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Increasing Safety for Aboriginal Women

CCWS has undertaken a new Aboriginal Liaison Initiative focused on strengthening collaborations and increasing the capacity among Aboriginal communities, anti-violence services and coordination initiatives to address violence against Aboriginal women.

Lawyer and former Highway of Tears Coordinator Mavis Erickson has joined the CCWS team as the Aboriginal Liaison Worker. Mavis brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to this position and will be focusing her efforts in the Northwest region.

The main goals of the project are threefold:

- Develop tools and resources focused on increasing safety for Aboriginal women who experience domestic and/or sexual violence;
- Assist existing community coordination initiatives to increase coordination and collaboration with Aboriginal service providers and villages/reserves;
- Foster new relationships between Aboriginal women and communities and the anti-violence sector.

Though the focus of this contract will be on Northwest BC, we anticipate the tools, resources and relationship building strategies will apply, and be of benefit, to the remainder of the province. The Northwest area to be covered includes communities from Prince George to Haida Gwaii on Highway 16 and Kitimat to Dease Lake on Hwy 37.

For more information, please contact Mavis Erickson at erickson@courtyardlane.bc.ca or Morgen Baldwin at morgenbaldwin@gmail.com.

Duncan Dedicated Domestic Violence Court Conference Held in September

At the invitation of the Duncan Domestic Violence Court Steering Committee, CCWS Regional Coordinator Michelle Novakowski and Legal Analyst Gisela Ruebsaat recently co-facilitated the regional conference, **Building Capacities for Coordination in Domestic Violence Cases in the Cowichan Valley**. The two-day event was held in Duncan on September 16th and 17th.

Topics covered included developing specialized responses to domestic violence, identifying risk and working together, talking the same language, and sharing information.

A lot of the conference work and training was focused on access issues related to marginalized women. The tragedy of Sunny Park, her son Christian Lee and her parents – all murdered by her husband Peter Lee who then committed suicide - was analyzed as a case study to explore some of the barriers encountered by immigrant women and children in accessing social response systems. Risk identification and information sharing with a particular focus on immigrant or other marginalized women and the particular risks associated with that was also covered. The end of the 2-day session brought all 130 participants together for a wrap-up and discussion of next steps.

CCWS staff Michelle Novakowski, Gail Edinger and Gisela Ruebsaat will, in conjunction with BC's former Domestic Violence Resource Counsel Jocelyn Coupal, be offering the workshop *Creating Safety Through Risk Identification, Focused Interventions and Information Sharing* at this year's Annual Training Forum November 25th and 26th.

Trends and Emerging Issues

Through their constant interactions with coordination initiatives and workers around the province, CCWS staff have identified the following trends as issues currently emerging in the field. Please read through this list and see if you have any firsthand experiences with these issues.

- Need for victim's police statement to be provided to victims and victim services workers
- Access to legal services for women who've experienced violence in the context of family breakdown
- Access for women to get protection orders if they don't have children and/or are not residing with the abuser and don't have enough for a criminal order
- Lack of charge approval and high rate of stays of proceedings in sexual assault cases
- Protective conditions being changed without consulting/notifying the victim
- DV Charges being dropped without consulting the victim
- Lack of cohesion in how to use "Leave the presence of..." clause in conditions of orders
- Concerns regarding judiciary:
 - Shortage of Judges
 - Judges releasing accused in spite of strong submissions regarding serious level of risk
- Women victims being arrested and/or convicted of spousal assault
- Proposed amendments VAWIR Policy
- Proposed Amendments to Family Relations Act
- Legislative Committee reviewing possible amendments to Provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

If you have had experiences with any of the issues listed above or other concerns that are emerging for you in the work, please contact CCWS staff and let them know about it. Having a full picture of the current issues in the field helps CCWS carry out their cross-sector collaboration at the provincial level with the goal of increasing safety for women and children throughout the province.

Penticton Regional Capacity Building

In May 2010, CCWS staff delivered the Capacity Building Session "Working Collaboratively to Identify and Respond To Risk" in Penticton for the South Okanagan/Similkameen area. 42 participants from around the region developed action plans around identifying red flags in domestic violence cases and improving referral processes. This regional workshop focused on increasing understanding of the benefits to women's safety of collaborative safety planning and developing action plans to implement collaborative work in communities in the region. Participants specifically learned about information sharing in high-risk cases and the benefits of a high risk interagency case management team. The workshop also included a panel presentation by members of the North Okanagan Integrated High Risk Case Management Team (ICAT).

Other Workshop Highlights

Developing a Collaborative Response to Sexual Assault took place in Nelson September 23rd & 24th, 2010.



Participants at the Nelson workshop included: L-R, Detective Cory Hoy, Nelson Police Department, Corp. Debbie Postnikoff of the Castlegar RCMP and Detective Paul Burkhart of the Nelson Police Dept.

Trail Violence Against Women in Relationships Committee: Getting Started Took place in Trail on September 28th.

Violence in Relationships: Developing a Collaborative Response for the Arrow and Slocan Lakes District in Nakusp on September 30th.

Building the Domestic Violence Accord took place over one and a half days in Castlegar in May 2010.

Developing a Collaborative Response to Sexual Assault. This 3-day workshop was held in Creston in May 2010.

Risk Identification Tools and Collaborative Risk Assessment in Kelowna, May 2010. Kelowna and Penticton VAWIR are now developing protocols to work with a designated DV officer around high risk cases.

Community Development

As always, CCWS Regional Coordinators have been busy providing support and assisting with capacity building to communities and coordination initiatives across BC.

Communities they have been working with in recent months include 100 Mile House, Bella Coola, Burns Lake, Campbell River, Castlegar, Chetwynd, Chilliwack, Courtenay/Comox, Cranbrook, Creston, Duncan, Elkford, Fernie, Fort St. John, Grand Forks, Haida Gwaii, Hedley, Houston, Invermere, Kamloops, Kelowna, Keremeos, Kitimat, Langley, Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows, Masset, McBride, Mission, Nakusp, Nanaimo, Naramata, Nelson, North Vancouver, Okanagan Nation Alliance, Oliver, Osoyoos, Parksville, Penticton, Powell River, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Princeton, Port Coquitlam, Queen Charlotte City, Quesnel, Salmon Arm, Sechelt, Smithers, Terrace, Trail, Vancouver, Vanderhoof, Vernon and Victoria.

Provincial Working Group

The CCWS Provincial Working Group recently met on September 21, 2010 in Vancouver.

Presentations to the Working Group included:

- Missing Women Investigation Review by Deputy Chief Constable Doug LePard of the Vancouver Police Department and Chief Superintendent Craig Callens of RCMP “E” Division
- Proposed Changes to the Family Relations Act by Nancy Carter, Director of the Civil and Family Law Policy Office, Criminal Justice Branch, Ministry of Attorney General
- Rob Kroeker, Executive Director of the Civil Forfeiture Office, provided an update on Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General activities

- Ministry of Children and Family Development Program/Policy Analyst Shauna Filgate reported on the development of Best Practices for Child Protection Workers
- Harjit Kaur, EVA BC Program Manager, reviewed recent activities of the Safety for Immigrant, Refugee, and Non-Status Women Project

The next Working Group meeting is slated for February 2011 in Vancouver.

New Resources

Confidentiality Agreement Template: This sample for coordination initiative members was adapted from a Dawson Creek VAWIR Committee in 2000 and recently reposted to our website.

Women Being Arrested Backgrounder: This CCWS Backgrounder was originally released in September 2007 under the title “Dual Arrest in Cases of Relationship Violence”. It was revised and updated in July 2010.

Chilliwack VAWIR Coordinating Committee Terms of Reference: May provide a useful reference for the development of other Terms of Reference documents.

To view CCWS resources and publications online, please visit www.endingviolence.org/publications.

Upcoming Events

CCWS Legal Analyst, Gisela Ruebsaat will be one of the presenters at **Developing a Collaborative Response to Risk and Safety: A Panel Presentation and Conversation** hosted by the Ending Violence in Relationships Tri City Committee on October 12th in Port Moody.

Contact Us

Gail Edinger, Regional Coordinator
250-397-2389, rosebud@bcinternet.net

Michelle Novakowski, Regional Coordinator
250-862-2887, micheno@telus.net

Gisela Ruebsaat, LL.B., Legal Analyst
250-592-3073, gisela2@horizon.bc.ca

Tory Pearson, Administrative Assistant
604-633-2506 ext 15, ccws@endingviolence.org

Visit us online at www.endingviolence.org/ccws.