RESOLVE news
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOR SOLUTIONS TO VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

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“Building the smallest democracies at the heart of society.”
The United Nations: The International Year of the Family, 1994

RESOLVE
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RESOLVE
news

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Resolving Child Sexual Assault: A Family Approach

by Billy Brodovsky, MSW, RSW

The Families Affected by Sexual Assault (FASA) program at New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families has been providing therapy services to families since 1985. The following will outline the type of service provided, how children and families are affected by sexual assault, and explore what factors are related to recovery for both the children and the family.

When a child discloses a sexual assault, the entire family experiences a crisis. Parents are unsure what to do or how to help their child. The FASA program is designed to address the crisis created by the disclosure and assist families and their children in recovering from the effects of sexual assault. It is important to note there is no wait list. Parents are contacted within 2 days of a referral to schedule an appointment. Barring scheduling difficulties, families are seen within a week or two. In order to be eligible for service the alleged offender must be living outside the family home, the disclosure must be recent (within the past year) and the person who has disclosed must be under 18 years of age. There is no fee.

The FASA program utilizes a systemic family therapy approach to provide treatment. The following assumptions organize our thinking about the people we work with and their situations.

✥ The sexual assault of a child affects all members of his/her family. The impact on each individual within the family varies.
✥ Parents are the best resource for their children.
✥ Children who are believed and supported by their parents/families are more likely to have a positive outcome.
✥ Sexual assault is something that happens to a person. It does not define their identity.
✥ Persons who have been sexually assaulted and their families can and do recover.

The FASA program meets with between 200 – 350 children and their families annually. The children consistently tell us, that prior to disclosing, they thought their parents would not believe them, blame them, be angry with them, or not be able to handle it. The vast majority of these same children are astonished when their parents do not react as they expected. Children and adolescents tell us that they feel a huge burden has been lifted. They have been told not to tell anyone. The secret is maintained by threats, bribes, and misinformation. Children often believe the assault was their fault, that they did something wrong, or should have been able to stop it. All worry about what their

Billy Brodovsky
Manitoba Community Profile: Marlene Bertrand

The staff at the Family Violence Prevention Program, Man. Dept. of Family Services and Housing

On January 27th, 2004, it was announced that Marlene Bertrand has been named to the Order of Canada in recognition of her work in family violence prevention and intervention. Marlene has been an innovator in the area of violence against women for two decades. From the grass roots shelter movement, to the development of the most extensive continuum of community-based services in the country, Marlene has always advocated for women and the agencies that serve them.

Marlene began this work in the early 1980s when she played an instrumental role in garnering funding and community support for a women’s shelter in Brandon, Manitoba. This at a time when domestic violence was regarded largely as a private trouble. Three years after operating the shelter in Brandon, Marlene assumed the position of Director at Osborne House in Winnipeg. While in this position, she implemented a strategic plan culminating in a new shelter facility, and broadening the shelter’s mandate to include outreach and preventative services. In 1988, Ms. Bertrand received the Woman of Distinction Community Services Award to commend her enduring commitment to helping families caught in the cycle of violence.

Since 1992, Marlene Bertrand has been the Director of the Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) of the Manitoba Department of Family Services and Housing. The Program provides policy and program direction as well as funding to 35 agencies across the province. The accomplishments of the FVPP under Marlene’s direction include: increasing funding to external agencies, increasing salaries and benefits for service providers, developing standards to ensure quality services, and working with the community to develop new services, such as children’s supervised access/exchange centres, couples counselling and a men’s resource centre. In addition, Marlene has forged meaningful relationships with other government departments and community groups to reduce service fragmentation and ensure that a continuum of services exists to support women in establishing lives independent of abuse. To acknowledge this work, Marlene was nominated by her peers and received the Manitoba Service Excellence Award for Leadership in 1999. In 2001, the Department of Economics (University of Manitoba) selected the FVPP to be profiled as one that is both well functioning and viewed positively by funded agencies.

Marlene has also been a member of numerous community boards and committees throughout her career. She is a longstanding board member of RESOLVE Manitoba and has been involved in two significant research projects with the centre, as a key consultant in the study of violence in the military and as the co-principal investigator of the upcoming longitudinal study of women in shelter. Ms. Bertrand was also one of three individuals appointed by the Government of Manitoba in 1998 to the committee responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Schulman report on domestic violence. At the national level, Marlene currently co-chairs the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Working Group on Family Violence, and consults with provinces across the country on the development of safe buildings and effective programming for women’s services.

As an expert in the area family violence, Ms. Bertrand has been invited to lead a number of international initiatives. Since 1998, she has worked with key representatives in St. Lucia to assist the country in coordinating a response to domestic violence and to develop a women’s shelter. More recently, she participated in similar work in Trinidad and Jalisco, Mexico.

The staff at the FVPP (Salena Brickey, Maureen Flaherty, Paulette Fortier, Jolyne Jolicoeur, Sharon Kuropatwa, Darlene Schindle, Yvonne Spyropoulos, Eleanor Stepaniuk and Shelley Turriff-Jonasson) would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Marlene Bertrand’s accomplishments and to congratulate her on receiving the Order of Canada. Marlene’s commitment to and understanding of the issue are inspiring to those of us who have the privilege to work with her, and to service providers and countless other women seeking strength and empowerment.
Raymond Currie: Over a Decade of Commitment to RESOLVE

by Jane Ursel

This past fall Raymond Currie completed his three year term as President of the Prairie Action Foundation, joining the ranks of two previous Presidents (Carolynne Boivin and Senator Sharon Carstairs) who, together, have altered the history of family violence research on the prairies. Raymond began his commitment to RESOLVE back in 1992 when the University of Manitoba became the site of one of five research Centres on family violence in Canada. For seven years, as Dean of Arts, he provided our province-based-Centre with the critical structural, financial and organizational support we needed in the early years. His sustained support was critical to our developing the organizational strength and momentum required to take on the much more ambitious goal of becoming a Prairie Research Network. Raymond joined PAF in 1999 right after his retirement as “my boss”, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Manitoba. He jokes about me becoming “his boss” as he works tirelessly to build and support the structure of our growing research network.

The accomplishments of the Foundation during his term as president are outstanding, including the successful completion of the $5 million fund raising campaign and the Strategic Planning Exercise which set the goals for the Foundation for the next five years. Raymond brings his long experience of university life and his remarkable insights on university culture and administration to the Foundation. He adds a wise academic voice to this creative partnership of universities, corporations and philanthropists which gives PAF a unique identity among Canadian Foundations. Raymond’s work on behalf of RESOLVE reflects his life long commitment to respect and equality for all members of our society, the first condition of which is life without violence and abuse.

While limitations of space do not permit me to enumerate the wide range of contributions Raymond has made to our community and our country, suffice it to say, that his commitment to RESOLVE and PAF are typical of a number of critical community organizations that Raymond so generously and joyfully gives his time. From all of us who have worked with Raymond, who have been “infected” by his energy and enthusiasm, inspired by his wisdom and generosity and entertained by his wit and good humour. Thank you.


“Raymond Currie cares deeply about all survivors of violence and abuse. He took over as PAF’s President in November of 2000, and soon after I joined the organization as Executive Director. For the next three years, we worked together to forward the goals of the Foundation. Little did I know that he would become more than supervisor, but a trusted mentor and friend as well. Organizations like Prairieaction Foundation are only as good as the people who work hard to guide them, and much of PAF’s success can be attributed to Raymond’s strong leadership during an important foundational phase. It has been my pleasure to work with him to support research solutions to violence and abuse, and delighted he is still with PAF as our very first Past President!” Lee Tunstall, Ph.D., Executive Director

“I’d like to thank Raymond for his support for research on family violence and abuse. From the very beginning, he supported the Manitoba Research Centre and later, as Vice-President and President of Prairieaction Foundation, he could always be counted on to put his shoulder to the wheel.” Margaret Newall, Chair
Helen McPhaden, in conjunction with the Stardale Women’s Group Inc. Foundation (a non-profit registered charity), has been instrumental in delivering support and psycho-educational intervention to women living in the Melfort and Northern Saskatchewan regions. Since its incorporation in 1997, the Stardale Women’s Group has been viewed as a learning and healing resource for women, many of whom are of Aboriginal ancestry and living in circumstances of abuse and/or poverty. The group’s work is grounded in a holistic philosophy and promotes traditional cultural healing perspectives.

Through her work, Helen has also developed the Stardale Model, which is a 14 week (5 days per week) intensive curriculum directed at women, based on a multi-disciplinary approach to self-development and healing. The curriculum addresses issues such as life skills, literacy development, group dynamics, relationships, anger management, therapeutic art, and parenting. Helen continues to promote this model for delivery throughout the prairie provinces.

The Stardale Women’s Group has recently been awarded funding from the Status of Women Canada for a project entitled: Defining the Future: Embracing our Girls. This project is designed to assess the experiences and service needs of female youth in Melfort, Saskatchewan, many of whom may be considered ‘at risk’. Results emerging from this project will be used to create an action plan intended to assist concerned citizens and human service providers in their efforts to develop and mobilize resources to meet the needs of the young women in their community.

“Wholeness is not a quality of the mind but an aspect of the spirit. That wholeness is a unique presence that is within you - it has only to be rediscovered”

Hi there! My name is Rebecca Harriman, and I am the new research assistant at RESOLVE Saskatchewan. I am in my fifth year of university at the University of Saskatchewan. I am currently completing my honours undergraduate degree in psychology, hoping to be finished this April. As part of my degree, I am completing an honours thesis entitled “Sexually Explicit Material and Its Implications for the Observer: Correlates in a Canadian University.” I am currently applying to a number of different graduate schools, specializing in either Applied Social or Clinical psychology. I have worked at RESOLVE since mid-October, and I have really enjoyed seeing how research can be applied within the community. I was able to help out with the research conference in November, and it was great meeting community members and people from RESOLVE Manitoba and RESOLVE Alberta. Thank you for those who have made me feel welcome, and I look forward to working with you all in the future.
We at RESOLVE Alberta were greatly saddened to learn of Betty (Elizabeth) Thomlinson’s struggle with cancer since last fall and of her death several weeks ago on March 31st. A native Manitoban, Betty grew up in rural Manitoba and nursed in communities such as Norway House and McCreary. As a member of the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Manitoba, Betty was involved with RESOLVE in the early days when the centre was the Manitoba Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women as a member of the centre’s Steering Committee. With colleagues Nellie Erickson, Mabel Cook and R. Packo, Betty was the principle investigator in a study determining the resources used by victims of abuse and family violence in northern Manitoba in seven First Nations communities. The research results were published as book chapters in several edited books, notably, “No Place for Violence: Canadian Aboriginal Alternatives”, edited by Jocelyn Proulx and Sharon Perrault, one of the Fernwood/RESOLVE Hurting and Healing series.

Betty completed her PhD in nursing from the University of Minnesota in 2000. By then she had joined the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary and connected with the RESOLVE Alberta office. Betty was an active and key member of two RESOLVE projects. The first was the SSHRC-funded CURA that is examining the justice and community response to domestic violence across the prairies. Betty was a member of the qualitative team that is currently analyzing data on over 150 interviews with women whose partners were involved with the justice system because of domestic abuse. Her sub-team was focusing on the health and mental health issues of both the men and women. She was even more central in the second project, the Impact of Premenstrual Syndrome on Mothering. This study involved conducting interview with over 40 women who experience difficult premenstrual symptoms, their reflections on how this affects parenting their children and what resources they have found helpful. Betty took the lead in writing several funding proposals, adding a rural component.

Betty was critical to RESOLVE Alberta, both in her role as Acting Academic Research Coordinator from July 2002 to June 2003 and as an active and valued member of several RESOLVE research projects and the Steering Committee. Apart from her many contributions as a researcher, with her keen sense of fun and solid strength, Betty was a joy to work with. Her presence is infused into much of RESOLVE’s work. We miss her terribly.

Cheryl’s departure is a happy move with new challenges and a new position. Cheryl Foulkes was RESOLVE Alberta’s Community Research Development Coordinator for almost one and a half years. During that time she worked closely with Betty Thomlinson, who was the Acting Academic Research Coordinator. With Betty, Cheryl was responsible for developing the RESOLVE website (which is now operational. See: www.ucalgary.ca/resolve/). She handled the many administrative tasks of the RESOLVE Alberta office, including setting up the Steering Committee meetings, payroll and linking community to researchers. She became involved in several RESOLVE projects including the PMS and Mothering research and the 10-year Evaluation of the Court Preparation program. Cheryl left RESOLVE to take a social work position with Foothills Hospital, a job that will utilize her clinical social work skills. We wish her all the best!
Resolving Child Sexual Assault: A Family Approach

...(cont’d from page 1)

Most people underestimate the importance of believing and supporting their child. Telling them they are loved, that it was not their fault and that they are believed is one of the most important actions a parent can take. Most parents have already taken this step before reaching our offices, but have not recognized that they have already helped their child. We also inform people about the different ways individuals may react to the assault or disclosure. Finding out that others have felt or acted in similar ways decreases anxiety about themselves and/or their children. It makes sense to people that no one is prepared to deal with sexual assault. When “symptoms” can be understood as coping responses, some of the helplessness and despair is further lifted. We have found that many people are misinformed about the long term effects of having been sexually assaulted. Some are concerned their child or their child’s sexuality is permanently affected, others are worried their child will become a sexual offender. Identifying the specific worry, exploring the source and providing information to reduce or eliminate the worry further contributes to both the child and the family’s recovery. The consistent message we receive is all of the above assists the people we work with to rediscover a sense of hope and the beginning of a belief that their child and they themselves with get past the trauma that did occur.

The above describes the beginning of treatment. Depending on the circumstances, families attend the FASA program from 1 – 2 sessions, to months of treatment. Most often we meet with the entire family. Portions of a session are sometimes used to meet with the child or the parent(s) individually. Treatment is focused on resolving the specific behaviors, affective states and problems the assault has created. Each family’s and child’s course of treatment is specific to their circumstances yet similarities exist. What is perhaps unique to the FASA program is we seek resolution for all family members. Traumas can be resolved, and people can move on with their lives. Assisting parents and their children in re-establishing the relationship they had prior to the assault can create a sense of hope and progress. This re-establishment of relationship allows the natural healing processes of the family to operate, as they should.

parent’s reaction will be. For many the fear or worry about their parents’ reactions has been a bigger problem and burden than the actual assault.

Where the child experiences relief as a result of disclosure, for the parents it is likened to a bomb exploding that throws everything they have known and trusted into disarray. For many families their view of the world has been shattered. Most had taken steps to protect and educate their children. Despite their efforts their child was harmed. More often than not, the child or the family knows the offender. When it has been a close and trusted relationship the sense of betrayal can be substantial. Regardless of the nature of the relationship with the offender, the parents we have met with identify common themes that they struggle with, oscillating between anger, helplessness, self-blame and guilt. They experience what they describe as a feeling of rage typically out of character for themselves and find themselves contemplating acts of violence in vivid detail. The helplessness comes from not knowing what to do. Parents are often afraid to talk to their child fearing they will make things worse. Not having recognized that their child had been hurt further contributes to their sense of incompetence. They blame themselves and feel guilty for not noticing or knowing. In hindsight some realize there were signs, but they had not picked up on them. When the child has disclosed to someone else, parents are further troubled that their child did not feel that they could come to them. Just like their children, parents blame themselves for the assault. One last issue for parents occurs when parents have their own history of abuse. Their child’s assault touches on their own trauma. When this occurs parents can project their own experience and perceptions onto the child. Assuming they know how their child feels and will feel becomes an obstacle to being able to understand and validate their child’s experience.

One can appreciate how emotionally intense the situation becomes for everyone in the family and how easily despair and hopelessness takes over. Yet children, parents and families do recover and move on with their lives. We have found providing factual information and educating people about sexual assault begins the recovery process.
Announcements

Upcoming Book Release

**Within our Reach: Preventing Abuse across the Lifespan** edited by Christine A. Ateah and Janet Mirwaldt is the fifth in the Hurting and Healing Series of books co-published by RESOLVE and Fernwood Publishing. The book launch will be held at McNally Robinson Booksellers (Grant Park Shopping Centre) in Winnipeg on May 27th at 7:00 p.m.

*Within our Reach* presents a collection of work by Canadian writers and is directed at undergraduate and college students, community practitioners and the general public. The purpose of this volume is to examine the issues associated with violence and abuse across the lifespan and review programs, practices and policies that have been developed to address these issues.

It is available at McNally Robinson Booksellers.

To order *Within our Reach* and our other publications see our website at: [http://www.umanitoba.ca/resolve](http://www.umanitoba.ca/resolve)

- No Place for Violence: Canadian Aboriginal Alternatives
- Pieces of a Puzzle: Perspectives on Child Sexual Abuse
- Reclaiming Self: Issues and Resources for Women Abused by Intimate Partners
- Being Heard: The Experiences of Young Women in Prostitution

Conferences

**June 6 - 9, 2004** 4th Annual IAFMHS (International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services) Conference, Stockholm, Sweden. For more information, please contact: Tracey Moropito, Conference Coordinator by phone: +1.604.669.7055; fax: +1.604.669.7054; e-mail: info@iafmhs.org; website: [www.iafmhs.org](http://www.iafmhs.org)

**July 11 - 14, 2004** Victimization of Children and Youth: An International Research Conference. Family Research Laboratory and Crimes Against Children Research Centre. Sheraton Harborside Hotel and Conference Center, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. For more information, please phone: 603.862.0767; fax: 603.862.1122; e-mail: sarahg@cisunix.unh.edu; or visit our website: [http://www.unh.edu/rrl](http://www.unh.edu/rrl)

**November 12 - 14, 2004** Childcare and Early Learning Conference. Sponsored by the Canadian Council on Social Development. More information will be posted on CCSD website at [WWW.CCSD.CA](http://www.ccds.ca) as it becomes available. If you have any questions, please contact Golden Planners Inc. at 613.241.9333, by fax at 613.565.2173, or by e-mail at info@goldenplanners.com
Prairieaction Foundation celebrates as Margaret Newall receives Kroeger College Award for Citizenship and Community Affairs from Carlton University

This past February, PAF Board Chair Margaret Newall received The Arthur Kroeger Award for citizenship and Community Affairs in recognition of her pioneering work for supporting research solutions to violence and abuse. Sponsored by Microsoft Canada, this honour is given to an organization or an individual who has shown: (a) creativity, persistence and overall leadership in demonstrating the value of local initiatives in dealing effectively with a problem or challenge and (b) whose research or activities have expanded understanding and awareness of the importance of good citizenship and community. Congratulations, Margaret!

Prairieaction Foundation becomes an Agency of Promise

Margaret, as a member of the Premier’s Council of Alberta’s Promise, has been instrumental in Prairieaction Foundation’s involvement as an Agency of Promise. Alberta’s Promise is a movement to facilitate partnerships between communities, businesses, service clubs, foundations and agencies so that they can better work together to direct more resources to benefit our children and youth. On April 2nd, 2004 Peggy Gray and Ora Zabloski were proud recipients, on behalf of Prairieaction Foundation, of an Alberta’s Promise “red wagon”, marking our commitment as an Agency of Promise.

RESOLVE Manitoba
~ Jane Ursel ~
Director (Academic)

RESOLVE Saskatchewan
~ Dr. Stephanie Martin ~
Academic Research Coordinator

RESOLVE Alberta
~ Dr. Leslie Jutty ~
Academic Research Coordinator
~ Cheryl Foulkes ~
Community Research Development Coordinator

Margaret Newall