

[Home](#) > [News](#) > BeMoreThanABystander

Be More Than a Bystander – EVA BC Creating Allies and Agents For Positive Change.



Approximately 26 women have been murdered in BC each year for the last ten years, with the exception of 2002, when that number almost doubled. BC also has the dubious distinction of having more murdered and missing Aboriginal women than anywhere else in Canada. But domestic and sexual violence resulting in death does not tell the whole story. In addition to the homicides, there are hundreds of thousands of assaults against women in BC each year and most go unreported.

Tracy Porteous suggests if as many people were dying of influenza or in airplane crashes as there are women dying as a result of violence in BC, we would see immediate and decisive

action being taken. She says however, that for crimes against women and girls, there isn't even a named central government office mandated to coordinate the programs, track the deaths, analyze the issues and lead action for change and prevention.

As Executive Director for the [Ending Violence Association of BC](#) (EVA BC) for the last 17 years, Ms. Porteous (*far right in photo with EVA BC staff*) is on a passionate mission to change that.

We spoke with Ms. Porteous last month to get more insight into this year's BCAB Humanitarian Award winning organization and see how it's making a difference in our communities.

BCAB - What services does EVA BC provide?

Tracy Porteous - Our mandate is to support over 240 community based victim-serving programs across BC, but in addition, EVA BC engages with a wide variety of sectors including child protection social workers, nurses, criminal justice, health and government personnel and the general public looking for answers and direction to local or provincial issues or wishing to work in partnership to improve the response. At the end of the day, all our services are aimed at improving systems and services that impact and support victims of violence.

BCAB - It seems the mandate for your organization could feel daunting at times - what keeps you motivated?

TP - Well, that is a big question! I think very few people in life have the great fortune to work in an area that is connected to their passion. I was very lucky that at the age of 20 or so I began working in this field. It felt then like a calling and still does to this day. Like so many women, I know how deeply crushing it is to experience violence and like so many front-line workers, I know how lonely it can be to try to figure out the many complicated systems alone. When I first began, it really was like the old Hollywood movies where women who had been raped were the ones put on trial. We have come a long ways from that, in many communities but not all and I feel privileged to have been a part of the change that has happened in the last 30 years.

BCAB - Is there a story you can share about the positive impact your organization has made in the life/lives of women in BC?

TP - In Victoria in 2007 a woman by the name of Sunny Park, her son and her parents were murdered by her husband, Peter Lee. This terrible and preventable tragedy had all the same signs as many other domestic violence deaths in our province. EVA BC decided that Sunny's voice and the voice of all victims of domestic violence needed to be heard at the Coroner's Inquest, so we got involved. With the help of the BC Law Foundation and the willingness of our counsel to work at an extremely reduced rate, for the first time in BC, the experience of victims was represented at an

Contact Us

Ken Kilcullen
President
[Email - Ken](mailto:ken@bcab.ca)

For information on our conference contact
Conference Management:

International Conference
Services

Ph: 604.681.2153
Fax: 604.681.1049
bcab@icsevents.com

inquest. No other lawyer or group, police agency or government ministry involved - and there were many - had the role of exposing the gaps and problems that victims experience. Our counsel was Diane Turner, a Victoria-based lawyer and previous Crown Counsel who had written the Crown's policy on Spouse Assault. With Diane, the expert input from the local service providers and our own decades of experience analyzing the gaps and needs related to policy and practice, we played a central role in educating the jury, the Coroner and with the help of the media, the public, in what was needed in order to keep women and kids in BC safer. As a result of the inquest and the many meetings and papers and briefs we have provided since, the following has occurred:

- 1) A Domestic Violence (DV) Death review panel was set up by the Coroner's office which has also made numerous important recommendations.
- 2) The BC Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) Policy was totally reviewed and updated and for the first time, child protection is a part of it now.
- 3) Crown, who a number of years ago withdrew from the VAWIR policy came back and has updated their own Spouse Assault policy.
- 4) A new Provincial High Risk protocol was developed that police are mandated to follow.
- 5) Threat Assessment training was provided for designated police, crown, child protection and victim services across province.
- 6) New online mandatory police training was developed that all police must now take on the basics of DV, high risk and how to collect the right evidence and assess risk.
- 7) New online training was developed for all anti violence workers on Safety Planning.
- 8) New training is being developed for all child protection workers on DV.
- 9) RCMP have totally updated their Violence in Relationships policy including a new DV Investigators guide outlining what evidence they must provide to Crown.

BCAB - Tell us more about how the "Be More Than a Bystander" PSA campaign our members are now running.

TP - I, and many others in the field of violence against women, had long been thinking we needed more men to speak up. I thought we needed sports stars because they were icons and role models to men and boys so we approached the BC Lions through a friend and colleague, Robin Wilson [co-founder of the Scott Tournament of Hearts] From that first meeting on, the Lions were in and we built this groundbreaking, never-been-done-as-big-anywhere-in-the-world initiative!

The power of the program is that we are engaging men in positive ways, not as potential abusers, but as allies and agents for positive change who have the power to speak up to prevent violence and to change attitudes. We know that the vast majority of men do not use violence against women and so imagine the difference that can be made if the vast majority of men who don't commit violence began to speak up to the minority that do! We want to make it socially unacceptable to be abusive or disrespectful toward women and girls, similar to what has happened in the drinking and driving movement over the last 30 years.

BCAB - What does the support that BCAB member stations are giving mean to your organization?

TP - The Humanitarian Award is providing us with an extraordinary opportunity to reach millions of people with this important violence prevention message.

Since the launch of the BCAB award, calls to our office have increased significantly, from people looking for support (who we were able to channel to receive help), to others wanting to help us (and we are open to any and all ideas!) We believe this award is providing a profile to both EVA BC and the issue of violence against women in a way that has never been done before anywhere in Canada. That individuals can make a difference by simply speaking up **will** create change and increase safety in BC, but we could not foster this change without your support in getting the message out.

We are most proud to stand together with you over this next year. We are very grateful to the BCAB for their generous support and hope you know what a huge gift you have made to women, to kids, to families and what a difference this will make in the health and well being of all BC communities, thank you!

[About BCAB](#) . [News](#) . [Board of Directors](#) . [Conference](#) . [Humanity Award](#) . [Excellence Awards](#) . [Membership](#) . [Broadcast Links](#)

Copyright © 2011 The British Columbia Association of Broadcasters. | All Rights Reserved