

Women Defining Peace (WDP)

Gender Violence Against Women in Canada: Effective Approaches and Resources

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in collaboration with Match International Centre

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe approaches and strategies used in Canada to prevent violence against women. This is part of a much larger project undertaken by MATCH, Cowater and WUSC, who jointly manage the CIDA funded project, Women Defining Peace in Sri Lanka. Women Defining Peace (WDP) is designed to support collaborative action on issues related to national peace. WDP subscribes to the conviction that for women, a peaceful existence means freedom from violence; as well as peace in a country, peace is also an eradication of gendered violence in the household, workplace, and community.

As a two-part fund, WDP will provide resources, guidance, and capacity-building support to NGO partners for sub-projects. 'Women and Peace' funds focus on peace-related activities and the overlap between conflict response and disaster management while 'Rapid Response' funds enable timely interventions on violence against women, tsunami reconstruction, peace-building, and women's rights in the context of peace.

The models used in Canada and other countries to respond to violence against women cannot simply be imported wholesale, so this paper is not meant to be a blueprint that can be followed, but a source of inspiration and data about how activists, governments, and institutions in one country have dealt with the issue of violence against women. This report was written for an international audience.

According to the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW):

... can be physical (such as punching, kicking, choking, stabbing, mutilation, disabling, murder), sexual (such as rape, any unwanted touching or act of a sexual nature, forced prostitution), verbal/psychological (such as threats to harm the children, destruction of favourite clothes or photographs, repeated insults meant to demean and erode self-esteem, forced isolation from friends and relatives, threats of further violence or deportation if the woman attempts to leave), stalking (such as persistent and unwanted attention, following and spying, monitoring of mail or conversations), financial (such as taking away a woman's wages or other income, limiting or forbidding access to the family income), and other forms of control and abuse of power. Violence against women is about the control and coercion of women. It is a significant problem in Canada and around the world, also including female genital mutilation, child marriage, dowry-related murder, honour killings, female infanticide, and trafficking in women. Mass rapes and enslavement of women are also used as an instrument of war and genocide.¹

The paper takes a broad and comprehensive view of prevention. It would be wonderful if there were simply one magic strategy that was always effective in reducing violence, but the situation is more complex than this. As well, the Canadian population is geographically, racially, ethnically, linguistically, socioeconomically and historically diverse, and some strategies have to be adapted or transformed to be effective for certain populations. This is why some local case studies are highlighted, and an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy is presented.

Most organizations in Canada dealing with violence against women have an understanding of violence against women similar to the following:

1. Violence against women is never justified or acceptable.
2. Intimate violence is primarily experienced by women at the hands of men.
3. Violence against women has a negative social impact on everyone.
4. Intimate violence cuts across all abilities, ages, classes, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations and requires diverse responses and solutions.
5. Violence against women arises out of the structures of power that reproduce the inequality of women and girls.

6. Violence is a learned behaviour that can be changed.
7. Ending violence against women and children is everyone's responsibility.²

This section begins with some definitions of various types of violence against women, and gives a short historical overview and brief description of the current context of violence against women in Canada.

Physical assault

Some men use physical violence as a means of controlling their wives or other partners. In this report “female partner” refers to a wife or girlfriend or any other woman with whom a man is intimate.

Physical assault can include slapping, punching, kicking, choking, biting, pulling hair, abuse of children or other loved ones if the woman does not “obey”, and/or the use of a weapon. “Forty-five percent of women assaulted by a male partner in Canada suffer physical injury. Injuries include bruising, cuts, scratches, burns, broken bones, fractures, internal injuries and miscarriages.”³ Physical assault can result in temporary or permanent disability or death. Research shows that physical violence by a man against his female partner often begins or worsens during pregnancy, when the woman is at her most vulnerable.⁴

Although women also use physical violence against male partners, this is often in self-defence. A national study conducted in 1999 found that:

...men use more serious types of violence, women are assaulted much more often, women suffer greater injury and are five times more likely to need medical attention, more than one third of assaulted women feared for their lives (38%) versus 7% of assaulted men, and the violence has deeper long-term consequences for women than men, including depression, anxiety, lower self-esteem, being fearful for themselves and their children: In fact, 22% of men who say they were assaulted said the violence did not have much impact on them at all, compared with a tiny proportion of women.⁵

Although not counted as physical assault, other controlling tactics or neglect may also result in physical harm to the woman, such as denying the basic necessities of life or not allowing the woman access to medical care when she needs it.

Sexual assault

A Canadian organization that does public education on violence against women defines sexual abuse as the following:

- Touching or acting sexual in any way that she doesn't want
- Forcing or pressuring her into sexual acts
- Forcing her to be a prostitute
- Not letting her have information and education about sexuality
- Forcing her to get pregnant, have an abortion, or have an operation so she can't have children.
- Infecting her with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases.⁶

Canadian federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women described the federal government's response to years of lobbying by women's organizations to change Canada's rape law, under which it was very difficult to convict offenders and did not cover sexual assault within marriage:

In 1983 the Criminal Code offences of rape, attempted rape and indecent assault were abolished, and replaced with three levels of a new offence of sexual assault that paralleled the new offences of assault.... The changes aimed to reduce the trauma to victims and increasing the likelihood of a just outcome by:

- De-emphasizing the sexual nature of the offences.
- Stressing the violence and assaultive nature of such crimes.
- Encouraging victims to report incidents to the police and
- Improving police handling of the cases.

These changes reflect the fact that both women and men could be victims of sexual assault and they established that husbands and wives could be charged for raping their spouse.⁷

The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women compiled these statistics about the prevalence of sexual assault in Canada:

- Girl children are targets of abuse within the family more so than are boys. Four out of five victims of family-related sexual assaults (79%) are girls, and over half (55%) of physical assaults of children by family members are against girls.⁸ In 1997, fathers accounted for 97% of sexual assaults and 71% of physical assaults of children by parents.⁹
- Only 10% of sexual assaults on women are reported to the police.¹⁰ Extrapolating from these data, there are 509,860 reported and unreported sexual assaults in Canada per year.¹¹ That's 1,397 per day; which means that every minute of every day, a woman or child in Canada is being sexually assaulted. Very often, sexual assaults are repeated on the same woman or child by the same offender.
- 98% of sex offenders are men and 82% of the survivors of these assaults are girls and women.¹²
- 43% of women in one study reported at least one incident of unwanted sexual touching, forced or attempted forced sexual intercourse, or being forced to perform other acts of a sexual nature before the age of 16.¹³ The majority of these cases were at the level of unwanted sexual touching, usually repeated incidents by the same offender.
- Sexual assaults often occur in contexts in which the abuser is in a position of trust in relation to the person assaulted, such as a husband, father, other relative, doctor, coach, religious advisor, teacher, friend, employer, or date. The majority of sexual assaults are committed by a man known to the victim who is likely to use verbal pressure, tricks and/or threats during an assault.¹⁴ Two-thirds of sexual assaults occur in a private home.¹⁵

Psychological violence and control

Physical violence is usually accompanied by psychological violence and control, also psychological violence may occur on its own. Examples of psychological violence and control include:

- Tearing down the woman's self-esteem by calling her stupid, worthless or all sorts of names, so that she believes that she deserves the violence.
- Isolating the woman from friends, family, neighbours and any one who can help. This may involve watching her all the time, following her (stalking) or making her report on her movements.
- Humiliating the woman in front of others.

- Lying, deception, setting traps, denying the abuse happened, making the woman feel like she is crazy.
- Falsely accusing her of seeing other men.
- Threatening to hurt the children or other people the woman loves.
- Destroying the woman's favourite possessions or means of livelihood, or threatening to do so.
- Blaming the woman for the abuse.

Springtide Resources [also known as Education Wife Assault also adds the following:

- Threatening to take the children away from her.
- Threatening to put her in an institution.
- Threatening to tell friends, family and her employer that she is a lesbian.
- Threatening to commit suicide.
- Threatening to withdraw immigration sponsorship, or have her deported.
- Controlling her time, what she does, how she dresses and wears her hair.
- Putting limits on who she can visit or talk to on the phone.
- Not respecting her privacy¹⁶.

Economic control

Economic control may involve taking away or controlling the woman's money, preventing her from taking a job, accessing money, getting training or education, and making her rely on the abuser for basic necessities. Economic control can also take the form of exploitation of the woman's paid and unpaid labour, so that the woman is forced to work, the man benefits from her work, but she has no income from her work. There is little comprehensive information about this type of abuse in Canada.

Spiritual abuse

This type of abuse can include:

- Putting down or attacking a woman's spiritual beliefs.
- Not allowing her to attend the church, mosque, synagogue, temple, or religious meeting of her choice or practice her spiritual beliefs.¹⁷
- Forcing her to commit actions that are against her spiritual beliefs.

Canada is a country in which people of different races, ethnicities, religions and geographic origins intermarry. Canada is a secular country with a Christian majority.

In Canada, spiritual abuse emphasized by Aboriginal (indigenous) women, many of whom were affected by the imposition of Christianity by force through the residential school system, and the outlawing of Aboriginal spiritual traditions. However, Aboriginal women discuss many forms of physical, sexual and emotional violence as also being destructive to the spirit, and the need to heal the spirit after abuse.

Inter-relationship with other types of violence

Canadians come in many races, religions, ethnicities, sexualities, levels of income, and personal circumstances. However, the dominant languages and cultures are English and French, and the dominant religion is Christianity. Although advances have been made in reducing discrimination based on sex, race and other factors, overt discrimination still exists, as well as the fact that societal institutions were originally designed to benefit higher status groups and still retain many of these characteristics. The academic term for a country like Canada is “white settler society”. European colonizers took land from indigenous peoples, but became the majority of the population and never left. Aboriginal peoples in Canada exhibit many of the social problems and economic status of other colonized peoples around the world:

Today, Aboriginal women are among the poorest in Canada. They face the highest levels of violence compared to any other group of women. This violence typically begins in childhood and continues throughout their life, compounded by other systemic oppressions such as racism, sexism and colonial legacies such as the Indian Act. They are among the lowest income earners and have lower educational attainments, shorter life expectancies and have higher rates of mental and physical health problems related to their historical marginalization. These experiences of poverty and exclusion also combine with differences of age, marital status, personal history, geographic location, socio-economic status to name a few. For example, young Aboriginal sole-support mothers living with physical or mental disabilities are among the most economically and socially marginalized in Canada.¹⁸

Aboriginal women do not only face violence from Aboriginal men, but also from non-Aboriginal men. Their lower social status led to the disappearances and murders of Aboriginal women not being properly investigated by police until recently. Other groups of women in Canada also experience racialized violence against women.

CRIAW identified the circumstances that make some women and girls more vulnerable to violence than others¹⁹:

- Around the world, as many as one woman in every four is physically or sexually abused during pregnancy, usually by her partner. In Canada, 21% of women abused by a partner were assaulted during pregnancy, and 40% reported that the abuse began during pregnancy. Abuse often begins or worsens during pregnancy, when a woman is most vulnerable, and most dependent on her partner’s support.
- Young women and female children are highly vulnerable to sexual assault. In 1997, persons under 18 were 24% of the population but represented 60% of all sexual assault victims and one fifth (19%) of physical assault victims. Of sexual offences against kids under 12, the ages at which boys are most likely to be sexually assaulted, girl victims outnumber boys by two to one. Women under 25 are also at greatest risk of being killed by their male partners.
- A DisAbled Women’s Network survey found that 40% of women with disabilities have been raped, abused or assaulted. More than half (53%) of women who had been disabled from birth or early childhood had been abused. Women with disabilities may also be physically, sexually or financially abused by people who aid in their care. Less than two-thirds of shelters for abused women report being accessible to women with disabilities. However, women with disabilities report that only one in ten who sought help from women’s shelters were accommodated.
- Research repeatedly shows that a vast majority of Aboriginal women have been assaulted, and that the chances of an Aboriginal child growing up without a single first-hand experience of abuse or alcoholism is tiny. Violence may have begun while at residential school or by parents whose souls were damaged by the residential school experience of rape, physical abuse, and cultural genocide. Violence continues into adulthood, ranging from 48% to up to

90% of Aboriginal women being assaulted at the hands of their partners, depending on the community in which they live. Aboriginal women also experience racially-motivated attacks and are harassed on the streets by the public and police more so than non-Aboriginal women.

- Violence against women crosses socioeconomic lines. However, low-income women may be more often trapped in abusive relationships because of a lack of financial resources for housing and income support. For Inuit women and others, “The virtual absence of alternative housing arrangements often forces women and children to stay in dangerous and potentially deadly situations.”
- In addition to racist violence, women who are of minority racial, ethnocultural or linguistic groups also suffer violence at the hands of their intimate partners. However, their access to the justice system and to services are not the same. Only 57% of Canadian shelters offered services that were sensitive to cultural differences. Women who have difficulty speaking the official language where they live face enormous barriers in accessing services and dealing with the justice system. When services and the justice system fail, women find it even more difficult to escape abuse.
- Women working in certain occupations are also more vulnerable to violence. For example, foreign domestic workers work for low wages isolated in private homes and are vulnerable to threats of deportation if they complain of physical or sexual abuse. They are often unaware of their legal rights or of services. Other occupations in which women are very vulnerable to workplace violence are health care workers and women in the military. All women in subordinate positions are vulnerable to sexual harassment in the workplace, and women in male-dominated occupations may be subject to workplaces that are hostile toward women. Women working in the sex trade are at enormous risk of sexual and physical assault, ongoing abuse, and murder. They receive the least amount of support due to the stigma surrounding prostitution, and the belief that prostitution is a “lifestyle” decision. This ignores the fact that almost all young women who end up in the sex trade are fleeing abusive homes, and that economic options for young women on their own are minimal.

Violence is about power. A dominant group uses physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic violence to control a subordinate group. In this sense, men may use violence to control women, and if a woman is also associated with other lower status groups, her risk of violence increases.

Prevalence of violence against women in Canada

The prevalence of violence against women in Canada is discussed as an important part of the context, and to underscore the enormity, depth and complexity of violence against women. Violence against women may be more prevalent in some countries than others depending on women’s vulnerabilities, rights, and circumstances, and violence against women may manifest itself differently in some countries than others in various methods of control over women’s lives, but violence against women exists in every country in the world. It is a global problem that no one country has completely eradicated, although women in some countries have been able to reach partial success in reducing violence against women through improving the economic, social and legal status of women.

The statistics on the prevalence of violence has itself been an important tool in raising awareness of the issue with the public and decision-makers. No longer could violence be dismissed as the actions of a small minority of “crazy” or “sick” people. No longer could most people dispute the need for shelters and other services for abused women. Knowledge of the prevalence of violence against women has also been an empowering experience for abused women who otherwise considered themselves alone, isolated or believed there was something wrong with them.

Because of the efforts of feminists, Canada has experienced a major change in how violence against women is viewed. In the early 1970s, this issue was not discussed at all. The 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women made no mention of violence against women as a problem and there were no shelters or services set up for survivors of abuse. In the early 1980s, a Member of Parliament was laughed at in the national legislature when she raised the issue. Now, no one in any decision-making capacity jokes about the issue, and federal cabinet ministers and others issue statements against violence against women. The issue is now more openly discussed in Canada, although a stigma still exists, but members of the public are willing to donate to shelters for abused women, and public benefit concerts and other events are held as fundraisers for shelters and services.

Feminists debate whether violence against women in Canada has really been declining, as stated by Statistics Canada. Feminists are on the front lines of providing services for abused women. The shelters are full and the crisis calls keep coming. The services have seen no reduction in usage. However, this could be because of successful outreach and education campaigns that violence against women is wrong and support is available. It could be that more women have heard of the service, or decide to leave abusive relationships.

The prevalence of physical and sexual assault has been outlined earlier. However, these are difficult statistics to collect. One statistic that is more reliable because it is difficult to hide is the spousal homicide rate. It declined in Canada from by 26% between 1993 and 2000 (men killing female partners), which is from .85 to .68 per 100,000 couples. The rate for women killing their male partners decreased by 39%, from .33 to .20 per 100,000 couples during this same time period.²⁰

One of the reasons put forward for the decline in all violent crime is that the demographic of young men (aged 15-25), who tend to disproportionately commit violent crime, is declining. Canada's population is aging, which means the proportion of people over the age of 65 is growing, and fertility rates are lower than replacement level, so the proportion of young people is declining. However, violence against women knows no age barrier, and some senior women are abused and controlled in various ways.

Another reason put forward for the decline in the spousal murder of women *and* of men (women tend to kill partners to escape violence) is the effectiveness of the women's movement's efforts to raise the awareness of the public and decision-makers, successfully lobby for changes in law and more protection for abused women, setting up support services such as shelters and crisis centres, and pushing for economic equality which gives women more practical options when faced with abuse, such as finding housing and earning an income high enough to support a family without having to rely on an abusive partner. These are complementary strategies which are inter-related. These are discussed in more detail in the third section of this paper.

One of the reasons for the feminist resistance to the idea that violence against women, at least for some women, has declined, is the fear that this may lead to cuts in services and women's equality initiatives because citizens and governments may falsely believe that the problem has been fixed, that it is over, and funds should be directed elsewhere. This fear is well-founded, as is discussed in the section on structural transformation. Women are still killed in Canada every year and physically and sexually assaulted every day. Some women are more vulnerable to violence than others, and may have experienced no decline at all in violence directed against them. There is no quick and easy strategy to end violence against women tomorrow. It is a complex pathway walked by many different kinds of people in many different ways, and whose end cannot yet be seen.

2. Theory and prevention

This section outlines theories and evidence for why violence against women exists in the first place. Ideas about the causes of violence have a major impact on what activists and societies do to prevent it.

Biological

The theory that violence against women is rooted in male biology would be grim if it were true, because it offers very little possibility for prevention. If men are biologically programmed to abuse women, then only imprisoning them or sedating them with anti-violence drugs (if they even exist) would work. This would be impractical, and would simply substitute one human rights violation (violence against women) with another. Yet many women and men believe that violence is deeply rooted in male biology. This subsection explored these theories.

Genetic factors, head injuries, hormones

Leading Canadian researchers conducted a literature review of theory about the causes of violence against women, and classified what they found into four categories, one of which was biologically-based theories:

Where family violence is concerned, two dominant [biological] explanations are observed in the recent literature. The first is that head injury in men can or could cause them to be violent to family members. The second approach, a gene-based explanation, focuses on sexual jealousy and male efforts to ensure sexual propriety over their partners. Woman abuse is seen as a “mate retention tactic” which will be used only under the right set of circumstances, such as when a man senses his wife could attract and keep a better partner. Empirical evidence for these controversial ideas is not strong but most researchers would acknowledge that biological factors can play a role in some cases.²¹

Some researchers attribute violence to testosterone levels, which women also have but less so than men. Others note that testosterone levels are affected by external circumstances. For example, men who watch competitive sports experience a rise in their testosterone levels when their sports team wins. This could even indicate that it is violence and competition that may increase testosterone levels, rather than testosterone causing men to commit acts of violence. Men have daily hormonal cycles with testosterone levels peaking at 4 am. However, most violence against women is not reported as happening at 4 am.

Research does show a link between the male hormone testosterone and aggression. However, aggression does not necessarily mean violence. Aggressive impulses can be channeled into physical exercise and sports, creative endeavours such as writing, music, art, and film-making, or passion for work or improving the community. Many activists for positive social change use their anger from being oppressed and abused, their passionate drive, to work for social and economic justice. Hormonal levels can increase or decrease certain drives, but whether to follow all of one’s impulses or channel them into something constructive rather than destructive is a choice.

There is one condition in which testosterone levels and genetic factors may actually have a strong impact on producing violence. This is in the case of boys and men born with two Y chromosomes instead of one. However, this is a rare condition which is also characterized by lower intelligence and difficulties in learning.

Violence against women is so prevalent that it can be the norm rather than the exception. This would involve an enormous number of head injuries to men and people with rare genetic disorders, if that were the only factor. Although some head injuries can cause personality changes which may lead to violence, the theory that something is wrong with violent men’s brains cannot begin to explain how widespread violence against women is.

The problem with other biological theories is that if all men are biologically programmed to abuse women, why do a significant number of men refrain from doing so? If violence is a solely male domain, why do some women abuse their children, other women, and even men with less power or status than they have? Men around the world have similar biology. Why then is violence against women even more common in some countries than others, particularly where the violence is legally sanctioned and socially customary? Why is the rate of violence against women higher in some communities within one country than in other communities in the same country, even though testosterone levels are no different? Although biological explanations rightly point out that violence is within the range of human behaviour, it cannot explain the social differences in terms of who is being abused by whom, how often and why.

As we will see in the gender socialization section, human beings are born with a vast capacity for all sorts of behaviour: violence, conflict, cooperation, kindness, cruelty and compassion. These behaviours are shaped as we grow up by our families, neighbours, community, institutions and culture. Some behaviours are discouraged, punished and rarely seen in a society. Others are encouraged, modeled and rewarded.

The behaviours that are discouraged will not emerge as frequently or at all, while those that are encouraged will increase. Whether or not human beings, and men in particular, have a biological capacity for violence is almost irrelevant, as research strongly shows that when, where and against whom to use violence is learned, and can be unlearned.

Alcohol, drugs, other substances

Another range of theory is that violence against women is caused by the biological effects of alcohol, drugs, or other psychoactive substances. If this theory were true, the focus of prevention should be on eliminating alcoholism and other substance use.

Research indeed shows a link between alcohol use and violence and aggression. One of the effects of alcohol is to lower inhibitions, so that the user may engage in words or actions that the user may not normally employ. However, many people who get drunk do not commit acts of violence. Some women report that their abusers get drunk to provide them with an excuse to commit violence against them. Sometimes men may feel like they do not have enough power and control in their lives, and this is what leads them to drink too much in the first place. Then, once the excuse of being drunk is in place, they try to gain or use power and control over others to make them feel better about themselves (REFs).

Long-term use of alcohol and restricted drugs and unhealthy substances (such as sniffing gas) may lead to brain damage, as well as damage to other organs. However, by this point, people are usually in bad physical shape as well as mental shape, so it is not the brain damage caused by alcohol in adults that is a cause of violence against women.

The only exception in which there is more of a clear link is in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This is the brain damage that can occur when a woman binge drinks during pregnancy. According to Canada's Public Health Agency, people born with FASD:

...have a hard time learning and controlling their behaviour. For example, they may appear to learn how to do a new task one day, and not remember the next. Other common problems include having trouble: adding, subtracting and handling money, thinking things through / reasoning, learning from experience, understanding consequences of their actions, remembering things, and getting along with others. Because of their disabilities, people who are affected by FASD may have special needs that require life long help - even throughout adulthood - regarding: handling money, such as paying rent and buying food, learning from their experiences and making changes in their behaviour, understanding consequences of their behaviour, or "cause and effect", interacting with other people socially, and keeping a job.

Affected people may develop mental health problems, have trouble with the law, drop out of school (or be disruptive in a classroom), are unemployed and/or may develop alcohol and drug problems. They may even be homeless.²²

Addictions to alcohol or drugs often mask underlying problems. Both women and men who have been abused physically and sexually are more likely to abuse substances. People suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder for these and other reasons are also more likely to self-medicate with drugs, alcohol and other substances. It is these underlying reasons that may be responsible for the visible link between substance use, violence and self-violence. This is particularly true for some Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Only a small minority of men who abuse women have been affected by FASD. Also, not all men who abuse women have used alcohol or other drugs. Sometimes men who abuse women even belong to religious groups that ban the use of alcohol and drugs. So although alcohol and other substances can facilitate violence through the lowering of inhibitions or providing an excuse, they are not themselves the root cause of violence. The possible exception is people born with FASD, who typically have great difficulty learning about the consequences of their behaviour. This brings us once again to violence as a learned behaviour.

Learned

There is strong evidence to suggest that violent behaviour is shaped, and can be eliminated, by learning. The theories in this section differ in terms of how violence against women is viewed. The first (psychopathology) looks at violent men as “sick” people in need of treatment. It sees violence against women as rooted in the psychological problems of individual men. The second (cycle of violence) assumes that violence against women is the learned response of men who witnessed violence against their own mothers. Here, the men are viewed as behaving dysfunctionally, but not necessarily as mentally ill. They are viewed as repeating what they learned as children.

Psychopathology

Many researchers and practitioners who adopt this perspective focus on childhood and other experiential events that have shaped men to become batterers. In this view, family violence may co-exist in a constellation of other interpersonal problems and functional deficits could be evident in non-family settings such as the workplace. Empirical evidence in support of this view takes the form of surveys of populations of batterers that find high levels of certain psychiatric diagnoses, specifically borderline and anti-social personality disorders. In this view, violent reactions and patterns are long standing and firmly entrenched and treatment must be intensive and individualized. The assumption is that psychoeducational approaches will be insufficient. At least some time must be spent exploring the historical origins of current behaviour by responding to past shame, guilt and traumas.²³

If this theory is correct, then prevention of violence involves intensive therapy with men who abuse women, and no other strategy to end violence against women would be effective. The only way to prevent men from becoming abusers in the first place would be to intervene in families in which abuse is occurring to ensure that boys are no longer exposed to either violence committed against their mothers, other women or themselves. To take this theory to its logical conclusion, each boy would have to have a “perfect childhood” to avoid becoming an abuser.

This approach does not recognize that legal interventions and women’s economic security are effective contributing factors in preventing violence against women. It cannot explain why some boys who witness violence do not grow up to be violent, or why some boys who do not witness violence do grow up to abuse women. It does not explain why some children who experience trauma become violent as a means of expressing that trauma, others use other non-violent means or hurt themselves instead, and yet others do not manifest the trauma.

Nevertheless, this theory, although it cannot begin to explain all violence against women, may contribute to our understanding of some of it.

Cycle of violence

Similar to psychopathology, the cycle of violence theory stresses that violence against women is learned in childhood by children watching violence being committed against their mothers. It is different from psychopathology in that the latter assumes there is something wrong with the individual, whereas the cycle of violence theory assumes that committing violence is a natural human response to learning violence as a child.

Research does show that children who have witnessed violence against their mothers in the home are more likely to commit acts of violence as adults, and more likely to stay in abusive relationships because the violence, to them, seems “normal”. The research also shows a profound range of other effects on children: They are more likely to become depressed, abuse drugs or alcohol, more likely to become sick, more likely to commit crimes, and may develop behavioural, emotional, cognitive, social, physical, and academic difficulties. The majority of inmates in federal prisons with some history of committing violence against family members witnessed violence as children.²⁴ There is no doubt that witnessing or experiencing violence as a child can have a lifelong effect on a person.

However, feminists have pointed out that not all children who witness violence in the home become abused or abusers, and some men who have not witnessed violence in the home may become abusers. So although the cycle of violence theory contributes to an explanation, it does not explain all of the violence that is committed, and cannot account for why some survivors or witnesses of violence are more affected than others.

If the cycle of violence theory were the only explanation for abuse, then prevention would involve identifying and intervening with kids who have experienced or witnessed violence before they became adults. Prevention would simply be targeted at individuals at risk.

Sociostructural

Sociostructural explanations of violence against women build on theories of learning, but look beyond individual experiences to examine social structures that contribute to violence against women. It stresses that violence against women is not an individual family phenomenon, but that it is systematically learned through prevalent cultural norms from early childhood and is part of and encouraged by structures that maintain the economic, political, social and cultural inequality of women.

Gender socialization

Canadian children are bombarded with violent cultural images, particularly from the United States, in television shows, films, and comic books. Even the “good guys” use violence to solve their problems. There are now more images of females using violence than there used to be, which has been linked to an increase in violence among girls. However, the vast majority of these violent heroes and villains are male, and most serious acts of violence continue to be committed by boys and men.

Boys also learn what is expected of “being a man” from their fathers, friends and other important people in their lives. This usually involves being “tough”, not crying or showing weakness, beating other people at sports and games, and making more money than others. When boys fight, it is considered to be natural, and they are often given violent toys to play with such as plastic guns and soldiers. Although more girls are now involved in competition, they are still more likely to be raised to be “feminine” and caring. One of the worst insults you can throw at a boy in Canada is that he does something “like a girl”, that he is a “sissy”, or likened to women in some way.

Many boys are goaded into proving their “masculinity” through acts of violence and a lack of compassion. Violent role models for boys, such as wrestlers, boxers, war heroes, action figures, outnumber peaceful, responsible and caring ones. Weak, insecure men sometimes feel they have to control others, especially women, in order to be a “real man”.²⁵

This view suggests that violence against women is rooted in the way that boys are socialized. It does contribute to a deeper understanding of why some men beat and rape women. It does not explain why some boys, who are socialized in the same way, do not grow up to beat and rape women. Using this theory, the way to prevent violence against women is to train boys from early childhood to respect women, and to redefine masculinity so that it does not include violence. Some would even go so far as to say ideas of masculinity and femininity should be eliminated, but this would meet with resistance from both women and men, and would be difficult to accomplish because these are so deeply rooted in people's personal identities. Some men have taken the initiative to educate boys and men about the violent aspects of gender socialization and to redefine masculinity so that it keeps positive qualities but eliminates the drive to control and dominate others. Many Canadian schools have adopted "zero tolerance" policies, that all acts of violence are punished and repeat offenders can be expelled. However, one Canadian province (Ontario) has announced that it will dismantle this policy after appeals to the provincial human rights commission that black youth were disproportionately expelled from school, unable to get into any other school, and were being recruited into gangs. Ontario will instead support the student, deal with the causes of the violence rather than expelling the student, and try to reintegrate the student into the school system.²⁶

Culture of violence

Closely linked to the gender socialization explanation, this view goes beyond the training of boys to look at society as a whole as a culture of violence versus a culture of peace. Each society is viewed on a continuum between violence and peace. The more militaristic a society, the more violence against certain groups is seen as normal or desirable, the more violent images circulate in the culture, the more that society is a culture of violence. This theory would predict that when violence itself is acceptable and seen as ordinary within a society, the higher the rate of violence against women in particular.

Research does show a link between militarism and violence against women. Rape, assault and murder of women is extremely high during times of war and conflict. One non-governmental organization (NGO) documented that in several countries, there is "a "hidden army" of girls, some as young as eight, who are abducted against their will to live life in the army. The roles of the girls vary from being actual soldiers through to serving as porters, cleaners and cooks. Almost all are forced to serve as sex slaves or "wives".²⁷ In times of conflict and civil strife, men are more able to commit acts of violence against women without repercussion.

Violence against women is even used as a deliberate weapon of war. Women are the backbone of many societies, producing and caring for children, working to provide food, caring for others in times of illness or hardship, transmitting cultural values. Violence against women has severe psychological effects, such as physical and mental illness, and a higher risk of suicide. An entire society can be weakened by undercutting the women.

If the theory about the culture of violence is true, then to prevent violence against women, societies must engage in peace-building initiatives to move towards a culture of peace. In Canada, some women and men distribute peace-building activity kits for use in schools, manufacture or distribute children's games based on cooperation, and do public education about non-violent conflict resolution. Although Canada is involved in armed conflict overseas and has engaged in localized armed conflict against certain groups in Canada, it has not been involved in a widespread armed conflict on Canadian soil affecting the whole population since 1812. Canadian-based resources may not be useful as inspiration in this area. International Alert's report *Women Building Peace: Sharing Know-How* is based on women's experiences in societies experiencing widespread armed conflict in their own country (<http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/Organizing/IAWBPKnowHowPaper.pdf>).

Power structures and the control of women

The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women was appointed by the Canadian government to talk with Canadians across the country and research the causes, consequences and prevention of violence against women. It concluded that:

Violence against women, both now and in the past, is the outcome of social, economic, political and cultural inequality. This inequality takes many forms, but its most familiar form is economic.²⁸

This view clearly identifies the power structure of patriarchy (male domination over women) as the cause of violence against women. It states that men abuse women because they can. Social, economic, political and cultural norms not only permit the abuse of women but encourage it.

In Canada, women earn 70% of what men do for full-year, full-time work. The income gap between women and men (counting all women and men whether in the paid labour force or not, or their hours of paid work) is even greater. That means that more Canadian men than women have economic resources. Race, ethnicity, class background, language, immigration status, indigeneity, disability, and age have a strong effect on income and social status, so for example, the average income for Canadian women as a whole is higher than for Aboriginal men.

Women make up 21% of Members of Parliament. There are more men than women at higher decision-making levels in both business and politics, so more men than women have political power. Most judges are men, so legal cases about violence against women are most likely to be tried by men. Although there are programs for the ongoing education of judges, these are voluntary, so some judges have expressed views stereotypical views of women and girls while acquitting sex offenders. Sentences for the physical and sexual assault of women and children are notoriously short and lenient.

Canada has controls on violent pornography and child pornography, but all other forms of pornography are not restricted. Particularly with the internet, magazines, DVDs, specialty television stations, prostitution, and cultural norms about sexuality, Canadian boys and men have access to millions of images of girls and women as objects to be used for sex. Although social norms have changed in Canada and more women are becoming professionals, there are still occupations in which women are more likely to be sexually harassed, and there is not occupation, even female-dominated jobs such as teaching and nursing, in which women as a group earn more money than their male colleagues.

This is what is meant by economic, political, social and cultural structures that contribute to violence against women. A recent Canadian study found that women sometimes stay in physically or sexually abusive relationships because they have no money for housing, they do not have enough income to raise their children without the abuser, and that they do not think that they are worth living without violence. Some women fear leaving the abuser, because they are most likely to be killed when trying to leave. Although there are legal sanctions in Canada, these do not work well for everyone, which will be discussed in more detail in the approaches section of this paper.

It is true that some men abuse women because they can get away with it. However, other men could also get away with it and choose not to abuse women, even though the same power structures are in place. Some men abuse women even though they cannot get away with it, and some kill themselves after killing their spouse.

There is no country in the world that has completely eliminated violence against women. However, research does show that the more egalitarian the society, the less violence against women exists.²⁹ However, some feminists dispute this, pointing to the increase in reported violence and instances of violence against women that are a backlash to women's increasing equality rights. The international study performed at John Hopkins University in the United States surveyed women directly in a number of countries rather than relying on reported violence. There is no point in reporting violence unless a woman knows she will be taken seriously, something will be done, and she believes this course of action will

make her safer from the abuser. Increases in reported violence may be indications that outreach on violence against women and women's equality rights are having a positive impact.

Even though there are some cases of abuse and non-abuse that cannot be explained well with this theory, economic, political, social and cultural structures and norms are definitely an important factor in allowing and encouraging violence against women. The solution to preventing violence against women using this view is the full economic, legal, political, social and cultural equality of women. This is a very long-term project, so it is one that must be undertaken at the same time as other shorter and medium term solutions. It is a strategy that should be undertaken in addition to solutions that address some of the other factors that lead to increased violence against women in couples in which the man or woman has experienced or witnessed violence as a child, or in communities in which the whole community has experienced ongoing violence and disenfranchisement, as discussed below.

Communities in need of healing

A number of years ago, Canadian research tried to estimate the monetary costs of violence against women to Canadian society as a whole: "The physical and sexual abuse of girls and women costs the Canadian economy \$4.2 billion dollars each year, factoring into account social services, criminal justice, lost employment days, and health care interventions."³⁰ This views violence against women not only as a concern of the individuals involved, but negatively affecting the community as a whole.

Many Aboriginal women in Canada are in the forefront of building a whole-community perspective on violence against women. Many Aboriginal women activists have a different understanding of violence against women, and view it as stemming from the larger context of the violence of colonialization, racism, disempowerment, and the imposition of a culture that does not respect women or the earth:

Our Elders and traditional people encouraged us to look at initiating a healing approach rather than continuing to focus on the negative, on the violence...There is a contradiction between a solution that seeks harmony and balance, among the individuals, family and community, and one that is crisis-oriented, punishes the abuser and separates the family and community. Our approach to wellness includes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being.³¹

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are still experiencing the effects of colonization: Their lands and economic resources were taken away, so that a significant proportion of Aboriginal peoples are relying on very low incomes from the state to survive. For over a hundred years, the Canadian government took Aboriginal children away from their parents and communities and raised them in residential schools where they were beaten and ridiculed for speaking their language, practicing their own cultural and religious traditions, and were often the victims of sexual abuse. They were told their parents were dirty and were probably going to hell. This left "generations of Aboriginal people without parenting skills, without self-esteem, and feeling ashamed of who they were and hopeless about the future."³²

The internalized hatred and oppression and widespread experience of many different kinds of abuse have led to increased levels of violence within Aboriginal communities in Canada. Aboriginal women are abused both by Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal men, and are also themselves more likely to commit acts of violence than other women in Canada. Physical and sexual violence against children and neglect of children in some Aboriginal communities which have not yet taken significant steps toward healing have resulted in children committing acts of sexual and physical violence against each other.

This view of violence against women is linked specifically to other forms of violence which are all seen as rooted in hatred, dominance of one group over another, and a lack of respect for human beings, other creatures and the earth. It is a view that explains ongoing violence against women as an internalization of hatred of self, hatred of women, desire for domination, lack of respect and a way of dealing with pain.

According to this view of violence against women, prevention must involve the healing of the woman, offender, family and friends, and whole community. There are a number of different ways of attempting this, which will be described in further detail in the following sections. One involved restorative justice systems: When someone commits a crime, instead of sending them to a jail far away from the community in which they may experience further abuses, they come before a circle of elders and community members, the person they hurt, and other interested parties. Everyone speaks about the pain the assault or wrongdoing has caused. The offender must undertake certain actions toward the victim and community, and must never let the wrongdoing happen again. If the person does wrong again, he is usually sent to jail or banished from the community. Another approach to healing is participation in spiritual ceremonies, building of self-esteem, establishing a sense of value and purpose for every human life. One of the case studies discussed in a later section of this paper explores the holistic and healing approach of a support centre for Aboriginal women who have experienced various types of abuse.

Other related approaches, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, can be found in societies that have experienced civil war and/or widespread human rights abuses in which the majority of the population has been victimized and have also been perpetrators of violence. Some of the women and girls in some of these societies have also been involved in armed conflict, and/or passed on the violence they have experienced onto other women, children or men of certain groups. Women in the society's dominant groups may be at once survivors of violence at the hands of their husbands or fathers and perpetrators of violence against servants, people of certain groups, or children.

What happens if most individuals in a given society have committed violent crimes against others, particularly women and children? Who could even overpower them to put them in jail, and who would pay for their upkeep? The legal approaches fought for and won by Canadian feminists may not be immediately effective or enforceable in a society in which violence against women is occurring within the context of civil war, or in populations (such as some Aboriginal communities in Canada) in which almost everybody, including men, women and children have been both abused and have abused others and themselves. For Aboriginal women, the key is stopping the abuse rather than punishing the offender, through healing the victim, offender, other family members and the community as a whole.

However, others have criticized this approach as "being soft" on the offender, and as not fully recognizing the abuse as the offender's fault, or of trying to take the focus off of the experience and pain of the woman. Aboriginal systems of community healing and restorative justice are discussed more specifically, along with their advantages and disadvantages, in the approaches to violence against women section.

Bringing it all together

Most of these approaches have something to contribute to our understanding of why violence against women exists, how it may vary depending on the context, and how it can be prevented. Unfortunately, there is not one simple solution to end violence against women. Rather, a combination of approaches is essential, because there are a number of different factors that contribute to violence against women.

For a more in-depth analysis of rights-based, resource-based and community healing-based models, please see the end of section three, approaches to dealing with violence against women in Canada.

3. Approaches to dealing with violence against women in Canada

This section is an overview of the different kinds of work to eliminate violence against women in Canada and support survivors, such as raising public awareness and support, providing services, research on the prevention and elimination of violence against women, and transforming society so that women have social, economic and legal choices and men no longer view abuse as a right or a viable option.

Structural transformation

The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women was a committee of experts appointed by the Prime Minister who travelled throughout Canada to meet with violence survivors, perpetrators, service providers and concerned citizens. It concluded that violence against women cannot end until economic, political/legal, and social equality is achieved. The Panel issued an Equality Action Plan as the cornerstone of its recommendations. However, most of the items in the plan were never implemented by government, as government priorities changed.

The late 1940s to the 1970s in Canada was a time of expansion of social policy and an increasing desire to share Canada's growing prosperity with all Canadians. According to an analysis by award-winning Canadian economist Armine Yalnizyan, the early 1980s, trade liberalization, debt reduction, spending cuts and tax cuts became key policy directions. Major cutbacks were made to vital programs and services. The result of this was a growing gross domestic product (GDP), but also a growing gap between rich and poor, no advancement in the elimination of child poverty, and a stagnation, and in some cases a reversal, in some women's equality advances.³³

Although Canada has moved away from the approach of achieving structural transformation – that is, full economic, political and social equality for women – as a means to end violence against women, this approach is still regarded by most people involved in the area of violence against women as fundamental to preventing abuse. In the words of one organization:

Governments may talk about equality, but their housing, income, employment, education, criminal justice, immigration, health, home care and child care policies help keep women trapped in abusive relationships.³⁴

Full equality for women would help prevent violence in two ways; by providing the economic and legal options and social support necessary to leave abusive relationships, and by raising the overall status of women in society whereby no woman is viewed as the property of a man, or otherwise as less of a human being.

Economic

Abusive men abuse the women in their lives because they can. Many women, especially those with children to support, have little option but to stay in these relationships because they cannot afford anyplace else to go. Abusive men are often manipulative and controlling in many ways. Some have harassed their female partners to leave paid work, for example by saying that they would be bad mothers unless they did so, so the woman loses any income of her own. Some have harassed women at work once they did leave, and made problems for the workplace, hoping that the woman would be fired. The cost of housing in most large, Canadian cities, where the majority of Canada's population lives, is extremely high. Many provincial governments, which fund shelters, stipulate that women can only stay there for a number of weeks. Many women have returned from shelters back into abusive situations because of they had nowhere else to go.

Economic options that would help women leave abusive relationships include social assistance rates that are high enough to support a family and pay the actual cost of rent, pay equity that would raise many women's wages, and free or affordable child care services so that women are able to find paid work.

Canada is currently moving backwards on issues of economic equality for women. There is a general public perception that equality already exists, as major strides have been made. The gap between rich and poor in Canada has been widening, and the wage gap between men and women's earnings is stagnant at about 70%. This means that female full-year, full-time workers earn on average 30% less than men who also work full-year, full-time, and that this condition is not changing. In the past two years, Canada refused to implement the recommendations of its own Task Force on Pay Equity, cancelled child care funding agreements, and according to the National Council of Welfare, no provincial or territorial government offers social assistance rates high enough to meet the cost of living.

Legal/political

As mentioned in the earlier section, abusive men abuse the women in their lives because they can. At one point, there were no legal consequences for a man who sexually or physically abused his female partner, unless he killed her. Even then, the law allowed the defence of provocation, so a man could claim that the woman's behaviour or words "provoked" him to kill her. In 1970, violence against women was such a taboo subject that the Royal Commission on the Status of Women did not mention it in its otherwise comprehensive report.

In 1980, almost all women assaulted by intimate partners had to lay a complaint with a Justice of the Peace to commence a criminal prosecution. Here in London [Ontario], a study by Peter Jaffe and Carole Anne Burris documented that police laid charges for only 3% of woman abuse cases in 1979, despite advising 20% of the women to seek medical treatment for injuries. Because "common assault" was a summary conviction offence, the police were limited in their ability to lay charges for events not personally witnessed. Also operating at the time were powerful and widespread attitudes that condoned or rationalized the violence of men, blamed women and kept them silent, and saw woman abuse as a private family matter in which society should not interfere.³⁵

Canadian feminists actively pursued a strategy of lobbying for laws that would protect women, the enforcement of those laws, and the transformation of police and court services so that they would be more sensitive and helpful toward abused women. Major positive changes were achieved in these areas, but the transformation is not complete.

In 1983, a federal cabinet minister responsible for Canada's national police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, issued a directive to police officers to lay criminal charges where the officers had reasonable and probable grounds that a wife assault took place. Many provincial and city police forces did so also. Also in 1983, the law was changed to expand what constituted a sexual offence, and stated for the first time that a woman has a right to say no to sex to her husband. In 1985, the equality clause in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* took effect which had an impact on improving the status of women and other disadvantaged groups.

The issue of legal changes highlights how interdependent various strategies and approaches to violence against women are. Public education made it more acceptable to talk about having been abused, and made it more likely that women would seek help. It reframed the issue of violence against women from being a personal shame that should not be discussed to an abuse of power that should be challenged. Most shelters for abused women and sexual assault crisis centres offer to accompany abused women to court, thus giving support to women who might otherwise be intimidated or isolated by the process. Some police departments now also offer victim services, which counsel and guide victims of violent crime through the court process. The fact that violence against women is against the law and there are legal consequences for men who break it in itself is a public education tool. Many courts force convicted abusers to go to a treatment program as part of the sentence. This had the effect, during a time when Statistics Canada claimed violence against women declined, to actually increase the number of court cases related to violence against women. Some women felt more confident about calling the police and following through with the court process.

Coordinated legal responses have also proven effective. A government report stated:

A specialized criminal justice system response was developed in Winnipeg in 1990, while similar programs in Ontario, Calgary, Edmonton and Whitehorse were implemented more recently. The more recent programs do not have extensive data available. The response in Winnipeg is composed of five components:

- Pro-arrest or zero-tolerance policy.
- Women's advocacy and child victim witness program.
- Specialized prosecutorial unit.
- Specially designated courtrooms and docket for intake, screening and trials.
- Special unit in the probation office to deliver court mandated treatment programs.

Between 1990 and 1997 the number of spousal violence cases coming before the court increased from 1,444 in 1990 to 3,120 in 1997 for a total of 14,958. Of these cases, 85% of the accused were men and 85% of victims were women. Conviction and sentencing sends a strong message that spousal assault is a crime, and is reinforced with an equally strong commitment to treatment programs for violent men. The most common sentence given is the combination of supervised probation and court-mandated treatment for offenders. Two-thirds of all convicted offenders received a sentence of supervised probation, and two-thirds of these were mandated to batterers' treatment programs. All provincial correctional institutions in Manitoba currently operate batterers' treatment groups.³⁶

Although there has been much improvement in the handling of violence against women by police and the courts since the early 1970s, problems still remain. Many Canadian police officers today offer sensitive and informed services to abused women. Some do not. Unfortunately, women from minority racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic communities, women living on low incomes, women living on the streets, women with substance abuse problems, women who work in the sex trade, women with certain types of mental or physical disabilities can be subject to stereotypical assumptions on the part of some police officers that may lead to the case not being followed through. Inquiries have documented systemic racism in police forces, courts and prison systems in Canada.

Physical and sexual assault are criminal offences and governed by federal law, but family law in Canada is provincial and territorial, and therefore women must go to different courts and hire a lawyer to deal with issues such as divorce, custody of children, access to children, child support and division of property. There are 13 provinces and territories in Canada, each with their own family law. Aboriginal women who live on reserves are not covered by provincial or territorial marital property laws and therefore may lose all claim to their family home if they separate from their partners. A few First Nations Bands have their own regulations, but most have none.

Some lawyers are sensitive to issues of violence against women and others are not. Some have experience with abuse survivors and others do not. If a woman does not have a high income, she may have to get a lawyer through Legal Aid services, which limits her choice of which lawyer she can hire to represent her. In the 1990s, federal funding to the provinces and territories for legal aid services was cut, making access to legal aid for civil cases all the more difficult. One legal clinic specializing in violence against women in the home prepared a handbook for abused women on working with lawyers. Entitled *Working with your Lawyer: A Toolkit for Survivors of Domestic Abuse*, the document "provides information for survivors of domestic violence and support workers on how to effectively manage the lawyer-client relationship. The materials are designed specifically for women who are about to - or have just entered - the Family Law process...."³⁷

The way courts deal with sexual assault is not satisfactory to women's organizations and service providers. A government report found that:

In terms of sexual assault, the conviction rate is only one third of all cases for 1998–1999. Of the sexual offence cases, six in 10 result in a prison term.³⁸

In 1993, the federal government passed criminal harassment legislation to prevent and punish stalking. Stalking is when someone refuses to leave someone else alone, and may follow, phone, or otherwise attempt to contact her against her will. Peace bonds and restraining orders are court documents which prohibit particular people from coming near another person. Although these and the criminal harassment law can prevent or punish some cases of harassment, they are not adequate in protecting women from ex-partners who are obsessed with them. A number of cases of the murder of women have been committed by men who had a court order not to contact the woman, and previous convictions for assault or harassment.

The exact wording of Canadian and provincial/territorial legislation pertaining to violence against women as of 2002 is found in Appendices 3 and 4 of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women report *Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile* at http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/0662331664/200212_0662331664_e.pdf.

One of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women's recommendations was to expand the Court Challenges Program, which was a fund disadvantaged groups in Canadian society, such as people with disabilities, Aboriginal peoples, racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and women could take cases through the many expensive and time-consuming layers of Canada's court system to the Supreme Court of Canada, where ground-breaking interpretations could be made by applying the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Canadian government cancelled this program last year.

Another Panel recommendation was to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing regarding the full participation of women. Most of these were never implemented by the Canadian government. Canada does not do as well as some other countries on the United Nations Gender Empowerment Measure, which takes into account issues such as equality in political decision-making, for example. There were fewer women elected in Canada's most recent federal election than in the election before it. Currently, one in five Members of Parliament is a woman (21%), compared with 40-50% in some other countries. That means that four out of five people deciding on government priorities is male.

The Panel also recommended that the Canadian government pass a Status of Women Act to ensure the rights and safety of all Canadian women were supported and advanced. This was never implemented.

Social

Women in Canada have also made major strides in terms of social equality, meaning how women and their roles are viewed in society. In the 1970s and 80s, an increasing number of girls were encouraged by teachers and family to do well at school and consider professional careers. Media portrayals of women became more diversified, including some strong women in leadership roles, not just women as sex symbols, women as passive, less intelligent, more emotional, etc.. Expectations of male-female relationships have become more egalitarian for some, not all, Canadians.

However, the pornography industry has expanded with new methods such as video, the internet and games. Women are still portrayed in very stereotypical roles, and some pornography also promotes the use of violence against women. The prime users of pornography are 12-17 year old boys, whose attitudes may be shaped in part by these fantasies.

Canada is a materialist society, where money matters a great deal and where money and education are the prime indicators of social status. As women's incomes increased, so did their social status, and vice versa. As social status and financial resources increase, so does one's ability to run for office or otherwise play a more influential role as a decision-maker in society.

Since the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women reported in 1993 with recommendations to fully fund equality-seeking women's organizations and strengthen women's capacity to influence government, the Canadian government chose to disband the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women in 1995 and freeze funding for women's organizations. In 2006, the federal government changed the mandate of the Women's Program to disallow further funding to women's organizations for research or advocacy. The term "women's equality" was also erased from the mandate. Organizations such as the National Association of Women and the Law have had to close their offices, and organizations such as the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women have had to lay off staff and scale back activities to reduce violence and poverty.

Canada has made major strides in the area of violence against women, which then entered a period of stagnation, and then reversal of some key areas of women's economic and political equality. It is unclear what direction Canada will be taking in future, and whether this current period will lead to an increase in violence against women, as statistics for the current period will not be available for another few years.

Raising public awareness and support

In a 2006 Policy Forum on Aboriginal Women and Violence entitled "Building Safe and Healthy Families and Communities", 250 delegate representatives of First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations, activists, policy makers and government officials from all levels convened in Ottawa. The women argued that raising awareness of violence was a key strategy. "They further stated that awareness needs to be focused on the community as a whole, with women and community leaders playing an active role, and men emerging as champions to end violence."³⁹

Some public education is aimed at abusers, such as advertisements that wife assault is a crime. Some public education is aimed at women and girls experiencing violence, such as the DisAbled Women's Network Ontario's *You Deserve To Be Safe: A Guide For Girls With Disabilities*, which gives definitions of violence, advice about what to do, and resources to contact. This publication also tries to deal with the low self-esteem caused by abuse, in letting abused girls with disabilities know: "You are not to blame. No one deserves abuse. You are a special person. You deserve to be safe."⁴⁰ This organization also made a video about violence against girls with disabilities.

Some public education is aimed at neighbours, co-workers, friends and others, who might be in a position to intervene or help. An example is a government-funded television advertisement in which one man challenged his friend because he noticed that his friend's wife was bruised. He told the friend that hurting a woman is never acceptable. Sometimes people who know that violence is being committed do not know what to do about it, or think it is a "private matter" in which they should not intervene. This kind of public education shows people that everyone has a responsibility to stop violence.

Some public education is more narrowly targeted to service providers, such as guidelines or handbooks distributed to doctors and other health professionals, police officers, and so on.

Some feminists are rightly suspicious of campaigns that focus solely on raising awareness, because deep and widespread structural changes need to be made, and unfortunately just because people or policy-makers are aware of an issue doesn't mean they take action on it. However, the paradox is that without public awareness and support, no other change is possible.

The rest of this section briefly describes particular types of public awareness raising.

Demonstrations and events

On December 6, 1989, Canada experienced its worst mass murder directed solely at women because they were women. A gunman who felt that he did not get into engineering school because women were taking his place walked into a Montreal university and shot 14 women. The national grief over this event sparked vigils and memorials across the country, and the day was established by Parliament as an

annual National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Every year on this day, vigils, memorials and educational activities are held.

Some Canadian activists also use the United Nations' "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence" (from November 25 which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to December 10, which is International Human Rights Day). The Canadian National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women falls within this time period.

Another annual event that takes place in many Canadian cities is the Take Back the Night march, which is usually held every September. The roots of this annual demonstration go back decades. It was conceived as a way women could "take back" the streets, a way of showing that women are entitled to walk in their own neighbourhoods or anywhere at any time of day or night, and be safe from harm. The demonstration has expanded to include all forms of violence against women, wherever they take place.

In 2004, the Native Women's Association, supported by Amnesty International, launched the Sisters in Spirit campaign. Demonstrations continue to be held across Canada to call attention to the "missing" Aboriginal women who disappeared in cities and rural areas and who either reappeared dead or were never found. Until this campaign, police forces were reluctant to conduct full investigations, or sometimes any investigation, into the whereabouts of these women. For years, Vancouver police, for example, were tipped off by Aboriginal women and sex trade workers about a certain pig farm that women never seemed to return from. Only when the campaign generated enough public and media attention did decision-makers and the police respond. They identified and arrested a serial killer who was responsible for the deaths of a number of the women who had gone missing in the Vancouver area. He has since been convicted and jailed. However, many cases across Canada remain unsolved.

In 2006, a number of Aboriginal women bicycled 7, 200 km across Canada to raise public awareness on the need to end violence against women. The cyclists Sheila Swasson, Chi Metallic-Larocque, and Donna Martin-Metallic from Eastern Quebec prepared for the trip by training and seeking sponsors, which included two major corporations. They called themselves "Aboriginal Women on the Move: Cycling to End Family Violence." They kept an online blog of their trip, so people across Canada could keep track of their progress, and still maintain a web site at <http://aboriginalwomenonthemove.org/index.html>.

Many services for abused women also raise both money and awareness through hosting fundraising events. For example, the Assaulted Women's Helpline holds an annual "Celebrate the Women in Your Life" gala at a Toronto hotel. For \$100 Canadian per person, those who attend the 2005 event for example ate a gourmet meal, watched a circus performance, listened to a worldbeat band, and saw a preview of the organizations public service announcement for television. Guests were also offered massage and make-up application services and a silent auction. The organization sought and received sponsorship from large private businesses (the telephone company Bell Mobility, the financial services company Franklin Templeton Investments and the grocery chain Summerfresh Foods.)⁴¹

Media coverage of demonstrations and events around violence against women varies and depends on size of community and the media outlet. Most of Canada's major media are owned by large corporations. Coverage of protests and events on violence against women are minimal through these outlets, except for the December 6th events. When they are covered, they are not always sympathetic. For example, one of Canada's national newspapers recently carried a column on December 6th that claimed that violence against women was an overstated issue and that women did not deserve to be commemorated. The column was written by a woman. Community newspapers are more likely to carry any kind of coverage and particularly sympathetic coverage that opposes violence against women.

A number of Canadian cities have established permanent memorials and landmarks to remember women who have died because they were women.

Public information dissemination

Various levels of government in Canada have produced public education materials about violence against women such as pamphlets and posters, and/or bought television and radio advertisements to raise awareness. Many of these messages have focused on violence against women as a crime with consequences. One particular TV ad was about a man challenging another male friend whom he suspected of wife abuse. Other ads stress that there is help for women who need it. However, it is women's organizations, shelters and crisis centres that have been in the forefront of public education on violence against women, with presentations in schools and other places, information booths, stickers and posters in washrooms and elsewhere, popular theatre, and other methods. As the issue became more acceptable to discuss, some other groups have also made public education efforts, or taken initiatives to educate their own members. These include religious communities, labour unions, teachers' federations, and some businesses.

In Canada, people wear small ribbons of specific colours on their shirts to show their support for particular causes. The White Ribbon campaign began when a few men in Canada in 1991 made and wore white ribbons around Dec. 6, the second anniversary of the Montreal Massacre of 14 women. The campaign has now spread to 50 other countries, and grew into an organization that produces resources to educate men about violence against women. This campaign has been attacked on all sides. A recent editorial in one of Canada's national newspaper called it a "white ribbon of shame", because it claimed violence against women was not really a problem and women victims of violence do not deserve to be commemorated. On the other side, the campaign has also been viewed with suspicion by feminists as some men who abuse women wear the white ribbon anyway, to try to make themselves seem progressive.

The use of the internet to communicate messages to end violence against women is growing, as is the use of technology to link activists from around the world. In November 2007, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) launched a campaign to end violence against women that includes posting videos on its own web site (<http://www.saynotoviolence.org/>) and YouTube, which is popular among mainly youth in industrialized countries, but which anyone in any part of the world with an up-to-date computer has access to.

Amnesty International also has an educational video about violence against women, accessible through You Tube. To find such videos, go to www.youtube.com and search for "violence against women".

Creative expression

Women who have been abused have used art, poetry, fiction, autobiography, music, photographs, film, theatre and other creative expression to communicate a message about violence against women, help themselves heal, and help others. The following is an example of poetry by an Aboriginal woman that is used by the Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence in its public outreach:

Woman of the Dawn

by Wenona Gardner

I am the heart of my family,
I am the center of my community
I carry the nation on my back
I carry the life of tomorrow in my soul.

I rise above the violence.
Bones heal. Bruises fade. My fear I face.
The rage I channel to protect myself.
To protect my children.
I walk away from the destruction
with my Great Creator by my side.

I am the one who can change the tide.
I am the one who will say STOP!
No more forever.

For I am the Woman of the Dawn.
I rise with the morning sun.
Blazing with light, love, and hope.
I hold the future within me.

Recruiting of allies

Labour unions and some faith groups and have been major allies in taking action on violence against women. However, sometimes allies have emerged from surprising places. As government funding in Canada for advocacy work is reduced, more initiatives which seek to end violence against women are turning to the private sector for funding. Elsewhere in this paper, corporate sponsorship of events is discussed, so only innovative strategies will be outlined here.

The Body Shop Canada is a major chain of cosmetic and bath products. In addition to actively raising the awareness of its customers about violence against women through actions such as its “Stop Violence in the Home Campaign”, it also donates the proceeds of its Mint Lipcare Stick to the Canadian Women’s Foundation’s violence prevention work. The Foundation is a “national public foundation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls. CWF researches, shares and funds the best approaches to: Ending violence against women, moving low-income women out of poverty, and building strong, resilient girls.”⁴² The advantage of having a national foundation to raise corporate funds for violence prevention work is that smaller local groups with limited funds and staff often do not have the time, money, connections or geographic proximity to gain this type of funding.

The Canadian Women’s Foundation launched a national fundraising and public education campaign called “Shelter from the Storm” to raise funds for 455 shelters for abused women in Canada. It recruited four corporate partners:

- Winners and HomeSense stores across Canada sold Shelter from the Storm t-shirts and teddy bears. The net proceeds from the sale of these items were donated to the campaign. Customers could also donate funds through these stores and show their support by signing their name on a paper cut-out which was then posted in the store. These two chains of stores also donated a percentage of their profits for one day to the campaign.
- Rogers Media radio stations across Canada broadcast radio-thons to share violence survivors’ stories, raise awareness of the issue and encourage listeners to donate.
- Canadians were also encouraged to make a donation through any BMO Bank of Montreal branch and if they wished, sign their name on a paper cut-out posted in the bank to advertise their support for ending violence.⁴³

Some women’s organizations refuse to pursue corporate sponsorship, because of the belief that corporations do not really care about preventing violence, but are simply interested in selling more products and improving their image. However, other women’s organizations view engaging the private sector as an essential component of ending violence against women, and argue that using corporate profits to end violence against women is better than having these profits distributed among the company’s shareholders or used for some other purpose. Much of these profits are made from female consumers. There has been no evaluation of the role of corporations in the struggle to end violence.

Allies can increase the credibility of the message to end violence against women. For example, in many countries, including Canada, women’s organizations are small, understaffed and not always taken seriously. However, when high profile people make statements about the importance of ending violence

against women, these can be used by groups to promote the message, such as the following statement by Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon:

Violence against women continues to persist as one of the most heinous, systematic and prevalent human rights abuses in the world. It is a threat to all women, and an obstacle to all our efforts for development, peace and gender equality in all societies.⁴⁴

Lobbying

Lobbying means meeting with, writing to, sending petitions to, phoning or otherwise contacting decision-makers to convince them to take action on an issue. Among many other activities, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters holds a "Breakfast with the Boys/Guys/Chiefs/Mayors", in which they meet with the male leaders of their province to encourage them to do more about violence prevention.

The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) was formed in the 1970s shortly after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women recommended to the Canadian government to fund women's equality organizations as an essential part of achieving equality for women. NAC grew to represent over 400 women's organizations across Canada who met each year in the capital to share information, formulate policy positions, and communicate these positions to the governing and opposition parties in Parliament. More than a hundred delegates would stay on for the annual lobby day to meet as a group with the Members of Parliament from each party and ask them questions about what they intended to do about specific issues, such as violence against women.

However, by the mid-1980s, government priorities shifted. The governing party refused to attend the annual lobby and cut funding for NAC. NAC was itself being challenged from within, as its leadership was not reflective of the racial diversity of women in Canada. Coverage of the women's movement by large corporate-owned media either thinned out or became even more critical. It was generally a time of crisis for many movements in Canada as trade agreements were being negotiated that many were afraid would lead to high unemployment in some industries, such as manufacturing, and an erosion of labour rights. In the mid 1980s, the first and last televised debate on women's equality issues was held between the major political party leaders. It became difficult for the women's movement to "compete" with other issues of concern to Canadians at the time, such as unemployment and the environment.

However, things were different in one area of Canada: Quebec. The Quebec women's federation mounted a successful march across the province in 1995 to meet with the provincial government leader. The marchers received much public support and media coverage along the way. They presented their demands, including specific issues related to violence against women, to the premier of the province in front of the cameras. This march was so successful, the federation went on to organize a World March on Women against poverty and violence in the year 2000.

Public interest and support are key to successful lobbying for non-governmental organizations who cannot afford to buy influence with donations to political parties. Elected representatives are concerned about being re-elected, for which they need to maintain a positive public profile and be seen to respond to the concerns of the population. If they perceive that violence against women is not a major public concern, they may not choose to act on any recommendations, or divert resources into dealing with violence against women, unless they as individuals have a personal interest and commitment to the issue. Lobbying often involved a show of numbers or other indications of widespread support for one's position.

One indication of public interest is media coverage of issues related to violence against women. The Quebec women's federation did and continues to maintain positive contact with journalists. It also marched through communities in a province with a good social infrastructure, meaning there are many progressive community organizations, including local women's organizations, across the province who helped and came out to show support. Therefore the support for the marchers' demands seemed to come from everywhere.

Unfortunately, raising awareness of an important issue is rarely enough to motivate decision-makers to make real change. What one's message is, how one delivers it, how many and what kinds of people are seen to support it, how important it seems to the population at large, are important factors in whether one's message will be acknowledged and forgotten, or live on until action is taken.

Lobbying is an ongoing process. Follow up is needed to keep violence against women in the forefront of the minds of decision-makers.

Specialized training for professionals

Training exists in Canada for a variety of professionals involved in dealing with survivors and perpetrators of violence against women. For most judges, health professionals, and others such training is optional and the professional must volunteer to take it or attend available professional development workshops or conferences that deal with the issue. For some professions, such as police officers, particularly officers assigned to special units that deal with domestic assault (such as Ottawa's Partner Assault Unit) such training tends to be mandatory.

Highlighted here is the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA), which is a procedure to predict future wife assaults. The Ontario Provincial Police offers training in the use of this tool to anyone who requests it. The tool itself was developed by the Ontario Provincial Police in collaboration with the Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishene. It is an assessment that is available for use by police, victim services, health care, and correctional agencies (prisons):

It is the first empirically tested and validated domestic violence risk assessment tool to assess risk of future wife assault, as well as the frequency and severity of these assaults...

- The ODARA is the result of a collaboration between the Ontario Provincial Police and the Mental Health Centre, Penetanguishene. The OPP's Behavioural Sciences Section is mandated to provide criminal investigation support services and training of a behavioural nature to OPP and other criminal justice agencies within the Province of Ontario. The MHC Penetanguishene's Research Department is internationally known for scientific research on crime, violence, mental disorder, and risk appraisal. In 2001, this research team was awarded a quarter-million-dollar grant by the federal government to develop risk assessments for wife assault recidivism. The funds also support research on the mental health issues of women assaulted by their spouses. In 2003, the team was recognized through an award for Team Endeavours from the Ontario Women in Law Enforcement.
- The ODARA was created from research on nearly 600 cases from OPP and municipal police forces. Using multiple regression techniques, the researchers found that 13 questions were the most highly predictive of future violence. The risk of assault can be predicted with high accuracy using these questions alone, reducing the need for a comprehensive assessment in order to evaluate risk of reoffence. The 13 yes/no questions cover the accused man's history of violence and antisocial behaviour (police record for domestic assault, police record for nondomestic assault, prior correctional sentence, prior failure on conditional release, violence outside the home, domestic assault during pregnancy, substance abuse), details of the most recent assault (physical confinement, threats of harm, victim reported fearing future assaults at time of the assault), and the victim's personal circumstances (number of children, children from a prior relationship, barriers to support).
- The ODARA is an actuarial risk assessment such that its scores rank wife assaulters on risk for repeated domestic violence. Thus, a male domestic offender can be placed into one of seven categories of risk. For example, a score of 0 places a man in the lowest risk category; 11% of men in the ODARA research study fell into this category, and 5% of these men met the criteria for domestic recidivism within a follow up of about 5 years. A score of 7 or more places a man in the highest risk category; 7% of men fell into this category, and 70% of these men met the criteria for domestic recidivism.

- Higher scores on the ODARA also indicate that an accused assaulter will commit more assaults, commit them sooner, and cause more injury (in a range of injury from none to lethality) than an accused with a lower score.⁴⁵

This section on specialized services for professionals leads into the next, on providing services. The quality of services provided to survivors and perpetrators of violence is only as good as the knowledge, commitment, and resources of those providing the services.

Providing services

Providing services is often viewed as picking up the pieces after violence has occurred. Yet, service provision also plays an important role in the prevention of further violence. For example, a government report found that:

A growth in the availability of emergency shelters for abused women ... has coincided with a decline in spousal homicides.⁴⁶

The report goes on to state fewer murders of women by their male partners is not solely due to the increasing presence of services, but is influenced by many factors operating at the same time, including “changing age patterns in the population, improved community services, increased awareness of and lower tolerance for violence against women, changes in the response of police and courts, coordinated inter-agency referrals and positive changes in women’s overall economic and social status.” This underlines the interdependence of a variety of strategies.

This section gives a brief description of the types of services offered in Canada, including shelters, help centres, crisis lines, programs for men who abuse women, programs targeted specifically to Aboriginal women and men, the role of the health care and judicial systems. This section ends with a brief discussion of coordinating committees and gaps in services.

Shelters, help centres and crisis lines

The first shelters and services for abused women in Canada started on an informal basis, with women offering assaulted women a place on their couch or basement to get away from violence. In the late 1970s and early 80s, women set up more formal services, lobbied governments for funding, and raised funds from the public. Services for abused women continue to be funded mainly through provincial and territorial governments, with the exception of some Aboriginal services which may receive federal funding, and donations from the public.

Not all women have equal access to services because of barriers of geography (distance), language, cultural barriers, and lack of accessibility of some services for women with disabilities. Aboriginal women have set up their own services in some areas.

The Assaulted Women’s Helpline (www.awhl.org) offers help to abused women in the province of Ontario 24 hours per day. It also has a TTY line, which means that women who are hard of hearing and who have equipment so they can type telephone conversations can also use it. The service is toll-free and confidential, so it does not show up on the caller’s phone bill. This organization also offers training workshops about violence against women to whomever is interested. It has trained Boards of Directors and Executive Directors of organizations, public, not-for-profit and private business administrators, doctors, lawyers, therapists, educators, case managers, nurses and front line workers.

Programs for men who batter

Programs for men who abuse women are available in most urban areas of Canada. Sometimes men are ordered to attend these programs by the courts. Other men present themselves to these programs voluntarily.

One evaluation of 200 men who were ordered to attend a program for men who abuse women found that almost 1 in 5 of the men repeated the abuse, most within the first six months. However, 4 in 5 of the men did not repeat the abuse. Those who completed a 14-week group treatment program called SAFE had a lower rate of recidivism 11%, that is 9 in 10 of these men did not repeat the violence.⁴⁷

Canadian researchers interviewed men who attended a feminist-oriented group treatment program and were identified by their counselors and partners as having made significant changes in their behavior. The most significant indicators of change were increased responsibility for their past abusive behavior, feeling empathy for their partners, reducing their dependency on their partners, and improving their communication skills.⁴⁸

The resource section at the end of this paper lists a number of resources about successful programs for men who abuse women.

Health system

Starting in 1984, Canada's largest province (Ontario) opened up three hospital-based programs for sexual assault survivors in response to demands by women's organizations. Thirty-three Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centres now operate at Ontario hospitals which provide care to women, men and children who have been recently sexually assaulted or experienced domestic violence. Their services include emergency medical and nursing care by health professionals trained in violence issues, crisis intervention, forensic evidence collection (documenting evidence of assault for later use in court), medical follow-up, and counselling.⁴⁹

The forensic evidence collection is done through the use of a "rape kit", in use at many hospitals across Canada. This kit outlines the evidence medical professionals need to collect while treating a sexual assault survivor, such as scrapings from underneath fingernails, any semen, and careful documentation of bruises and other aspects of the victim's condition. This evidence has been valuable in leading to convictions for sexual assault.

Survivors of violence often rely on not-for-profit community groups such as women's shelters and crisis lines for psychological support. In Canada, waiting lists to see psychiatrists (funded by Canada's health plan) may be long in some areas. The services of psychologists and social workers are not free for the user, unless accessed through a free clinic, a not-for-profit organization or paid for by a private health plan.

Some cities have women's health centres, where a violence survivor's physical and psychological care may be coordinated, but most survivors do not experience coordinated care.

Gaps in services

It may sound like Canada has a comprehensive plan in place to help survivors of violence, and it may certainly be better developed than in some parts of the world. However, Canada has a population of 33 million people and not all of them have equal access to the services which exist. The services tend to be disconnected and in most cities and towns, do not work together as a whole.

As well, there are some services that are very hard for anyone to find, such as adequate services to support children who are survivors of physical, sexual or emotional violence, who have witnessed such violence in the home, or who have survived military violence and conflict in their country of origin.

Services in rural areas are sparse or non-existent. Women and children must often leave their communities, schools, extended families or workplaces to escape violence in rural areas. Services are not adequate for women with physical and/or mental disabilities. Some shelters in urban areas have access to interpretation services for women who have difficulty speaking the official language dominant in their area, but many do not, leaving some immigrant and refugee women isolated with no one to talk to. The province of Ontario has a French language crisis line (Briser le silence), but francophones outside

Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick may have no access to services in their own language, even though French is one of Canada's two official languages.

Canada's federal (national) and regional governments issued a report which stated:

Women's use of criminal justice and social services may depend on a number of factors, including:

- Awareness of existing services.
- Fear of reprisals by the offender.
- Reluctance due to shame or embarrassment.
- Availability of these services in the woman's region.
- Accessibility due to linguistic or cultural barriers.
- Accessibility due to financial barriers (including the woman's access to a telephone).
- Potential impact of accessing services upon the woman's custody over her children.
- Fear of reliving the experience of violence by testifying before the courts (Gauthier & Laberge, 2000)⁵⁰.

Research on the prevalence, causes and prevention of violence against women

Research is needed to convince the public and governments that violence against women is a problem for everyone. Research that evaluates programs and approaches can also be helpful in determining how violence can be prevented. However, research can also be used as a way to avoid action. A great deal of information already exists about the causes of violence against women and violence as a whole. What is missing is effective communication of this research, and action on the implications and recommendations of the research.

Another problem is that some common research methods for determining the prevalence of violence in the home does not take into account power differences between women and men, and is used to justify inaction on violence. The Conflict Tactics Scale, and similar ways of asking about the prevalence of violence, is still in common usage in despite decades of criticism that it "does not place violent acts within the context of gendered power inequities within the family. Feminists also contend that by describing the use of violence as a "conflict tactic" the model does not capture the element of coercive control that characterizes the relationships in which women are abused, nor does it address women's use of violence as self defence."⁵¹

In Canada, research on violence against women takes place in three main types of locations: Government and government-funded agencies, universities, and community-based organizations. It was a piece of research and the reaction to it, Linda MacLeod's report *Wife Battering in Canada: The Vicious Circle* (1980), which began a national uproar that served a public education purpose. The author concluded that "about one in ten married women – that's approximately 500,000 women – are battered each year in Canada, and yet no-one talks about wife battering."

A female Member of Parliament who raised the issue in the federal legislature was laughed at. It made the national news, and also began a process within government to recognize and act on violence against women.

Today there are five centres of excellence across Canada to do research and raise awareness of issues of violence against women and children. Some university professors and other researchers also do this type of research and report it at academic and professional associations, which reach doctors, nurses and other professionals who come into contact with abused women. Much research in Canada on violence against women is community-based, done by shelters and front-line agencies. The federal

government has a National Clearinghouse on Family Violence and used to have a Family Violence Prevention Division as part of the department of Health. Some provincial and territorial governments also fund or monitor research on violence against women. Some, such as the Ontario Women's Directorate, a part of the Government of Ontario, also disseminate this research information in pamphlets, on its web site and TV ads.

Summary: Rights-based, resource-based and community healing models

The rights-based framework of dealing with violence against women is the dominant model in Canada, although many feminists have worked also as vigorously with the resource-based model. These are not identified in this way in Canada, and there is significant overlap between them. The community healing model is primarily used within some Aboriginal communities.

Some feminists have focused primarily on changes in law and policy, on enshrining women's rights in the constitution, and working on enforcing these rights. I am calling this the rights-based model.

Some feminists do not want to work with the state and do not spend much time lobbying governments, but work with women to enhance economic independence and ensure that women have the resources, such as housing, employment, and so on, to escape abuse should it occur. I am calling this the resource-based model.

In reality, many feminists in Canada do both, so in some ways this is an artificial division. Yet it becomes very important when considering public education and prevention. Many of the public education messages around violence against women have focused on this type of violence as being wrong, a crime, and that a woman has a right to be safe. Gender equality has been enshrined in the Canadian constitution since 1985, in a special section called the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Feminists spent decades successfully pushing for tougher laws and the enforcement of laws on physical and sexual assault of women, and legal resources such as injunctions to keep abusive men away.

However, because Canada is a society with deep and growing economic inequality based on sex, race, ethnicity, geographic location, ability, and other factors, not every woman has equal access to her rights as described on paper. Economic realities keep some women in abusive relationships. Racism has kept some women from accessing the justice system. The psychological effects of ongoing abuse have kept some women dependent on abusers because they have internalized messages of worthlessness. The social stigma of being abused and the resulting possibility of breakdown of existing social and community networks keep some abused women silent. Some women stay in abusive relationships because they are justifiably afraid of being killed if they leave by a man who might then kill himself, so legal sanctions against violence become irrelevant in those cases. Rights on paper are not enough. Social and economic structures need to change too to enable women to have full access to their rights.

This is not a recommendation of a rights-based model **or** a resource-based model, but a reminder that **both** must be pursued at the same time for either one to have any meaning.

Public education must also tie ending violence against women with women's equality to avoid what has recently happened in Canada. In 2006, a national government was elected that eliminated funding for projects that involved research or advocacy for women's equality. As a direct result, some women's organizations such as the National Association of Women and the Law had to close. Although there was a strong grassroots campaign and a few media columns that opposed the move, the issue was ignored by some media and congratulated by others. Women's equality organizations were portrayed as having outlived their usefulness. Although Canadians are more educated than they were 20 years ago about violence against women, the prevalent view in the population is that it is a matter of a few individual families, and that all that is required are shelters for abused women to go to. There is a lack of recognition of the link between violence against women and women's inequality, or of the structural issues involved in producing and supporting violence against women. It is assumed by many that women already experience the right to be safe, and the degree of violence against women is underestimated. Violence against women is mistakenly viewed as something that happens mainly on the streets, such as assaults

by strangers, rather than the reality that most violence against women happens in the home by someone the woman knows. Particularly with sexual violence, some women are still viewed as deserving the violence, which makes it almost impossible to enforce their legal right to be free from violence.

Enforcement of rights takes ongoing education of the public, professionals and decision-makers, as well as the resources to be able to protect oneself and ensure rights are enforced. Some women in Canada are not economically dependent on men, some are almost entirely economically dependent on men (especially if they have children and no paid work) and some may have their own income but are partly dependent on a partner's income to avoid poverty. This puts Canadian women in a very different situation from one another when it comes to the ability to enforce their rights and access services.

The community healing model has something to offer as a complement to rights- and resource-based models, as the latter are not equally effective for all women. In Canada, racism and other forms of hatred and inequality play a role in both the enforcement of rights and access to services, for example the Aboriginal women who phoned emergency services when they were afraid of being killed by one woman's ex-boyfriend but help was only sent after several calls and many hours and arrived only after the women had been killed. Another example is when women with mental or physical disabilities are not believed or taken seriously by police or the courts, or are particularly dependent on the abuser.

Individualistic rights-based frameworks can pose problems for women in marginalized communities whose deeply-held loyalties may be toward their families and communities rather than their own well-being. Some women will not act on their own behalf. The rights model relies not only on convincing decision-makers and the public to establish and enforce rights, but on the assumption that women are separate beings from their families and communities, rather than interconnected with them. Therefore a low income woman who is financially dependent on her male partner may not wish to see him jailed because she will then have no income other than social assistance, which in Canada, is not enough to live on. A woman who is a part of a community which experiences racism may not wish to call attention to violence in her community, or wish her male partner to be treated in a racist manner by police, courts and jails. The rights-based framework works for some women better than others. It is important to establish written rights as a base, ensure access to and enforcement of those rights, but also to go beyond this framework to learn from the most marginalized women what works best for them.

The community healing model necessitates members of the community listening to one another and coming to a resolution about how healing of each individual and the community can occur. This will not always be possible, and may not be a desirable model in all circumstances. The problem with this model is that the significance of violence against women in particular can be forgotten or put aside. This model requires sufficient public education so community members understand the severity and effects of violence against women on women, children and the community as a whole. It also requires that all community members are respected enough to be heard and valued. The strength of this model is that it recognizes violence against women as a problem for the whole community, may lead to a catharsis of pent-up pain and may improve community understanding of the effects of violence. This model has only been tried with small, well-defined communities.

The frameworks discussed here are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Establishment of rights and effective mechanisms for the enforcement of rights, redistribution of power and resources, and community healing can all be mutually supporting objectives. None of them are easy.

4. Key initiatives and case studies of effective approaches

This section describes key initiatives such as collaborative approaches to eliminating violence against women, models for engaging men, innovative approaches and 'promising practices' in prevention. These initiatives are discussed in the form of five case studies which include Aboriginal and Quebec models.

Effective approaches

Although Canadian feminists disagree about whether or not violence against women in Canada is actually declining or whether it is a problem with measurement, there are two indicators that are certain: Countries in which there is more economic, political and social equality between women and men have lower rates of violence against women,⁵² and in Canada, the rate of men killing female partners (and vice versa) has steadily declined since 1974.⁵³

A study by Canada's national and regional governments came to this conclusion:

The decrease in the spousal homicide rate from 1993... may be due to, among other things, increased community-based supports, mandatory charging policies and improved training of police officers. The decline in spousal homicide rates could also be attributed partially to the fact that women may have developed a lower tolerance for spousal violence and an increased tendency to leave relationships before the violence reaches a critical and deadly stage...⁵⁴

There is only one approach that is effective, but each approach contributes something vital to the overall effectiveness:

- Education/awareness that violence against women is wrong makes some men less likely to engage in it.
- Public education that violence against women is wrong makes many women less likely to tolerate it when it does occur to them.
- Public education that violence against women is wrong may make people around abused women and abusive men less likely to stand by silently or urge the woman to stay.
- Services for abuse survivors give some women an alternative to staying in an abusive relationship.
- Laws which frame violence against women as a serious crime provide consequences for abusing women.
- Police officers trained to deal with violence against women in a serious manner communicate that there are consequences for men who abuse women and may be able to put women in touch with services.

Also:

- When women have a sufficient income of their own, they no longer have to rely on a man for food or housing and are therefore in a better position to leave an abusive relationship.
- When women can gain social status independent of men, they no longer have to rely on a male partner to be respected in their community.
- When women are educated from childhood to make decisions and engage politically in the community, they may be less likely to accept male partners making decisions for them.
- When women are equally represented in community decision-making, action may be taken on issues of concern to women such as dealing with violence and ensuring economic independence.

- When men are raised from childhood to respect and cherish women as human beings, they are less likely to abuse them.

Many people would probably like to know if there is one magic initiative that ends violence against women. Violence against women is complex, deeply rooted and can have specific consequences or manifestations depending on race, ethnicity, religion, geographic location, sexuality, age, ability, health status, and legal status. This means that many different approaches must be used, and that an initiative may work in one time and place under certain circumstances and not in another. That is why this paper discusses many different kinds of examples, to be used as an inspiration for local, culturally appropriate approaches elsewhere.

London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse

This initiative, begun in 1980, became a model for Canada and has been studied around the world. The information for this section is taken verbatim from *Imagine...Celebrating 20 Years of the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse* (2001).

The London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse is an integrated community response to end violence against women in one of Canada's small cities, London, Ontario. It started when family violence researchers sent a letter to the police, judiciary, probation office, women's shelter (which had opened in 1978), and courts, inviting them to meet on a monthly basis.

"Problems discussed by the Committee members centred on gaps in services, lack of coordination (and mutual understanding), and lack of awareness of the dynamics of woman abuse among some social service and mental health professionals. Specific problems included inexperienced prosecutors, absence of information sharing between civil and criminal systems, the ease with which a defendant could delay proceedings, and the delay in resolving cases, time during which women were at risk for further assaults. Unbeknownst to the police, who were advising women to lay informations at the courthouse, the policy of the Justices of the Peace was never to initiate a prosecution on the first complaint of the woman. There was a "cooling off" policy whereby the JP would require the woman to come back a week later if she still wanted to take the matter to court. The low rate at which women returned was taken by court officials as evidence of the wisdom of the policy.

"Generally, women who sought safety through the legal system – with restraining orders, calls to police, legal restrictions on access to the children – found a system that was slow, ineffective, and often blamed them for their own victimization. Men could evade service of court orders, avoid getting a lawyer and use other tactics to delay court proceedings. Restraining orders were rarely enforced by the courts and unenforceable by the police. Bail conditions were likewise unenforced in many cases. Most cases of assault were heard in the family courts rather than the criminal courts, reflecting the sense that woman abuse was not a real crime.

"It became apparent that representatives of each justice and social service component needed to learn more about the others and needed to act in a coordinated way. It was also necessary to ground initiatives in an understanding of the dynamics of woman abuse, to create a comprehensive array of services and to verify the need for and benefit of those services with research. Specific initiatives focused on in these early days were the encouragement of police charging, shorter court processes, better awareness of woman abuse among all professionals, removal of the abuser from the home rather than the women and children, public education and work with the schools, stronger support for women as complainants in the justice system, greater publicity about available resources, increased awareness of women's rights, better access to civil remedies, and therapeutic services for abusive men. There was also a push, only partially successful at first, to have these cases heard in criminal court."

Some of the early members of the committee themselves displayed attitudes about violence against women that were common at the time. One court representative on the committee resigned saying that

what women needed was marriage counseling in order not to provoke violence, and added, “it’s a wonder some of them don’t get socked more often.” Another more progressive committee member said:

One of the challenges was watching the figures grow. People said “you’re doing all this and the problem keeps getting worse” and we said “no, the problem isn’t getting worse, we’re hearing about it now” and that was a hard battle because some of the committee members – a minority – were really apprehensive that we were creating more of a problem. That was good, though, because it meant we had to be prepared to justify within our own group what we were doing and that made it a lot easier when we had to tackle the rest of the world.

In response to an influential piece of research done by two of the committee members, which showed that women in London had to call police on average 35 times before the police would do anything, “the Committee made the following recommendations:

1. That the police lay charges in all cases of wife assault
2. That training occur with all criminal justice personnel in the issues surrounding woman abuse
3. That an advocacy service for women be developed
4. That a clearer distinction be made between civil and criminal processes in respect to wife assault cases
5. That a program for men be developed
6. That the community be made aware of the extent of the problem of woman abuse
7. That the Committee integrate its response to victims

“Beginning in May of 1981, London police officers were directed to lay charges rather than leave the onus on the women to seek out a Justice of the Peace. In addition, officers were directed to give out “victim information cards” clarifying the actions they intended to take and outlining the options available to the woman. The London Police were the first police force to undertake such an initiative, one that is now nearly universal across Canada. The number of charges laid proactively by the police increased dramatically, as did women’s satisfaction with the process.

The Committee developed Community Accountability Principles: “In 1992, the Committee reached a consensus that any services provided to those impacted by woman abuse must be based on a feminist philosophy which analyses the historical and structural basis of power, control and sexist socialization as expressed and enforced by the crime of woman abuse. Through many years of commitment and cooperative effort, it was been determined that a safety conscious, community response demands that policies and programs must reflect a commitment to the following standards of practice:

1. The safety of abused women and their children is the fundamental priority of intervention.
2. “Service delivery” must extend beyond traditional concepts to include advocacy and political change.
3. Services to abused women, their children and men must work within a coordinated framework
4. Women’s choices and expertise related to their own situations must be respected. At the same time, service workers have the responsibility to i) create conditions where a woman is given an opportunity to make informed choices ii) create reasonable boundaries and safety provisions.
5. The needs of abused women and their children are paramount, not the needs of her family, service providers, religious group(s) or the state.

6. Service agencies must be responsible for critically reflecting on how their organizations' hierarchical structures, and the service providers related positions of power, may negatively impact the desired mutuality or the working relationship with the client.
7. Services must recognize "symptoms" in abused women and their children as common adaptations to intolerable social and interpersonal situations of violence.
8. Services must not collude with tactics of control used by abusers.
9. A de-institutionalized, non-medical approach to intervention is to be employed along with the necessary and appropriate use of medical and psychiatric services.
10. Services must be universally accessible, and will respond sensitively and appropriately to the needs of: diverse multicultural/multilingual communities; Aboriginal peoples; lesbians and gay men; persons with physical disabilities; persons with developmental disabilities; older persons; persons with HIV positive testing; persons with low literacy skills.

Over the past 20 years (28 years now), the Committee has accomplished many goals, and yet the overall goal of eliminating violence against women altogether remains a continuing challenge. "The Committee expanded from the initial focus on the legal system to epitomize a holistic conception of the root causes of woman abuse and the need to work at multiple levels. That said, however, the gains made in the criminal justice system were significant and led the way for other jurisdictions. A system designed to respond to abuse and trauma should not re-traumatize the woman it seeks to help. We now recognize the ways the "system" can be complicit in reproducing the abusive experience.

"Another key accomplishment was the fostering of a common vision among partners that sometimes came from opposing perspectives. Initial distrust by some sectors of other sectors, while not completely abated, was confronted and addressed. It was decided that consensus could not be achieved in all cases...

"General observations of the key contributions are: Identifying gaps in services and lobbying for program development; Maintaining feminist principles of operation; Embracing conflicts by not demanding consensus; Moving beyond conflict to be action oriented; Harnessing the power of voluntary contributions; Working through the media to educate the public; Training professionals in the dynamics of woman and child abuse; Creating a multi-point access system for woman abuse services; Designing research for action and advocacy; Using language carefully by naming the issue; Integrating men into the work; Finding a place for children in anti-woman abuse initiatives; Initiating prevention efforts and work with the schools; Serving as a role model and mentor for other communities.

"As in any initiative of similar scope, all has not been smooth sailing. Meetings were sometimes acrimonious and the tenor of the debate may have silenced some around the table. Some organizations have found themselves competing with each other for a limited and shrinking funding pool. There were periods when energy waned and effort was needed to kick start the movement forward. Programs for abusive men have not always been embraced. Likewise, some have felt that the safety of children has been pushed to the background. However, members and member agencies are always in a process of education about each other's work."

The Coordinating Committee is still active today, and is made up of representatives of 30 local agencies and private individuals who meet monthly. These include the police force, Aboriginal agencies, translation and interpretation services, violence survivor groups, programs for men who abuse women, the court system, shelters for abused women, health centres and services, religious groups, multicultural and immigrant services and associations, children's services, feminist groups, sexual assault centres, a general information service for the city, and the city and provincial governments.

Pro-gam: An intersectoral partnership to identify and treat men who batter in Quebec⁵⁵

Phone: 1-514-270-8462

<http://pro-gam.ca>

Pro-gam inc. was founded in 1982 by a small group of people who were interested in offering assistance services for men who behaved abusively within the home. At the time, shelters for battered women had begun opening their doors, but intervention services were unavailable for men who behaved abusively. Thus, Pro-gam became the pioneer organization in Quebec to offer such services for men.

Pro-gam is now partnered with legal and judicial services (police, courts, youth centres, government departments and youth protection services), universities, community organizations (shelters for abused women, mental health centres, women's centres, crisis lines, suicide prevention centres, anti-violence groups), health services and clinics, research institutes, labour unions, academic and professional groups, and workplaces which offer employee assistance programs.

In addition to the therapeutic services that are offered for men, Pro-gam develops professional training and supervision services, engages in awareness and prevention activities in schools, community organizations, public and private institutions and participates in events such as symposiums, conferences and seminars. Pro-gam staff and affiliates have published articles in specialized journals in the field of psychosocial intervention. These articles reflect the years of field practice, questioning and thinking which the team of counsellors has engaged in over the years.

Pro-gam adheres to the following objectives when working with abusive men: It helps men recognize their violent and controlling behaviours, helps men take responsibility for their behaviour, helps men understand the motivations underlying their behaviour, helps them identify their abilities to resolve difficulties, helps them find and use alternatives to violence. It works with the female partners of abusive men, and also offers webcam supervision of men.

Pro-gam offers many different types of training, for example, training for businesses about violence in the workplace (including psychological harassment) and specialized training for partner organizations. It also makes presentations at academic and service provider conferences and offers an internship program for university students.

Aboriginal women building a world without violence: Case study of Minwaashin Lodge⁵⁶

Minwaashin Lodge

424 Catherine Street, 2nd Floor Ottawa, ON K1R 5T8

Phone: 1-613- 741-5590

fax: 1-613-748-8311

www.minlodge.com

Minwaashin Lodge is an Aboriginal women's support centre in Ottawa, Ontario founded in 1993. The centre offers integrated services to respond to the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual needs of women and their families. It provides a range of programs and services to First Nations, Inuit and Metis women and children who are survivors of domestic and other forms of violence. All programs and services are provided in the context of cultural beliefs and values to ensure a holistic approach is used as part of the healing journey. Services and programs include: Specialized counseling for adults, youth, and children; a children's program; a shelter for Aboriginal women and children fleeing violence; transitional and family support; youth programs (Fire Keepers and Spirit Movers) for children and youth 8 to 18; services of a traditional healer/Elder; cultural programming, including teachings, ceremonies and visiting Elders; program for Two-spirit (Aboriginal gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer) people; pre-employment readiness training; and a Men's Program. It also offers a holistic and intergenerational program for direct and intergenerational survivors of the residential school system.⁵⁷

Colonialism has left many Aboriginal families with a legacy of abuse, addictions, economic dependence and brokenness. Physical and sexual abuse is often perpetrated generation by generation until the cycle is broken and all involved can heal. Minwaashin Lodge's Sacred Child Program is a culturally-based program focusing on the holistic needs of children ages 0-6 years. Caregivers and children receive: information on and modeling of positive Native parenting, parental relief for 3 hours, information on the effects of family violence on children who witness it, team building for children, building positive self-esteem through arts and crafts, developing greater listening and communication skills through storytelling, and learning social skills (being helpers, sharing, responsibilities, being safe). Activities also include medicine walks (a spiritual practice), drumming, regalia making, fun & games, ceremonies, feasts, visits from storytellers and Elders.

Minwaashin also offers full-day training workshops for service providers and students who wish to learn about better ways of serving the Aboriginal community. It has made many links in the community among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginally-focussed organizations. As a result, some of the latter hold fundraising events and make donations to Minwaashin. Minwaashin is also supported by the federal, provincial and municipal governments and foundations.

Safety audits: METRAC making the community safer for women

This information is the description of the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) about its own safety audit initiative and some of the results of evaluation and feedback about this initiative. METRAC is a not-for-profit, community-based organization in Canada's largest city, Toronto.

The fear of violence that is felt by most women reflects the reality of violence in most women's lives. Women are subjected to violence in both private spaces, such as their homes, and in public spaces, like their neighbourhoods. Fifty-six percent of Canadian women are afraid to walk in their own neighbourhood after dark. Only 18 percent of men feel this way. Additionally women who are further marginalized by their race, sexuality, ability, age or income-level, for example, are often subjected to discrimination, further increasing their vulnerability to violence and the fear of violence.

METRAC's Safety Audit Resource Kit: For Women and Communities is based on two principles:

- That all the users of a space are the safety experts of that space; thus users should be involved when evaluating a space.
- When a space is made safe for the most vulnerable of users, it in turn becomes safe for all users.

METRAC's Safety Audit Process involves users with their varying identities and backgrounds, sharing the expertise of their experiences and their diverse and unique safety concerns, as they brainstorm ideas for positive anti-violence change.

How METRAC's Safety Audit Process is Done

In METRAC's Safety Audit Process, women express their safety expertise. You don't need a degree in planning or architecture - it's your safety needs and experiences that count.

Although their main goal is to reduce the opportunity for sexual assault or harassment, doing a Safety Audit will also discourage other crimes. Participating in METRAC's Safety Audit Process is one way women can achieve a positive change in their social and physical environment.

In METRAC's Safety Audit, you ask questions like these:

- When and why do I feel uncomfortable here?
- Have I heard about or experienced negative things here?
- What is the lighting like?
- Is it difficult to see what's up ahead, because of sharp corners, pillars, overgrown bushes or fences?
- Would anyone hear a call for help?
- What changes would make me feel safer? Do these changes negatively affect the safety of others in my neighbourhood?

METRAC's Safety Audit Resource Kit: For Women and Communities is a powerful tool for community-driven change. Not all changes will happen at once, but METRAC's Safety Audit will help to open discussion, identify plans for change, and prioritize anti-violence action. It works from the understanding that once a space is safer for all women, it will be safer for everyone.

METRAC has used its Safety Audit Process with architects during the pre-building stage of new developments, and engineers and designers in the development phase. METRAC's Safety Audit has been conducted in office and apartment buildings, community parks, neighbourhoods, underground garages, and schoolyards where there is violence or the fear of violence.

Some Places Where Safety Audits Have Made a Difference

- Safety Audits of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) have led to the creation of Designated Waiting Areas, emergency intercoms, the Request Stop Program on buses, and changes to the Rapid Transit (RT) Stations
- Safety Audits have led to changes in many Toronto parks
- Neighbourhood groups have used METRAC's Safety Audit in municipalities across Canada
- Safety Audits have been requested at community housing projects and community centres in Canada, England, and Australia
- At colleges and universities across Canada, METRAC's Safety Audit has been successfully used - for example at Queen's, University of Toronto, and Carleton
- The Safety Audit has been used to review safety in hospitals, design and improve parks and community centres, make shopping malls safer, and enhance residential neighbourhoods

The impact of METRAC's Safety Audit has been significant. The Women's Safety Audit Guide was published as part of the "Community Kits" produced by the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women (1992), and by the National Crime Prevention Council.

What People Say About METRAC's Safety Audit

"Conducting a safety audit is a very effective community development strategy. It brings community members together to discuss their safety concerns and examine what kind of community they want to live in."

— Community Activist

"Reaction and interest in the Campus Safety Audit guide and video is very positive. Queen's University is using them extensively. The video was shown in residences during Orientation and staff and faculty have been using both guide and video as part of departmental meetings, in classes, and individually. An invaluable education!"

— University Administrator

"Conducting a Women's Safety Audit© of the Toronto Transit System gave us a unique opportunity to see through the eyes of women. We now understand the specific concerns women have for transit safety, and have made significant changes that will benefit everyone who rides the TTC. I highly recommend it."

— Toronto Transit Commission Official

Universities and Colleges

The Campus Safety Audit guide, kit and our video "Safer for Women, Safer for Everyone" (1992) have been used by college and university campuses around the world. The involvement of the student body and faculty in auditing campuses has led to many changes and greater personal safety for all.

Workplace Safety

METRAC has worked on improving personal safety in work environments. These have included a bank, hospitals, corporate offices, campuses. Applying safety audits in the workplace is straightforward and productive, raising awareness and providing greater personal safety for many.⁵⁸

METRAC not only conducts safety audits, but offers training to individuals and organizations about how to conduct them. Safety audit materials can be ordered from METRAC for a small fee by phone, mail or e-mail: 158 Spadina Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 2T8, info@metrac.org, phone: 1-416-392-3135, fax: 416-392-3136.

The New Brunswick Family Violence and the Workplace Committee

New Brunswick is one of Canada's eastern provinces. This committee is a partnership between the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, University of New Brunswick, Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick, Fredericton Chamber of Commerce, Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation, Office of Human Resources of the Government of New Brunswick, River Valley Health, Cendant, NB Power, and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (a department of the national government). This committee put together a toolkit for businesses to use to prevent family violence. It includes posters, postcards, bookmarks, Powerpoint presentations, a sample workplace policy, a model safety plan, fact sheets, "messaging" (how to talk about family violence), a list of services and resources, a checklist of instructions on how to organize educational events about family violence in the workplace, and an opportunity for feedback. The fact sheets not only include information about family violence, but also fact sheets entitled "Supportive Workplace Policies, Practices and Programs" and "Creating a Positive Workplace". According to the Committee:

The purpose of this Toolkit is to help New Brunswick businesses take action to address family violence and its impact on the workplace. This Toolkit is appropriate for unionized and non-unionized workplaces, business owners, managers, and employees. It can be used in large and small business, rural or urban work places, and across all sectors.

These toolkit materials are made available free of charge. Although directed at businesses, not-for-profit community groups have also made use of the toolkit, such as New Brunswick's toll-free bilingual crisis and suicide helpline.

Although there are many useful aspects to this toolkit, the two elements that are most innovative are the workplace safety plan and the workplace policy:

Model Family Violence Policy

Whereas family violence affects the lives and impacts on the safety of hundreds of New Brunswick employees each day,

Whereas, family violence enters the workplace impacting on the safety of both victims and co-workers, and results in lost productivity, increased health care costs, increased absenteeism and increased employee turnover,

It is the policy of _____ that each of our employees has the right to work in an environment free of violence. Moreover, every employee has the right to seek assistance [through the Employee Assistance Program] with issues in relation to violence, even when it is happening outside of the workplace. Violence, as defined in this policy, means a pattern of coercive tactics in which one person seeks to hurt or intimidate another through the use of physical force, verbal harassment or manipulation in order to establish and maintain power and control over the victim.

Therefore, we will use a variety of methods, including:

I. Employee Awareness

- We will disseminate a statement that states our opposition to all acts of violence, including family violence, to all our employees/supervisors/managers.
- We will post copies of the family violence policy, information posters and other media prominently in areas accessible to employees, customers and suppliers.
- We will provide information to all employees about services available, [through our EAP] to help employees deal with any issues related to workplace or family violence.

II. Workplace Safety

- We will seek to eliminate the potential for violence in and around the workplace by reviewing our workplace environment and minimizing, where possible, physical attributes which may expose our employees to violent acts.
- We will provide reasonable means to consult with and assist victimized employees in developing and implementing individualized workplace safety plans [consistent with existing collective bargaining agreements].
- We will enforce all known court orders, particularly orders telling the abuser to stay away from the work site.
- We will have an emergency security plan with procedures for contacting the police when employees observe anyone engaging in threatening behaviour.
- We will explore options for voluntary relocation of the victimized employee, escort for entry and exit of the building, and dealing with harassing telephone, email and faxes.

III. Supportive and Non-Discriminatory Policies

- We will take reasonable measures to develop policies, practices and measures that deal with employee absenteeism, productivity, safety, and requirements for support and counselling related to family violence.
- We will ensure that our policies and practices do not discriminate against employees experiencing family violence and we will be responsive to their needs as victims.
- We will not base staffing decisions on any assumption about or knowledge of an employee's exposure to family violence.

IV. Training

- We will make training on family violence and its impact on the workplace available on a regular basis for all managers, supervisors, human resources staff, and security staff.
- We will train staff on signs of family violence, impacts on workplace, making appropriate referrals, confidentiality, individualized responses and safety plans.

V. Responsibility for Policy

- We will ensure that all managers and supervisors follow the policy and disseminate copies to all employees upon implementation and all new employees.
- Employees with questions or complaints about family violence related workplace behaviours that fall under this policy, may discuss them with _____. Concerns will be addressed.

We believe that helping to prevent violence in the workplace and in the family is our company's business and will help foster a safer society.

Home And Workplace Safety Plans

Workplace Safety Plan

- Save any threatening emails or voicemail messages.
- Inform your employer, security supervisor or a person of your choice of your situation.
- Park close to the entrance of your building, and talk with security, the police, or a manager if you fear an assault at work.
- Have your calls screened, transfer harassing calls to security, or remove your name and number from automated phone directories.
- Identify an emergency contact person if the employer is unable to contact you.
- Make sure your employer is aware of court orders such as custody orders, peace bonds or restraining orders that forbid the harasser from being near or contacting you at your workplace.
- Ask security to escort you to and from your car or public transportation.

If You Have To Flee, Try To Take...

- Important papers - birth certificates, social insurance cards, any court documents.
- Credit cards, bank account numbers, and ATM cards.
- Some money.
- An extra set of keys.
- Medications and prescriptions.
- Phone numbers and addresses for family, friends, doctors, lawyers, and community agencies.
- Clothing and comfort items for you and the children.

Home or Personal Safety Plan

- Consider an unlisted phone number.
- If possible carry a cell phone for emergencies.
- Remove items of a personal nature from your garbage or recyclables.
- Make sure your windows and doors are locked, consider the use of deadbolts.
- Use security alarms or other security features if possible.
- If travelling in a car, change your travel route to and from work often.
- Keep emergency numbers at your disposal.
- Make sure others are informed of your situation and if possible, create a signal to let them know if you are in danger.
- Have an escape route mapped out in case you need it..
- If children are involved teach them a plan and make sure they know emergency numbers.

For more information about the Committee and its initiatives: <http://www.toolkitnb.ca/emain.asp>

5. Recommended resources

Research centres

British Columbia Institute Against Family Violence

74640 Kitsilano RPO, Vancouver, BC V6K 4P4, Canada
Phone: 1-604-669-7055

www.bcifv.org
resource@bcifv.org

This organization “works to eliminate emotional abuse, psychological abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, destruction of property, injury to pets, physical assault, sexual assault and homicide in relationships of family, trust or dependency.... works to eliminate victimization of all family members, particularly those who are more vulnerable than others because of their gender, sex, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, physical condition, developmental capacity, mental health, age, sexual orientation, socio/economic status or related condition.” It carries out this work through research and education, bringing together community, university and government, publishing information and resources, and providing library services about violence.

Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children

1137 Western Road, Room 1118, Faculty of Education Building
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, N6G 1G7, Canada.
Phone: 1-519-661-4040 Fax: 1-519-850-2464
E-mail: Centre Coordinator Maria Callaghan

mcallag@uwo.ca
<http://www.crvawc.ca/>

This research centre is a partnership between a university, a college and a community coordinating committee to end violence against women. It conducts research on healthy relationships, the impact of violence on health and well being, the intersections of gender inequality and racism, ableism, homophobia, classism, and ageism. It specifically also does research and education aimed at changing practice policy and law concerning families and intimate relationships, justice systems, educational systems, health care systems, social services, workplaces, communities and community institutions, and organizations working to end violence.

Freda Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children

SFU Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5K3 Canada
Phone: 1-778-782-5197 Fax: 778-782-5189 E-mail:

freda@sfu.ca
<http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda/>

The FREDa Centre is a joint collaboration of academics at Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, and community and women's organizations working at the grass-roots level. The FREDa Centre is committed to participatory action research as defined by the community, and works in the interests of the community. **The FREDa Centre's** research focuses specifically on violence against women and children, and encourages collaborative partnerships between communities and academics who are working to end this violence.

RESOLVE: Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse

Resolve Tri-Provincial Network, Room 108, Isbister Building,
University of Manitoba Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2N2 Canada
Phone: 1-204-474-8965
Fax: 1-204-474-7686

E-mail: resolve@umanitoba.ca
<http://www.umanitoba.ca/resolve/>

The Manitoba Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women was established at the University of Manitoba in 1992. It is a collaborative endeavour of the three Manitoba Universities and a range of public and voluntary sector organizations. The goal of this regional centre is to undertake research which will offer practical, action-oriented ways to help end family violence. It is essential that we provide services for victims of family violence and intervention and treatment for offenders. We must also go beyond providing these services and eliminate the violence in our homes, schools and communities. Research can help us to uncover the causes of family violence. It can also generate effective strategies for action, and help us to use our limited resources in the most productive ways. Each project of the Research Centre is being directed by a multi-disciplinary team comprised of academic researchers and representatives from community based organizations. A particular focus of the research is examining strategies to stop the intergenerational cycle of violence, examining programs for children in schools, shelters and community agencies and programs for parents in shelters, correctional institutions and community.

Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research

678 Windsor St, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3 Canada
Phone: 1-506-453-3595 Fax: 1-506-453-4788

<http://www.unbf.ca/arts/CFVR/>

This centre is affiliated with the University of New Brunswick and is actively building and sustaining partnerships among academics, policy makers, service providers, and community organizations.

Le Centre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur la Violence Familiale et la Violence Faite aux Femmes (CRI-VIFF)

Université de Montréal, École de service social CP6128, SUCC Centre Ville,
Montreal, QC H3C 3J7 Canada

Phone: 1-418-656-3286 Fax: 1-418-656-3309 E-mail: criviff@criviff.ulaval.ca

<http://www.ulaval.ca/vrr/bd/regroupement/fiche/136.html>

This French-language research centre on family violence and violence against women views violence as an act of power and control either by an individual or by a group, institution, or society against an individual or group with less power or access to resources. The centre engages in three main areas of research: Understanding violence (links between societal norms, social roles and violence; comparative studies of different populations), analysis of factors that make one more vulnerable to violence, evaluations of prevention efforts, psychosocial and legal interventions.

Key organizations

There are many grassroots women's organizations, shelters and crisis centres in Canada. Most of these organizations are local, overworked and understaffed, and/or operate on volunteer labour. The recommended organizations below are mainly national, provincial or territorial organizations which are very active on anti-violence issues and which may be better equipped to answer questions posed by peace/women's equality activists in other countries. A list of individuals in various organizations who agreed to be contacted for this project is provided separately.

Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres

77 East 20th Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia, V5V 1L7 Canada

Phone: (604)876-2622

Fax: (604)876-8450

E-mail: casac01@shaw.ca

Website: <http://www.casac.ca>

This organization describes itself as “a Pan Canadian group of sexual assault centres who have come together to implement the legal, social and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent, and ultimately eradicate, rape and sexual assault. As feminists we recognize that violence against women is one of the strongest indicators of prevailing societal attitudes towards women. The intent of the Canadian Association is to act as a force for social change regarding violence against women at the individual, the institutional and the political level.”

Canadian Women’s Foundation

133 Richmond St. W. Suite 504, Toronto, ON M5H 2L3 Canada

Phone: 1-416-365-1444, Fax: 1-416-365-1745,

E-mail: info@canadianwomen.org
www.cdnwomen.org

This foundation has given over \$10 million (Canadian dollars) in grants to community groups across Canada with a major focus on ending violence against women, moving women out of poverty and helping girls become strong and resilient. The foundation also researches and shares the most effective approaches to helping women and girls reach their full potential, and has developed national strategies on ending violence against women, moving low-income women out of poverty, and building strong, resilient girls. The Foundation brings together organizations that work with women and girls for skills training and knowledge exchange, and work with them to develop evaluation tools that reveal the most promising practices for helping women and girls. It also seeks to aid women in becoming powerful agents of social change.

Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System

254 Pall Mall St., Suite 200, London, Ontario N6A 5P6 Canada

Phone: 1-519-679-7250 Fax: 1-519-675-7772 E-mail: info@lfcc.on.ca
www.lfcc.on.ca

Although this is a local organization located in southwestern Ontario, it is a model agency in that it provides services for children from a strong feminist perspective. It is a non-profit social service agency helping children and families involved with the justice system as victims of crime, witnesses of crime, parties in custody disputes, subjects of child protection proceedings, litigants in civil suits for compensation, teenagers in therapeutic care settings, or youthful offenders. It is studied by other countries as a model because it has an innovative approach to understanding children exposed to domestic violence, supporting their mothers, and creating resources for service deliverers. In addition to providing direct services to children, the centre also conducts research, publishes documents, offers training workshops, holds conferences and staff are called on to serve as expert witness in court.

National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence

396 Cooper Street, Suite 301, Ottawa, ON K2P 2H7 Canada

Phone: 1-613-236-1844 Fax: 1-613-236-8057

National Coordinator: Verna McGregor

E-mail: vmcgregor@nacafv.ca
<http://www.nacafv.ca/>

The goal of this Aboriginal-controlled organization is to reduce family violence in Aboriginal communities. It initiates, designs and delivers culturally appropriate programs and services to address family violence, and to support shelters and family violence prevention centres; provides necessary support to service providers for networking and capacity building; determines the needs of First Nations communities with respect to family violence; conducts research and share best practices, resources as it relates to family violence in order to promote good program management; advocates with governments to illustrate the depth of the issue and promote partnerships with First Nations, non-government organizations, federal, provincial and territorial governments; bridges gaps between non-government organizations and federal, provincial and

territorial governments; participates in and conducts a national review of the Family Violence Prevention Program, and drafts recommendations on the future direction needed; and promotes public awareness of family violence.

Shelternet.ca

<http://www.shelternet.ca/splashPage.htm>

Useful information for abused women in Canada in 10 languages (English, French, Spanish, Polish, Chinese, Arabic, Farsi, Vietnamese, and Portuguese). This site helps women find a shelter, make an escape plan, and also shows women how they can hide their activities on the internet so abusers cannot find out that women have used the site.

Springtide Resources [formerly known as Education Wife Assault]
Suite 220, 215 Spadina Avenue Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2C7, Canada
Phone: 1-416- 968-3422,
TTY: 1-416-968-7335 Fax: 1-416-968-2026

E-mail: info@womanabuseprevention.com
www.springtideresources.org

Springtide Resources promotes healthy and equal relationships by engaging diverse communities in shared educational strategies designed to prevent violence against women and the effect it has on children. It is committed to education as a critical element of social change, solutions to violence against women that include everyone, partnership and collaboration to increase responsibility and community capacity, diversity reflected in governance, staff, volunteers, materials and partnerships, accessibility and accommodation throughout the organization and programs, innovation in methodology, tools and content, and ethical stewardship of public and private funds. This organization offers various types of resources related to ending violence and operates programs for immigrant and refugee women, young women, women with disabilities, and deaf women. It also offers volunteer training and training for groups, workplaces, governments and institutions.

White Ribbon Campaign: Men working to end men's violence against women

www.whiteribbon.ca

"Violence against women is one of the most serious human rights violations on the planet. Across Canada and around the world, there is a growing momentum for organizing around men's roles and responsibilities in ending violence against women." The campaign offers resource materials for men to educate other men about violence against women.

Useful government resources

Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile.

Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women, 2002.

http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/0662331664/200212_0662331664_e.pdf

This is a report issued by a committee of cabinet ministers of Canada's national and regional jurisdictions.

Family Violence Initiative, Public Health Agency of Canada

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/initiative_e.html

Other books, articles, fact sheets and reports of interest

A Teacher's Handbook: Understanding Woman Abuse and its Effects on Children, Strategies for Responding to Students, by Linda Baker and Peter Jaffe.

London, Ontario, Canada: Centre for Children & Families in the Justice System, 2006.

<http://www.crvawc.ca/documents/TeacherHandbook.pdf>

This handbook helps teachers understand what woman abuse is and the impact it has on children, how to recognize the signs that violence may be occurring in the child's home, learn how to support students and deal with challenging behavior, and learn to offer support and information about resources to mothers who are being abused.

Access Denied: The Barriers of Violence and Poverty for Abused Women and Their Children After Separation by Peter Jaffe, Michelle Zerwer & Samantha Poisson. 2002.

http://www.lfcc.on.ca/access_denied.html

In this two-year study, 62 women were interviewed about their experiences after separation from an abusive partner. Ninety-five children were interviewed as well. Focus groups were held with women involved with specialized domestic violence counselling. To provide the reader with a broader context, each section of the report contrasts the myths and facts juxtaposed with study facts and recommendations.

Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence Against Women

http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/pdf/cp_vaw_best_practice_2004-07-22.pdf

Produced by the BC Ministry for Children & Family Development, May 2004. Provides information and gives guidance to workers who provide protective services when assessing and intervening in situations involving violence against women when children may be at risk from harm.

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW). Violence Against Women and Girls: Fact Sheet. 2002.

www.criaw-icref.ca

Choose "factsheets", then "Violence Against Women and Girls".

Family Violence: It's Your Business

<http://www.toolkitnb.ca/emain.asp>

This is a workplace toolkit intended to provide employers, unions and employees with information and resources for recognizing and responding to family violence situations that enter the workplace.

Hot Peach Pages

www.hotpeachpages.net/canada/index.html

International directory of abuse hotlines, shelters, refuges, crisis centres and women's organizations (including Canada), plus domestic violence information in over 75 languages.

Interventions for Children who Witness Intimate Partner Violence: A Literature Review.

By Sharon Agar. Vancouver: BC Institute Against Family Violence, 2004.

http://www.bcifv.org/pubs/Agar_Lit_Review_2004.pdf

This reviews recent evaluations of methods of dealing with children who witness violence in the home, to reduce the likelihood of these children growing up to commit or put up with acts of violence.

Making a Difference in Ways that Count: A Canadian Philanthropic Strategy to Prevent Violence.

By Jan Richardson, Leslie Tutty, Cathryn Bradshaw, Avril Phillip, Vanessa Kennedy, Bev Wybrow. Toronto: Canadian Women's Foundation, 2004.

<http://www.cdnwomen.org/PDFs/EN/CWF-philanstrategy.pdf>

This document is useful in describing what types of initiatives are ideal at a national, regional and local level. It stresses local organizations and initiatives that are adapted to local populations, and engaging neighbours, families, friends, and co-workers in public education and prevention strategies. It proposes that national investment is also necessary to provide a focus on prevention, public education, exchange of information and learning, and social policy development.

Muslim Wheel of Domestic Violence

By Sharifa Alkhateeb, 2007.

http://www.lfcc.on.ca/muslim_wheel_of_domestic_violence.pdf

The Muslim Wheel of Domestic Violence conveys some of the ways religion can be distorted to justify abuse against women and children. Dr. Sharifa Alkhateeb adapted it from the Power and Control Wheel developed by the Domestic Abuse Project of Duluth, Minnesota.

Reflections: Increasing the Success of Men's Programs

http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/success_of_men_s_programs.html

An interview with four people who work in programs for men who abuse women.

Toolkit for Working with Men and Boys

<http://toolkit.endabuse.org/Home/>

A comprehensive tool kit designed to help people work with men and boys to prevent gender-based violence. It provides readings, case studies, handouts, exercises, and other resources as well as community-building tools.

Endnotes

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