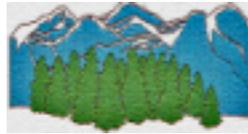




**BC Association of Specialized  
Victim Assistance &  
Counselling Programs**



**Ending Relationship  
Abuse Society of BC**

## **New Partnership Between Anti-Violence Groups and Resource Industries**

Backgrounder on the Renewing Resources for Safer Communities Project

Violence in relationships often intrudes into the victim's or offender's workplace, compromising the safety not only of the people involved, but of the entire workplace. Relationship violence can increase lost productivity, health care costs, absenteeism and employee turnover.

The Renewing Resources for Safer Communities Project is an innovative partnership between the anti-violence sector and the resource sector (particularly forestry and mining) that aims to improve the resource sector's capacity to respond to violence in relationships.

The BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs (BCASVACP) and the Ending Relationship Abuse Society (ERA) have come together to manage this one-year violence prevention project, working in partnership with WorkSafe BC, the BC Federation of Labour, and the United Steelworkers Union.

The BCASVACP is an umbrella organization for over 200 programs that serve survivors of domestic and sexual violence. ERA's members work with men who have abused their partners.

Free workshops will be provided to assist corporations and unions in their response to employees dealing with violence in relationships. This initiative offers industry an opportunity to invest in healthy relationships and a safer workplace environment. Renewing Resources received a \$150,000 Partners in Prevention grant from the Ministry of Community Services.

What is unique about this project is the focus on the resource industries and the partnerships with labour. While violence in relationships is not necessarily more common in these industries, project organizers chose to focus on them for two reasons:

- Including the needs of rural and isolated communities is important and these industries are major employers in rural and isolated communities.
- Involving men in speaking up about the issue of relationship violence is critical to creating safer and healthier communities, and these industries are operated by a predominantly male work force.

In December 2007, an Ontario jury in a coroner's inquest made 26 recommendations, including that the Ontario Ministry of Labour amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include domestic violence, abuse and

harassment as factors warranting investigation at work. The jury heard from workplace witnesses who knew there was a problem but didn't speak up because they didn't know how to handle domestic violence at work. The jury recommended "extensive domestic violence education and training for employees, health-care professionals and the public so they can recognize the signs and know what steps to take" (Klie, 2008).

Familial stress can increase as a result of job layoffs and shuffling of staff and/or closures. Violence in relationships causes a negative impact on all levels of the workplace. For example, once there is an arrest made, the skilled or trained worker is no longer available to work as they await trial in jail, or attend the numerous court dates associated with criminal charges. For the person victimized, it may mean time away from work to heal, or if they do attend work, it will likely impact them because of physical and emotional injuries. There are of course unique considerations relating to violence in relationships for these industries.

Many of the sites are isolated which means living in camp is often a reality. Other sites are long drives from residential centers, resulting in workers spending the majority of their time away from home. This lifestyle may lend itself to potential relationship and familial stress. For example, people who use violence to control their partners feel a loss of power and control when they are unable to be in contact. Increased violence often results from this perceived loss of control. This can create a higher risk situation for employees and their partners.

The action plan of the Renewing Resources for Safer Communities Project includes hosting free training sessions around the province in key areas identified by forestry and mining personnel. At these sessions, participants will learn what exactly defines "violence in relationships" as well as what constitutes an appropriate response from a corporate, union and individual perspective. They will also receive a Tool Kit on CD to assist with proactive prevention strategies, including a draft policy. The vision of this initiative is to reduce violence and to assist employers to develop skills and knowledge to respond. At the end of it all, we hope to make our communities a safe place to work and live.

The sessions will take place in Fernie on April 16<sup>th</sup>, in Langley on April 21<sup>st</sup>, Prince George on May 29<sup>th</sup>, and Qualicum on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

For further information and registration details, phone: Sandra Beggs at 250-559-8831 or 604-315-1134, or Habiba Rashid at 604-633-2506 (ext 10). Email: sandra@qcislands.net or renewing@qcislands.net.

## **References**

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