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The United Nations: The International Year of the Family, 1994*

Agreement# 40063171

Where Was There To Go?: Osborne House 35th Anniversary



by Victoria Lehman B.A., M.A., LLB. - Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba

This year marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of Osborne House, Winnipeg's first shelter for abused women. Congratulations are in order for our community and for the progress made over the past thirty-five years. Despite all developments, and before we become too self-congratulatory and consider that we are so much more advanced than other parts of the world, let us somberly reflect that it was only in the 1970's that our own criminal code precluded a man from being charged with the rape of his wife.

Recently, I spoke with woman of 86 years, one who had money and family to support her but had stayed in a life-threatening, degrading marriage, rather than separate or divorce. I asked "Why did you stay?", especially as the repercussions of that hell of a marriage had extremely deleterious effects on the lives of her children. Her response was "Where was there to go?"

In fact, in the 1940's this same woman had taken her own mother to a lawyer to seek relief but had to turn back when her mother said that she would continue to worry about her philandering, alcoholic and abusive husband. The daughter then realized that there would be no separation that day, or any day. Both generations of women only received the traditional due reward of an abusive marriage when they were widowed. These women, like all women in their circumstances, lived in mortal fear for the entire 50 years of their marriages.



**Barbara Judt, Chair,
Osborne House, with recognition award
presented by MLA's Bonnie Mitchelson
and Myrna Driedger**

Even now, "Where was there to go?" is as much a psychological or philosophical question, as a question of fact. The senior woman above had substantial financial and familial resources but had limitations within herself.

There often were, and there most certainly are now, resources to which an abused woman may seek help. "Zero tolerance" laws for spousal assault; second-stage housing for transition from women's shelters to long-term housing; and the social stigma of being in an abusive marriage is largely on the wane. Government and non-profit programs are readily available and are widely advertised; knowledge of these resources is limited

only to those new Canadians for whom English and French are not accessible. Even then, there are inroads that have been made to many ethnic communities. Although the "information gap" has been greatly reduced, the "isolation gap" continues to be subjective and internal to the victim.

Our community has made tremendous progress

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Saskatchewan Update

Bridging the Gap: Criminal Harassment Victimization and the Criminal Justice Response



by *Deb George, Stacey Burkhart and Jill Arnott - Domestic Violence Unit, Family Service Regina*

Staff of Family Service Regina's Domestic Violence Unit identified an overwhelming number of individuals whose lives were affected by criminal harassment, and recognized the extreme level of frustration they experienced in seeking safe and concrete resolutions to this serious social and criminal justice issue. One-on-one work with survivors, involving shared frustration and concerns for safety, motivated an initial research project focused on identifying the primary areas of concern within this issue. Status of Women Canada saw value in seeking ways we might more effectively address criminal harassment and agreed to fund our project.

A significant aspect of phase one centered on data gathered via the interview process. In addition to hearing the stories of survivors, we met with individuals from as many areas involved in both the community and the criminal justice response to criminal harassment as possible. Phase two saw us continuing to follow the experiences of targets and reviewing case files, as well as gathering detailed information from Regina and Saskatoon Police Services via interviews and surveys with a cross-section of officers and an examination of each agency's policies, strategic plan and organizational structure. Our approach allowed us access to a variety of perspectives.

One of the most significant findings coming out of both phases of research is that those working within the system have many of the same concerns and frustrations as targets do. The manner in which these are experienced are different, but the fact that they are shared across the boundary of "victim" and "system" validated our initial suspicion that criminal harassment and the surrounding issues need to be explored further to establish how we might systemically address it with greater degrees of efficacy.

The single greatest factor that emerged from the first phase of research, from both victims and those working within the system, and confirmed in phase

two by police officers and learning event participants, was the lack of consistent knowledge, and in turn, the need for education that focuses explicitly on criminal harassment. Furthermore, a lack of proper and/or comprehensive understanding of domestic violence has a critical impact on understanding domestic-related stalking. Former partner stalkers are characterized by an extreme desire to control, an inability to handle rejection a steadfast sense of entitlement, a vengeful attitude and an assumption of little or no responsibility. Behaviours and actions that are not overtly harassing, threatening or criminal on their own become so when they are unwanted and repeated, and even more

so in the context of a past relationship governed largely by fear. Failure to recognize the seriousness of criminal harassment, both on its own, and as an extension of domestic violence, heightens the potential for profound harm and lethal violence.

At every step in the process, we are failing some targets, for there appears to be a filtering system in place that determines the course of

action taken. Minimization is possible at every stop in the process. Targets second-guess themselves right at the outset, wondering if they are over-reacting, or attempt to "handle it" on their own. The generalized lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of this crime is reflected in (sometimes) faulty/flawed advice and direction and minimization from friends and family to whom targets often turn for support and validation. The first professional contacted may not be a police service, and again, the general lack of knowledge here frequently compromises a target's ability to engage protective measures and receive supportive services.

Given that the police represent the entry point to the criminal justice system and their response affects everything that follows, appropriate and timely police intervention is essential. All targets interviewed noted encountering knowledgeable, compassionate and helpful police officers, although this usually occurred after several negative experiences characterized by

Bridging the Gap, cont'd on page 4



Stacey Burkhart and Deb George

Manitoba Update

Update on the Canadian Observatory on the Justice System's Response to Intimate Partner Violence



by Cheryl Fraehlich

The Canadian Observatory on the justice system's response to intimate partner violence was formally established in 2007. The Observatory is a national/international network of researchers, practitioners and policy-makers from across many disciplines with an interest in conducting research that examines and compares the justice system's response to intimate partner violence (IPV) across the country and abroad. Housed in the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence at the University of New Brunswick and led by the centre director, **Dr. Carmen Gill**, the Observatory includes members from Canada (including members from all three RESOLVE centres), the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The last 18 months have been busy for the Observatory and many projects are underway or near completion. Some of the specific activities undertaken by teams of observatory members include:

Standardized Data Collection Grid:

Although information about the justice system processing of IPV cases has been collected in Canadian jurisdictions, a lack of standardization of the collected information makes comparison difficult. During 2007/2008, Observatory members developed a data collection grid to gather information from Crown prosecutors' files and piloted this grid in four sites that include Winnipeg, Guelph, Calgary and Fredericton. The hope is that in the future, this instrument will allow the establishment of a data set that will facilitate interjurisdictional comparison on the justice system response in IPV cases.

Dialogue With Government: Team members in British Columbia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Yukon, Ontario, and the Atlantic region are contacting those provincial and territorial justice system agencies responding to IPV that do not currently share data with researchers. The purpose of establishing this dialogue is to create a better understanding of the importance of research and sharing data on the justice system response to IPV and to create a better understanding of the obstacles facing researchers who pursue research in this area. Although more work is required, team members also report that their efforts are achieving success in

establishing dialogue with provincial/territorial/federal governments and feel confident and optimistic about the relationships they are developing.

Literature Review: The purpose of this project is to compile existing literature on the justice system response to IPV. The literature review will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 consists of the creation of an annotated bibliography that includes literature from the years 2000 to 2008 and phase 2 will take the form of a critical literature review. At present, an annotated bibliography comprised of English-language documents, French-language documents and a specialized section that pertains to the justice system response to immigrant and refugee women who experience IPV has been developed. These sections of the annotated bibliography will be compiled into one document that will be available through the Canadian observatory website in the near future.

Policy Audit: Team members are conducting a policy audit that includes a search of policy documents related to IPV and the justice system in Canada. The policy audit will provide insight into what is happening across the country and inform research directions. In addition, the audit will allow for the identification of gaps in policy and an examination of the policy cycle from policy development and intent to policy implementation and impact. Similar to the literature review, the policy audit includes a specialized section of policies specifically relevant to immigrant and refugee women who experience IPV.

Creation of Opportunities for Students and New Researchers: Creation of opportunities for student involvement is an important component of the Canadian observatory. Research assistantships have allowed students to work on each of the projects described here. Through its Postdoctoral Fellowship program, the observatory also welcomed three postdoctoral research fellows in 2008.

To learn more about the activities of the observatory, refer to www.unb.ca/observ/.



Dr. Cheryl Fraehlich

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condescending attitudes that “blame the victim.” Crimes between intimates are often perceived to involve a greater degree of victim responsibility or provocation. This impacts the response received by targets being stalked by their former intimate partners. When targets are turned away or not taken seriously by the police, there is no deterrence to escalating stalking behaviours and potential violence, no system-generated safety measures for targets, and no possibility of prosecution, sentencing or court-ordered and monitored treatment for stalkers. Further, if the police response is lacking in any way, successful prosecution and sentencing is compromised, targets remain at risk, and stalkers continue to receive the message that this is not a serious issue, and thus, they will not suffer serious consequences, if any at all.



Jill Arnott

A significant problem commonly cited is the “breaching cycle.” The cycle follows a trajectory of arrest, release on protective conditions, breach of the conditions, arrest, release on the same conditions etc. ad infinitum. Common in domestic violence and criminal harassment cases, and often continuing for a lengthy period of time before resulting in harsher consequences, many justice workers feel that this cycle has become an ‘accepted glitch’ in the system. The breaching cycle is a source of extreme frustration for all involved because it consumes valuable resources to no effective end, it renders front-line workers powerless to provide any real or concrete protection to targets as it gives stalkers repeated opportunities to do harm, and it leaves all involved (from target to perpetrator, as well as those who work in human services and criminal justice) feeling that the system does not take the issue seriously.

The final layer of the filtering system is the court - prosecutors and judiciary alike; thus pro-active sentencing (that is, sentencing that will function as a deterrence) and court-ordered treatment requires knowledge and vigilance on the part of those prosecuting criminal harassment cases and insight and wisdom on the part of those making sentence determinations. When sentencing constitutes a continuation of the breaching cycle - that is, imposes the same conditions that were breached pre-sentence - it fails to effectively deter future engagement in such behaviour. Many interviewees expressed a lack of hope when discussing the breaching cycle and inconsequential sentencing

practices.

An issue raised by most human service workers is that are operative in different cultural communities and the failure of front-line workers to recognize and/or provide for these differences. In Saskatchewan specifically, First Nations targets are unlikely to describe stalking incidents in terms that readily identify them as such to any areas of the system they engage, from police to shelter workers to social service workers. This, coupled with higher degrees of normalized or acceptable violence often means that some targets are less likely to be made aware of, or receive access to, all the resources available to them. Cultural sensitivity is essential to responding effectively to all victims of domestic violence and targets of stalking.

The degree to which the system depends on stalking targets to gather evidence was expressed as a concern by both targets and those working with them. This was confirmed by Regina and Saskatoon police officers who cited the complainant’s lack of knowledge about criminal harassment and how the inadequate job they do in collecting useful evidence as the greatest difficulties police encounter in identifying and investigating criminal harassment. The lack of understanding, both systemically and culturally, means that most targets are unaware, for a significant period of time, that the behaviour in question is actually criminal and are unlikely to seek advice or assistance. The process is extended and the potential for violence is increased due to the heavy reliance on targets to “get what is needed.” For stalking targets already experiencing significant levels of stress and fear and struggling to simply maintain some degree of normalcy in their daily lives, the added burden of compiling evidence further taxes mental, emotional and physical resources that are already being stretched thin. Given this significant dependence on targets, the necessity for knowledgeable and understanding front-line workers, capable of identifying stalking cases early and providing appropriate support, sound advice and useful resources to stalking targets, is of utmost importance.

In conclusion, several issues were raised repeatedly, with a resounding echo, throughout the course of this research project that, in our estimation, require serious assessment and provide the starting points from which we might begin to address criminal harassment with greater success. ☘

Alberta Update



by Leslie M. Tutty

RESOLVE Alberta recently completed a report entitled *An Environmental Scan of Strategies to Safely House Abused Women*. This project consisted of a review of strategies of safe houses for abused women in published academic literature and Internet sites. One area the document examines is housing options for abused women commonly available in Canada, such as emergency protection orders, emergency women's shelters, second-stage shelters, and permanent housing through public and private sectors. Several novel models for housing abused Canadian women through the use of safe homes, interim housing, and third-stage shelters are also explored. As well, we looked at options to assist women to remain in the family home while increasing the women's safety from an abusive intimate partner.

Information from each housing option is subdivided into an overview of options, safety issues, maximum stay length, quality of housing, emotional support, and access. These variables were selected based on the authors' long histories of interviewing and working with abused women with respect to housing and other numerous issues.

This project developed from the previous national research project *A Feasibility Study for a National Network of Women's Shelters and Transition houses* prepared for the Housing and Homelessness Branch, Department of Human Resources and Social Development, Ottawa, in 2007. At a presentation of the results to members of the *Alliance to End Violence*, it became clear that not only was safe housing an issue for Calgary and the province of Alberta, but also for other concerned groups. Groups such as Calgary's *Poverty Reduction Coalition* were also involved in attempts to solve such complex issues. This project was created in an effort to support those efforts. Thanks are gratefully extended to the Poverty Reduction Coalition for funding the environmental scan.

The Research Advisory team for the project included **Andrea Silverstone**, Chair of the Calgary Domestic Violence Committee and Executive Director of Peer Support Services for Abused Women; **Karen Walroth**, previous Executive Director and **Linda White**, current Executive Director of the Alliance to End Violence; **Jean Dunbar**, of Calgary's YWCA Sheriff King Home; **Chris**

MacFarlane, Calgary Poverty Reduction Coalition; **Jan Reimer** and **Kate Woodman** of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters; and **Dr. Wilfreda (Billie) Thurston**, Director, Institute for Gender Research, University of Calgary. For copies of the report, please email tutty@ucalgary.ca or resolve@ucalgary.ca.

This project is the first phase of the recently approved national project *Identifying Best Practices to Safely House Abused and Homeless Women*, funded by the *Homelessness Knowledge Development Program*, *Homeless Partnering Secretariat*, *Human Resources and Social Development Canada*. This project consists of interviews that will gather the views on how best to address housing and safety issues with 50 to 60 women who have experienced partner abuse and homelessness.



Other RESOLVE Alberta Updates

We were very lucky to have had **Bianca Giurgiu** work with RESOLVE Alberta during the Winter Term as an MSW practicum placement. Bianca is originally from Romania and plans to conduct an MSW thesis on the experiences of abused women who have immigrated to Canada from Eastern Europe. While with RESOLVE, Bianca worked on several projects; conducted interviews with abused women who had experienced some form of homelessness; conducted an environmental scan of strategies to safely house abused women after a shelter stay; and analyzed quantitative data on a one-day training program with respect to immigrant women and legal issues. We are fortunate that Bianca will continue to work with RESOLVE Alberta over the summer as a research assistant.



Bianca Giurgiu

Mallory Faul, who collected Crown files data over the past year for the NCPC-funded *HomeFront* project, has left to work with the *Elizabeth Fry Society* in Calgary. We wish Mallory all the best in her future endeavours.



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toward addressing spousal abuse. The *Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba* has passed many resolutions in support of these efforts; millions of dollars have been invested; and a community that involves government, university research and numerous non-government agencies are all connected in an attempt to assist families embroiled in this issue. However, spousal abuse seems to continue unabated.

Why does this problem continue? The answer is that every situation is unique to the individuals involved in this most intimate of relationships, and the most dangerous time for the abused wife is still at the point of separation. Therefore, any abused spouse must seriously consider the timing and consequences of the point of departure, and should be encouraged to seek professional outside assistance in the endeavour to separate-involving family only broadens the range of potential targets. The departure unbalances the dynamics of the relationship, which often causes feelings of abandonment and rage. Such feelings can result in lethal violence in spousal abuse cases where previously the abuse had mistakenly perhaps appeared “manageable” to the abused spouse.

The point of separation sees a common occurrence of relationship dysphoria that can quickly turn into a potentially lethal scenario. By far, the situation results in the most dangerous circumstances for law enforcement and for those in the extended circle of family or friends, even more than most other criminal matters that require enforcement intervention. Even those professionally involved, such as lawyers and judges, can be affected.

The cycle tends to repeat itself an average of eight times, as the abused partner makes limitless attempts to work through her part of the relationship. At this time she will have grave doubts about her own self-worth. She will also struggle with the sense of responsibility with which only the truly “co-dependent” can be burdened- both for the abusing partner and the desire to “give the children a father.”

While the situation is frustrating to all involved, and may appear delusional from an outside perspective, there is no insight that can be “injected” into the abused spouse. What is needed is for young girls and boys to be educated in areas of bullying; abuse; mental illness -as there is sometimes an organic, physical basis for violent behaviour, such as “explosive disorder”; and personality disorders (psychology). This education is needed in order

to inoculate them from the negative impact of what they may learn in a toxic home environment. We continue to act in the hope and expectation that our continuing education and vigilance in this issue as a community will have the same positive effect as in tobacco and alcohol education. Such programs are not completely effective due to lack of community cohesion and resource support of the individual and families. A result is a feeling of hopelessness, disaffection and alienation. Relationships between intimate partners of all races, genders, sexual orientation and economic levels, are distorted in power between the parties, which are then susceptible to abuse. Truly, the price of women’s freedom from abusive relationships is to continue to direct our ongoing energies and resources to this issue. Our efforts must never abate. ☘



Supporters at Government House celebrating Osborne House’s 35th Anniversary

Source: *Statistics Canada 2008 Shelter’s For Abused Women* by Julie Sauve and Mike Burns

- 101,000 women and children were admitted to 569 shelters in Canada, between April 2007 and March 31 2008.
- Over half of the women admitted to shelters came with their children.
- 9 out of 10 of the shelter residents did not plan to return to live with their abusive partner.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



We bid a fond farewell to Julie Shirtliff, our amazing office manager, who has worked with us since September 2008. During this period she organized our 2008 Research Day, developed an office procedures manual and sorted out our office—no small task in the short time she has been with us. While Julie is a marvel of organizational skill, she is especially appreciated for her joyful good humour and thoughtful support for all of our staff. Coming into work each day is a pleasure because of the warm and friendly office atmosphere she creates. Julie is moving because her husband received a marvelous job in Ontario. While we will greatly miss her, we wish Julie and Phil all the best.

This past month we have seen two wonderful new additions to our staff. **Anita King** joined RESOLVE in early April as our new book keeper. Anita works half time for the Departments of Religion and German and Slavic Studies and the other half at RESOLVE. Already it is evident that she is a great multi-tasker. She brings a wealth of office experience with her and a quiet confidence that inspires us as we deal with our complex budgeting processes. In late April, **Cindi Porcher** joined RESOLVE. Cindi was just completing a term as Administrative Assistant in the Faculty of Human Ecology when we learned of Julie's upcoming move. Cindi bravely parachuted in to learn the complex files, forms and finances that make our office run. We are so delighted to have such an experienced administrator available to us. She will be our Acting Office Manager until our formal hiring process begins.

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS



June 16 – 19, 2009 - Canadian Domestic Violence Conference: Working With Those Who Perpetrate Abuse and Their Families in Toronto, Ontario, at the Hart House Theatre, University of Toronto. Presented by Hincks-Dellcrest Centre - Gail Appel Institute. Presenters include **Della Yaroshko** and **Deb Farden**. Details are available at www.canadiandomesticviolenceconference.ca. For more information contact Shannon Holcomb at **416-972-1935 x3340** or sholcomb@hincksdellcrest.org or training@hincksdellcrest.org.



November 19 – 20, 2009 - Research Day 2009: Healing From Violence and Abuse in Regina, Saskatchewan, at the Regina Inn and Conference Centre. Presented by RESOLVE Saskatchewan.

Call for papers and registration information can be found on the RESOLVE Saskatchewan website at www.uregina.ca/resolve/. Submission deadline is June 30, 2009. For more information contact Mary Hampton or Ann Bishop at **306-337-2511** or RESOLVE@uregina.ca.

RESOLVEnews is a quarterly newsletter published by RESOLVE Manitoba. Any submissions, announcements and inquiries can be directed to the RESOLVE office in each of the three prairie provinces or to the editor, Ilze Ceplis, RESOLVE Manitoba - phone (204) 474-8965; fax: (204) 474-7686; e-mail: newsedit@cc.umanitoba.ca



Supporting solutions to violence and abuse

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Changes at Prairieaction Foundation



Prairieaction Foundation is growing and changing. Following almost a year of research and careful consideration, the Board of Directors of Prairieaction Foundation made a decision to hire an association management firm to handle all administration requirements. Effective March 1, 2009, **Strauss Event & Association Management** joined our team. **Martin Strauss** is our new Executive Director and **Kirsten Parker** our Executive Assistant. Please make note of the additional changes:

New address: 386 Broadway, Suite 503
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3R6

Toll-free telephone: 1-877-926-8129

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Web site: www.prairieactionfoundation.ca



Martin Strauss

As a tri-provincial foundation, we are committed to ensuring that the reputation and work of Prairieaction Foundation is maintained and elevated in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We are confident that this change is a good fit for Prairieaction Foundation and that our donors and friends of the Foundation will agree. As always, we welcome your comments and feedback and invite you to share your thoughts with us. I am also a telephone call away and can be reached at **1-306-535-5607** or dianna.waffle@sasktel.net.

Have a safe and happy summer!

Dianna Waffle, *President*

Prairieaction Foundation ☘

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