

WOMEN

making waves

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Inspiring Stories, Amazing Women, Ending Violence



By **Angela Marie MacDougall**
Executive Director, BWSS



Think about Battered Women's Support Services as concentric circles or a web of interconnected experiences, lives and stories steeped in survival, hope and effective change. At the centre are women who access our services, on a continuum of living with power and control including physical and sexual violence. Women who are seeking safety, living the complex reality of staying in an abusive relationship

with the hope that "he will change", leaving for a while, getting a taste of freedom and being pulled back by fear, societal pressures, systemic barriers, returning with the promise that "things will change". Throughout that process, reaching out to lean on another through our support groups, our crisis line, our counselling, our legal advocacy, our workshops, our employment program, our specialized services and finding other women who are also finding a sense of personal power and empowerment...who are living free of violence.

Statistically, women will stay, leave and return seven times before leaving for good, and some women never leave. As one 86 year old woman said, "If I had support

like I have received at BWSS when I was younger I would have left a long time ago."

Yes, all women of all ages, 14 – 86 who are dealing with power and control in their relationships including sexual and physical violence access BWSS. Each woman, or girl, with a painful journey of injustice and harm who are writing strength, survival and hope into their story through their contact with Battered Women's Support Services, this year well over 8,000 have called or walked through our doors.

Women who volunteer with us who are also on a continuum who through their experiences have decided that they want

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Royal Commission on Violence Against Aboriginal Girls and Women

By Fran Smith and Lisa Yellow-Quill

Co-Managers, Aboriginal Women's Program, Battered Women's Support Services

This article has been informed by the writing, research and through the consultations with Beverley Jacobs (Coach), Alison Koper, Nicole Ludwig, Amy McCallion, and Karley Scott Rosowsky from the University of Calgary Law School for presentation at 2011 Kawaskimhon Moot hosted by University of British Columbia First Nations Legal Studies Program in Vancouver, BC. As part of the moot process, each law school was to represent a client. The University of Calgary moot team represented the Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS).

In consultation with the University of Calgary Moot team and in preparation for the 2011 Kawaskimhon Moot held in Vancouver from March 5-7, 2011, the Battered Women's Support Services initiated a call for a Royal Commission on Violence against Aboriginal Girls and Women.

In Canada, Aboriginal women are five times more likely than other women to die as a result of violence, and the numbers of Aboriginal women who are currently missing are staggering. This problem is not localized to one civic or provincial region, but is spread across the country; there are reports that more than 582 Aboriginal women are known to be either missing or murdered currently in Canada. It is important to note that many women who have gone missing or who have been found murdered are not women at all, but rather, girls in the care of the provincial ministries responsible for child and family services and foster care. In response to this crisis, many non government organizations are conducting research and spreading awareness both nationally and internationally such as the Amnesty International Stolen Sisters and No More Stolen Sisters reports.

Royal commissions throughout history have been known to address issues of grave public concern. A royal commission has the ability to address the historic, social, legal, economic, child welfare and political challenges facing Aboriginal girls and women across Canada, while recognizing that violence against Aboriginal girls and women is a grave national concern. There is no doubt that the very making of this nation as a nation rooting the colonialist treatment of Aboriginal girls and women has manifested into what is today Canadians willingness to either ignore or push aside issues relating to or involving Aboriginal girls and women.

In BC, on September 27, 2010, the Lieutenant Governor in Council issued an Order in Council establishing the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry. Wally Oppal, QC, was named Commissioner. Under the Terms of Reference, the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry will:

- a) inquire into and make findings of fact respecting the conduct of the investigations conducted between January 23, 1997 and February 5, 2002, by police forces in British Columbia respecting women reported missing from the Downtown Eastside of the city of Vancouver;
- b) inquire into and make findings of fact respecting the decision of the Criminal Justice Branch on January 27, 1998, to enter a stay of proceedings on charges against Robert William Pickton of attempted murder, assault with a weapon, forcible confinement and aggravated assault;
- c) recommend changes considered necessary respecting the initiation and conduct of investigations in British Columbia of missing women and suspected multiple homicides; and
- d) recommend changes considered necessary respecting homicide investigations in British Columbia by more than one investigating organization, including the co-ordination of those investigations.

In order to redress systemic inequality and to eliminate the violence perpetrated against Aboriginal girls and women within Canada, BWSS stresses that there is a responsibility by all to address this issue. The dangers faced by Aboriginal girls and

women are not confined within any single jurisdiction and it is inappropriate to approach the issues as if they could be. The intersection of race, class, age and gender operate in a way that uniquely and severely impacts Aboriginal girls and women, in terms of how women experience violence. This not simply a West Coast issue and not simply a DTES issue. This is an issue which plagues and deeply affects all Canadians and all areas of Canada.

BWSS recommends that a combined fact-finding and policy-based mandate within the Royal Commission on Violence Against Aboriginal Girls and Women is established. Under the fact-finding mandate, the Commission should include Aboriginal and/or woman chief commissioner(s), along with an Aboriginal youth council, infusing the inquiry with both Aboriginal, woman and girl perspectives. Our initial discussion about this Royal Commission reflected the following focus:

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- 1. The investigation of cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal girls and women across Canada and the response of the designated policing agencies and the Canadian, provincial and territorial governments more broadly;**
 - 2. The fulfillment of the needs of the families of missing Aboriginal girls and women and families of murdered Aboriginal girls and women, as each of their needs are different;**
 - 3. The empowerment of Aboriginal girls and women;**
 - 4. Affirming Gender-balance and Healing;**
 - 5. The judicial and law enforcement systems within Canada;**
 - 6. The generation of broader awareness and understanding surrounding the challenges facing Aboriginal women and girls in Canada;**
 - 7. The allocation of resources to the investigation and determination of the identity of perpetrators of violence against Aboriginal girls and women.**
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Historically, Canada has engaged actively in the inquiry process and utilized the recommendation of various inquires to shape important public policy. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was established in 1991 with a mandate to restore justice to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada through developing foundations of a fair and honourable relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Highlights of the RCAP process include:

Consultation with national and regional Aboriginal groups, leaders in various fields, federal and provincial politicians and a variety of experts in the development of the TOR

Involvement of four Aboriginal commissioners and three non-Aboriginal commissioners

Public hearings over the course of 178 days, in which 96 communities were visited across Canada

Briefs were received from 2,000 people and more than 350 research studies commissioned.

In Volume 3, Chapter 2 of RCAP, there was mention of Family Violence and recommendations regarding changes to Family Law. In Volume 4, Chapter 2 of RCAP, there was mention of Women's Perspectives and recommendations for Aboriginal women's organizations to receive funding to participate in Nation building, to participate in health institutions and to do an inventory of Aboriginal women's groups.

The federal government formally responded to the recommendations within the *Report of the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples* on January, 7, 1998 with *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. Several objectives were tabled from the report and funding allocated for targeted areas of concern. However, according to the Assembly of First Nations report, *Royal Commission of Aboriginal People at 10 Years: A Report Card*, there has been a clear lack of action with respect to key elements of the RCAP recommendations.

There has definitely been no clear action with respect to addressing or to preventing violence against Aboriginal women and girls. The violence is not only internally within First Nations communities, but it is also occurring in urban areas.

Battered Women Support Services is recommending a specific Royal Commission on Violence Against Aboriginal Girls and Women to address the gaps that were in RCAP to address issues affecting Aboriginal women and girls, but to also make concrete and specific recommendations to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls at a national level.

New Immigration Sponsorship Conditions Would Jeopardize Women's Safety

Media Advisory FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Anti Violence Advocates Address New Rules of Engagement for Immigrants

March 30, 2011, Vancouver, BC – In a move that will hurt women in violent relationships, Canada's federal government has quietly proposed new engagement rules for marriages involving Immigrants. Under the proposal, a spouse or partner from abroad who has been in a relationship with the Canadian sponsor for two years or less would be granted only "conditional permanent residence" or risk having their permanent status revoked. In turn, this could lead to their removal from Canada.

At Battered Women's Support Services, 48% of women who access our services are recent Immigrants and the newly proposed sponsorship obligations and conditions would further jeopardize their safety. We anticipate this having devastating implications for women who have been sponsored by their abusive partner. The Canadian government will, by policy, be forcing women to stay in abusive relationships to experience emotional and physical damage or risk being in violation of the conditional permanent residence status with potential removal from Canada which could further complicate access to safety and security.

"Placing women on conditional permanent resident status exacerbates their already vulnerable situation. Not only are they at risk for abuse due to their status as women in a culture in which violence against women is relatively common, but also to their position as conditional permanent residents." Said Darla Tomeldan, BWSS Legal Advocate "Threats of deportation, fear for her own safety, fears of bureaucratic entanglement, language barriers, poverty, and lack of privacy due to extended family shared dwellings, community pressure, social consequences, no access to legal and social services can impede a battered woman from seeking help."

The Canadian Press reported that "the federal notice says that given concerns about violent relationships, a process for allowing bona fide spouses and partners in such situations to come forward without facing enforcement action". Though this measure will seemingly have the most profound impact on women dealing with violence; this provision appears to be an afterthought.

"Assessing violence and abuse in relationships can not be taken lightly, said Rose Elena Arteaga, BWSS Manager, Direct Services and Programs, "there must be clarity around evidentiary requirements, definition of the types of abuse, training for immigration officers on violence against women, legal services and social services for abused women on conditional permanent resident status."

Without firm figures defining the extent of marriage fraud, this measure seems to be manufacturing a crisis for which women who are dealing with violence will ultimately pay the price.

Battered Women's Support Services is able to work to end violence against women because of the financial support from:

- BC Ministry of Solicitor General – Victim Services Crime Prevention Division
- BC Ministry of Social Development Employment & Labour Market Services Division
- The City of Vancouver

- The Law Foundation of BC
- SEDI Social and Enterprise Development Innovations
- Tides Foundation
- Vancouver Foundation
- Department of Justice Canada

And YOU...
Please make your donation today



It Begins **Here...**

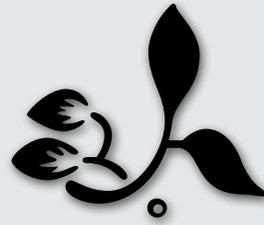
By **Vicky Chiew** • Crisis Volunteer Worker

Scared shitless. That's how I felt when I first started working on the BWSS Crisis Line. Women would phone and ask me questions that I couldn't answer. Women would share with me insurmountable problems that I couldn't help solve. Women would be in tears, in a major crisis, and all I could do was listen. *Shmoly, what did I get myself into?!*

Then one day, a support worker told me that it's okay to admit I don't know the answers right then and there; I can call people back with the information later. Then, another day, I realized that I can always ask BWSS staff for help to brainstorm ways we can support women in challenging situations; I wasn't, and am not, alone. And, just recently, I discovered that many women who call appreciate someone *really* listening to them: someone who hears them, not in judgment, but with a sense of justice; not out of pity, but with true compassion that gives dignity; not in fatalistic resignation to the same god-awful shit that happens to too many women, but with persistent hope that the violence can stop here.

In the end, it dawned on me: It's not just about volunteers and workers providing a service by answering crisis calls. It's about women, being here for each other. It's about strong and resilient women, reaching out for support to make positive, life-changing choices. And it's about **us**: *all* women, with our families, friends and allies, in solidarity, coming together to do our part in ending the violence against women everywhere. It begins with us. It begins wherever we're at.

And for me, it begins here - every week on the crisis lines. Scared shitless no longer.



Childhood Betrayed

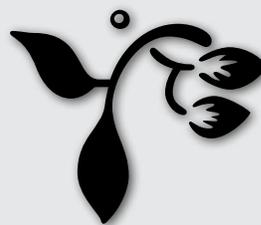
By ml

Unhappiness and fear are unwanted friends
That make you wonder how life will mend
The pain and injury of a long ago past
What will it take for peace to last?

Life is a journey and we chart our way
Through clouds and sunshine day by day
Sometimes we struggle and sometimes we laugh
Hoping each day tribulations will pass.

Scalding pain of childhood betrayed
Rips through the heart and wars with the soul
Till clouds of confusion make it hard to know
If you're winning or losing or status quo.

Grappling silently with life's simplest tasks
Lost in confusions which others walk past
Stuck in a breach not of your own
Lost forever in the words of a poem.



Every Tuesday a group of amazing women get together...



Every Tuesday a group of amazing women get together to feel each others' feelings and share feelings and experiences that can not be shared anywhere else or at least cannot be considered as serious as they are.

Women gather to hear and to be heard, validated, and understood without prejudice. Women come to be known for who they are and for the amazing things that they would like to accomplish.

Every week, women come together to build community, reduce isolation, form connection, and to empower themselves by providing safe and nurturing spaces for each other. Only one thing brings women here every week...it is the feeling of belonging and inclusion.

It is my honour to be part of this group as a facilitator and see women growing and changing gradually. I am so pleased that they allow me to accompany them through their journey toward recovery from abuse and be with them as they discover their strengths and challenges in life. Nothing is better than seeing

women reclaiming their power, changing the quality of their life, and increasing self-awareness.

After all this time, I still feel excited when it is Tuesday. I go to the Drop-in group with a heart full of compassion and a mind full of ideas. I walk with women through their current fears and confusions and help to keep their desired future in sight.

Every week, I am astounded at how women connect to each other and support each other to defeat pain and make their voices heard.

**Thank you,
women, for being here with us, for
being strong in your life and a true
inspiration for other women!**

BWSS' Drop-in
Support Group
Healing Connections
EVERY TUESDAY FROM 12-2PM.
For more information about the
group and/or join, please call our
Crisis/Intake line at
604-687-1867.

**Marjaneh
Aghamohseni**
Victim
Service
Short-term
Worker



Poem of a Battered Woman

By
Rhonda Vermette

You were always right, even when you were wrong
You would say I was weak, when I knew I was strong
You made promises to me, ones that you did not keep
You continued to hurt me, you made me weep
The embarrassment I would feel, from the glances I would get
I was sure people were thinking, "Did she not learn yet"
All of your cheating and all of your lying
You hurt me so much, I felt I was dying
You always told me that I would fail
But in the end I did prevail

2011 WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUPS AT BWSS

At Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) Support Groups are intrinsic to empowerment and empowerment is at the heart of healing from the oppression of abuse and violence. BWSS is committed to offering support groups to women dealing with abuse and its effects. The BWSS Women's Support Group Program provides a safe place for women to connect with each other in order to alleviate isolation, share information, raise awareness, heal by developing coping and recovery skills and plan for a life free from abuse.

BWSS' Women's Support Group Programs

DEWC Drop-in Group

Starts on APR
5 - 8pm
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.
302 Columbia Street, Vancouver

Healing From Trauma through Empowerment I

Starts MAY 24
Every Tuesday evenings.
6 - 8pm
BWSS Vancouver office

Drop-in Group

Every Tuesday
12 - 2pm
BWSS Vancouver office

FREE FROM ABUSE LBTQ2S Women's 10 Week Support Group

Starts MAY 18,
Every Wednesday evenings.
6 - 8pm
BWSS Vancouver office

Latin-American Women's Support Group

Every Monday
10 - 12pm
BWSS Vancouver office

Recognizing, Understanding and Overcoming the Impacts of Abuse

Currently, every Thursday
12:30 - 2:30pm
BWSS Vancouver office

Healing From Trauma through Empowerment II

Currently until the end of MAY
6 - 8pm
BWSS Vancouver office

Yoga

Starts APR 12 every Tuesday.
10-12pm
BWSS Vancouver office

Healing From Trauma through Empowerment I

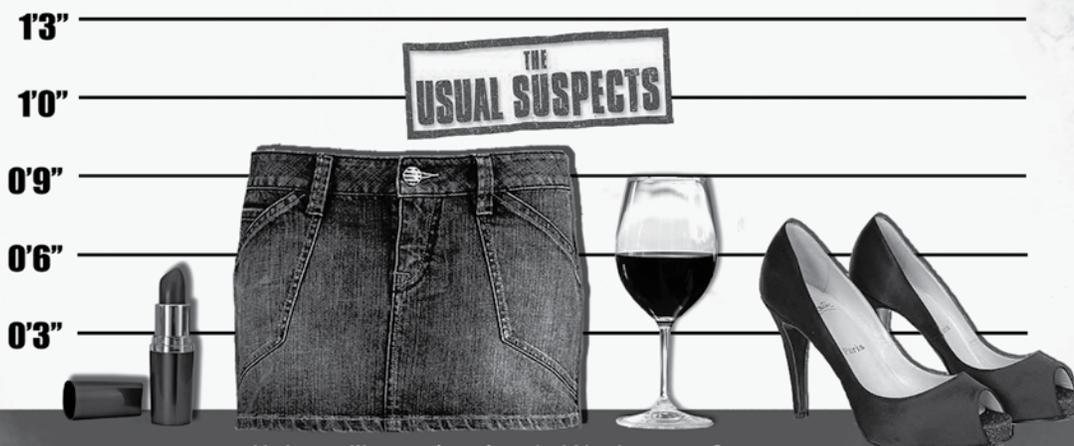
Currently until the end of JUNE
10 - 12pm
BWSS Vancouver office

Shiatsu

Every Wednesday
1 - 4pm
BWSS Vancouver office



PUT RAPISTS ON TRIAL. NOT WOMEN.



Urban Women's Anti-Violence Strategy
Prevention of Violence Against Women Week



**By
Rosa Elena
Arteaga**
Manager,
Direct Services
& Programs

At BWSS we have been supporting a number of refugee women who have experienced violence and who are going through their refugee process. During the last twelve months a high percentage of the women who accessed our services and who were going through their refugee process had their claims accepted. It has been a long journey for the women to reach an official answer that acknowledges that they have the right to protection and freedom from abuse. The women's journeys stem from their strength to escape from their abusive partners, from their country of origin, to the strength to come to an unknown country with the only hope to finally become free from violence. However, at their arrival, they had to face a system that does not understand violence against women and its

effects as well as a system that does not understand the migration of abuse across the lifecycle, which follows girls and women through infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and as elders.

What did it take the women to succeed with their claim for freedom? For some of them, it took the support from a family member, a friend, or a neighbour who helped them to escape to Canada. In Canada, it took the support of an anti-violence women's organization, BWSS, which assisted them to access the right lawyer, the right interpreter, and the right counsellor. BWSS team supported the women by identifying and understanding the range of needs from forced migration, sexual violence, and intimate violence to the spectrum of cultural needs. It took an approach which identifies the strength, barriers, needs and support needed from settlement to empowerment.

SUPPORTING REFUGEE WOMEN who Experience Violence



A Journey to Freedom

After a long and painful journey these women have identified their strength, their value, their success and their right to live free from violence. We at BWSS stand and work in solidarity with all women who are on a journey to freedom.

of the violence that they have experienced though their whole life.

Finally, it took the women's strength and resilience to escape from violence, to expose themselves to strangers and tell their stories, their consistency in contacting their friends, neighbours, family, women's organizations in their countries of origin so they could gather evidence and expose that gender violence is a social issue and that women's right to protection is not merely guaranteed.

After a long and painful journey the women have identified their strength, their value, their success and their right to live free from violence. We at BWSS stand and work in solidarity with all women who are on a journey to freedom.

It took the consistency and commitment of the BWSS team to support the women's journey through its programming such as legal advocacy, STV counselling, language specific support groups, and employment program. For the majority of the women their refugee process took more than a year and during that year they were consistently accessing BWSS programs. In addition, it took the willingness of their immigration lawyers to learn and understand about the impacts of abuse. These lawyers became aware that women's loss of memory, lack of trust, and their overwhelming fear does not relate to their intellectual capacity, cultural background or the veracity of their story, rather it relates to the impact



Immigrant Women's Employment Program

By Andrea Canales | As the Immigrant Women's Manager, Immigrant Women's Employment Program launches its **3rd** year of programming, we reflect on our 2010-2011 year where we successfully engaged **67** women representing **23** different countries.

The successes have been many and truly celebrated among all of the program participants, that have found not just the training and resources to enter the Canadian workforce, but who have also found a community of resilient and strong women coming together in solidarity, support and camaraderie as they share the common experience of being an Immigrant woman in a new land, with a new language and new culture, often far removed from their loved ones, while overcoming the impacts that violence and abuse have had in their lives.

Women in the program attend sessions daily, in addition to ESL classes, volunteer placements, counselling sessions, computer literacy trainings, GED upgrading classes, fieldtrips, self-care workshops and 1-1 ongoing support. At the completion stage, women attain employment, enter the education system or enrol in other programs while continuing their healing and empowering journey towards living a violence free existence.

Our program has been extremely well received by our participants and the community at large, as we are able to provide a holistic, all encompassing approach to our work where each woman is at the forefront, leading and deciding the direction of her program and her life.

We honour each and every one of these **67 women**, who have made a commitment to themselves and who beyond their 6 months participation with us, continue to achieve their goals and transcend any obstacles put in their way.

To find out more information please call **778.628.1867** or attend one of our Info Sessions, every Monday at 10:00 am.



Without Warning

By Rhonda Vermette

I have a story to tell and it is not so nice
It's about when I fell and it was not on ice
It is about a man whom I loved very dear
But as the year went on, he instilled in me a fear
In the beginning he was kind and easy to love
Quite refined and gentle as a dove
Then without warning, I was totally unaware
He punched my face and pulled my hair
He struck me again and again, until I hit the ground
There was no one to help me, not a soul around
This violence went on for many years
I sat there in silence and shed plenty of tears
It did not matter how hard I tried
I always had bruises that I could not hide
I was afraid to move, afraid to talk
Tired of all the people who liked to gawk
All of the guilt and all of the shame
Yet I wasn't the one inflicting the pain
When I heard the doctor, I thought it was a lie
The doctor stated, "The man is going to die"
I would pray to God that this nightmare would end
I never had no one to trust, not one friend
Then one day God said, "No more"
He took him to Heaven and picked me up off the floor



Laughter in counselling...



By Athena Affan
Stopping the Violence
Counsellor

Laughter in counselling may sound like a contradiction but it isn't! Tremendous work, connection, and hope can grow from genuine laughter. For example, a woman I work with expressed a sentiment of being lost at sea with no land in sight. I asked her, "Do you know which direction is the right direction?" She indicated the negative, and I could see that it was this fact that was causing some distress. Still I couldn't resist a punch line. "Any direction!" I said with zeal, "because land's not going to come up from under you!" We shared laughter around this, and in our discussion afterward, I learned that my humour had not only demonstrated empathy but had inspired hope.

On occasion my work is witnessing women's pain and stories of trauma. On other occasions, I am providing practical information about trauma or about contributing factors to violence against women. Perhaps the less obvious part of my work is connecting with women on a human level - recognizing her strengths and hopes or honouring the ways she resisted the trauma. None of this is effective unless it is rooted in genuine caring and warmth. When I laugh with a woman, I'm given an opportunity to connect with an inner wellspring of joy which feeds and waters those very roots. Our laughter strengthens our relationship by creating common ground on which we can relate.

Women are so much more than their experiences of trauma and I'm more than a "professional" - I'm a woman too (and a funny one at that)! My desire is to recognize and reflect the richness and entirety of a woman in our sessions and laughter helps me do just that. It keeps me grounded in a woman to woman relationship rather than a counsellor-client relationship. When our laughter is bouncing off the walls of my space, for a moment it's the woman who is sharply in focus while trauma fades into the background.

Humour



I had worked with a therapist for several years without seeing a smile or hearing laughter and it troubled me because I genuinely believe that "laughter is good for

the soul." It touched me deeply when I heard my counsellor at BWSS laugh. It was like my soul had a cool refreshing drink after a long drought. There was a physical feeling of my body absorbing the strength of that laughter.

With the exception of the years mention above, my experience in recovery has been filled with laughter. Humour has often saved me and my sanity. As a trauma survivor I understand first-hand that laughter is often used to cover up mountains of pain. Yet this same humour, given personification, has been my greatest ally in recovery.

Recovery creates emotional havoc and sometimes, when I'm discussing the long-reaching affects and pain of trauma with my counsellor, it feels like I can't breathe and I'm drowning in emotions which cause me to focus on the problem not the solution. Humour brings me back to the present and allows me to re-group and carry on. I'm not interested in living in the past or continuing my life in the trenches of despair. I am willing to do whatever it takes to focus and live in the here and now; humour is my touch-stone. Going back and picking up the threads of a tattered life can suck you dry. Humour is the refreshing breeze that brings me forward; it's balm to my soul. I couldn't do the hard work of recovery, without the safety valve of humour.

- ml



Empowerment Strategies for Women:

Recognizing and Addressing the Effects of Financial Abuse.



By Sara Yasan
Manager, Training and
Strategic Interventions

A complex combination of social, psychological, cultural, familial and economic factors contribute to a woman's decision to remain in, leave and/or return to an abusive/violent relationship. Beside fear of losing their children, women who live with violence and abuse, frequently cite income, employment and financial stability as the strongest, most immediate deterrents to leaving abusive situations. Impacted by

the legacy of debt and imposed bankruptcies, even after leaving an abusive relationship, many women struggle to eat, find a safe place to live, achieve academic goals, support their children and rebuild their lives.

To understand the dynamics of financial abuse and the experiences of women survivors, we need to recognize that financial abuse takes many forms. In fact, financial abuse is a common tactic of power and control in abusive relationships, which enables an abusive partner to control women by preventing or restricting her access to money, employment or other financial resources as well as prevent her from having access to, or making decisions for her own financial resources.

BWSS Economic Empowerment Strategies for Women: Recognizing and Addressing the Effects of Financial Abuse

initiative explores and addresses the impacts of financial abuse on the lives of women. Our objective through this initiative is to equip women survivors of violence, advocates, other frontline workers, policy analysts and other systems, institutions and government entities with strong analysis, practical resources, and information grounded in the lived experiences of women. Thus be better able to enhance women's ability to engage in all levels of society and to better assist women who are living with violence and abuse in achieving financial safety. In order to ground ourselves in the experiences of women, throughout the month of April 2011, women who access our services were invited to take part in focus groups. Women were invited to share their stories and struggles as they experienced, and continue to experience, the impact of financial abuse.

By Andrea Canales
 Manager, Empowering Women's
 Employment Program



Arising from BWSS commitment to social change, the **Engaging Immigrant Women in the Legal System** project objective is to use empowerment methods to minimize the power imbalance Immigrant women experience when they access the legal system and to make the legal system more accessible.

After **3 years** of extremely successful and cutting edge work, we are proud to report on the many accomplishments achieved during the project timeline spanning from 2008 to 2011. With community work engagement and working with Immigrant women from the Iranian, Afghani, South Asian and Latin American communities, at the heart of our project, we were able to reach and train over **350** women from these communities while developing and/or enhancing their leadership and critical thinking skills.

From providing language specific training in the community, to delivering direct training to community workers working with Immigrant women, our work has been a reflection and a response to the identified needs in each of these communities. Spearheading this process, were the **14** trained Peer Researchers, representing the 3 communities, who worked tirelessly to ensure that the training was specific and culturally appropriate for the participants in the Self-Advocacy workshops, which were fully created and facilitated by them, in their roles as emerging community leaders.

Alongside this training, we developed an array of resources that will ensure a fairer and greater access to the legal system by not just Immigrant women, but by all women navigating the legal system. In total, we developed 6 resources:

- Empowering Non-Status, Refugee and Immigrant Women Who Experience Violence Training Manual
- A Resource for Front-line Workers: When Battered Women are Arrested
- Resources for Women: When Battered Women are Arrested
- Violence against Women and the Law: Resource for Women and Advocates
- Toolkit for Lawyers: Best Practices in Working with Battered Immigrant Women
- Toolkit for Immigrant Women working with a Lawyer

All can be found and downloaded from our website www.bwss.org

We have translated the above resources as well as our up until now English only version of "How Can I Help my Friend" into Farsi, Punjabi, Spanish.

Additionally, we did in person outreach and project resource distribution to over 65 community workers as well as over 10 community speaks.

Overall, the Engaging Immigrant Women in the Legal System project has been a rewarding and well-received initiative. We continue to receive requests from the community to come in and provide this type of much needed training. The Peer Researchers feel saddened at having to reach the end of this project; nonetheless, they are fully aware of the amazing impact that they have brought into women's lives as well as their own. As one of them wrote:

“ Through all the process the most important thing I learned is to see the power and the capacity to create a network of safety and information. I felt part of a chain in creating a change to make the system work for Immigrant women but also to make Immigrant women part of the change itself... I feel lucky to have been part of such a great project in which I had the opportunity of growing in all levels, professionally and personally. ”



This project was in collaboration/ received funding with/from the Law Foundation.

BWSS ANNUAL Volunteer Appreciation Event



ON MARCH 31, 2011, we held our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event...it was our biggest event ever with 86 women in attendance... women who are committed to the work of ending violence against women...it was truly a beautiful evening, so many inspiring stories and so many amazing women...

A video of Battered Women's Support Services Volunteer Appreciation Event in Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories, was made by Davina Ridley and can be found on YouTube:



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b0EnAYlso>

Volunteer to end violence against women and join us in being part of the solution.

Volunteering at BWSS can be a life-changing experience. As a volunteer you will learn valuable skills in the areas of crisis intervention, group facilitation, administrative support, retail sales and/or public speaking. You will be working with a team of like minded women who are committed to your success and the success of women using our services. Volunteer opportunities include:

Crisis Line & Intake Program

Our Crisis line doesn't get answered without the help of volunteers. This volunteer opportunity is for women who see themselves ready to make a difference by working directly with survivors of violence. After completing an intensive 12 week training program, volunteers answer our intake and crisis lines providing information to women and the community, facilitating support groups for women survivors as well as delivering workshops to high school students on dating violence. The majority of this work is done weekdays, during the day.

email intake@bwss.org
or call Jaclyn at 604-687-1868

Retail Program My Sister's Closet

We can't open our doors without the help of volunteers. This volunteer opportunity will see you making a difference while working with some fine eco-fashion and household treasures. The energy is contagious as you work within a dynamic team of committed women. Retail, promotions marketing, and merchandising are just a few of the opportunities at BWSS' retail program.

email mrsp@bwss.org
or call Mariana at 604-687-0770

Office Volunteer

Our business line doesn't get answered without the help of volunteers. This volunteer opportunity is the ideal spot for making a difference whether you are new to office work or you possess serious office skills and want to share the wealth. Office volunteers are required weekdays, during the day. Greeting women coming for support, answering business inquiries, and photocopying resource materials are all required.

email samantha@bwss.org
or call Samantha at 604-687-1868

This poem was written by a woman who went through our Healing from Trauma group series - it depicts her experience and process through those groups.

The Blessing of the Weavers

As you help us weave
Our hearts back together
You help us
Through stormy weather
Helping us to reclaim
The "us" that we are
You give us the strength
The courage to go far
You bring us to the light
To allow us to see

The beauty that rests inside
The truth we can be
We receive our tools
To build a foundation
The teachings you give
Help us assess our situation
It's true this journey
Is each one of ours
With these shared moments
We can reach the stars





After an opening address by Hlamomsim Anon aka Bambie Tait, Wilps Luus, Gitxsan Nation and hand drum songs from Terry Azak, Nisga'a Nation, Jessica Yee read the introductory chapter to the book and played recording of "The Grand-Mother's Spirit," a political tale she performed, originally and recorded at the ReBELLEs conference a few years ago.

Fran Smith from Battered Women's Support Services spoke about her experiences doing front line work to end violence against women. There was a special appearance by Beverley Jacobs, former president of Native Women's Association of Canada who spoke about the power of women and men working together in all our communities to heal our communities and to end violence against women. Gloria Larocque, from KETA Society, spoke about her work to bring the voices of Indigenous women to the centre of the discourse and the action.

On Thursday, April 14, 2010, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives hosted the Vancouver book launch of **Feminism FOR REAL** edited by Jessica Yee. The anthology asks and in a profound way answers the question, "Has capital F Feminism become its own form of oppression?"

The anthology confronts uncomfortable truths about the birth and evolution of academic feminism. Through the writings of women and men the anthology exposes the painful experiences that many of the feminists who fight every day for justice and rights are invisible and voiceless within mainstream and academic feminism.

The book launch was held at **Rhizome Café** located at **317 East Broadway**, in Vancouver. Rhizome is a wonderful neighbourhood café serving healthy, fresh food while hosting events in collaboration with community groups that are working toward a more just, sustainable world for all. www.rhizomecafe.ca

Battered Women's Support Services numerous volunteers, staff and women who are accessing our support services were present. We took this opportunity to reflect on our feminism and our feminist action to end violence against women in our individual lives and in our work. Reflecting on how it has mattered to us to ensure the voices of marginalized women are at the centre of all we do. We each left the event feeling a sense of empowerment and renewed determination to continue gathering our strength, grounding our vision, to continue taking action and continuing to move forward.

Battered Women's Support Services had the privilege of being selected, by Jessica, as the recipient from book sales that evening. We are so committed to the vision of the book we are in discussion with Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives to have copies of **Feminism FOR REAL** for purchase in Vancouver.

If you wish to purchase the book please email us at endingviolence@bwss.org



Adorn

@ My Sister's Closet
Clothing Swap

Join us for a bit of music, bevies, appies,
listen to inspiring speakers and
swap some fashionable clothing.
Bring your clothes to swap.

Donations appreciated through our Pink Purse
to help finance services and programs
supporting women experiencing violence.

Thank you for being part of the solution!

May 19th, Thursday
6 to 9 pm
1092 Seymour & Helmcken St.

bwss BATTERED WOMEN'S SUPPORT SERVICES
The Violence Stops Here

mrsp@bwss.org | www.bwss.org

My Sister's Closet and You!

By Angela Marie MacDougall

In our effort to support zero waste and eco fashion, we are solid members of the thrift movement, where women, men and children have access to beautiful new and thrift clothing.

Revenue generated from sales of clothing go into funding violence prevention and intervention services operated by Battered Women's Support Services supporting over 8,000 women every year.

Our decision to free ourselves from the whims of government drove us to be in business to end violence against women.

Shopping and donating to My Sister's Closet – Social Enterprise of Battered Women's Support Services means you are directly assisting women and children who are living with violence to find safety:

- Crisis Line
- Counselling
- Legal Advocacy & Court Accompaniment
- Support Groups
- Workshops
- Education
- Information Services
- Employment
- Specialized support
- Training
- Youth Engagement in Violence Prevention
- Volunteer Programs
- Artisans and Women Designers
- Zero.O.Lab our in house brand

Visit us at
1092 Seymour Street
at Helmcken in Vancouver, BC
or call us at
604.687.0770

MY SISTER'S CLOSET Social Enterprise of Battered Women's Support Services

Mom's Clothing Swap @ My Sister's Closet

The baby & children's clothes are free!!
Beautiful selection of new and thrift baby & children's clothes available

Just trade them!
If you bring one or more pieces, you can get the same quantity of pieces in exchange!!

Baby

1092 Seymour Street at Helmcken in Vancouver, BC
604.687.0770
www.bwss.org | mrsp@bwss.org

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The Violence Stops Here

MY SISTER'S CLOSET
a social enterprise of Battered Women's Support Services



Women Arrests and Police Complaints

We must remain
Vigilant

By Angela Marie
MacDougall

Since 2008, Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) has been supporting a growing number of women accessing our services who have been arrested for allegedly perpetrating domestic violence against their partners. In our experience, these arrests are occurring despite the fact that in all cases the women were in relationships where their partners were abusing them.

In 2010, we participated in several meetings with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police/"E" Division Crime Prevention and Program Support Services, NCO I/C Program Support and Evaluation. RCMP "E" Division Crime Prevention and Program Support Services are in the process of making a number of changes to policy and procedures related to how they conduct domestic violence investigations. BWSS participated in the external consultation phase.

The consultation included:

1. Revisions to the "E" Division Violence in Relationships Policy.
2. Newly developed Domestic Violence Unit Policy.
3. The introduction of an Investigation Guide and Supervisor Quality Assurance form to replace the current ED 301 and 301-1 Domestic Violence check sheets.

Some results have been observed from these consultations, however, we are remaining vigilant as several recommendations we deemed essential to women's safety within the policy and practice revisions were left on the table by RCMP, specifically issues arising from women arrests. Further, BWSS has been challenged by a larger provincial agenda emphasizing "dual arrest" overshadowing the reality of women arrest. Though there are instances of "dual arrest", when both parties are arrested, which is also a concern, the policy development with a "dual arrest" emphasis has shifted the focus from the larger concern of increasing numbers and the chain of causation for women being arrested.

Presently in 2011:

1. BWSS is working with 28 cases where women have been arrested and our support and advocacy has involved a variety of strategies all dependent on the direction and guidance of each individual woman involved.
2. As co-complainant with women who have been arrested, BWSS filed three police complaints with the Office for Public Complaints Against the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).
3. Two of the three complaints have been resolved successfully; the third is currently under review.
4. In the two resolved complaints the RCMP acknowledged the police officers failed to follow several areas the Violence In Relationships (VIR) Violence Against Women In Relationships (VAWIR) Policy (the policy guiding their policing response in domestic violence cases) and failed to follow E" Division Operational Manual relating to Victim Service Programs and wrongfully arrested the battered women.
5. BWSS is currently preparing a fourth police complaint as co-complainant.
6. One RCMP jurisdiction has stood out with more wrongful arrests than any other in BC, BWSS

has met with and we are in ongoing conversation with their leadership. There is another very close second RCMP jurisdiction where we are working our way to engage the leadership there, too.

7. Many women who are being arrested are recent immigrants who speak little or no English.
8. BWSS has recently become aware that in the Okanagan there has been a spike in Immigrant women being arrested. We are currently seeking more information in order to ensure the women who been arrested in that region receive support and advocacy.
9. December 2010, Public Safety and Solicitor General, Attorney General, and Children and Family Development issued an updated Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy (VAWIR) which included "Police Release Guidelines" appendix updating the guidelines for municipal police and RCMP that were originally developed in 2005.

As we wrote in 2010, there are huge legal, social, economic and emotional consequences for women who are arrested, which may include:

- exclusion from transition houses and victim services programs (community and police based),
- involvement of MCFD,
- loss of child custody to a violent partner,
- the inability to find employment with a criminal conviction,
- incarceration,
- deportation and
- simply falling thru the cracks of a shrinking women's safety network.

These consequences add significantly to the burden already being shouldered by women who are dealing with the emotional, physical and spiritual impact of being a victim of relationship violence. Further, women's negative experience of the criminal justice system may in many cases increase vulnerability for further abuse.

We must remain vigilant, given the increasing prevalence of woman arrest, the provincial emphasis on "dual arrest" and the dire consequences of being arrested, it is critical that advocates are proactive in assisting women who have been arrested. Women who are arrested should be provided with appropriate information, support and advocacy. Our toolkit "When Battered Women are Arrested" is available on our website. We have appreciated the positive feedback from advocates and women who have found it useful.

Continued from page 1

to connect or reconnect with a community of women giving back to help other women find a way to live violence free. On Thursday, March 31, 2011, eight-six women attended our annual Volunteer Appreciation Event. Though we like to think we are demonstrating appreciation to women who volunteer with us every day, our annual event is the only time when all volunteers, staff and board members get together to acknowledge, recognize and celebrate their amazing work and contributions to ending violence against women.

Women who volunteer at BWSS are a true reflection of our communities and tell the story of women's survival and women's liberation. This year was our biggest and best event ever. With the microphone open, women shared their stories of the connections, relationships and positive impact volunteering at BWSS has made in their lives and the impact they've been able to make in the lives of other women, children and men.

Our staff team, women who are committing their lives to the work of ending violence against women as a personal mission statement dovetailing with the mission of Battered Women's Support Services. Indigenous women from Indigenous communities in Canada reaching out to Indigenous women living in the urban settings and on reserves linking the abuse in their intimate relationships to the very making of this nation as a nation and that personal safety is linked to Indigenous sovereignty. Recent Immigrant women delivering information, counselling, support groups in languages including Farsi, Punjabi and Spanish integrating critical cultural nuances that speak deeply and profoundly. BWSS Women counsellors working with women who are so impacted by lives filled with physical and sexual violence the trauma lives deep inside well after the abuser(s) have left assisting women unravel the experiences, piecing back together that which has been fractured, shattered...

Our board members, strong women leaders, leading change in their respective professional and personal lives while lending their wisdom and guidance to the governance and strategic direction of Battered Women's Support Services. Their strong leadership growing authentically from years of experience ending violence in the diverse communities of women and feminist organizing.

And the activism, BWSS staff team helping women prepare, then accompany and successfully advocate for Refugee women to achieve refugee status, when after 20+ years of dismissing deaths of marginalized women (disproportionately Indigenous women) our staff who occupied the Vancouver Police department and said in no uncertain terms "enough is enough", our staff who stand up to government policies like changes to Family Relations Act, restructuring of Bridging Employment programs, changes to immigration sponsorship that will disproportionately impact abused Immigrant women, proactively addressing bad practices in co-ed emergency shelters where women have been sexually assaulted, our staff who take the streets to stand up for women who are missing and who didn't survive. And who will do it again in a moment's notice.

Each amazing woman with a story of overcoming, embracing and embodying survival and empowerment; grounding herself in her personal experience fueling her forward to effective change in her life, in her relationships, in her community and in the larger society, like ripples in a pond reaching our larger community regionally, provincially, nationally and internationally.

It has taken a while to get to this issue of Women Making Waves, because we've been busy ending violence against girls and women. In this issue we celebrate our positive and effective change, inspiring stories, and all the amazing women who are ending violence.



Men Ending Violence

Over the past six years, Battered Women's Support Services has been pro actively working with men to urge men to own their role in ending violence against women.



We have centred our work at prevention rather than intervention. We have sought out and have been sought out by numerous men across Canada and the US. The work has evolved where we have been implementing violence prevention actions that include:

1. Social Media & Marketing
2. Internet Strategies
3. Workshops & Education
4. Cultural Events
5. Fundraising Activities

Our work has centred around recognizing that men relate to the issue of violence against girls and women in four interconnected & intersecting ways:

1. Men Who Use Power and Control in their relationships and interactions with girls and women (including physical and sexual violence)
2. Men Who Are Silent By-Standers
3. Men Who Are "Good Guys"
4. Activists

During National Crime Victim's Awareness Week – April 10–17, BWSS featured social media and web-based actions to further define these concepts while seeking engagement of men in being part of the solution.

MenEndingViolence



The Violence Stops Here



Please check our blog at www.bwss.org/endingviolence to stay up to date on Men Ending Violence work.

How BWSS' Legal Advocacy Empowered Me



In 2009 I found the courage to escape my abuser shortly after discovering I was pregnant. When I left, I was so traumatized that I couldn't even carry a proper conversation.

I looked into countless resources and eventually found Battered Women Support Services. Their legal advocacy services were probably the most important support I had.

Next began the daunting task of rebuilding my life, which included the legal system. I had never dealt with anything like it before and felt powerless. I spent a lot of time crying and complaining about how unfair the process was.

Finally, I came to the realization that no one was going to do this for me. If I wanted my life back, I would have to take action.

I started doing research. I looked into countless resources and eventually found Battered Women Support Services. Their legal advocacy services were probably the most important support I had. They put me in touch with appropriate representation and helped me acquire knowledge on how to navigate the legal system.

This gave me some control over my situation and began a snowball effect. I started to regain my confidence. I began to feel empowered and knew my voice had to be heard. As my self esteem grew, I became motivated to make positive changes in my life, including pursuing my education. All of these things have been important not only because they've help me improve my life, but they also gave me creditability in court. I gained the strength to stand up to my abuser in court. I knew that I would be believed!

My battles in court are still ongoing and it is possible that I may have to do this many more times in the future. However so far I have done well and my abuser has yet to gain access to my daughter. Had I not had help from legal advocacy and become informed, I am certain the outcome would not have been as positive. Although this experience may be one of the most difficult things I've ever been through, it has also been the most valuable. It has taught me that I am capable of success and that I can protect myself and my child.

WOMEN *making waves*



Women Making Waves is published by **Battered Women's Support Services**

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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.*

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Vancouver, BC V5L 5G2

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By Phone 604.687.1868 ext. 315
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Online www.bwss.org

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

Last Year...

Here's How We Delivered On Our Commitment

Court and Police accompaniment, victim impact statements, legal advocacy and crisis intervention
4,200 women

Legal Workshops & Pro-bono Legal Information **500 women**

42 support groups- Over **420** Sessions – **1,520 women**

3,550 one to one counselling sessions

Violence Prevention and Intervention Training Program – **42 women** attended

Crisis line calls **9,500**

Job search skills **105 women**

Outreach and Training Workshops **500**

HELP US to end violence against women



Make your donation today. Make a commitment, join BWSS' *Circle of Strength* monthly giving program