of women's advocates that the women most in need of legal representation are the least likely to be able to articulate that need to anyone capable of satisfying it (i.e. immigrant women, poor women, and women with disabilities).

The Affidavit Campaign

West Coast LEAF believes an effective way to address the complexities of this issue is by an affidavit campaign. The concept of the affidavit campaign came from Mahatma Gandhi in India more than 70 years ago. It was recently revived by the Downtown Eastside equality rights organization, PIVOT, to record the experience of Downtown Eastside residents with police brutality.


In the case of family law legal aid, West Coast LEAF sees this as an opportunity to give voice to some of B.C.'s most vulnerable women – women faced with the prospect of losing their children, women who abandon valid maintenance claims from former spouses for fear of violence, and women who, with their children, are destined to poverty because they cannot navigate the complexities of our court system alone.

By having unrepresented women swear affidavits outlining the impact the family law justice system has had on their lives, West Coast LEAF hopes to emerge with three outcomes:

- a test-case identified and underway to establish the obligations of government to provide adequate legal aid in family and other civil law matters;
- a powerful document reporting on the results of the campaign that will inform the government, the public and the legal profession about the need for family law legal aid; and,
- a body of evidence that can be used by West Coast LEAF should an opportunity arise to intervene and present a women's equality argument.

West Coast LEAF's goal is to facilitate the development of a test case by working with other legal organizations and community partners, and to intervene in a case or cases in order to ensure that the equality rights of women are fully recognized in the law. We also hope to raise awareness about the impact legal aid cuts have had on women and their families.

West Coast LEAF has volunteer lawyers and non-lawyers available to take and swear women's affidavits. We will provide women with childcare reimbursement and bus tickets, where possible. Interpretation and other accessibility concerns will also be addressed so that all women have the ability to tell their stories.


If you know of women interested in giving affidavits in your community please contact West Coast LEAF at affidavits@westcoastleaf.org or #604-684-8772 or toll free at #1-866-737-7716. More information at www.westcoastleaf.org. 



PROGRAMS AT WORK ACROSS THE PROVINCE



Queen Charlotte Islands

The Queen Charlotte Island Women's Centre Society booth at the Edge of the World Music Festival (Tlell, QCI) on July 12th, in celebration of their 20th anniversary as a society. In the photo are Celina Laursen, Women's Centre coordinator (left), and Lois Chatham, Child Care Resource & Referral worker. *Thanks to Brenda Adams for sending the photo.* 

Battered Women's Support Services and My Sister's Closet

by Olatz Sagarduy, Information Coordinator and Counsellor, BWSS, and Onna Tatum, Manager, My Sister's Closet

Battered Women's Support Services in Vancouver offers STV and SVAP programs as well as a number of other services, including My Sister's Closet, a thrift boutique located on the eastside of Vancouver. We opened our doors on March 31, 2001. Our goal is to offer practical support to battered women in the form of clothing and household goods. We also provide volunteer opportunities for women and give them valuable job development skills in a retail environment. My Sister's Closet also serves as a contact point for low-income and battered women to meet others and gain a support system and awareness on issues relevant to women. Women can gain independence and be free!

Clothing and Hamper Voucher Program

Every month we distribute vouchers for clothing and household goods to 11 different women's groups, transition houses and shelters across the Lower Mainland. Since we opened two years ago we have sent out over \$150,000 worth of clothing vouchers and hamper vouchers combined, and we have served hundreds of women.

Too often women who are escaping violence leave with only the clothes on their backs. Receiving a clothing voucher not only fills the physical need for clothing, but also provides them with the freedom to choose their own clothing. One of the women told us, "I am really happy I got this voucher, because my husband used to pick out all my clothing, and now I get to choose what I want to wear."

The hamper voucher program allows women to get household items they need to start a new home free of violence. This program has been highly successful, as we are filling approximately 9 hampers a month.



Volunteer Program

We have approximately 12 volunteers, five of whom have been with us since we opened our doors. Every month we have a volunteer meeting so that all of the women can get to meet and discuss the work that we do, and problem solve around difficult issues. It is also a chance for these women to have a larger voice in the work.

In addition to our regular volunteer program, we also work with the Elizabeth Fry Society and with a Community Work Service Program, to provide a positive environment for women and girls to complete community service hours. There are approximately five new women a month who enter this program with us. We are finding that these women enjoy their time with us. Many are surprised that a service such as ours is available, and are interested in participating in a space where women are working together to improve all of our lives.




13 Steps to open a Thrift Store

1. Look for grant opportunities and find the one that best suits your project
2. Strike an Advisory Committee to give input into the process of opening the store
3. Create a comprehensive business plan
4. Create a timeline, working back from the day that you would like to open the store
5. Start looking for a location
6. Do a name search that best reflects the philosophy of the organization
7. Apply for a business licence and deal with any other legal aspects
8. Promote the store to solicit donations and recruit volunteers
9. Have a storage space ready to start receiving the donations well before your opening date
10. Start looking for inexpensive ways to furnish the store (i.e. through donations)
11. Round up your friends and volunteers to renovate/design the space
12. Start advertising your opening date and inviting people to the opening party
13. Open your doors and be ready for a wild success!


My Sister's Closet is a dream come true for Battered Women's Support Services. We had been receiving phone calls from people wanting to donate clothes/household items to battered women for years. We sadly had to refuse the offers because of lack of space at the office as well as the confidential nature of our services. With the opening of My Sister's Closet we are able to turn the donations into a great benefit to battered women, offering them selected, clean, good quality clothing options.

New Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs

The following agencies have received funding to implement Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs: Family Services of Greater Vancouver, in Burnaby/New Westminister; Ishtar Transition House Society in Langley; Abbotsford Community Services in Mission; Haven: A Society for Women and Children, in Parksville; Port Alberni Women's Centre; Prince Rupert Community Enrichment Society; Prince George and District E Fry Society in Quesnel; and Shuswap Area Family Emergency Society in Salmon Arm. The Association would like to congratulate these agencies and communities regarding the acquisition of their new contracts. We are very pleased that more communities will now have access to specialized community-based services. 

Goodbye to Brenda Adams



We are sad to say goodbye to Brenda Adams, who has left her position as STV Counsellor on the Queen Charlotte Islands to move to Vancouver Island. Brenda has been an enthusiastic and hard-working Association Board member, in addition to being a dedicated counsellor and community activist. We wish Brenda well in her new endeavours. 



VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

www.endingviolence.org

or e-mail:

bcasvacp@endingviolence.org



Announcements

Child Tax Benefit Clinic in Vancouver

The Community Legal Assistance Society is running a clinic for individuals who are having problems with the child tax benefit and the Canada Custom and Revenue Agency. The clinic is restricted to that issue and will provide summary advice on dealing with Notices of Objections and Appeals to the Tax Court of Canada. Most clients are expected to be representing themselves. In a limited number of cases, CLAS will be able to provide counsel if the client is financially eligible. To book an appointment, please contact David Mossop's law office at 604-685-3425.

Collection of Shoes for December 6

To mark December 6, Women in Action, a survivors' organization based in New Westminster, is collecting women's shoes. Each pair of shoes will carry the name of a woman who has been missing or killed, and they will all be displayed at the Vancouver Art Gallery on December 6. WIA would like to collect at least 1,000 pairs of shoes. Contact Women in Action at 604-523-4WIA, or go to www.bcwia.org for more information.



Events

"When the Smoke Clears..." Supporting Grief, Loss and Healing, October 23-25, 2003 at the Coast Plaza Hotel & Suites at Stanley Park, Vancouver. Featured speakers include: George Enns, Jessica Easton, Arden Henley and Bruce Ramsey. A joint conference presented by the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors and the BC School Counsellors' Association. See further information and registration materials at www.bc-counsellors.org/pdop.htm. If you have any questions, please contact Aina at hoffice@bc-counsellors.org.

Battered Women's Support Services Peer Support Training, starts October 24, 2003, in Vancouver. The training is held on Friday mornings from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. There is an orientation session for the training the weekend of October 18 and 19. For more information, or to register, contact Angela at 604-687-1868.



Resources

Do you have an article, book, video, workshop or other resource that you'd like to share with other support workers or administrators? Take a minute to tell us about it. Contact Sarah at sarleav@radiant.net or 604-253-7210.

Legal Advice from the Law Line

From Sept. 2003-March 2004, the Law Line will provide brief legal advice and assistance services that can be delivered during or shortly after a telephone conversation. This service is available to low income people who cannot access alternate legal services and who meet an income test for advice services. Brief services range from legal advice to help with correspondence and documents, and phone calls or letters to third parties on a client's behalf. In the Vancouver area call 604-408-2172. Outside Vancouver (toll free) 1-866-577-2525.

Crown Counsel Policy on Spouse Assault

The new Crown Counsel policy on spouse assault is available online at www.ag.gov.bc.ca/legislation/spousal-assault/index.htm. This new policy updates the Crown Counsel portion of the Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy available at www.ag.gov.bc.ca/vawc/index.htm. Other components of the policy remain unchanged. If your program did not receive a copy of the policy, and you do not have access to the Internet, please contact Victim Services Division, MPSSG to get a copy.

A Victim's Guide to the Canadian Criminal Justice System: Questions and Answers

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) has developed a booklet to assist victims of crime, and their families, in better understanding the Canadian criminal justice system. *A Victim's Guide to the Canadian Criminal Justice System: Questions and Answers* provides answers to questions that victims may have about the justice system and their rights as victims. The guide is available on www.crcvc.ca, and the CRCVC encourages workers to feel free to download and share it. [Note: a quick read of this guide suggests that though it does contain a great deal of information, it does not seem to take into account situations where the system does not work as it should- e.g. when a police officer does not follow up with a victim.]

Custody and Access Resources

The websites of FREDA (www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda) and Ontario Women's Justice Network (www.owjn.org) have links to important current resources on custody and access.

Accounts from Survivors

Stories of Truth, compiled by Jennifer Asselin, is a collection of first-person accounts by survivors of abuse. Available through the Fernie Women's Centre at 250-423-4687 or fwrc@elkvalley.net.

Rural Women and Violence in Relationships

At www.ruralwomyn.net, an American-based sight, there are a number of articles and fact sheets relating to rural women and domestic violence. The site was started by rural women as a place to discuss their lives, and how they differ from those of urban women.

The Trajectories of Rural Life: New Perspectives on Rural Canada,

includes a chapter by New Brunswick researchers Jennie Hornosty and Deborah Doherty. Their research, *Responding to Wife Abuse in Farm and Rural Communities: Searching for Solutions that Work*, was conducted with the Family Violence on the Farm and in Rural Communities Research Team. Contact the authors (hornosty@unb.ca or deborah@deborahdoherty.com) to order copies.

New Writings on Violence Against Women

Violence Against Women: New Canadian Perspectives, edited by Katherine M. J. McKenna and June Larkin "provides an account of our national involvement in violence prevention over the past thirty years. Intermingling state statistics with local policy concerns, moving from high school corridors to courtrooms, dimensions of our historical and continuing engagement in ending violence against children and women unfolds." Available from Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme, at (416) 736-5356 or www.yorku.ca/cwscf/inanna.html.

Fact Sheets on Immigrant and Refugee Women, Racism and More

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) has released its most recent fact sheet on Immigrant and Refugee Women in Canada. CRIAOW has a number of excellent publications, including a fact sheet on *Women's Experience of Racism*. You can obtain free copies by contacting CRIAOW at (613) 563-0681, ext. 221 or visiting www.criaw-icref.ca.

Canadian Children's Exposure to Violence

Canadian Children's Exposure to Violence: What it Means for Parents is the latest report to be released by the Canadian Council on Social Development in conjunction with Family Services Canada. The full and summary reports are available on the CCSD website at www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/violence/

One More Great Website...

In their words, "Womennet.ca, the Canadian Women's Virtual Information Centre, helps women respond to challenges and improve their quality of life. Whether they are working outside the home or parenting, on their own or with a spouse, young, middle-aged or older, women face challenges." Visit www.womennet.ca to find a range of excellent resources, including resources on violence against women.

Mission Statement

The BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs is committed to providing coordination and support to Specialized Victim Assistance Programs, Sexual Assault/Woman Assault Centres, Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs and other similar programs. The BCASVACP respects the safety of individuals, community diversity, and human dignity regardless of economic status, gender, age, race, cultural or ethnic origins, physical or mental ability, or sexual orientation. The BCASVACP is dedicated to promoting the well being of victim and women serving organizations by addressing the issues of violence within social, legal, ethnocultural, interpersonal, familial, and intrapsychic contexts.

Membership

We work to address the needs of Specialized Victim Assistance Programs, Sexual Assault/Woman Assault Centres, Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs and other similar programs. The BCASVACP provides support, training, education, and information exchange forums to its 100+ member programs.

Your membership will support the BCASVACP in continuing many important services, including the development of analysis, lobbying for funding, representation on various government committees, administrative tools development and training, coordination, and implementation.

A membership in good standing will ensure that your organization has access to the most current information available. Your BCASVACP membership acts also as a voice of community support for our continued work in lobbying for funding for these programs, working on progressive legislation and policies to benefit you and your clients, and managing social change projects that are vital towards achieving equality, safety, and dignity for victims of violence.

We always welcome your input and questions. For more information about what BCASVACP membership is all about, contact 604-633-2506, or e-mail bcasvacp@endingviolence.org



**BC Association of
Specialized Victim Assistance
& Counselling Programs**

Our program wants to be a BCASVACP member. Membership fees are on a sliding scale between \$60 to \$160. (Whatever your program can afford)

I do not qualify for program membership. I would still like to receive the BCASVACP quarterly newsletters. (\$25)

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Website: _____ E-mail: _____

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Please make cheques payable to the BC Assn. of Specialized Victim Assistance & Counselling Programs and forward to #728 – 602 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1P2