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

Agreement# 40063171

New Staff Provides Support to Kids



by Cheryl Fraehlich

On July 11, 2016 a new staff member joined the Victim Services branch of Manitoba Justice. Going to work complete with business cards and a uniform, this highly trained staff member quickly settled into her duties. Welcoming new staff to Manitoba



Her handler is **Vivian Bott**, who works in the Child Victim Unit of Victim Services. In addition to working together, Milan also resides with Vivian, who describes her as a very calm, soulful dog with a wonderful, gentle temperament.

Justice may not be particularly remarkable, but a unique twist was certainly added when the new staff member was only three years old, weighed just under 60 pounds - and was a black Labrador retriever named **Milan**. Milan is Manitoba's only PADS Intervention Canine and is part of the team of Victim Services staff who assist victims of crime as their case is processed through the criminal justice system.

Milan came to Manitoba from British Columbia where she was bred and trained by Pacific Assistance Dog Society (PADS), Canada's first fully accredited Assistance Dog International school. Milan started her rigorous instruction at two months of age and is extremely well disciplined and obedient.

Vivian's job involves working with children who need to testify in court. She contacts the parents/guardians and then works with the family to provide support and to help prepare the children to attend court. Vivian learned about the first intervention dog placed with Victim Services in British Columbia

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Examining the Experience and Needs of Yazidi Refugees



by Lori Wilkinson

Who are the Yazidi?

In 2017, Canada was to resettle over 1,200 survivors of Daesh (IS militants). Almost all of them (81%) are Yazidi women and children and mostly from Northeastern Iraq near Kirkuk and Erbil. What makes this group significantly different from many of the previous refugee arrivals is the degree of physical, mental and emotional health issues, exacerbated by the fact that they are among the most marginalized and tormented ethnic minorities on the planet. They have been victims of persecution for centuries, mainly due to the mistaken belief that the major deity in their religion, Melek Taus (the Peacock Angel), is actually Satan. Perpetuation of this false belief has meant that generations of Yazidis have faced centuries of marginalization, forced conversions, and persecution. Their religion, culture and way of life is not well understood.

Today, the best estimates suggest that there are between 400,000 and 700,000 Yazidi still alive, mainly living on the border of Iraq and Iran. Because of deepening persecution, particularly as the result of the 74th genocide led

by Daesh and their followers, many have fled to nearby countries that include Syria, Turkey, Georgia and Armenia. Germany hosts the largest numbers of Yazidi refugees, followed by Canada and the United States. Now that they are geographically dispersed, their health and continuity are in jeopardy because they value endogamy. Those who marry out of the Yazidi community are considered excommunicated. Thus, the community needs to be together to thrive and grow. This explains their reluctance to relocate, even under dire conditions, until very recently.

The Project

Immigration Research West, under the direction of **Lori Wilkinson**, will conduct a 2.5 year study of the resettlement experiences of the Yazidis destined to Canada. The majority of Yazidi coming to Canada

are women and their families, as many of the men and teen males have been captured or killed. Because the majority are government-sponsored refugees, they will be resettled primarily in Calgary and Winnipeg, with smaller numbers destined to Toronto and London. The purpose of the project is to gather information about the settlement needs of the Yazidi, particularly in relation to their language acquisition (preliminary estimates suggest that fewer than 5% can speak French or English upon arrival), access to various settlement and mental health services and housing. There are two data collection strategies that include focus groups followed by in-depth interviews with participants. An advisory team that consists of experts in the settlement organizations, mental health services and academics will lead all aspects of the project.



The Outcome

Among the various outcomes for this project, the most important involves the collection of data to assist settlement services organizations provide programs to assist this group in their resettlement and integration in Canada. The Yazidi are a very unique group. Not only are they victimized by

centuries of persecution, but the generations of marginalization in Iraq has meant that many have little or no education, which will make it more difficult to acquire a new language and jobs here in Canada. Among refugees, they are some of the most traumatized, according to initial reports from various settlement service agencies. This is also a problem because provinces like Manitoba only offer ten, one-hour sessions with a trained psychologist, hardly enough time to deal with the simplest of mental health concerns. The hope is to collect information that will assist support agencies to identify gaps in programming and services that will in turn allow agencies to justify their requests for additional funding, particularly to language and mental health programs for newcomers, which have all recently experienced drastic funding cuts.



Manitoba Update



by Jane Ursel

Holiday Celebrations



As we return to work in the New Year some of us are still recovering from our holiday celebrations. Imagine throwing a party at which 2,500 slices of pizza, 4,300 litres of juice and 3,100 fruit snacks were consumed. That is the usual fare for the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata **24-hour Children's New Year's Eve Party**. I had the pleasure of attending the party this year and I can say that it should be in the Guinness Book of World Records! For more than a decade, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre has successfully hosted this event for children and youth who predominantly reside in Winnipeg's North

end. From 10 a.m. on December 31, 2017, to 10 a.m. on January 1, 2018, over 300 children and youth attended the party, celebrated and ate their way into the New Year. This party provided a safe, supervised place to ring in the New Year, with time to play, connect with friends, and celebrate all the excitement that 2018 has in store. Youth volunteer mentors with their energy and enthusiasm were a key component of the 'party-on' event. These youth were extremely well organized and it was impressive to observe their gentle, caring attention to the younger children. The 24-hour celebration is supported by a GoFundMe campaign, and volunteers from Ma Mawi's youth group and from the community in general. The name Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata translates from Ojibway into the phrase, "we all work together to help one another". This party is a wonderful example of the founding principle of Ma Mawi. ✂

Meet Our Steering Committee Member: **Lori Wilkinson**

Lori Wilkinson is an internationally renowned researcher in the field of immigration and refugee policy. She is a Professor in the Department of Sociology, the Director of Immigration Research West at the University of Manitoba and editor of the Journal of International Migration and Integration. Despite her heavy research and administrative commitments, Lori has been a member of our Steering Committee for the past ten years and shares her valuable insight and ideas. Those who attended our recent Research Day may have heard her speak on the panel she organized on *Trauma and the Refugee Experience*. Her current work examines the multiple traumas of refugees fleeing war-torn countries, and she travels around the world to countries that are trying to cope with growing numbers of refugees. Lori has been a visiting fellow at the Refugee Study Centre, University of Oxford, UK and a visiting professor at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India. She was recently awarded a 1.2 million dollar grant from the Federal government to conduct a two-and-a-half-year study of the resettlement experiences of refugees in Canada (see Page 2 for more detail). Lori is particularly concerned with the plight of Yazidi refugees who fled the genocide of Daesh (IS militants), many of whom have been settled in Canada. Lori is committed to addressing social injustice and inequality, particularly among marginalized and racialized groups. ✂



Lori Wilkinson

Saskatchewan Update



Introducing Our Steering Committee Member: **Kerrie Isaac**

Kerrie Isaac is the Executive Director of the Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan (SASS), a non-profit organization based in Regina, SK. This organization is a multi-funded agency that provides leadership on matters and issues that surround sexual violence in Saskatchewan. SASS is primarily a provincial umbrella organization for ten member agencies that provide direct service to survivors of sexual assault. SASS also supports non-member agencies and communities that seek to increase services to survivors and reduce sexual violence through identification and determination of solutions to current gaps in service, education and policies.

With ten years of experience working in child development and education in Saskatchewan, Kerrie is an energetic leader with a passion for supporting individuals through education, networking, and collaborative opportunities to affect social change. She has facilitated courses at Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Regina for the Early Childhood Education Department. Kerrie is also passionate about the prevention of sexual violence and supporting children and youth in developing respectful and healthy relationships.

She started with SASS in 2016. Since then Kerrie has successfully applied and received funding for two major projects—*Saskatchewan First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training*, and the *Saskatchewan Sexual Violence Action Plan*.

The First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training™ is a training program delivered to service providers and community members from across the province. This training is intended to build the capacity of professionals, paraprofessionals and community members to assess and respond effectively to disclosures of sexual assault and sexual abuse. Survivors



who receive safe and supportive responses to disclosures of sexual violence are more likely to seek help from medical and counselling services and/or report to police. First Responder to Sexual Assault and Abuse Training™ is a comprehensive training program, inclusive of the full continuum of sexual violence and across the lifespan.

The Saskatchewan Sexual Violence Action Plan is a three-year project, where community and government leaders are working collaboratively to develop a sexual violence action plan for the province of Saskatchewan. The Sexual Violence Action Plan will reflect the needs of all sexual violence survivors and includes strategies to support strong community and government leadership, effective prevention, outreach and intervention.

The vision of the Saskatchewan Sexual Violence Action Plan is that every Saskatchewan citizen has access to a full continuum of sexual violence services and supports across their lifespan. Services must be well resourced, based on evidence based best practice and available in all communities across the province.

At this time Kerrie is developing a SASS Annual Leadership Forum for service providers and community membership (in regard to sexual violence in the province). SASS member agencies have identified a lack of educational resources for service providers as a critical need in their communities. Currently, there are no specialized learning modules or training opportunities in Saskatchewan that service providers and community members can attend so as to keep abreast of current knowledge and best practices in the field of sexual violence. The SASS Annual Leadership Forum will establish an annual specialized education forum for service providers and community members. ✿

Alberta Update: the Ethno-Culturally Diverse Communities Committee



by Priya Kharat

Formed in 2013 by the Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, the Ethno-Culturally Diverse Communities Committee (ECDC) is a non-partisan working group and is comprised of stakeholders from the city of Calgary. ECDC aims to address the prevalence of domestic violence among diverse communities by educating, advocating and creating awareness on the crucial need to adopt culturally appropriate strategies that recognize the unique needs of ethno-culturally diverse communities, including immigrants and visible minorities. Our mission is to act as a catalyst for initiating collaborative ethno-cultural networks to help communities become free of domestic violence.

As relevant literature indicates, many members of ethno-cultural communities hesitate to access prevalent domestic violence services and prefer to reach out to their natural available supports. In their attempt to address the uniqueness of these communities, the ECDC engaged in a community-wide consultation to understand current gaps in services, and concerns and challenges to address domestic violence among the ethno-cultural communities. Results included development of a response that was proactive, and not reactive, in terms of services and treatment.

Community members stated that a collaborative model would encourage a process for identifying community champions for training—involving community leaders in relevant program planning, training, and liaising with religious leaders, thereby acknowledging the importance of community members. Engaging the community in creative initiatives to raising awareness and initiating dialogue around meaning and impact of domestic violence meant encouraging community members to support survivors of violence that would address the concern of 'othering'. This would also enable building healthy relationships, including aid in opening dialogue on mental health, initiating cultural connectivity—including educating service providers on different cultural practices that could be misunderstood—and the loss of identity and stressors of role reversals experienced by some individuals due to immigrating to a new country. The process could be a catalyst for creating a culture of respect and aid in connecting newcomers—including immigrants

and refugees to available support services—and community dialogues leading to an increased awareness, education and impact isolation.

Despite the prevailing services, community members stated that some of the concerns to acknowledging the prevalence of domestic violence among ethno-cultural communities were that it was strange to talk about domestic violence in a new country; difficulty to explain one's situation due to lack of cross-cultural awareness; prevailing apathy; fear of disbelief; fear of victim blaming; challenges of spoken languages; dynamics of multi-generational conflict—a concept difficult to explain; fear of misinterpretation; fear of being judged; financial insecurity; fear of security to

self and children; fear of abandonment; fear of community ostracism; impact of culture and faith; lack of awareness on meaning of domestic violence, and victim; fear of effects of separation on children; expensive legal system; hope of inculcating a change in the perpetrator; fear of losing extended family; confusion and resulting helplessness on meaning of parenting in Canada; fear of the system including lack of trust; fear of the existing business model of practice followed by community organizations;

fear of deportation; fear and confusion of the current emergency response system; fear of a system that supports an option of leaving and breaking family; fear due to lack of open dialogue between community and emergency; and fearing the power awarded to services including children's services leading to misunderstanding.

To address the above a collaborative model would encourage information sessions for families on nuances of the school system—such as parent-teacher interviews—initiate parenting workshops, and have safe networks to discuss concerns. Subsequently, a proactive model would also include advocating for dialogue on the meaning and impact of domestic violence with students, liaising with embassies prior to individuals arriving to Canada and encouraging use of mainstream media to increase awareness. Towards the above, the ECDC is advocating for an ethno-cultural model to address domestic violence among the ethno-cultural communities. ❁



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in 2010, and was very interested in the possibility of becoming a handler and having a dog placed with Victim Services in Manitoba. Approval had to be obtained from Manitoba Justice stakeholders before an application could be submitted to PADS and in August 2015 Vivian applied to be a handler. In June 2016 she received a call that told her a dog was available from PADS. After this call Vivian had to go to the PADS facility in Burnaby for a one week training course on how to handle Milan and how to maintain her training. Once Vivian's training was complete, a manger from PADS came to Winnipeg to make sure that Vivian's home and the settings where Milan was to work would be appropriate.

Milan's job is to provide additional support to children in pre-court meetings and in court. She brings her calm and gentle temperament to these encounters and, unlike other Victim Services staff, she can be a source of physical comfort to children as they pet and hug her. Milan attends court with the children and sits at their feet and sits with them in the hall during court breaks; she is available and accessible to children throughout the whole day. Her calmness contributes to her ability to sit patiently for hours if necessary.

When asked about how Milan has been received, Vivian explains that the response has been phenomenal. She says that when Milan comes into the room the entire atmosphere changes and that this is clearly visible on all faces. Milan reduces the stress that is part of what is otherwise a very stressful and intimidating process. Her presence helps to build relationships between staff and children and families and she is an immense source of comfort to children. At the time of this writing, Milan has attended numerous pre-court meetings and has attended court 16 times. In addition to her tremendous value to children and families, Milan is a morale booster for



all staff of Manitoba Justice. Quite simply, she puts a smile on people's faces.

Funding for Milan comes from the Victim Services allotment of the Criminal Property Forfeiture Fund. This pays for her food, toys, vet bills and anything else that Milan might require. Although Milan is employed by Manitoba Justice, PADS retains her ownership. Every two years a PADS official will come to Winnipeg to complete a

public access test, to assess Vivian and Milan as a team and to ensure that Milan maintains her training.

When Milan is "off duty" she loves to play. During the warmer months she enjoys going

to the dog park to run around and roll in the grass. She also enjoys swimming and play dates with other dogs. Appropriate for her new home in Manitoba, Milan loves the snow—rolling and diving in it and eating it. She

knows she is not allowed to play when her vest is on, but when the vest comes off, Vivian describes Milan as a "lovable, sweet, goofball". Although they are together virtually all of the time, Vivian is clearly well suited to

be Milan's handler and never tires of being with this special dog who contributes so much support to the children with whom she works. Vivian states, "I literally have the best job in Manitoba. Being able to work with Milan and see her impact on clients is the greatest thing."

To learn more about Milan visit her Facebook page at *PADS Intervention K9 Milan* www.facebook.com/MilanPADS/. 🌸



Announcements, Conferences and Events



March 8, 2018 - *International Women's Day: #PressforProgress*. Now, more than ever, there's a strong call-to-action to press forward and progress gender parity. There's a strong call to #PressforProgress motivating and uniting friends, colleagues and whole communities to think, act and be gender inclusive. For more information refer to www.internationalwomensday.com. Check event listings in your area.

March 19 – 22, 2018 - *34th Annual International Symposium on Child Abuse*, in Huntsville, Alabama, USA, presented by the National Children's Advocacy Center. This symposium provides expert training and numerous networking opportunities to professionals in the child maltreatment field, and is one of the few conferences that addresses all aspects of child maltreatment, including but not limited to physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to violence, poly-victimization, exploitation, intervention, trafficking, and prevention. For more information refer to www.nationalcac.org/symposium-about.

March 20 – 23, 2018 - *Canadian Domestic Violence Conference 5 (CDVC5)* at the Nova Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia. The CDVC5 has been specifically designed to foster knowledge in bringing about effective interventions and conversations with women, men and children dealing with domestic violence in various professional contexts. While primarily emphasizing men's violence against women, this conference will also focus conversations on the margins of the field, such as violence in same-sex relationships; violence with people with disabilities; in Aboriginal relationships; first generation immigrant relationships; and straight women's perpetration of abuse. To address the diversity among women, the conference will explore conversations with women who want to leave, women who are ambivalent about their relationships and women who know they want to stay. This broad range of discussions will include individual, couple, family and group conversations. CDVC5 will highlight trailblazing community initiatives designed to challenge social determinants of domestic violence. For more information refer to canadiandomesticviolenceconference.org.

April 3 – 5, 2018 - *International Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Gender Bias* at the Hilton Chicago, in Chicago, IL, USA. This annual conference focuses on sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, human trafficking and elder abuse. The three-day conference highlights promising practices and emerging issues to effectively respond to these crimes in all of our communities. For more information refer to www.evawintl.org/conferences.aspx.

April 16 – 19, 2018 - *Conference on Crimes Against Women* in Dallas, Texas. The goal of the Conference is to provide practical instruction, using current information, the newest ideas and most successful intervention strategies, to those professionals responsible for combating the many and varied forms of crimes against women. This conference is conducted for the sole purpose of providing training to only those people employed by governmental or non-profit agencies in the fields of law enforcement, prosecution, social work, victim's advocacy, therapy, probation/parole, campus safety and medicine who work directly with victims of crime. For more information refer to www.conferencecaw.org.

June 13 – 15, 2018 - *Shelters of the Future: A National Conversation* in Ottawa, Ontario, at the University of Ottawa and the Shaw Centre. Presented by Women's Shelters Canada—Shelters and Transition Houses United to End Violence Against Women—is hosting its first national conference! This will be a unique opportunity for shelter and transition house (TH) workers to share and learn from their peers. This is also a chance for partners, policy makers, researchers, activists, and others to engage with the shelter sector. The conference will offer practical opportunities for learning, knowledge sharing, and collaboration via workshops, panel presentations, and forum discussions. **Early-bird prices are available until April 15, 2018.** For more information refer to www.endvaw.ca/nc2018/.



Prairieaction
FOUNDATION

We're finding solutions to protect women and children from violence and abuse!

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2017 Tri-Provincial Grants Recipients

Prairieaction Foundation (PAF) is pleased to announce the recipients of our 2017 Tri-Provincial Grants! Congratulations to **Suhad Bisharat**, Executive Director of Laurel Centre, Inc., **Dr. Jane Ursel**, *Acting Director*, and **Dr. Cheryl Fraehlich**, *Research Associate*, both of the RESOLVE network – University of Manitoba, who are successful grant recipients in the research of men who are victims of intimate partner violence. Congratulations also to **Crystal Giesbrecht**, Director of Research and Communications of the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan (PATHS) and to **Anahit Falihi**, PhD Candidate (University of Saskatchewan), **Dr. Ailsa Watkinson** (University of Regina), **Dr. Daniel Kikulwe** (University of Regina), **Dr. Michael Baffoe** (University of Manitoba), and **Dr. David Este** (University of Calgary) who are successful grant recipients in the exploration and understanding of the needs of newcomers who experience intimate partner violence. As these are Tri-Provincial Grants, research will span all three prairie provinces. The PAF Board is excited to learn about the findings of this very important work and how it may inform the development of solutions and support for victims of intimate partner violence.

PAF is committed to funding research that leads to community awareness and solutions to violence and abuse. We are specifically interested in research that engages in solution focused outcomes that will work toward keeping our communities safer. Our next call for research is **May 1, 2018**. Details outlining the criteria and the application for funding can be found on our website at www.prairieaction.ca. ☘

RESOLVE Manitoba

~ Dr. Jane Ursel ~
Director (RESOLVE)

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