

WOMEN *making waves*

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The Wizard's of O.Z.

By **Andrea Dobbs**

Whether it is a twister that tears through a woman's home or the wrath of a partner bent on ripping apart the safety and security a woman should expect to feel in her home, the destruction can be devastating. Much like Dorothy found herself in a world that she did not understand; women and their children often find themselves uprooted and displaced by a violent partner.



Designed to support women and their families on their journey home, *The OZ Project* was conceptualized during a routine volunteer meeting where Lynne Hannay, a graduate of VCC's Interior Decorating program and long term BWSS volunteer, had the idea to extend the support of BWSS into the homes of women and their families in the form of interior design services. Thus the pilot project began....

In early February of 2007 we held the first of many planning meetings. Through this meeting we formed a partnership with Vancouver Community College. It would be designers from their Interior Design Program along side myself as the lead designer and a BWSS Counselor who would make this dream a reality for one very deserving woman. Thanks to one of our counselors we were able to connect with a woman who we will call "R". "R" agreed to meet with us to discuss the project and was excited to work with us.

Like many women leaving abusive homes, most of "R's" belongings had been lost or abandoned in exchange for freedom, and although many of the items in her home had been donated to her by friends and

neighbors and through the BWSS Hamper Program at MSC, it was nice for her to imagine being able to design her own space. The first of many consultations was booked, and I met with "R" at her home to photograph, measure and view her home AND to begin the dreamscaping process. *Continues on page 2*

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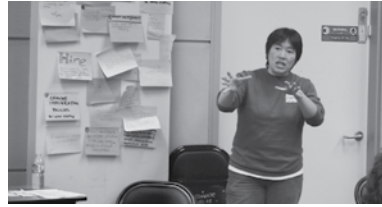
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Multicultural Outreach Café: Exploitation of Immigrant Women and Girls



**By Pari
Ruengvisesh**

Strategy for Multicultural Outreach, Knowledge and Education is a joint project between BWSS and SWAN (Sex Workers Action Network) Vancouver. On Thursday, June 14, 2007 we hosted a Multicultural Outreach Café. Set in the World Café environment, the aim of this event was to provide a welcoming space for service providers and community stake-

holders to share, learn and explore on issues around sexual exploitation of women and youth in ethno-cultural communities- the issues mostly surrounded by stigmatization and invisibility.

The event was very successful. There was such diversity among the 45 participants- in terms of ethno-cultural backgrounds, as

well as diversity of organizations represented (family services, Stopping the Violence workers, experiential women, youth and immigrant service organizations) Also, the 3.5 hours session was full of lively, engaging and insightful rounds of conversation. So much information was shared and many really good suggestions offered.

This is a first step towards capacity building among service providers and community members in working collaboratively to develop a strategic plan to address the issues of sexual exploitation of women and youth in ethno-cultural communities.

*Somewhere over
the Rainbow
skies are blue
and the dreams
that you dare to
dream really do
come true.*

Continued from page 1

Dreaming was something “R” had learned to live without. It was just too painful to imagine the life she wanted when it seemed so far out of reach. During one of our consultations she pulled out an Italian Home Decorating magazine that she had carried with her from Italy years earlier, and as we opened the pages we allowed our minds to wander. We came upon the photos of Tuscan gardens and villas, English gardens, and the coastline of Monaco. All of the images that were presented were lush, rich and saturated in both history and colour; the framework was being set, and it was decided. If she could not go home to Tuscany we’d have to bring Tuscany to her!

Further consultations took place, and the work of transforming “R’s” home began. It was a challenging process because while a television design show does one room on a \$1000 budget; we had an entire apartment with two bedrooms, a bathroom, a living room, kitchen, hallway and balcony to consider. With no budget, we had to source out donations to make “R’s” dream a reality. We had to get creative. Materials were gathered by the designers as we pooled our resources and secured donations via community members and businesses, pulled donated items from The Outlet, the fantastic house-wares department at My Sister’s Closet, and used found items from back alleys and free boxes.

With the help of a dedicated crew of volunteers the rooms began to take shape. Finally we were down to

**“I dreamed
to be in
Tuscany and
now every
time I open
my door
I am there.”**

the wire. Then...we were there. Candles lit, flowers set; it was time for the reveal. As “R” entered the room her jaw dropped. “Is this my house? It’s so beautiful,” she said over and over again. And then she entered her tranquil bedroom, only then did the tears escape. On her side table was a photo of her mother, a proud and piercing gaze much like that of “R’s” daughter. Now it was time for the celebration. Good food, good people and good design! We were both tired and

completely proud...of ourselves for having pulled it off and of “R” and her daughter for daring to share their dream with us.

It is near impossible to share the entirety of what we all experienced during the OZ Pilot Project...this article barely skims the cream off of the top; I can only hope that you as a reader can get a taste for what we accomplished. “R” said it best during the OZ wrap up party when she said, “I dreamed to be in Tuscany and now every time I open my door I am there.”



**World Café
Building a Safe
Community Café**

By Rosa Arteaga

What Volunteering Means to Me

By Marion Bourne

One of the first things I did when I was asked to write a 200 word essay on volunteering was to look at the BWSS Volunteer poster. It read: "Volunteer to End Violence Against Women." Wow, what a concept! I also looked up the word volunteer in the dictionary. The definition I found was that a volunteer "is a person or persons who spontaneously and willingly extend themselves for the good of others or cause." As we know Violence Against Women is everyone's concern, so what a great idea to be able to volunteer at My Sister's Closet and be part of bringing about change through "feminist activism and fashion."

Next I thought about what the criteria is for volunteering. I was drawn to My Sister's Closet in 2001 because I like fashion, being social, and to feel like I am participating in something greater than myself. I also had a lot of volunteer experience having volunteered at Liberty Thrift many years ago.

So what are the benefits of volunteering? Being a volunteer:

- Helps to expand my desire to be of assistance and gives me a sense of connectedness to others.
- Allows me to be a part of a diverse and mixed community.
- Generates and builds confidence, self-esteem, satisfaction and the opportunity to serve BWSS and the community.
- Creates responsibility, trust, flexibility and acceptance for the many different kinds of people we work with; and the ability to engage and help others in such a comfortable, safe environment as My Sister's Closet is a benefit to all.

For me, volunteering is a lifestyle choice, a decision to contribute to a collective unity amongst us, which serves the good of all women. One of the more personal

benefits of volunteering was that I was able to take many items I had purchased from My Sister's Closet and distribute them to several orphanages in Guyana, South America, on my last visit. This was a small effort, but with far reaching, positive rewards. Choosing to make a difference counts.

Looking back over the years, I have volunteered for many organizations. I hope that my sharing will encourage all of us to remember what a great gift we receive when volunteering – and how we can all make a difference to ending violence against women!

- Thank you.

BWSS Retail Program

BWSS Retail Program News:

The BWSS Retail Program is pleased to announce the opening of our second retail location, MSC¹⁰⁹², coming early July 2007 to Yaletown. Located at Helmcken and Seymour, this new retail location will offer the downtown community a chic, urban shopping experience for the discerning fashionista.

*MSC¹⁰⁹² is the next step for BWSS in our effort to ensure our long term sustainability through social enterprise, and is being created both in response to the popularity of our current retail location, My Sister's Closet, and the huge demand for socially conscious shopping choices for the modern consumer.

**Please stay tuned for the announcement of the Grand Opening Celebrations!*

Interested in Volunteering? As a Volunteer in the BWSS Retail Program you will have the opportunity to be part of a dedicated team of like minded women working toward ending violence against women, and making a difference in women's lives through the finest thrift fashion.

Volunteer opportunities available every day, including evenings and weekends. For more info or to book an interview:

Call: 604-687-1868, **ext:** 305 or **Email:** mysterscloset@bwss.org

On April 26, 2007 BWSS in partnership with other agencies serving Vancouver held its first Building a Safe Community Café. This event was a huge success. Over hundred and twenty workers from Vancouver and Lower Mainland participated in this event.

Community workers, front - line workers, social workers and managers from diverse agencies sat at the table to share their work and ideas with each other. Through the day, participants moved to

different tables to talk about how we, as community agencies, provide services to the whole family whether the family remains together or chooses to separate. What creative approaches to services we currently use. How in our practice we deal with the ethical dilemma between respecting the person's right to self determination and protecting the rights of children and adults to be free from harm. How we as agencies can work together effectively to better serve families when there are differences between us.

Participants were very engaged in the conversations and found several opportunities to network and share information about their services.

At BWSS we are committed to building safe communities free of violence. We received excellent comments from all the participants and there was a huge interest in continuing these conversations. We are eager to carry on this work and will keep you updated!

BWSS Women's Dance!

April 28th marked the last day of BC Prevention of Violence Against Women week, and BWSS celebrated with a fabulous Women's Dance Party at the FOE. It was a wonderful celebration of women, and a great time to connect with old friends, meet amazing new women, and share a laugh

while dancing to music spun by DJ Susan Y.

The Silent Auction was a hit as well, with the opportunity to bid on items such as a weekend getaway to Keats Island, a Womyn's Ware gift pack, interior design services, jewelry, a jewelry box, a beautiful

Mexican platter, and two gift passes to Spartacus Gym.

This event would not have been a success without the hard work of DJ Susan Y, Rain Daniels and her friends, and the fantastic volunteers. Together we were able to sell almost all of the tickets and raise over

\$1500.00 to put towards the ongoing work of BWSS.

We hope that all of you who joined us for this party had a great time, and hope you check out our next event, July 28th at Ironworks.

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.

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Thank you to our wonderful Sponsors:

- **Lynne Hannay.** A dedicated volunteer and supporter of BWSS
- **Rosa Arteaga.** Manager of Direct Services and Programs
- **Also:**



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.

:: Thank You ::

- Andgela Kirschner
- BMO Fountain of Hope
- Dogwood Monarchist Association
- Flaming June
- Hydrecs Fund
- IBM Employee's Charitable Fund
- Jane Williams
- Mavis McEwan
- Sandra Kessleman
- Sauder Foundation
- St. Mary's Kerrisdale
- VCC Faculty Association

BWSS summer Calendar of Events

July 2007

Opening, MSC¹⁰⁹², our second retail location.
 Check out our website, www.bwss.org for updates.

July 22nd

Commercial Drive Festival.
 Come say hello at the **BWSS Information Table**, and don't forget to come check out the great finds at **My Sister's Closet**, 1029 Commercial Drive.

July 28th

BWSS Women's Dance!
 Join us at the Ironworks Gallery for an evening of fun, food and friends.
 Details to come.

August 9th

International Day of the World's Indigenous People