

WOMEN

making waves

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WOMEN

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Women Making Waves is published by **Battered Women’s Support Services**, a non-profit organization supporting women facing abuse and violence.

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Unique Programming

“meeting women where they are at”



By **Angela Marie MacDougall**
BWSS Executive Director

We have dedicated this issue of our newsletter to acknowledge our vibrant and rich programs specifically suited for Aboriginal and Immigrant women. Aboriginal women and Immigrant women represent women facing complex intersection of marginalization as they struggle to survive the effects of violence and abuse. At BWSS we are committed to meeting women where they are at, to meet their needs, to assist women through crisis, beyond mere survival to thrive in their families and their communities.

Aboriginal women as the first people of this land now known as Canada, are significantly disadvantaged due to the historic and ongoing implementation of colonization, as well as, staggering statistics of violence in intimate relationship. Immigrant and refugee women struggle to find a way of being on this land while experiencing

language barriers, discrimination, tentative immigration status and isolation in addition to violence and abuse by their intimate partners.

It is from this knowledge and that analysis that BWSS provides specialized services for Aboriginal women and immigrant or refugee women from numerous places around the world. “Meeting women where they are at” forms the basis from which our services grow. We are committed to being flexible and proactive in all areas of our work. Through these women-centred specialized programs we are offering a unique combination of cultural, legal, political, emotional and educational services.

The primary funder of BWSS Legal Advocacy Program, The Law Foundation of BC recently conducted a funding strategies review evaluating legal advocacy services at BWSS. The report highlighted the success of the program. The report also highlighted, as well as, confirmed

that over 50% of women who see our legal advocate identify as immigrant or refugee.

BWSS Aboriginal Women’s Program is also meeting women where they are at, in fact 14% of women accessing BWSS identify as Aboriginal, Native, Métis or Indian. The program meets women where they are at through gender, culture, history and tradition.

More than cross cultural understanding or working with diversity, BWSS programming is feminist anti-oppression work that encourages each woman to be all of who she wants to be in spite of all the barriers and forces that are designed to keep her down. Through our advocacy and our activism we are holding systems and institutions accountable and seeking systemic change. We are proud of our programming, proud of our staff and our volunteers and most proud of the impact we see our work making in the lives of women most disadvantaged. [bwss]



BWSS Aboriginal Women's Program attends The 7th World Indigenous Women & Wellness Conference

By Mona
BWSS First Nation's Women's Crisis Support Worker

This conference will address the growing patterns of violence within Indigenous families and communities. Success stories will be shared by Indigenous communities who have learned effective strategies to promote wellness in their home environment and communities. The issues of violence and relationships will be shared. Particular emphasis will be on hearing the voice of Youth and embracing the Elders to promote healthier and positive futures for Indigenous communities. The conference will also provide information, resources and networking opportunities for Indigenous people. **BWSS will have an information table at the conference.**

Preventing Violence Against Women Connecting with the Community

By Samantha
BWSS Stopping The Violence
Counsellor

April 23rd until the 29th, 2006 was nationally declared "Prevention of Violence Against Women Week" with the goals of increasing public awareness of the issue of violence against women and initiating preventative action. In recognition of the Week and in honor to all women and our community, BWSS went out to the streets!

For two days teams of women, volunteers and workers, hit the Commercial Drive area with balloons and pamphlets in hand. Starting from My Sister's Closet/

The Outlet, women walked the street handing out flyers with suggestions on how any one of us in our everyday life can take action in the prevention of violence against women. Women spoke with many community members about the issue and its realities, what BWSS offers women, and how they, the community, can support the work of BWSS. The reactions and feedback from the community were positive – appreciating BWSS for reaching out and grateful for the support, advocacy and education BWSS provides women dealing with violence.

*BWSS was out there...
strong and proud...
fully committed to the
elimination of violence
against women.*

BWSS Aboriginal Women's Program UPDATE

BWSS Aboriginal Women's Program staff, volunteers, community members and leadership team recently met to discuss the ongoing development of the Aboriginal Women's Program at BWSS.

In upcoming months, BWSS Aboriginal Women's Program will be focusing on developing strong partnering relationships with collateral women's organizations with Aboriginal specific programming. Through these partnerships we want to increase access for women to gain culturally relevant support and information and to participate in cultural practices and traditions. For some time now Aboriginal women advocates and frontline workers have wanted to hold a sweatlodge for Aboriginal women. BWSS Aboriginal Women's Program staff are continuing that process and are partnering with other Aboriginal women to identify sites and an Elder to support the sweatlodge.

Currently, approximately 14% of women who access BWSS identify as Aboriginal.

Inside The Circle Residential School Survivor Group for Women completed in May. The group is designed to support residential school survivors, inter-generational school survivors and survivors of foster-care and/or adoption. Women who attend the group were enthusiastic participants seeking knowledge, support and were expressive.

The group was facilitated in a way to ensure the emotional and physical safety of each woman present. By creating a safe environment, we found that women were willing to engage in topics that were difficult for women to talk about. The group also focused on regaining traditional practices and learning about the roles and responsibilities as caregivers. The group was a place for women to gain information about the child protection system and the courts. Women commented on feeling more empowered and able to articulate their needs. Through receiving information women reported feeling more confident to address issues and advocate on their own behalf. Women also received information about Residential School settlement process.

Women identified that residential schools may be closed, but the impact on individuals first, second and third generation continues. Further, women identified that Aboriginal children continue to be raised outside of their family of origin through the child protection system. Women expressed much sadness, anger and rage at the ongoing impact of state run programs keeping Aboriginal people disconnected from culture and family. [bwss]

Latin American Women at BWSS

By Rosa
BWSS Manager of Direct Services and Programs

BWSS has implemented a Latin American Women's Program as a response to the growing demand from immigrant women accessing our services. This program provides a holistic approach and cultural understanding of the unique issues and needs of these women.

This is the first time that a women's organization in Vancouver is offering support, long-term counseling and other services to Latin American immigrant women in their own language and from a feminist, anti-oppression perspective. At BWSS, we acknowledge the struggles of Latin American immigrant women who are fleeing violence in their native country, who may have been tortured or undergone systemic violence and oppression, and have experienced the immigration process. BWSS understands that the women may not only have immediate needs but often may carry previous trauma that requires support to help them integrate into their new society.

A majority of Latin American women, like many women, have been raised to believe that the family should

be together regardless of the abuse suffered at the hands of their husbands or boyfriends. BWSS helps the women achieve freedom from violence, and allows them to work toward a family-centered future that may or may not include their male partner. We are also focused on helping the women act as the head of their family — raising children and teaching love, respect and freedom.

By accessing the Latin American Women's Program at BWSS, women become aware of their rights and they can get the support that they need to grow stronger. They learn that they have a voice and that their voice will be heard if they speak. At BWSS Latin American immigrant women learn that violence against women happens everywhere and not just in their homelands. BWSS encourages the women to connect with the larger community and to feel part of Canadian society while maintaining their unique cultural identity.

Through the Latin American women's Program, BWSS is committed to acknowledging unique cultural identities, validating our individual experiences as women, and achieving our goals in overcoming violence against women in all societies. [bwss]



By Olatz
Legal Advocate
Battered Women's Support Services

Immigrant and refugee women in Canada face many struggles. Struggles such as the immigration experience, language barriers, lack of knowledge around the system(s), compounded by the abuse they experienced in their lives, makes the need for legal advocacy even greater. The Legal Advocacy Program at Battered Women's Support Services provides information, support and advocacy to battered women navigating the immigration and family legal system. A big percentage of women accessing the legal advocacy program are immigrant and refugee women.

Too often, immigrant and refugee women "learn" about the system through their abusive partners. Abusive partners tend to use the system as a threat in order to control women, which make women even more vulnerable and more afraid to leave the relationship. The role of the legal advocacy program is to provide accurate information about the system and to help women identify the abuse they are experiencing, so women can make their own choices.

By practicing a feminist, anti-oppression analysis in the legal advocacy program, we are better able to understand immigrant and refugee women's unique struggles and needs, and thus, attempt to alleviate them. The Legal Advocacy Program provides information about the legal system combined with a thorough understanding of the relationship dynamics of abuse, which offer immigrant and refugee women a more holistic while sensitive approach.

At BWSS we are committed to continue observing and learning about the immigrant and refugee women as well as the trends of the legal system, in order to contribute to improve their lives. [bwss]

Complexities of the legal system for immigrant women

Two Poems in tribute

by Mahara Albrett

For C.J. and all native women

Sitting before me
your dark hair
a loose waterfall
over your left shoulder,
I watch as tears
arise from your centre
like pure water
from a spring.
You are remembering
your mother's words
calling you a whore.
When you sit before me
and say that you
are not beautiful,
I want to remind you
that you are a candle

still beaming Light
after all these years.
You are not what happened to you.
You are not
the lies you were told.
You are not
the murder that you committed
in self-defence.
You are not
the needles and the prostitution
that you used to do.
You are not
the violations that others
committed against
the beautiful child
that you were.

But you are
the soft small duckling
I saw walking on lotus leaves
this afternoon
and
the perfect
yellow lotus flower
beside her.
And you are
the bush flowers
I saw with deep purple centres
and delicate
mauve petals
like lace
blossoming
in the light.

for m.c.

the apricot circle
lays itself down
on the horizon
of this city of mountains meet ocean.
concrete curtains sometimes open
to reveal
cool sea air
green blue trees
white powder
of mountains
meet sky.
I am smiling sadly
as I sometimes do,
when this work takes
it's ironic turns
and you
are counting out
hundred dollar bills
on your hotel room bed
giving me the money
so that you won't kill yourself

smoking the white powder in your glass pipe.
your adopted father
smoked another kind of pipe
but he and your adopted mother
didn't know how
to bring their prayers into living
for too many years
after Residential School.
you say in a tone that is both frank
and embarrassed,
"my father was a white guy",
but I don't see it anywhere
except in your colour of skin
as you sit with the long limbed
gracefulness
of your people,
indian eyes glance
as if painted with brushstrokes
over fine cheekbones.
your clear forehead has tiny beads forming
with the fevered look

people have down here.
people driving by in their fast,
factory cars
wouldn't know that you read
world religions
and carl jung.
they don't know that you carry
a curled up copy of siddhartha
in your back pocket
or my now worn,
Writing Down the Bones.
they don't know how hard you try
to pry yourself away
from the craving in your brain
and slip because that white powder
tricks people's minds
into believing
they will die if they don't have it
instead of the truth
which is,
they will die if they do.

Mahara Albrett is from the Sleil Waututh Nation in North Vancouver and is an Aboriginal Wellness Counsellor as well as a Reiki Master. Mahara began writing poetry at age fifteen and was first published a year later. In her late teens and early twenties she was published in numerous anthologies and journals. These poems been previously published in Quill Canadian

Poetry Magazine. Mahara lives in her community in North Vancouver and has recently become a grandmother for the first time. Mahara is currently acting in a leadership role with BWSS Aboriginal Women's Program and co-facilitates BWSS Women Seeking Safety Support Groups for women with trauma and substance use issues.

*In honor of our mothers...
daughters...sisters...
granddaughters...
nieces...girlfriends...*

*In honor of our community...
our neighbors...our families...
our friends...ourselves...*

*I commit to taking one action
to aid in the prevention of
violence against women.*

Ways to Prevent Violence Against Women

- 1 **Tell** a girl child that she is fabulous
- 2 **Reach out** to a woman in your life/community who is isolated and demonstrate care for her
- 3 **Donate** clothing and/or shop at My Sister's Closet & The Outlet, social enterprises of BWSS, to support the services offered to women, located at **1029 Commercial Dr.** phone: **604-254-7471**
- 4 **When you see** an advertisement that exploits women call or e-mail the company and draw their attention to the objectification of women
- 5 **Men**, take on more family and household responsibilities. Women, take on less
- 6 **To support** liveable welfare rates to enable women to leave abusive relationships by writing to the Minister of Finance, Carole Taylor, at PO Box 9048, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria, BC, V8W 9E2 (no stamp necessary)
- 7 **Offer** free childminding to enable a mother to take time for herself
- 8 **Mentor** a young woman to be a leader in her community
- 9 **Host** a women's empowerment night where every activity is designed to strengthen self and spirit of women
- 10 **Verbally honor** and recognize Aboriginal women in your life and your community as the original women of this land
- 11 **Talk to a man** in your life who is using abuse and tell him to get help and stop

Battered Women's Support Services

Since opening our doors in 1979, over 117,000 women have accessed our services. We use a woman-centered, anti-oppression framework to provide support, education, and advocacy to women who have experienced abuse and work toward the elimination of violence against women in society.

Women, if you want to join us in our work to empower women and strengthen communities, please give us a call to find out more about volunteer opportunities. If you need

support for yourself or a friend, please do not hesitate to call us.

Make a difference to the 8000+ women facing abuse we serve every year! One of the best ways to show your support for our vision to end violence against women is by making a tax-free charitable donation to BWSS. Visit our website to make your gift today! Thank you for making a difference in the lives of women facing abuse and their children.

More than one million children in Canada have witnessed violence against their mother

One in three women in British Columbia has experienced violence

Our Intake/Crisis Line is **604-687-1867**

Monday to Friday 10am – 5pm
Wednesday 10am – 8pm.

www.bwss.org

Women Seeking Safety

By **Cait BWSS Stopping The Violence Counsellor**

Women Seeking Safety is a present-focused support group to help women attain safety from the effects of trauma and substance abuse. The WSS group is based from the book "Seeking Safety" by Lisa Najavitz. The title of this book, Seeking Safety, expresses the basic philosophy of our group. That is, when a woman has both active substance abuse and dealing with the effects of trauma such as abuse in intimate relationships, childhood sexual abuse and/adult sexual assault, the most urgent need is to establish safety.

The group is a first stage/entry level, 10 sessions, psycho educational approach that is rooted in feminism and empowerment. Some of the session topics include,



safe coping skills, finding compassion, understanding our anger, healthy relationships, detaching from emotional pain, intimacy and trust, and self-nurturing. Every session women make a recovery-based commitment for the coming week as well as a commitment to connect with a community resource/support before the next session.

Women Seeking Safety offers a framework that many women find helpful. It is like a new lens that honors what women have lived through, encourages empathy and self-understanding, and may increase their motivation to get clean and sober. It can be reassuring to realize that we may have abused substances as an attempt to cope with overwhelming emotional pain and to recognize how common this pattern is and that we are not alone.

“One is not born a woman, one becomes a woman” was the theme of the International seminar on Non Governmental Organizations and Women’s Empowerment: Indian and Canadian experiences. Ninu Kang, BWSS board member, recently attended this seminar along with many other activists from Canada and India which was held at Panjab University Centre for Canadian Studies in Chandigarh, India. The focus of the seminar was how women’s organizations in Canada are trying to address

cross-cultural issues urging multi-ethnic Canadian society to be culturally sensitive to the experiences of women with a particular focus on the specific challenges for women as they are forced to interface with the Indian community and the mainstream society in their struggle for empowerment.

strive to serve women from all walks of life while understanding and staying in their cultural, spiritual and historical experiences of each woman. “Working from the women’s experience is more than words. It is a spiritual journey of oneself that is imbedded in spiritual principles such as compassion, care and understanding” Ninu shared with participants at the seminar.

“Coming back home and carrying on with my life here I can’t help but to think how much I have gained from this experience”, says Ninu. “We work so hard to attain justice and equality for women in Canada and sometimes it feels like the mountain we can’t push. Being part of this seminar and listening to other women and men activist working tirelessly on issues such as female foeticide infanticide and sex selection made me think about the privileges I and many of us in Canada have and that humbled me”.

She was joined by many other activists from Canada and India. Presenting a keynote address at the seminar was Dr. Sunera Thobani of the Centre for Women’s Studies and Gender Research, at UBC who spoke about one of the failings the women rights movement that has within it racial inequalities deeply entrenched racial hierarchy. [bwss]

BWSS attends International Seminar on NGOs and Women’s Empowerment: Indian and Canadian Experiences’

**By Ninu Kang
BWSS Board
Member**

Ninu spoke at the conference about her specific experience bridging culture and gender both in her work as Director of Family Programs at MOSAIC and her participation as board member of BWSS as a feminist women’s organization and her life as a woman and mother. She shared the successes and challenges of organizations such as BWSS that continue to

Here is letter from a woman who tells her story of resilience and the empowerment through accessing Battered Women’s Support Services

Her name remains confidential and she wanted to share this with all of you...

Violence Against Women Takes a Terrible Toll on Survivors, but with support the survivor spirit is strong

Dearest Women of Battered Women’s Support Services

One year ago today I walked out of my Family Home. You were with me when I took my first steps to freedom. You helped me to understand abuse when all I knew was that “something was wrong, and that I couldn’t fix it” and how much it hurt. You heard my pain, you let me cry, you supported me, you calmed me, and you reassured me. You guided me to a shelter to live in when I needed to leave. You knew my journey ahead was long and painful. You were there for me.

I know that the road ahead is long. I know that there is much pain to come. But my eyes are open now. I clearly see the road ahead and what I need to do to be free. I no longer blame myself for what happened. I have learned to understand abuse for what it is and how it played a major part of my life and marriage.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you from the Bottom of my Heart for all the support you gave to me over the past two years. I would also like to thank you for all the continued work in your organization and for all the other women you have freed and continue to free from abuse. You are truly angels from heaven.

With love, LM



BWSS Retail Program



My Sister's Closet and The Outlet

By Onna
Co-Retail Supervisor – My Sister's Closet

My Sister's Closet and The Outlet are flourishing in the beautiful weather we have been having, and although we had a rocky start to the spring and summer with the road construction, the community is making up for lost time. We have been receiving record amounts of clothing and household goods to our programs over the past few weeks and the shop is buzzing with activity. We recently held our Summer Gala on June 24th, which was a great success. Members of the community joined us for food, music and of course fabulous shopping at our Carnival themed event. It was hot but so was the shopping!

Our Dedicated Volunteers

We couldn't have such a wonderful summer without the hard work of our dedicated team of volunteers. At the moment we have 35 volunteers and at least 3 new women signed up for volunteer interviews each week. Our volunteers work hard to make sure that everyone has a great time when they shop with us and take special care to ensure that women using our services are well looked after. Our volunteer meetings are always fun and engaging and it is great to having volunteers who are willing to share their talents with the rest of us. At our last meeting we all learned how to belly dance under the skilled instruction of one of our weekend volunteers. It was a blast. It is the volunteers who make the experience of My Sister's Closet and The Outlet truly wonderful and their work is definitely paying off.

Clothing and Household Items to Women in Transition

Since April we have given away \$8,675.00 worth of clothing and household goods to women using our Clothing and Hamper Voucher Programs which is amazing. The Clothing Voucher and the Hamper

Program is accessed by women in transition referred through BWSS and other community organizations. Women receive free clothing and household items to assist them through the challenges of starting over. However, we would not be able to give the women this support if it weren't for the people in our community and beyond who make it possible through donations and their shopping dollar. We marvel at the generosity of those around us and would like to say thank you to each and every one of you who have made a donation or purchased an item from our stores or volunteered your time in order to help those around you who need it most. Thank You!

Our Community

The Drive is full of activity this summer with the Commercial Drive Festival and The World Cup taking over the streets. So you haven't been to the Drive lately this is the time to come down and stop by My Sister's Closet and The Outlet and get a taste of the energy and excitement of the neighborhood. In "The Closet," not only will you be able to find the perfect beach dress or killer jeans for an evening out on the town, but you'll find the perfect accessories in The Outlet for that great summer picnic you've been planning.

SEPTEMBER 30th



Bag Sale!

Make sure to mark your calendars for our next semi-annual Bag Sale.

All day you can buy an eco-friendly shopping bag full of clothing you select yourself for only \$16.00! Look for details closer to the day.

Have a great summer and happy shopping!

The Outlet

WOMEN
making waves

Upcoming Groups at BWSS

- 10 Week Support Groups for women survivors of violence
- 10 Week Support Group for lesbian and/or bi-sexual women
- Latin American Women's Support Group
- Empowering Mother's Parenting Program
- Healing from Trauma through Empowerment (formally Women's Trauma Recovery and Empowerment Stage 1)
- Healing from Trauma through Art
- Student Lawyers for legal advocacy and information
- Downtown Eastside Women's Centre Support Group
- Tuesday Afternoon Drop in at BWSS



Call 604-687-1867 for more information.

Donations February - June/06

We would like to thank all of you who have made a donation to BWSS in the past few months. Your generous gifts have made a huge contribution towards our vital programs and services for women.

Our sincere appreciation to the Government agencies and Foundations who continue to fund BWSS services:

- City of Vancouver
- Ministry of Community Services – Stopping the Violence Branch
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General – Gaming Enforcement Branch
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General – Victim Services Division
- The Law Foundation of BC
- The United Way of the Lower Mainland
- The office of Lorne Mayencourt, MLA Vancouver -Burrard
- The Sauder Foundation
- The Vancouver Foundation

In honour of International Women's Day on March 8th, the following individuals and organizations contributed in-kind or cash donations to us for which we are grateful:

- Simon Fraser University Women's Centre
- Canadian Wildlife Service
- Environment Canada
- Heather Whiteford
- Bob Kent

The following individuals and organizations worked tirelessly to organize special events whose proceeds benefited BWSS

- Tamara and Joe of Canwest Shows-The She Show
- Tamara Pachmann - Celebrate, Woman!

Thank you to the following organizations:

- Access Justice
- Alliance Lodge 193
- A-Part Auto Wrecking Ltd. and the Charity Car Program
- BMO Fountain of Hope
- Helping Hands Club of the Worker's Compensation Board
- IBM Employees' Charitable Fund
- London Life Employees' Charity Trust
- Paradise Marketing, Inc.
- The Hydrecs Fund
- St. Mary's Kerrisdale Church

Finally, several arts organizations kindly support our work by offering complimentary performance tickets for our volunteers and women who access our services. Many women would not be able to attend these cultural events if not for the generous support of

- Ballet BC
- Eve Elsner, "The Good Body"
- Judith Marcuse Projects and the World Urban Festival

In Memoriam Donations

- In March, an anonymous donor gave a gift to BWSS in memory of Ms. Jenny Francis

A very special thank you to our new monthly donors:

- Rachel French deMejia
- Stephen D. Hammond
- Kaurina Jeeris-Warder
- Brigitte Mahneke
- Geoff Wilson
- Anonymous

- Brigitte Mahneke has made several donations to BWSS in memory of her brother, Charles K. Klingberg who sadly passed away on January 31, 2006

yes! I would like to support BWSS in your work to end violence against women.

I would like to donate \$ immediately to BWSS.

Monthly Sustaining Member

I wish to join the *Circle of Strength* monthly giving club and make my gift of \$ every month.

I authorize BWSS to bill my credit card on the 1st of each month. *I understand that I may cancel my contribution at any time with written notice.*

Payment Information

- Enclosed cheque payable to BWSS
 VISA MasterCard American Express

Card Number
 Name on card
 Expiry Date /
 Signature

Contact Information

Name
 Address
 Phone
 Email

We respect your privacy and will not trade or sell your name to other organizations

- I wish to receive the BWSS newsletter, *Making Waves*
 I have remembered BWSS in my will
 Please contact me to discuss how I can include BWSS in my financial and estate planning

Please send your completed form & donation to:

BWSS
 P.O. Box 21503
 1424 Commercial Dr.
 Vancouver, BC V5L 5G2

OR
By Phone 604.687.1868 ext. 315
By Fax 604.687.1864
Online www.bwss.org

Your gift is tax deductible. We will send you a tax receipt.

