WHEN WOMEN USE VIOLENCE

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“The image of a victim as pure, innocent and helpless looms large in dominant culture, and makes it difficult to speak about agency, strength, and resiliency, and even a ‘taste’ for revenge as other features of being a victim.”

1. Introduction

The increased incidence of women being arrested has been the source of much concern across the province. And while we believe many of these arrests are the result of police not applying the Primary Aggressor Policy, it has focused attention on a topic that the feminist anti-violence community has struggled with over the years, namely women’s use of violence in intimate relationships. The issue raises a number of important questions:

• Has there been a shift in women’s behaviour, where women have become more violent?

• Is it merely that women are acting in self-defence and police are misinterpreting the situation?

• What about situations where women are the sole perpetrators of violence in the relationship?

• What about violence in lesbian relationships? How do we understand these situations?

• Are all acts of violence against intimate partners the same?

• Is it appropriate for women who use violence to use anti-violence services?

• How can we, as anti-violence workers, assess the situation and help women who use violence?

• What kinds of interventions are needed?

This article explores current research to help us understand what motivates women to use violence in both heterosexual and lesbian relationships.

2. What do we know about women’s use of violence in relationships?

2.1 Heterosexual relationships

Many studies that consider how women and men use violence in relationships fail to acknowledge that women and men experience—and use—violence for different reasons and under different circumstances. They tend to subscribe to the simplistic view that all violence is the same in its motivation, intent and outcome. Studies held up as “proof” that women are equally as violent as men are often based on research using the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) to measure the level of violence in a relationship.

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Message from the Executive Director

It is with great sadness that we mark the two-year anniversary of a triple domestic homicide in Merritt. On April 6, 2007, Darcie Clarke reported to police that her three children, aged 6, 8 and 10, were dead. Their father Allan Schoenborn, who had previously breached a restraining order, was later arrested and charged with their murders.

On September 4 that same year, Oak Bay resident Peter Lee murdered his estranged wife, Sunny Park, their son and Sunny’s parents, before killing himself. A Coroner’s inquest into the events and circumstances leading up to the murder-suicide was launched on April 28, 2008. Thanks to interest in our *Keeping Women Safe* report and the hard work of lawyer Diane Turner, EVA BC become the first provincial victim-serving organization to ever participate in a BC Coroner’s inquest. Hearings were suspended on May 7, 2008 pending a legal decision on whether Crown prosecutors will be required to testify. We are currently awaiting judgment from the BC Court of Appeal.

The murders in Merritt and Oak Bay are two heartbreaking reminders of why the work of frontline anti-violence workers like you is so important. Occasions such as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (December 6), International Women’s Day (March 8), Prevention of Violence Against Women Week (April 19-25) and Victims of Crime Awareness Week (April 26-May 2) give us an opportunity to celebrate women and proactively raise public awareness of violence across the province.

Your efforts on this front were truly inspiring again this year. Through our listservs and ongoing communications with programs, we gathered a number of interesting and unique initiatives from communities throughout BC. To help you plan your public events for next year, look for these ideas and others in our first newsletter in 2010.

This issue offers in-depth articles on worker safety and women’s use of violence, and a two-part series on women with disabilities. We travel to Smithers, BC to learn more about 16-step women’s empowerment and head across the pond for a coordinated community response to relationship violence.

With respect,

*Tracy Porteous*
The CTS has been highly criticized for focusing mainly on physical aggression (with little regard for emotional or psychological abuse or financial control), using a set ranking of “severity” of violence, and essentially “tallying” acts of violence. The scale fails to consider the context of, or motives for, violence and to account for factors such as culture, ethnicity and past experience of violence (see DeKeseredy and Swartz, 1998). Women tend to admit to using violence more frequently than men do. As well, social taboos against women’s use of violence often result in women’s violence being viewed as more violent than the same behaviour by men. Thus, women are commonly treated more harshly by the justice system.4

Case study no. 1
Jill grew up in an alcoholic family where psychological and physical abuse was commonplace. She witnessed her mother being emotionally and physically abused until her death from cancer when Jill was nine years old. Jill’s partner, John, grew up in a very violent home and swears he will never use physical violence. He has kept this promise, but instigates and prolongs arguments until Jill—desperate for John to stop—yells, slaps or punches him in the chest. According to the CTS, Jill is the aggressor in this situation: she is violent, he is not. It is clear, even from this brief description, that there is much more going on in this relationship than merely who does what to whom.

A review of recent literature on women’s use of violence in heterosexual relationships shows that:

1. Women’s violent behaviour towards their heterosexual partners is substantially different from men’s on historical, cultural, systemic, situational and individual grounds.5
2. Generally, women use violence to try to control situations, whereas men use it to try to control people.6
3. Women’s violence usually occurs in the context of violence against them by their male partner.
4. Women’s use of violence in heterosexual relationships often puts them at greater risk of violence from their male partners.
5. Women commonly cite one or more of the following themes for using violence: childhood violence (as a target or witness), violence in past adult relationships, emotional abuse, unavailability of help, frustration with their partner’s refusal to discuss problems, feelings of isolation and a lack of support from their partners following the birth of children, and/or a desire to protect their children from their partner’s violence.7

• Both women and men are capable of physical and psychological aggression, but research suggests that men perpetrate sexual abuse, coercive control and stalking more frequently than women and that women are more often injured during domestic violence incidents.
• Women from different cultural backgrounds may view violence differently. For example, many cultures do not consider physical aggression to be a taboo for women. Cross-cultural perspectives must be taken seriously to ensure an appropriate criminal justice response towards women’s violence in diverse communities. It is fairly common, for example, for women charged with violence against their male partners to be treated much more harshly by police and the justice system. In my experience, this is particularly true for Aboriginal women.8
• Women’s physical violence is often motivated by self-defence and fear, whereas men’s physical violence is more likely to be driven by an attempt to assert control and domination in the relationship.
• Studies of couples in relationships where both partners use violence find that women experience more negative effects than men.
• Differences in how and why women and men use violence mean that interventions based on male models of partner violence will likely be ineffective for women.9

2.2 Lesbian relationships
Violence in lesbian relationships exists in the context of a homophobic/heterosexist, misogynistic and racist society that, on one hand, denies women’s use of violence and, on the other, pathologizes it. Ristock’s research on violence in lesbian relationships10 gives us insight into the multiple, overlapping and compounding factors that increase the probability of experiencing and committing violence as well as the nature and dynamics of violence between women. Her work identifies themes of invisibility and isolation (from being in a first lesbian relationship, living in a homophobic/heterosexist environment and/or dislocation), the normalization of violence and relationship dynamics.

2.2.1 Invisibility and isolation
Sixty-one percent of participants described their first lesbian relationship as abusive. Often these women were involved with a woman who had been out for a longer period of time and sometimes was much older. This statistic suggests that a vulnerability...
to violence is part of the heterosexist context in which lesbians are isolated, unable to access meeting places, and dependent on their first lover for information about living as a lesbian. Conversely, several women interviewed by Ristock indicated that their abusive partner was in her first lesbian relationship. Some women used their status as “new” lesbians who were perhaps unsure of their commitment to the relationship or to being a lesbian to threaten their partner into doing what they wanted. Others noted that situations where at least one partner was still in the closet also played an important role in the context of first relationships.

All lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people experience living in a homphobic/transphobic/heterosexist culture, which sets the stage for social isolation in their relationships. Some lesbians remain closeted and feel that they have to hide their sexuality from certain people even when they are out to others. Internalized homophobia can lead to stigmatization of a woman’s lesbian partner and give permission to use violence against her because she is “sick”, “unnatural”, etc. Staying in an abusive relationship may be fuelled by the fear of encountering homophobia/heterosexism. In the search for an inclusive community, many lesbians move between communities, geographic location or emigrating from another country, which can create a climate of social vulnerability.

2.2.2 Normalization of violence
Many women in Ristock’s research described violence as commonplace, ongoing and a normal part of their lives. They spoke of three main factors that contributed to violence in their relationships:

• drugs and alcohol (her and/or her partner’s use, and if substance use was a factor in the abuse),
• a history of previous abuse (childhood and/or adult experiences of violence),
• racism and poverty (living a lifetime of violence).

2.2.3 Relationship dynamics
In addition to power and control dynamics, where there is a perpetrator and a victim, research has identified other dynamics. Shifting power involves movement of power from one person to another in a relationship. Some women spoke of a shift in power dynamics when they stood up to their abusers and exchanged roles; others found that power shifted back and forth in the relationship over time. Fighting back can be a coping strategy, a form of resistance, retaliation with the intent to hurt or cause harm, and/or an act of self-defence.

Case study no. 2
Barb grew up in a middle-class, military family with a controlling father. She knew she was a lesbian from an early age, but didn’t come out to her family for fear of being rejected. Gloria grew up in a very violent home where she witnessed her mother being abused, was often neglected, and was sexually abused by an uncle between the ages of 5 and 10.

Barb is Gloria’s first lesbian lover and was physically and psychologically abused by a previous partner. Barb doesn’t want to repeat that pattern but finds herself increasingly frustrated by Gloria’s neediness. Gloria is very jealous of Barb’s friends and often accuses Barb of cheating. Barb becomes so stressed that she strikes out at Gloria in an attempt to stop her from questioning her (Barb’s) motives. On two occasions she is physically violent towards Gloria. Barb is very ashamed of her behaviour and seeks counselling to address her abusive behaviour and to understand how her past relationship has affected her. As Barb becomes more self-assured, Gloria escalates her accusations and becomes increasingly violent. The power dynamics in this relationship are complex and appear to shift back and forth.

3. Why do women use violence in intimate relationships?
Violence in intimate relationships does not occur in a vacuum. It is embedded within the socio-cultural context and is maintained and supported by the structures of a society. Understanding women’s use of force requires complex analysis using a multilayered perspective. The ways in which the various social, institutional, familial and individual contexts of a woman’s life interplay and influence each other are important considerations in developing a framework to determine what motivates a woman to use violence. For example, a woman’s lived experience of sexism and the social prescriptions of gender roles, racism, homophobia (or other oppressions), socioeconomic status, the level of social isolation she experiences, family relationships, childhood experiences, experiences of violence and the ways in which these factors interact are some of the influences that may contribute to her use of violence. In order to understand a woman’s motivations for using violence, it is essential to consider the full context of her life.

3.1 Categories of violence
Women’s use of violence in relationships can be separated roughly into four categories.11

3.1.1 Primary physical aggressors
Women who use tactics of power and control, including violent behaviour, to control their partners are considered
primary aggressors. Pense and Dasgupta (2006) suggest that it is rare for a heterosexual woman to achieve dominance over her male partner through a pattern of power and control. Hamlett (1998) reports only a small number of women in her program who fit into this category, the majority of whom are violent to a female partner. These women generally grew up in abusive households, witnessing the abuse of their mothers and often experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse themselves, and have identified with the perpetrator. Often these women possess a sense of entitlement that they use to justify their violence. Some women have histories of violent behaviour in their teens and may have previously been abused in at least one adult relationship.

3.1.2 Relational or situational violence

Here, there is no pattern of control or domination (power fluctuates back and forth continuously in the relationship) and violence is used to achieve goals. This form of violence has been identified in both same-sex and heterosexual relationships. For example, a woman hits her partner in the midst of an argument over money. The use of violence in this relationship is unusual and generally arises in highly stressful situations. In lesbian partnerships, either woman may use violence but does not attempt to dominate the other woman in other ways. A thorough assessment of the dynamics in the relationship is needed to distinguish relational or situational violence from primary aggressor violence.

3.1.3 Self-defence

The overwhelming majority of women who are violent are acting in self-defence. Often a woman is trying to remove herself either from, or in anticipation of, a violent incident involving her partner. This situation is common among women who are abusive towards male partners and who may also be retaliating against physical, emotional and/or psychological abuse. It is also common in abusive lesbian relationships. Women whose violence is motivated by self-defence often stop using violence when the violence against them stops. There are examples, however, of women who initially use violence in self-defence but continue to abuse their partner after their partner’s violence stops.

3.1.4 “Never again” mode

Some women, regardless of their partner’s gender, enter survival mode (“no one is ever going to hurt me that way again”) and use violence as a way of protecting themselves. These women, almost without exception, have experienced violence in at least one adult relationship and often have histories of childhood abuse.

These categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, a woman who is abused in one relationship and takes a “never again” stance in a subsequent relationship is at increased risk of becoming the primary aggressor in the new relationship. Because of her previous abuse, she may have difficulty interpreting her partner’s behaviour and identifying early warning signs of abuse. Is she missing cues that she is in danger? Is she interpreting everything in the new relationship as potentially dangerous? Interventions that could help a woman acting in self-defence against her partner’s abuse may not be well suited to a woman who is the primary aggressor in the relationship.

3.2 Aspects of assessment

For an intervention plan to be effective, it must reflect the women’s specific circumstances and her motivation for using violence. Three key components of a detailed assessment include:

- The context in which the violence occurs (i.e., the relationship history). Does one person hold more power than the other? Does power shift back and forth? What happened leading up to the event?
- The intent of the violence. What was the woman hoping to achieve by using violence?
- The effects of the violence on the woman and her partner.

We need to ask questions about her:

- experiences with abuse, bullying and violence in childhood, youth and current and past relationships,
- socio-cultural background, family and community networks,
- past intervention experiences,
- motivations and intentions,
- immediate situation and the consequences of the violence on her and her partner.

4. Why is it important to understand women’s use of violence?

More and more women are being arrested for assaulting their partners, whether they have been violent or not. In this environment, it is essential that anti-violence workers have the knowledge and tools needed to help women manoeuvre the justice system and find alternatives to violence. Women tend to face harsher treatment by police and courts than do men. They are often mandated to abusive men’s treatment programs or other programs that equate her violence with that of men. Rarely are they asked to share their side of the story and prior offences by partners (in current or past relationships) are frequently overlooked. In lesbian relationships, both women are often arrested, only to have charges eventually
dropped or no charges laid at all. The violence is not taken seriously or treated as relationship violence. Typically there is no analysis of relationship dynamics, even in cases that do go to court.

Our role as anti-violence workers is to engage women in order to understand the ways they use and/or are victimized by intimate partner violence. Healing requires examining all of who we are, including those aspects of ourselves that are “not so pretty”. Whether women use anger and violence to defend themselves from abuse, to try to prevent future abuse, to control a situation and/or to control another person, we can help them develop skills and strategies grounded in respect and non-violence.

“… [A]buse is always inexcusable, … there are many different kinds of abusive relationships and many reasons for why it happens. … we need to understand those differences so that we can respond in more helpful ways. The same responses are not appropriate for someone who has experienced abuse her whole life and occupied both the perpetrator and victim positions, someone else who has been terrorized by her first lesbian lover, someone else who uses violence to retaliate against an abusive partner, and someone else who has experienced shifting power dynamics where both she and her partner have been verbally and emotionally abusive. The violence still has to stop: in looking at these contexts, I am not saying that women are not responsible for abuse, but I do think we need different ways of responding that attend to the complexities of these differing power dynamics.”12

I want to learn more!
The Spring 2009 issue of this newsletter discussed the incidence and implications of women’s mistaken arrest and described recent EVA BC work on this issue.

Readers are also encouraged to download our Dual Arrest in Cases of Relationship Violence Backgrounder and Freedom From Violence Toolkit (Chapter 4.8 on “Working with Women’s Use of Violence”) at www.endingviolence.com/publications.

BC’s women with DisAbilities have for many years led the way in Canada: providing support, cutting edge research and strong leadership to the Women with DisAbilities movement. The impetus for Pacific DAWN came in the mid 1990s and, since 1995, we have been working to advance the rights of women with DisAbilities in BC and the Yukon. Run by women with DisAbilities, our organization is currently in a period of resurgence and outreach. We are a cross-disability feminist organization representing all women with DisAbilities, not just women with mobility and physical DisAbilities. We see ourselves as fully empowered human beings when our differences are accommodated, and are speaking out when society creates the barriers to our full inclusion.

Pacific DAWN strongly agrees with the international disability slogan that states “Nothing About Us Without Us”. We believe that only women with DisAbilities know their own situation and that we should have control over issues, written materials and research affecting our lives. Too often we have been the subject of research and used for our knowledge without any control of what is produced or any compensation.

Pacific DAWN does not provide direct services; our purpose is to ensure that the voices of women with DisAbilities are heard and that our particular life experiences and needs are acknowledged. We want to expand and maintain a network of communication between DisAbled and non-disabled women, to educate and raise awareness of women with DisAbilities within all organizations, and to promote research on all issues affecting women with DisAbilities.

Our current focus is on violence experienced by women with DisAbilities. It is estimated that 83% of women with DisAbilities will be sexually abused in their lifetime, 53% of women with DisAbilities (from birth) have been raped, abused or assaulted and 42% have been or are in an abusive relationship.

Although much has been done to improve accessibility for those with mobility impairments, this is only one of a number of disability categories represented by Pacific DAWN members. If a woman with DisAbilities is able to call for help, she is referred to a local victim services worker who may not have the knowledge to assist her. Local, fully accessible resources that can help may exist, but there is currently no registry of women-serving organizations that are accessible to women with DisAbilities.

Pacific DAWN hopes to rectify this problem and develop training, resources and protocols for working with women with DisAbilities. In keeping with listening to women’s lived experiences and requirements, our first project since the mid 1990s will be to ask a multitude of women with a variety of DisAbilities what services should be available when we experience violence in our lives.

I want to learn more!
Pacific DAWN is open to all who support its objectives, although only those who identify as having DisAbilities have a decision-making vote. Visit www.pacificdawn.ca or email Pat Kelln at pkelln@telus.net to learn more, sign up for the organization’s newsletter or become a Pacific DAWN member.
A recent report from the United Kingdom suggests that women with disabilities tend to experience more abuse than other women, but have access to fewer services. The result? Women with disabilities who try to escape violence face almost insurmountable barriers.

**Study methodology**

In 2005, Professor Gill Hague and Dr. Pauline Magowan (Violence Against Women Research Group, University of Bristol), Dr. Ravi Thiara and Audrey Mullender (Centre for the Study of Safety and Well-being, University of Warwick) and an Advisory Group of consultants with disabilities set out to learn more about the needs and experiences of women with physical and sensory impairments who are experiencing relationship violence.

The research was managed by Women’s Aid, a UK non-profit devoted to ending domestic violence against women and children, and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Findings and recommendations were published in a 2008 report, titled *Making the Links: Disabled Women and Domestic Violence*.

The researchers approached the project with a social model of disability lens. According to this school of thought, the barriers faced by people with disabilities are due to society’s failure to take into account their needs rather than their individual impairments.

Between September 2005 and March 2008, they facilitated a focus group and consultations with disabled women; interviewed professionals, practitioners, activists and other experts; conducted two national surveys of domestic violence organizations and organizations serving people with disabilities; and conducted 30 in-depth interviews with women with disabilities who had been abused.

**The UK experience**

The study found that women with disabilities experienced a wide range of abuse, often over an extended period of time, at the hands of intimate partners, personal assistants and/or family members. Respondents reported that “being disabled made the abuse worse, and also severely limited their capacity to escape or take other preventative measures” (Executive Summary, p. 3).

Key observations from the report (pp. 3-5):

* Being disabled strongly affected the nature, extent and impact of abuse. Women’s impairments were frequently used in the abuse. Humiliation and belittling were an integral part of this and were particularly prevalent.
* Sexual violence appeared to be proportionately more common for disabled than for non-disabled women.
* Financial abuse was also particularly common with caregivers often taking women’s personal allowances and other money.
* Many abusers deliberately emphasized and reinforced the woman’s dependence as a way of asserting and maintaining control.
* The abuse was especially acute where the abusive partner was also the caregiver. Neglect and deliberate isolation were tactics adopted by some perpetrators, exacerbating the abuse and making sources of help unavailable.
* While only a minority of the women interviewed reported abuse from their personal assistants, it was generally considered to be widespread, pervasive and continual in disabled women’s lives—and often unacknowledged.
* Disabled women who reported abuse were often disbelieved, not taken seriously, or made to feel guilty, ungrateful, or unworthy of any relationship.
* Disabled women experienced depression, losing a sense of themselves, having problems sleeping, eating disorders, feeling worthless, and not being able to trust anybody as a result of the abuse.

**Barriers to seeking help**

The report identified a number of challenges that discourage women with disabilities from seeking help. Many women (p. 5):

* did not recognize their experience as abuse,
* blamed themselves,
* were unaware of other options,
* feared losing their independence or being institutionalized,
* feared having their children taken away,
* did not trust agencies to respond effectively.
The report also noted that (p. 5):

- Professionals rarely asked about abuse and women were reluctant to disclose if not asked.
- Women were reluctant to leave accommodations that had been adapted to their needs.
- Accessible services and alternative housing were not always available.
- The options available to women who were unable to take their care packages and personal assistants with them were especially limited.
- Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee women, lesbians and women with no recourse to public funds were particularly reluctant to seek help—and least likely to receive the support and services they needed.

**Recommendations**

The report provides a number of best practices for service providers and legislators and encourages the development of a strategic plan for women with disabilities who experience abuse. Broadly speaking, the recommendations call for increased public awareness, training in relationship violence and disability equality for relevant agencies, improved collaboration between relationship violence service providers and organizations serving people with disabilities, and a comprehensive range of support services for women with disabilities who experience abuse.

**I want to learn more!**

Visit www.womensaid.org.uk for more information on the Women's Aid organization or to download the entire Making the Links report.

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**A SHARED VISION FOR RESPONDING TO RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE**

In 2007, the London Councils commissioned Standing Together Against Domestic Violence, a registered charity, to study the extent to which known survivors of relationship violence seek support from various statutory and voluntary agencies in the United Kingdom. The research findings and recommendations, recently published in Completing the Jigsaw, bear a number of similarities to the approach advocated by EVA BC’s very own Community Coordination for Women’s Safety program. Below is a comparison of key ideas shared by the two organizations.

1. **A coordinated community response**

1.1 Standing Together

An overriding factor in agencies’ response to domestic violence is the complexity of the issue and its prevalence and scale. This report throws further light on this and (again) makes the case for more concerted effort. This can only be achieved if the response is designed around a coordinated approach. The Government policy of supporting a coordinated community response is well known and the model is a very sensible means of developing a considered and coherent form of coordination. (p. 2)

If domestic violence is strongly correlated with (if not the cause of) the issues with which the victims present to the agencies, it is essential that it is systematically and accurately identified by those agencies. Otherwise it seems unlikely that those agencies can solve problems for individuals and families when they are not aware of all the underlying issues. …

Of our sample, all of whom had been victims in police incidents of domestic violence, 36% had been in touch with other agencies who had not identified the domestic violence on their own databases… (p. 3)

1.2 CCWS

The BC provincial government has no clear policy demanding coordinated policies and practices in responding to violence against women, but provides ongoing funding to EVA BC’s Community Coordination for Women’s Safety (CCWS) program. The CCWS mandate is to support local communities and the province in developing a coordinated and consistent community response that improves assaulted women’s access to justice and other relevant systems.

CCWS recognizes that violence against women may not always be the primary issue to which an agency is responding. Coordination between agencies is essential for putting together
the various components of a women’s life, detecting the presence of any abuse and ongoing risk, and then taking measures to resolve the situation.

2. Training

2.1 Standing Together

Very few staff we interviewed received any kind of formal domestic violence training, demonstrating many missed opportunities for agencies to improve their response to the needs of their clients.

Recommendation: Introduce training programmes in identifying domestic violence and understanding the dynamics of domestic violence. …

It is recommended that local domestic violence partnerships institute a training programme for frontline staff which directly addresses the dynamics of domestic violence (including perpetrator behaviour). Any training programme should also explore methods of identifying domestic violence as a factor in clients’ background where it is not specifically disclosed, and how to enquire safely and appropriately. (p. 3)

2.2 CCWS

We are developing new training that will help frontline workers use risk indicators to identify high-risk relationship violence cases. The curriculum will include information on power dynamics, which is crucial for distinguishing between ongoing relationship violence and isolated events.

3. Information sharing

3.1 Standing Together

We found that the identification of domestic violence by agencies did not necessarily lead to information, some of it vital, being shared with other agencies. In over a third of cases where victims were known to the police and had contact with at least one other agency, domestic violence was not identified by any other agencies. …

Data protection concerns were regularly quoted as a significant barrier to the sharing of information both within organisations and between organisations. …

Recommendation: Information Sharing Protocols to be established and must include health agencies.

Information sharing remains the single most challenging aspect of the partnership approach to domestic violence. It is difficult to address this concisely within this document but it is a fact that successful Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) have negotiated a way through such problems. (p. 4)

3.2 CCWS

The Keeping Women Safe report, co-authored by CCWS and the Critical Components Project Team, identifies information sharing as one of eight critical components in an effective response to domestic violence. Specifically, we note the need for consistent and timely information sharing between agencies and with the victim, with an emphasis on high-risk cases.

Recommendations 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 of our report call on BC’s provincial government to develop—and provide training on—a provincial information sharing and/or case coordination protocol framework for domestic violence cases that includes both the criminal and civil (family law/child protection) systems. A government-based information-sharing committee involving BC’s Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and Ministry of Attorney General is an important first step.

The MARACs referred to in the Standing Together report include independent advocates and use shared information to develop unique safety plans that attempt to address risks faced by the survivor and her children. This process is similar to the case conferencing model advocated by CCWS and covered in our Community Leadership Training.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.endingviolence.org
Like the Standing Together study, our *Keeping Women Safe* report stresses the importance of having independent advocates involved in case conferencing and/or information-sharing and safety planning processes. Only a minority of abused women will disclose abuse to system-based responders. Independent advocates are often in a better position to encourage women, particularly those from marginalized groups, to share critical information on risk factors.

**4. Specialized victim support**

**4.1 Standing Together**

*The role of the specialist service provider cannot be overstated. The specialist agencies can respond directly to the domestic violence thereby assisting and enabling victims to negotiate their way through other agency procedures. Furthermore, they provide an invaluable referral route for agencies whose direct remit is not domestic violence.*

However, the existence of specialist services is limited and thus their effectiveness cannot be fully realised by the majority of agencies and practitioners.

*Recommendation: Analysis of prevalence…should be conducted and specialist services should be commissioned according to defined need.* (p. 4)

**4.2 CCWS**

*Our *Keeping Women Safe* report identifies specialized community-based victim support as one of eight critical components in an effective response to domestic violence, something we have been advocating for close to 20 years. Specifically, we note the need for comprehensive, proactive and timely support with outreach and access for marginalized groups.*

Recommendations 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 of our report advocates a specialized approach backed by sufficient funding to enable the appropriate community-based programs to deal with the number of cases they receive.

**Progress report**

Anthony Wills, Chief Executive of Standing Together, explains what his organization is doing to make the *Completing the Jigsaw* recommendations a reality in the UK. “We’re now in the second year of developing the action plan and a structure that supports it. The research itself has introduced a different level of interest and commitment, but agencies—particularly the statutory sector—are unsure of quite how to proceed.”

Standing Together has responded with a training strategy that aims to explain the dynamics of domestic violence, ensure effective responses and work towards appropriate referrals. The strategy will save money through prevention and earlier intervention and solve problems before they reach crisis.

“The training is just one element of our action plan,” says Anthony. “It’s important that each agency take responsibility—and be accountable—for the domestic violence that appears in their agency. We believe there will never be sufficient services to deal with the scale of these issues in the not-for-profit sector, so centrally funded frontline agencies must do more.”

EVA BC and CCWS continue to work closely with communities across BC, government ministries and police agencies to help ensure that the recommendations contained in the *Keeping Women Safe* report are acted upon.

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**I want to learn more!**

Read more about Standing Together Against Domestic Violence or download the *Completing the Jigsaw* report at [www.standingtogether.org.uk](http://www.standingtogether.org.uk).


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1 All Standing Together page references refer to the *Completing the Jigsaw* Executive Summary.
Worker safety plays a critical role in the delivery of anti-violence services in BC. Every day, advocates, counsellors, public educators, administrators and program support staff work with women and children across BC who have experienced violence. Every day, these workers return home buoyed by the incredible strength of the survivors of violence they see, but concerned about the implications of this work for their personal safety.

An ongoing concern
According to an International Labour Organization study, Canada has one of the highest rates of on-the-job assault and sexual harassment. Women face a heightened risk of on-the-job violence primarily because high-risk occupations (e.g., social services, health care) tend to be staffed predominantly by females. Police tell us that domestic violence calls are among the most dangerous types of calls an officer can respond to. It is therefore not much of a stretch for us to extrapolate that there are real concerns about the safety of workers who deal with this kind of violence daily.

In 2007, Maggie Ziegler (MA, RCC) addressed the issue of worker safety in the anti-violence sector in EVA BC’s Freedom From Violence Toolkit (“Taking Care of Ourselves: The Impact of Working within Systems”). In 2008, EVA BC hosted its province-wide Annual Training Forum on the theme of risk assessment and safety planning for women and children who face violence in their lives. The event included a workshop on “Risk Assessment in the Workplace” by Lydia Rozental, a practicing clinician and supervisor. During the teleconference calls with programs in Spring 2009, frontline workers continued to raise concerns about the safety of workers who deal with this kind of violence daily.

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With the recent economic downturn, a focus on worker safety is more important than ever. There is a clear link between stress and work-related violence, and the industry slowdowns, downsizing, job loss and heightened employer demands during these tough times produce financial stress that can exacerbate frustration and aggression in abusive relationships.

Work-related violence
Work-related violence is any act or attempt to cause injury or abuse (physical or psychological) in, or related to, the workplace. It can be committed by anyone—employers, clients, co-workers or members of the public.

In the anti-violence sector, work-related violence is often not restricted to the agency’s office. Many frontline workers meet clients in their offices or homes and accompany them to public places or services agencies (e.g., police, court). Violence can occur at any of these places, and can even follow workers home. Technology provides even more opportunities for intrusion—telephone, fax and email can all be used to harass, intimidate, threaten or assault.

There are a number of factors known to increase the risk of work-related violence in the anti-violence sector, including certain features of the workplace:
- an isolated or low-traffic location,
- office design, layout and/or lighting,
- open access or inadequate security measures.

As well as the nature of the work:
- working with women who are leaving abusive relationships and/or are survivors of sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse,
- providing service, care, counselling and/or education,
- working alone or in small groups,
- for some, working in small communities with limited anonymity.

Impacts
Work-related violence can result in both physical and psychological trauma. In the case of physical violence, workers may suffer assault—or the threat of assault—from the offenders of the women with whom they are working. This physical trauma may also result in psychological impacts, including depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder and overall stress. Stress and vicarious trauma—ongoing
concerns among frontline anti-violence workers—could result in weakened immune systems, heart attacks, nervous system damage and strokes.

Even in the absence of physical trauma, workers who deal with violence may experience the psychological impacts described above. Moreover, similar to the cycle of abuse, work-related threats and harassment are often precursors to physical violence. The impacts of work-related violence extend beyond individual employees to affect their interactions with clients and the dynamic of their entire office. For these reasons, it is critical that frontline workers and employers engage in risk assessment and safety planning for staff as an integral component of their work.

Wayne’s Law

In 2007, the Workers’ Compensation Board of BC introduced regulations concerning working alone or in isolation, workplace conduct and violence in the workplace. The regulations, which became effective February 1, 2008, require employers to conduct a risk assessment and develop written procedures, policies and programs to address workplace violence hazards, including threats and physical violence.

Sections 4.20.2 to 4.23 of the regulations define working “alone or in isolation” as situations where assistance would not be readily available to a worker:

- in the event of an emergency, or
- in the event the worker is injured or ill.

Although not directly applicable to frontline workers, section 4.22 nonetheless outlines safety procedures and provides direction for employers that wish to develop worker safety policies and procedures for working alone or accompaniments:

4.22.1 Late night retail safety procedures and requirements

(2) If a worker is assigned to work alone or in isolation in late night retail premises and there is any risk of harm from a violent act to the worker, then, in addition to any other obligations the employer has under sections 4.20.2 to 4.23,

(a) the employer must develop and implement a written procedure to ensure the worker’s safety in handling money, and

(b) when that worker is assigned to work late night hours, the employer must also do either or both of the following:

(i) ensure that the worker is physically separated from the public by a locked door or barrier that prevents physical contact with or access to the worker;

(ii) assign one or more workers to work with the worker during that worker’s assignment.

(3) A worker described in subsection (2) must be trained in the written procedure referred to in that subsection.

Improving worker safety

During EVA BC’s spring 2009 teleconference calls, programs shared some of the measures that agencies/organizations and staff have taken to improve worker safety.

Office security:

- Not publicizing the agency’s address.
- Limiting office access with codes or locked front doors that can be opened only by staff.
- Limiting client access to a specific floor(s).
- Installing tinted office doors to limit recognition of workers.
- Installing one or more security panic buttons.
- Installing security cameras.

Organizational guidelines, protocols and training:

- Establishing clear guidelines and protocols for agency and staff.
- Adopting a protocol that protects the confidentiality of workers’ schedules, but requires workers to inform co-workers of their whereabouts.
- Adopting a “no home visits” policy or, alternatively, ensuring that office staff is aware of these visits.
- Adopting a protocol that prevents frontline staff from making public presentations in order to ensure their anonymity.
- Taking special precautions and conducting staff risk assessments when working with dangerous clients or clients with dangerous partners.
- Being aware of suspicious mail.
- Training staff in self-defence.

Staff measures:

- Being mindful of surroundings between the office and car when leaving work.
- Having access to a cell phone or alternative means of communication where cell phone service is unavailable.
- Requesting assistance from the local court sheriff for unsafe court accompaniments.

A sample domestic violence prevention policy published in the August 2004 issue of Workforce Management also contains a number of measures that workers and employers can take to improve workplace safety. The following excerpt outlines key points:
Employee

• Encourage the employee to save any threatening e-mail or voice-mail messages. These can potentially be used for future legal action, or can serve as evidence that an existing restraining order was violated.

• The employee should obtain a restraining order that includes the workplace, and keep a copy on hand at all times. The employee may consider providing a copy to the police, his/her supervisor, security, or human resources (or appropriate individuals/departments within your company).

• The employee should provide a picture of the perpetrator [in question] to reception areas and/or security.

• The employee should identify an emergency contact person should the employer be unable to contact the victim.

• If an absence is deemed appropriate, the employee should be clear about the plan to return to work. While absent, the employee should maintain contact with the appropriate Human Resources personnel.

Employer

• Arrange the victim to have priority parking near the building.

• Have calls screened, transfer harassing calls to security, or have the employee’s name removed from automated phone directories.

• Limit information about employees disclosed by phone. Information that would help locate a victim or indicates a time of return should not be provided.

• Relocate the employee’s workspace to a more secure area or another site.

• The employer should have trained EAP professionals or community anti-violence workers assist the employee with development of a safety plan.

• Work with local law enforcement personnel, and encourage employees to do so regarding situations outside the workplace.

We want to hear from you!
EVA BC strongly advocates that all frontline agencies and workers undertake risk assessment and safety planning measures when providing service to survivors of relationship violence, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse. Let us know how your agency is improving the safety of frontline anti-violence workers by contacting Harjit Kaur at kaur@endviolence.org.

I want to learn more!

References and resources


BC Federation of Labour

• Links in the lefthand menu at www.bcfed.ca/issues/women.

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety


CUPE


Safe Canada


WorkSafeBC


2 Ibid.

In 2008, STV Outreach worker Marilyn George helped launch the first 16-step women's empowerment group in Smithers. Today, she is preparing to co-facilitate her fifth group in the region. Marilyn shares her experiences with the 16 steps and explains how other communities can start their own empowerment groups.

Marilyn has been working as an STV Outreach worker at the Northern Society for Domestic Peace in Smithers for the past three years. Supporting women in her region—including some as far as 70km away—can be challenging on a 17.5-hour workweek, but the opportunity to support them makes it all worthwhile. “I have the chance to plant that seed in a woman’s mind. Even if she chooses to go back to the relationship at first, I am helping to make her life better over time.”

What is 16-step empowerment?
To quote Dr. Charlotte Kasl, “The 16-step empowerment approach encourages people to break through limitations, focus on their strengths and talents, use their rational mind as an ally in healing, and bond in power and joy.”

Dr. Kasl provides a different way of looking at things that society views negatively. “In this empowerment model, addiction is not seen as the enemy, but rather a survival mechanism that was often triggered by violence, neglect or alienation, often starting in childhood. …The task of healing from addiction and violent relationships starts by validating the positive survival goals of security, comfort, love and power that underlie these addictions and compulsive behaviours. The next step is to find non-addictive ways to meet those needs.”

The 16 steps speak to anyone with any form of addiction—from drugs and alcohol to relationship dependency, even something like bingo.

How are 12-step and 16-step programs different?
A 12-step group like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) helps you stay sober by relying on other group members for support. The 16-step approach takes recovery further by identifying how trauma affects your life (e.g., why you might be staying in a violent relationship) and then filling that hole with something positive.

Many times, people who go into treatment centres or AA groups to kick their addiction fall back into it. The reason is that there are no follow-up or support systems in place to help them understand why they developed the addiction in the first place. The 16 steps provide an opportunity to explore those issues.

In no way do I think that the 12-step program is not good. I gained my sobriety through AA, but I think there is life beyond it. I think it would be safe to say that I grew to need more than what AA had to offer.

How did you learn about the 16-step approach?
When I first heard about 16-step empowerment 10 years ago, I was committed to the 12-step AA program and wasn’t open to a different approach. Then, at EVA BC’s Annual Training Forum in 2007, I heard Dr. Kasl’s keynote address and attended her workshop on “Living the Sixteen Steps: An Empowerment Workshop for Love, Strength, and Power”. I knew immediately that I wanted to start a group in my community.

What has been your experience with 16-step groups?
My colleague, STV Counsellor Lois Hobley, and I started our first 16-step women’s empowerment group in Smithers in January 2008. Thirteen women signed up almost immediately and, while a few dropped out as the weeks passed, seven women finished the program completely.

Following that, Northern Health and the Minerva Foundation provided funding to facilitate three 16-step women’s empowerment groups in the Hazelton area. Two of these groups were successfully completed. I believe my experiences as a First Nation woman helped contribute to the success of these programs.

Our next Smithers group starts June 3, 2009 and we expect to have anywhere from 5-10 women. New people can join
during the first few weeks, but we stop enrolment after that to ensure that everyone has a chance to work through all 16 steps.

**How does your group work?**

Our group meets once per week for two hours. We introduce the program in week 1 and then work through one new step each week after that, for a total of 17 sessions. Each session begins with an explanation of the step followed by a series of group exercises to work through the concepts.

The women bond over time and the group becomes a safe, non-threatening place where the participants feel comfortable and confident enough to try something new—like saying “no” to someone for the first time, or even just sharing something personal out loud.

**Can other communities start their own 16-step empowerment groups?**

Definitely! Any frontline worker can facilitate a group—STV outreach workers, STV counsellors, transition house workers, you name it. It’s a great opportunity for women in the community to familiarize themselves with you and what you do, which makes them more likely to access other services in the future.

Agencies can order Dr. Kasl’s manual, titled *Yes You Can! Healing from Trauma and Addiction with Love, Strength and Power*, which explains group dynamics and the various challenges you’ll face when forming an empowerment group. I would also recommend the *Women Tell Their Stories* and *From Recovery to Discovery and Empowerment* DVDs.

I want to learn more!

Contact Marilyn George at 250-847-9000 ext 228 or mq.george@domesticpeace.ca to find out more about her experiences with 16-step women’s empowerment groups in Smithers and surrounding communities.

WOMEN IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

BY MAGGIE ZIEGLER

“The most important thing is to talk with the women of the Congo. There is a tendency, particularly from the United Nations, to deal only with the men with guns and think that if they can stop the shooting they’ve ended the war. But there’s another component to the war. And it’s called rape. And the raping has never ended [in the DRC] from 1996 to this day. And you’re never going to end the war in the Congo until you prevent the violence to the women. And therefore you’ve got to involve the women in the peace negotiations. And incredibly enough, they have never been involved.”

– Stephen Lewis, Chair of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, formerly the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa

Be warned. This column is not a good news story. It is about the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where rape is a weapon of war, and more. Stephen Lewis argues that what’s happening in the DRC is an act of criminal international misogyny, sustained by the indifference of nation states and the delinquency of the United Nations (UN).

“The worst place in the world for women”
The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs has called the DRC the worst place in the world for women. Feminist playwright/performer/activist Eve Ensler, whose 2007 trip to the DRC played a significant role in publicizing the horrific assaults against women, said at that time, “I have returned from hell.”

Women in the DRC are being raped multiple times, by multiple perpetrators, with bottles and guns. They are being mutilated, shot and ripped apart while their children watch or are murdered or raped themselves. These women are shunned, stigmatized and shamed. Because they are often poor and very ill, it is frequently medical desperation that drives them to seek help.

Dr. Denis Mukwege, a Congolese gynecologist who founded the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, has treated approximately 21,000 women over the past 12 years, performing up to 10 rape repair surgeries per day. It is estimated that 300,000 people have been raped and 4.5 million have been killed in this latest round of violence in the DRC.

A history of colonialism
The DRC has a history of colonial exploitation and international interference and continues to be of great interest to the Western world. The country’s rich resources include the world’s largest supply of coltan, which is used to produce cell phones. Militias control these mines and export the output to industrialized countries abroad. The Western world is decidedly less interested, however, in the ongoing violence and rape perpetrated by the government, rebels and militias, including the fleeing perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide.

Eve Ensler reminds us that violence against women occurs in every country around the world. She views what is happening in the DRC as an economic war fought on the bodies of women, and the situation at Panzi Hospital as an “end-of-the-world scenario” that could happen to women anywhere.

Speaking up and speaking out
Christine Schuler Deschryver, a Congolese human rights activist who is connected to Panzi Hospital, had a raped 10-month-old baby die in her arms. When recounting the experience to Amy Goodman of Democracy Now!, she suggested people can help by sharing the story.

Speaking the truth about what is being done to women, girls and babies is just part of this story. It is also the story of demonstrations that saw 8,000-10,000 women fill the streets of three major African cities—Goma, Bunia and Bukavu—in November 2007, of the many brave women who broke their silence, and of the men who listened and wept. It is the story of the men and women who are working together to educate communities and support the integration and acceptance of raped women, of dedicated activists in remote areas.

Christine Schuler Deschryver calls for members of the international community to wake up, educate ourselves and take action, no matter how small. We can add our own voices to the passionate pro-feminist voice of Stephen Lewis. We can honour men like Dr. Mukwege and women like Christine Schuler Deschryver. We can support Panzi Hospital and Eve Ensler’s V-Day campaign (www.vday.org) to raise awareness about the women of the DRC in 2009. We can watch Lisa Jackson's brave film, “The Greatest Silence”, in which she uses her own experience—being group raped in Washington, DC—to connect with the DRC women. She also journeys into the forests to speak with perpetrators.

We can use our own knowledge of violence against women and our own experiences supporting women in local communities to find ways to speak out about what is happening to women in the DRC.
We are pleased to report that our ongoing work with RCMP “E” Division recently resulted in revisions to the RCMP’s Violence in Relationships (VIR) and Protection Order Registry (POR) Policies. The following excerpts are especially pertinent for frontline anti-violence workers across BC.

Notice regarding revisions to the VIR Policy:

2.3 The Deputy Criminal Operations Officer (Contract), “E” Division, is a member of the Community Coordination For Woman’s Safety (CCWS) Committee. The CCWS was created to provide assistance to BC communities to develop new models or improve existing models of cross-sector coordination on violence against women. Refer to the CCWS Web Site, www.endingviolence.org/ccws.

The Safety Issues Protocol (SIP) between CCWS and RCMP “E” Division has been added to the VIR Policy:

2.4 A protocol has been developed between the RCMP (District Commander Level) and CCWS (Regional Coordinators) to resolve any outstanding issues which cannot be resolved at the local (detachment) level. Refer to Appendix 2-4-2 for the CCWS Safety Issues Protocol and “Request for Review form”.

District Commander

11.1. When requested by the Community Coordination For Women’s Safety (CCWS) Regional Coordinator, conduct a file review. See line 2.3 above.

Under the POR Policy, Undertakings to Appear (UTAs) have been added to the information required to be sent to the Protection Order Registry:

1.4. Copies of all UTAs (including the Promise to Appear (PTA) or Recognizance) entered into by an accused where there is one or more “no contact” conditions must be immediately forwarded to the POR.

**What is the Safety Issues Protocol?**
CCWS developed the Safety Issues Protocol (SIP) in collaboration with RCMP “E” Division in 2006 as an alternative way for frontline workers to address concerns about police practice that affects women’s safety.

**How does it work?**
1. A community responder has a concern that relates to the RCMP and is affecting safety for women.
2. The community program has attempted to address the concerns at the local level by every means possible.
3. The community responder contacts a CCWS Regional Coordinator and completes the SIP Request for Review form.
4. The SIP provides for CCWS to bring issues that concern victim safety to the attention of the RCMP District Officer and request that s/he look into the issue. There are four regional District Officers who are responsible for detachments in their area and they have been notified of this procedure.
5. The District Officer will investigate the concern and will get back to CCWS in writing as per the outcome.
6. The CCWS Regional Coordinator will, in turn, communicate with the community responder and the matter will proceed from there.
7. When the matter requires a review of policy or is provincial in scope, the CCWS program will bring it forward to RCMP “E” Division and/or the CCWS Provincial Working Group.

**Where can I find it?**
Workers are encouraged to download and use the SIP Information Bulletin at www.endingviolence.org/publications and to contact CCWS Regional Coordinators Michelle Novakowski (250-862-2887, michen@telus.net) or Gail Edinger (250-397-2389, rosebud@bcinternet.net) with any questions.

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**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

www.endingviolence.org
In April of each year, the Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General participates in National Victims of Crime Awareness Week (VOCAW). The aim of VOCAW is to recognize victim service workers and volunteers and to celebrate their dedication and the positive impact they have on the lives of thousands of victims across the province.

This year, our Ministry sent out recognition certificates to victim service workers who have worked with victims for over five years, and provincial pins to all victim service volunteers who have dedicated their time to helping victims of crime. These certificates and pins acknowledge the excellent services victim service workers and volunteers provided. The commitment of these individuals is an inspiration to everyone to make a difference in our communities.

During VOCAW, many communities throughout BC hosted a variety of events recognizing the importance of victim service programs. From guest speakers and information fairs to community dinners and workshops, communities came together to celebrate the work of victim services and to educate the public about the resources that are available should they witness, or be the victim of, a crime.

The Division continues to work in partnership with the 156 victim service programs across BC to ensure that strength and capacity is provided to victim service supports and programs.

To support victims of crime, we encourage you to take part in your ongoing community events so that our communities become safer and healthier for everyone.

Court support programs are being established by the Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division to enhance court-based support services available to victims, witnesses and their families throughout the criminal court process. Court support programs are designed to work collaboratively with justice, community and victim service partners and augment supports currently provided by police-based and community-based victim service programs.

During this time, Kay MacIntosh will continue in Port Coquitlam until Tanya’s backfill is confirmed. Staffing transitions will be planned to minimize any disruption to the operations of the court support program.

**Surrey Provincial Court**

As you are aware, the court support program is being expanded to Surrey Provincial Court. Renovations are currently underway to create office space for the Court Support Caseworkers within the courthouse. Construction is expected to be complete by May 2009 and the program will start soon after.

Two Court Support Caseworkers will work at the Surrey Provincial Court location. As a result of the eligibility list established in the January 2009 Port Coquitlam staffing competitions, we are very pleased to announce that one of the two Surrey Court Support Caseworker positions will be staffed by Bethany Norton.
**Ministry of Housing and Social Development programs**

As programs already know, we are pleased to report that all of the STV Counsellors, STV Outreach and Children Who Witness Abuse programs will be staying at the Ministry of Housing and Social Development (MHSD). There had been some discussion about moving these programs to BC Housing, a Crown corporation, or the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.

What remains unclear is the future of BC’s Transition Houses, Safe Homes and Second Stage programs. While we have been told a decision has not yet been made, some believe these programs are slated to move to BC Housing. The BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses and EVA BC have been working to keep these programs with the STV Counselling and STV Outreach programs at MHSD.

At press time, we have still heard nothing but have scheduled a meeting in Victoria towards the end of June. As always, we will post any news to the listservs as soon as we have it.

**How do I join the listservs?**

To sign up for an EVA BC listserv, visit www.endingviolence.org/sign_up_listserv.

**STV Counsellor Core Training**

A fourth Core Training module on substance use and mental health was completed and piloted in March 2009. The feedback received was used to revise the curriculum in preparation for future offerings, tentatively scheduled for October 2009 and January 2010. Modules 1-3 will not be offered this fiscal year, but STV Counsellors who have not completed these prerequisites may still be eligible to take module 4. Please contact Ramona Barron at barron@endecingviolence.org for more information.

Readers can always refer to our Calendar of Events at www.endingviolence.org/event for an up-to-date listing of all training opportunities.

**STV Outreach Core Training**

The second round of our new STV Outreach Core Training program wrapped up this past April. A strong majority of participants rated the modules “useful” or “very useful”: module 1 (94%), module 2 (100%) and module 3 (95%). A full 100% of survey respondents said they would recommend the training to a colleague. To date, more than 45 STV Outreach workers from 37 programs across BC have completed the training.

**Annual Training Forum**

This year’s province-wide training forum is scheduled for November 19-20 at the Best Western Richmond Hotel and Convention Centre. As in years past, EVA BC’s Annual General Meeting will be held in the same location immediately following the event, on November 21. Registration packages will be distributed to programs in early September.

**2009 regional teleconference calls**

This spring, EVA BC facilitated a series of twelve 2-hour teleconference calls with STV Counselling, STV Outreach and Community-Based Victim Assistance programs across the province. Participants raised a number of important issues that our staff will be exploring further over the coming year. Look for the teleconference reports in early summer.

**New regional listserv**

EVA BC is pleased to announce the launch of a new listserv specifically for STV counsellors in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley. The purpose of this new listserv is to provide a means for Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley counsellors to communicate about issues pertaining only to them (e.g., scheduling meetings), with the goal of cutting down on the number of non-relevant listserv messages received by counsellors in other regions of the province.

Counsellors in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley remain on the provincial listserv and will continue to use it for province-wide communication. All STV counsellors
in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley who are currently on the provincial STV Counsellor listserv have been added to the new listserv and informed of the new address via email.

If you have questions, would like to be removed from the listserv, or are not on the provincial listserv but would like to join the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley listserv, please contact Habiba Rashid at evabc@endingviolence.org.

New Executive Director listserv
In response to a number of requests from Executive Directors seeking access to one of our existing listservs, EVA BC is pleased to announce the launch of a new listserv dedicated to Executive Directors and authorized representatives. If you are an Executive Director who would like to subscribe to the listserv but have not yet received faxed instructions from our office, please contact Habiba Rashid at evabc@endingviolence.org.

Family Relations Act review
In February 2006, the Ministry of Attorney General announced a review of BC's Family Relations Act aimed at modernizing the law and supporting cooperative approaches to resolving disputes. A three-phase consultation was launched in 2007 and recently completed. Consultation discussion papers and responses are now available at www.ag.gov.bc.ca/legislation/archive.htm#fra.

EVA BC and CCWS participated in an in-person consultation organized by the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) on issues related to family violence and children's participation in the family law process. We also made a written submission, which is available at www.endingviolence.org/publications.

Pre-election package
New this year, EVA BC developed a pre-election package to help programs keep issues like relationship violence and sexual assault front and centre during the 2009 provincial election campaign. The package, which contained background information and questions on key areas of concern, was sent to all major provincial parties. Official responses were received from the BC Green Party, the BC Liberals and the BC NDP. Please let us know if you found this resource useful and would like to see more of the same in the future!

The 2009 BC election package and party responses are available at www.endingviolence.org/publications.

Renewing Resources project
EVA BC recently concluded its Renewing Resources project, aimed at changing attitudes that condone behaviours related to violence against women in BC's forestry and mining industries. In all, the initiative educated more than 600 participants in forestry, mining and other labour-organized sectors through workshops and presentations. In addition, we estimate that approximately 2,500 people have viewed the Men Speak Up film, one of the resources produced as part of the project.

Peer Anti-Violence Education (PAVE) project
Our work on a tailored version of the Freedom from Violence toolkit for BC communities that work with highly marginalized women is in its final stages. The new tool, which comprises a short film and companion booklet, is undergoing final edits and is tentatively scheduled for release this July.

Immigrant women project
As reported in the Spring 2009 issue of this newsletter, EVA BC is partnering with CCWS, MOSAIC and Vancouver Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services on a three-year project to consult, analyze and take action to address policy gaps that compromise the safety of immigrant, refugee and women who otherwise are in Canada without legal status who experience violence.

In March 2009, we conducted four focus groups with anti-violence and settlement workers in Prince George, Victoria, Kelowna and Vancouver to identify policy barriers facing these women. A fifth focus group in Vancouver brought together representatives from other Law Foundation-funded programs working on immigrant women projects.

Phase 2 concluded with the recent selection of 10 key projects we will explore further in phase 3:
1. Safety for abused immigrant women
   1. Develop a woman abuse protocol or policy with Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
2. Negotiate a policy with Citizenship and Immigrant Canada that would allow abused women to be granted emergency work permits.

3. Negotiate lower work requirement expectations for refugee women that acknowledge the psychological impact of trauma and ensure access to social assistance.

II. Sponsorship

4. Develop a backgrounder and negotiate policy changes concerning sponsorship agreement exceptions that prevent women from accessing social housing and income assistance.

5. Alleviate the sponsorship debt repayment faced by abused immigrant women.

III. Cultural competency

6. Develop culturally sensitive guidelines and training on risk indicators and risk assessment. Develop guidelines and training with legal advocates and settlement service providers to deal with situations faced by abused immigrant women.

7. Develop an inventory of local violence against women committees and promote the representation of immigration, settlement and justice sectors on those committees.

8. Partner with health, settlement, legal and justice systems to design and deliver training for interpreters on risk indicators, response to disclosures and referrals.

9. Develop a province-wide service with Citizenship and Immigration Canada that provides immigrant women and advocates with consistent, timely and accurate immigration information.

10. Develop a backgrounder on the policy/legal issues related to custody and access faced by immigrant, refugee and non-status women.

COMMUNITY COORDINATION FOR WOMEN’S SAFETY (CCWS) PROGRAM

CCWS helps BC communities develop new models and improve existing models of cross-sector coordination on violence against women. Learn more at www.endingviolence.org/ccws.

Community support

Since our last newsletter, CCWS Regional Coordinators have been busy providing training or support to a number of communities, including Bella Coola, Campbell River, Chilliwack, Fort St. John, Invermere, Kitimat, Prince George, Quesnel, Terrace, the Tri-Cities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody) and Whistler.

VAWIR coordinators teleconference call

On March 26, 2009, eight Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) coordinators from across BC participated in a teleconference call organized and facilitated by CCWS. Issues discussed included how to start a VAWIR Committee and involve essential people, how to bring training to your community and the role of the coordinator in resolving conflicts between agencies.

Community Leadership Training and beyond

The last offering of the three-day Community Leadership Training (CLT) concluded in February 2009. CCWS is now focused on developing follow-up training on collaborative risk identification and safety planning that will build on the CLT material to help workers improve risk identification and engage the system in information sharing and safety planning. A one-day workshop on safety assessment and planning for social workers, emergency ward staff, health services, schools and other community agencies is also under development.

“Dancing in the Light” sexual abuse conference

On April 7, 2009, Morgen Baldwin facilitated a two-hour workshop on the basics of working collaboratively on behalf of CCWS. The group’s 15 participants came from Anaheim Lake, Bella Bella, Bella Coola and Williams Lake and represented probation, child protection, transition house, youth, school counselling, suicide prevention/intervention and health services.

Upcoming conference presentations

Mobilizing Government and Community Through Evidence-Based Research and Legal Strategy

On June 14-16, 2009, CCWS will present a workshop as part of a panel presentation at the First Annual Canadian Conference on the Prevention of Domestic Homicides in
London, Ontario. Using a case study approach, this training will explore the eight critical components described in our *Keeping Women Safe* report.

**Increasing Safety for Immigrant, Refugee and Non-Status Women**

In June 2009, CCWS will provide a keynote at a regional conference in Kelowna that brings together settlement and anti-violence workers to increase knowledge and share information. The talk will focus on understanding gender violence, risk and safety, and timely and effective referrals to anti-violence programs.

**SAFE CHOICES PROGRAM**

Safe Choices focuses on improving the health and safety of women in abusive same-sex/gender relationships by empowering women and strengthening our communities to respond to this issue. Learn more at [www.endingviolence.org/safe_choices](http://www.endingviolence.org/safe_choices).

We are happy to report that the Safe Choices Healthy Relationships and Service Provider workshops continue to be very well received. Over the next several months, we will be training more workshop facilitators.

If you are LBQT, have some experience in group instruction or facilitation and are interested in this training, please contact Ramona Barron at barron@endingviolence.org.

Based on feedback we’ve received from participants, facilitators and the LBQT community, we are planning to create a Healthy Relationships “Sexuality, Intimacy & Desire” workshop specifically for Trans individuals and their partners.

Other projects include: updating the Safe Choices Service Provider “Making the Transition” workshop material, updating the curriculum for the Healthy Relationships “Sexuality, Intimacy & Desire” workshop, and developing advanced training for Safe Choices Healthy Relationships workshop facilitators.

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EVA BC’S Toll-Free Line!

**(Members Only)**

1-877-633-2505

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

[www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)
BELLA COOLA
As reported in the Spring 2009 issue of this newsletter, the Bella Coola Community Support Centre hosted its “Dancing in the Light” sexual abuse conference on April 6-8, 2009. In all, more than 150 people came to hear speakers from across BC (Bella Coola, the Lower Mainland, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Terrace and Vancouver Island) and as far as Ottawa. The event concluded on Wednesday evening with a role-playing demonstration by Street Spirits Theatre Company and a sold-out, standing-room-only performance by Susan Aglukark.

Conference organizer, Melinda Mack, was especially pleased by Bella Coola Chief Spencer Siwallace’s attendance on the final day. “I wanted so much for a male leader from our community to be there, to represent our community and help take that stand that sexual abuse has to stop!” Positive feedback from facilitators was also gratifying. “People really seemed to appreciate the commitment and hard work that went into organizing the event and the community’s courage to explore this issue in such an open forum.”

Based on the success of this year’s conference, Melinda is already considering the possibility of hosting a follow-up event in the next year or two. “This is just the beginning,” she says. “Many thanks to everyone that helped make ‘Dancing in the Light’ a success and special thanks to the Bella Coola Community Support Society for being the backbone of this project.”

I want to learn more!
Contact Melinda Mack (STV Outreach Worker, Bella Coola Community Support Society) at imagine@belco.bc.ca for more details.

FERNIE
In honour of International Women’s Day, the Fernie Women’s Centre held a “Spa Day” for the women of Elk Valley on March 8, 2009. The full-day event included workshops on journaling, challenging unhelpful thoughts, living green, self massage, women’s health and balancing diet and exercise. Community businesses chipped in to spoil the women with fabulous door prizes and mini-spa treatments that included massages, pedicures and make-up. The Fernie Women’s Centre is extremely grateful to Teck and Best Western for their sponsorship and to the community for its amazing support.

I want to learn more!
Contact Vanessa Oleksow (STV Counsellor, Fernie Women’s Centre) at evstv@shaw.ca for more details.

Dr. Mike Rumpel delivers a stirring keynote address on great women throughout history.

Helen McAllister leads a workshop on living green.

Vanessa, Corrie and Lauren show off Fernie Women’s Centre’s new logo!
NELSON
This year, the community of Nelson honoured BC Prevention of Violence Against Women Week with a number of initiatives.

The Nelson Community Services Centre (NCSC), including the Aimee Beaulieu Transition House and Women's Outreach programs, kicked off the week with a Purple Ribbon Campaign. Posters were put up around town and purple and white ribbons were distributed to local coffee shops and businesses. The NCSC also produced purple ribbon car magnets, which sold for $10. “The first 50 magnets went so quickly that we had to order another 50!” enthuses Alice Temesvary, Women’s Outreach Worker. “Both the Nelson City Police and the RCMP have magnets on their vehicles.”

The local VAWIR committee organized two well-attended mini-workshops where participants watched “It’s Time: African Women Join Hands Against Domestic Violence” (April 20) and EVA BC’s “Men Speak Up” (April 24).

Alice also authored three articles for the local newspaper to raise public awareness and the NCSC distributed a newsletter honouring the event to all Nelson agencies. The local recreation centre featured a display of student artwork entitled “Imagine a World Without Violence”.

“All in all, it was a great week,” says Alice. “We couldn’t have pulled it off without the help of many dedicated staff members.”

I want to learn more!
Contact Alice Temesvary (Women’s Outreach Worker, Nelson Community Services Centre) at ncsc_alice@netidea.com for more details.

SURREY
DiverseCity’s STV Counselling program has launched a drop-in support group for Punjabi women who are in abusive relationships. The group meets every Wednesday from 3:30-5:30pm. Bus tickets and snacks are provided.

I want to learn more!
Call 604-597-0205 ext 1202 to register or contact Sadia Sameeullah (STV Counselling Program, DiverseCity, Surrey) at 604-597-0205 ext 1320 for more information.
Changes to LawLINE services
LawLINE is one of the ways in which Legal Services Society provides legal advice services throughout BC. The service has been funded for another year and will continue until at least March 31, 2010. Reductions in LawLINE staff, however, mean that the scope of coverage has been redefined to focus primarily on issues arising from the current economy (effective April 6, 2009). For a list of the categories that continue to be covered and examples of each category, visit www.lss.bc.ca/general/LawLINE.asp. Questions, comments or suggestions can be directed to lss-services@lss.bc.ca.

Events

June 15 – World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
Raise awareness about the neglect and abuse of aging adults.

June 21 – National Aboriginal Day
Recognize and celebrate the diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Canadians.

Resources

New EVA BC resources
All EVA BC resources are available on our website (www.endingviolence.org):
- Protection Orders: What They Are and How They Are Registered
- Protection Order Enforcement Case Study
- 2009 BC Election Package
- Party Responses to the 2009 BC Election Package

Recently updated Legal Services Society publications
Reminder: If your client’s first language is not English, LSS offers certain publications in a number of languages. Visit www.lss.bc.ca/elan/April_May_09/multilingualPublications.htm.

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence e-bulletins
The NCFV publishes a bi-monthly electronic bulletin that features new products and resources, identifies funding opportunities, profiles key Canadian family violence research and events and provides updates on the Family Violence Initiative. Subscribe or browse past editions at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/EB/eb-subscribe-eng.php.

New “Jane Doe Legal Network” website
Pivot Legal Society’s Jane Doe Legal Network is a legal outreach program focused on the needs of women living in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland who have experienced violence. The Network recently launched a new website with detailed information about its services and upcoming events, legal resources and links to community resources and legal information publications. Visit www.janedoelegal.org.
Mission Statement
The Ending Violence Association of British Columbia (EVA BC) works to coordinate and support the work of victim-serving and other anti-violence programs in BC through the provision of issue-based consultation and analysis, resource development, training, research and education. Our work is guided by respect for difference, human dignity and equality.

Membership Eligibility
Membership is available to provincially funded Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs, Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs, Stopping the Violence Outreach Programs, Sexual Assault Centres and other similar programs. Please contact EVA BC at 604-633-2506 ext 10 or evabc@endingsviolence.org if you are unsure about your agency’s eligibility.

Membership Benefits
• Receive our tri-annual newsletter with news, resources and in-depth articles about top issues in the anti-violence field.
• Become a part of our broadcast fax list and receive time-sensitive information about funding and policy changes, surveys and more.
• Receive copies of all of our publications, including manuals, reports and discussion papers.
• Take advantage of reduced tuition fees for our annual training forum.
• Become eligible to sit on our Board of Directors.
• Participate in our province-wide listservs.
• Access our toll-free line for members.

We wish to thank the Ministry of Housing and Social Development and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General for their ongoing funding support.

ENDING VIOLENCE
Association of BC

My program would like to become an EVA BC member ($60-$160, depending on ability to pay) ☐

My program does not qualify for membership, but we would still like to receive the EVA BC newsletter three times per year ($25) ☐

Name: ___________________________
Organization: ___________________________
Mailing address: ___________________________ Postal code: ___________________________
Website: ___________________________ Email: ___________________________
Amount enclosed: $ ___________________________

Please make cheques payable to “Ending Violence Association of BC” and forward to:
728-602 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1P2
Charitable # 13926 5821 RR0001