

WOMEN

making waves

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16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

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



10 December is International Human Rights Day! The day to celebrate and commemorate the creation and existence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Even though there are improvements of human rights across the world, girls and women continue to experience gender-based violence. Violence against women is "one of the paramount human rights problems of this century^[1]" and action is still very much needed for the freedom and liberation of girls and women. Each and every day at BWSS, we unify our knowledge, resources and services to take action.

On November 25, 2013, we announced our second annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. BWSS joined millions of activists from across Canada and around the world in a call for an end to gender-based violence and sought to engage individuals, communities, governments and the larger society to increase our response, to act and prevent gender-based violence. Throughout the 16 Days we sought to demonstrate how social structures, historical underpinnings, violent masculinities, harmful traditions, and legal policies help normalize gender-based violence and impunity. We shared resources and articles from activists, front-line workers, advocates and inspirational stories written by women who courageously share their experiences of resistance, of survival to raise awareness about gender-based violence as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional and international level. We also demonstrated how women, girls, boys and men are taking action, resisting violence, seeking safety, owning their role, teaching others, both here, in Canada, and around the world.

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bwss **Women Making Waves**
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supporting women facing
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Continued from cover

It may come as a surprise, but there is no country and no society which is not profoundly affected by gender-based violence. So it continues to be the responsibility of all of us to bring an end to this serious human rights violation. From Canada to Afghanistan, from the UK to Zimbabwe, the 16 Days Campaign is a powerful platform to help us find authentic ways to advocate for an end to gender-based violence.

16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women begins on November 25th, continues through December 6th and concludes on December 10th. Here's more about the significance of these dates:

On November 25, 1960, three Mirabel sisters were brutally assassinated for opposing the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic on the orders of the Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo. Since 1981, the date 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women has been marked as tribute to the Mirabel sisters and also as global recognition of gender violence by United Nations and activists.

December 6th is the **National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women**, is a day commemorated in Canada each December 6, the anniversary of the 1989 École Polytechnique massacre, in which fourteen women were singled out for their gender and murdered. It is often marked by vigils, discussions and other reflections on violence against women.

Human Rights Day is celebrated annually across the world on 10 December. The date was chosen to honor the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation, on 10 December 1948, of the Universal Declaration



of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of human rights and one of the first major achievements of the new United Nations. As one of the most pressing human rights issues, violence against women is fused with Human Rights Day.

During our 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign thousands of people participated in the conversations and took action. Thank you all for joining us and we hope you continue to be part of the conversations and to increase awareness.

Take action and make a difference...

Join our Circle of Strength

The word is out and everyday at Battered Women's Support Services we receive more crisis calls from women who are living in fear and with dominance and are seeking safety, We are receiving more and more requests from the community to provide our services. Join our Circle of Strength monthly giving program and become a vital partner in our chain of response... Your monthly donation is essential to deliver support services to women survivors of violence every day on our crisis lines, in counselling, and in support groups and to empower our community through training and education programs. With your contribution, together we are taking action to end gender violence. Donate today to commemorate 16 Days.

Donate – Join the movement, our movement, your movement.

Support My Sister's Closet, a social enterprise of BWSS

If you're in Vancouver, Coast Salish territory, stop by My Sister's Closet located at 1092 Seymour Street (at Helmcken) in Yaletown. As a community thrift boutique My Sister's Closet is a safe and welcoming space for community to engage with us and/or join our efforts in ending violence against women and girls, through beautiful thrift fashion for men and women and artisan designs.

Volunteer

Volunteer to prevent violence against women. There are many ways to support women survivors of violence and contribute our ending violence work. Battered Women's Support Services offers volunteer opportunities on our Crisis and Intake Line, within our Women's Safety and Outreach Program, at BWSS office, and at My Sister's Closet, social enterprise of BWSS. Learn more about how you can volunteer your time: <http://www.bwss.org/take-action/volunteer/>

Connect & Share

Social media has an empowering effect if you use it to voice your view.

Every day, log on to our Ending Violence blog at www.bwss.org/endingviolence to have information and tools for action and shift the culture of violence. We are always looking for articles to share with our amazing online community. If you have an article or wish to write, please email us with your idea at endingviolence@bwss.org.

Twitter is a fast, dynamic and effective way to communicate, join the conversation at @EndingViolence

[1] Half the Sky, page 'introduction' Nicolas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuD



services for women facing abuse

One in three women have been victims of assault by a spouse or partner

- Counselling & Advocacy
- Support Groups Program
- Aboriginal Women's Program
- Legal Advocacy Program
- Community-Based Victim Services Program
- Latin American Women's Program
- YUth Ending Violence Program
- A.W.A.R.E. Employment Program
- Education & Training
- Volunteer Program
- Retail Program & Social Enterprise



The Violence Stops Here



Over 30 Years Working to End Violence against Girls & Women

Hours: Mon-Fri 10am to 5pm
Wed 10am to 3pm
Counselling: 604-687-1867
Business: 604-687-1868
TTY: 604-688-9732
Email: intake@bwss.org
www.bwss.org



A Journey of Transformation through BWSS Volunteer Programs

By V.D.

As a newcomer to Vancouver, I started to look for a place to volunteer and contribute to the community. I knew I wanted to work with women and to be part of an organization that makes a difference. That is what brought me to Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS). I learned the number of women BWSS helped each year and all the services and programs they offer to meet with the needs of women. Supporting tens of thousands of women every year, BWSS makes a real difference in our community. And I wanted to be part of the solution by joining them.

When I connected with BWSS to volunteer on the crisis line, I was encouraged by a very welcoming and supporting message from the Crisis Line Coordinator. There was not available space for the training at that moment, but I was informed about other volunteer opportunities in the organization. And I started to volunteer as Office Volunteer and Retail Volunteer at My Sister's Closet.

Each role has a crucial importance at BWSS and everyone is very dedicated to provide best support for women. As an office

volunteer, I needed to keep myself updated about the work at BWSS because many times I was the first connection with women and community members through answering the business line and opening the doors to women. The day I started my work at the reception I have to say that I was very worried and nervous not only because English is second language, but also I had never used a (telephone switchboard) before and this was my first volunteer experience. However, with the support from BWSS staff and volunteers I felt so grounded. They helped me to develop my communications skills and I learnt so much about the job. The atmosphere at the office was great; you could feel the passion for the work these women have. This passion is contagious.

And each time I think about my volunteer experience at My Sister's Closet, words are not enough to say how I appreciated to work at this community thrift boutique.

I met wonderful people along the way, and also witnessed the importance of the support from the community. With the generous support from the community members who donate their clothing, every day My Sister's Closet generates funds for the programs that BWSS offers for thousands girls and women.

My experience in both programs could not have been more rewarding. I learned a lot from those amazing people and grew together. Volunteering at BWSS is transforming lives and enables you to make a significant contribution to ending violence work.

Volunteer

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

To get more information about volunteer opportunities email us at intake@bwss.org or call **604-687-1868**.



Awareness, Empowerment and Action

I contacted BWSS in October 2012 on the advice of an alcohol and drugs counsellor. I had suddenly become overwhelmed by trauma, intrusive thoughts and I knew I needed help.

By Elissa Bell

When I called BWSS, they ensured me they could help but I would need to be put on a waiting list. Six months later, I started a psycho-educational group with BWSS called Awareness, Empowerment and Action. I have since been in two trauma groups and a new Narrative group that is absolutely amazing!

I had never been able to feel for myself, or see anything as “abusive” if it happened to me. Here, at BWSS, that belief is being challenged. As I opened my heart to feel for the women in group, and cried with them, and felt angry for them, I began to see myself differently. This insight is now leading me to have some compassion for myself as well.



I come from a place that having heard so often that “it WAS my fault and didn’t deserve to live”. I believed it at 8 when I first contemplated taking my own life. For the next 7 years, family life just got worse. So at 15, I left home and thus began my goal of trying to get away from myself by partaking in many addictions – all just to get away from the pain and hurt of: sexual molestations; sexual assaults; incest; battery; bullying; group beatings; and spousal abuse. At 49 years old, I had not dealt with any of them. Today, I am a year into working on the physical traumas, I have a great support network set up, I am coming up to 12th years free from substance abuse, 8 years free from suicidal ideation, 10 years from being in a relationship and, I am a non-smoker!!! 4 ½ years now.

I am getting so much help from these women and am so grateful. What I see within myself is a new way of questioning, of challenging the old stories/beliefs. Who put them there? How are they affecting me? Do I want to take responsibility and do something different? And, because of the supporting, caring environment with BWSS, I plan on sticking around BWSS as long as they’ll have me.

I would want other women to know that it is worth the pain of digging in and finding our truths. It is permitted for us to share what we’ve been told to keep secret. There are people you don’t know yet, that you can help by telling your story and if you can’t tell your story yet, there is so much to gain of giving our time to listen to and validate another woman’s story. There is help. Yes!!! It is hard to ask for and harder still show up to get it, but it is only by doing this, by risking and taking chances that we can change. I don’t like what I’m going through, I cry, make weird honking noises, use my sleeve at times to wipe my nose and the tears away – but I’m ok with that today!!! I can feel for me now, a little, when I never could before.



"I am getting so much help from these women and am so grateful. What I see within myself is a new way of questioning, of challenging the old stories

Community Forum on Responding to Changes to Immigration:

Supporting Non-Status, Refugee and Immigrant Women Survivors of Gender Violence



On November 15th 2013, Battered Women's Support Services hosted a Community Forum on Responding to Changes to Immigration Policy, in partnership with The Migrant Mothers Project and YWCA Metro Vancouver. Over 50 front-line workers, counsellors, settlement workers, and community activists came together to learn and share knowledge. We reinforced our commitment to continue our collaboration and to increase our networks so we can affect change and attend to the inequalities that migrant women face within Canada's economic, social, legal and political systems. Inequalities that, more than often, deny basic rights to migrant women and their families.

Panelists Andrea Vollans, Legal Educator YWCA, Metro Vancouver, Rupaleem Bhuyan, Assistant Professor Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, Darla Tomeldan, Legal Advocate, West Coast Domestic Workers Association, Ai Li Lim, Executive Director and Staff Lawyer, West Coast Domestic Workers Association and Rosa Elena Arteaga, Manager of Direct Service and Clinical Practice, Battered Women's Support Services discussed:

- The many barriers that women and children with precarious immigration status face in Canada and how we can find safety and support for them
- How recent changes to immigration policy are impacting women and children
- The growing number of mothers without legal status, many of whom have been victims of violence
- How women's and community organizations across the province are supporting migrant mothers by addressing the systemic oppression that women face

We were very excited to collaborate with the Migrant Mother's Project, participatory action research project working with community based organizations in Toronto, Ontario to improve the lives of migrant women and their children. The Migrant Mothers Project explores how women with precarious immigration status in Canada seek safety and support from abuse for themselves and their children at times when accessing services is vital to their well-being.

With the aim of understanding women's migration and gendered violence, first of all, we have to acknowledge that there is a war against girls and women all over the world. From the moment a woman is born and her gender is defined as female, she will be oppressed and discriminated against. Migrant women flee from their countries for many reasons and one of the main reasons is the dismantling of their land. *"Women play a significant role in agriculture, the world over. About 70% of the agricultural workers, 80% of food producers, and 10% of those who process basic foodstuffs are women and they also undertake 60 to 90% of the rural marketing; thus making up more than two-third of the workforce in agricultural production.*"* Colonization, globalization and the domination of natural resources have taken away women's land ownership, access to and control over their own land.

Furthermore, force migration is prompted by women's experiences of gender violence and a broad spectrum of violence that girls and women face through their lives, which includes gender oppression, gender persecution, political persecution, femicide, war, economic violence and the impacts of colonization and globalization.

By Rosa Elena Arteaga
Manager of Direct Service and Clinical Practice



Women are continually forced to leave their land and migrate to a foreign country where they will be discriminated against based on their social location. Racialized and marginalized migrant women face the most oppressive and unsafe alternatives to flee from their countries and they, are not just simply allowed to enter Canada, they are screened and chosen based on the immigration laws and the policies implemented by the current governmental administration.



In our experience, migrant women have always faced structural barriers and we have taken action to address those barriers at systemic and individual level.

Once a migrant woman makes it into Canada, she might have been trafficked- or she might have come as a refugee claimant, through sponsorship, on visitor's visa, under temporary work permit or undocumented, among other alternatives. Her immigration status will play a huge role on the level of barriers and oppression that she will face as well as the services available to her. Many migrant girls and women will continue experiencing all forms of violence such as physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse from intimate partners, family members or extended family. The process of migration and a precarious immigration status makes girls and women more vulnerable to experience further violence, by the state, by employers, and within their relationships.

With this in mind, we, at Battered Women Support Services support migrant women with precarious immigration status, non-status, refugee claimants and permanent residents who have or are experiencing violence. We are strongly committed to understanding and recognizing that migrant women don't "just come" to Canada, migrant women flee from their countries under extreme circumstances and with an immense need for support to overcome the impacts of gendered violence, the impact of migration and the complex process of adaptation. We have taken many steps to ensure that we provide the appropriate support but also that we affect systemic change.

We provide support to all migrant girls and women who access our services. Through our feminist, intersectional and decolonizing approach, we recognize that migrant women deal with shared "cultural" as well as individual and unique experiences. This acknowledgment of the collective and individual needs

requires caring and compassionate assistance and support. In our work supporting migrant women, we walk along side each woman with an understanding that migrant women face huge social isolation and many structural barriers related to their precarious status and social location.

Our specialized services include but are not limited to:

1. Assistance navigating the legal system,
2. Including education and information about the Canadian legal system,
3. Assistance to access legal support including referrals to lawyers from our selected list of lawyers,
4. Accompaniment and support in order to attend refugee hearings,
5. Assistance to access basic supports such as food/clothing/furniture, health services, shelters and transition houses, advocacy and support to obtain social assistance, education,
6. Information and support about child protection and parenting,
7. Language specific counselling and support groups, assistance and
8. Advocacy to apply for social housing.

In our experience, migrant women have always faced structural barriers and we have taken action to address those barriers at systemic and individual level. In 2011, we responded to the Balanced Refugee Reform Act (Bill C-11) and exposed the impacts that those changes were going to have on refugee women. In Gender Persecution and Refugee Law in Canada written by Lobat Sadrehashemi, we expressed our concern about making more difficult for women fleeing gender-related persecution to be able to make their stories understood by decision-makers at the Immigration Refugee Board (IRB). We think that there will be many women who slip through the cracks, who do not have access to legal counsel. The current changes on the immigration policies have only increased the structural barriers. These barriers are putting migrant women at risk and depending on an immigration status; they are limited in their ability to access basic services such as health services, income assistance, legal support, and safe shelter. Furthermore, it will limit their right to protection because many migrant women would not call the police and expose the violence they are experiencing for fear of deportation.

We strongly believe

Services and a strong collaboration among service providers, at municipal, provincial, national and international level, is vital to migrant women's capacity to overcome the impact of gendered violence, forced migration and adaptation.

that continued access to a full range of programs such as services offered by Battered Women's Support

Services and a strong collaboration among service providers, at municipal, provincial, national and international level, is vital to migrant women's capacity to overcome the impact of gendered violence, forced migration and adaptation.

*http://www.wikigender.org/index.php/Women_and_Agriculture



By Mia K.

My memories of My Sister's Closet and BWSS reach back into my childhood. As a kid growing up with a single mom, we always found great prices at My Sister's Closet. I was so happy to get books and toys that we would not have been able to afford brand new. I distinctly remember when my mom went to a BWSS parenting workshop and I played and ate noodles while I waited for her. After that

My Volunteering experience at My Sister's Closet

workshop, my mom changed the way we did things at home and thanks to that parenting workshop, I grew up with the mentality that if we live together we must help each other out and not just force one person to do all the work. I also began to develop independent life skills that are preparing me for life as an adult.

My mom has a sheet of paper that she got from BWSS that says "model of a healthy relationship". She taped it to our storage room wall and I remember as a child reading it curiously, not knowing where it came from, but still storing what I read in my mind. Every time I walked into the storage room I saw that paper, and eventually it became ingrained in me. Today, having realized how I and those around me deserve to be treated, I make sure all my relationships abide by that model.

I started volunteering at My Sister's Closet this past April 2013. I decided to come to My Sister's Closet because I knew what it stands for and supports, having shopped there before, and wanted to give back to community the best way I could. It has been wonderful experience. I do not only work with great clothes, but also work with many wonderful people with different skills and personalities. In the past, I had trouble fitting in, particularly in high school, but My Sister's Closet feels just like a community. Everyone has something different to bring to the table; everyone has a different way to solve a problem. The volunteers at My Sister's Closet are a diverse group and it is a joy every time I meet a different volunteer.

At My Sister's Closet I learn to be accommodating because everyone has a different opinion. I develop my skills as a team player rather than an individual worker as I would usually do. We each play our strengths and cover for each other's weaknesses and this is what makes a team work well. Coming to volunteer at the store feels like a breath of fresh air amidst the constant flood of schoolwork. I always feel like I am doing something useful when I am able to come in and leave my frustrations behind to be surrounded by everyone's good energy, whether that be on shift, just coming into shop, or at a volunteer network meeting. Thanks to My Sister's Closet, I feel such emotional fulfilment that material things could not give me; the fact that.

My Sister's Closet

your community thrift boutique

A MODE for women, men, businesses, retailers, film industry to participate in ending violence against women

SHOP for vintage, eco fashion, thrift, local woman artisans' creations

DONATE women & men's clothing & accessories

VOLUNTEER with My Sister's Closet

Located at
1092 Seymour Street
Yaletown, Vancouver

OPEN 7 DAYS
MONDAY-THURSDAY 10am to 6pm
FRIDAY 10 am to 7 pm
SATURDAY 11 am to 7 pm
SUNDAY 12 pm to 6 pm

FOR MORE INFORMATION
samantha@bwss.org

604.687.0770

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

MSC_BWSS

www.facebook.com/groups/BWSSmysisterscloset/





My Sister's Closet

Fashion Forward to end Violence Against Women · **A YEAR IN REVIEW**

By **Samantha Kearney,**

Manager of Retail Services and Programs

This will be a challenge to condense a year at My Sister's Closet, social enterprise of BWSS, into a few paragraphs...however, will take the challenge on as we do at BWSS and go forward!

Throughout 2013 our lil boutique has been buzzing! I would say it is rare if a day goes by at our shop without good energy, excitement, organizing, and hard work all to end violence against women. Now this is due to all our supporters: shoppers, clothing donors, and volunteers. A huge thank you goes out to each one of you and to each of our volunteers who gave their time, energy, skill, and often their heart to doing all we can in generating much needed funds for BWSS critical prevention and intervention services and programs.

community takes a needed pause to reflect and find meaningful indulgences for a social purpose, for social justice. We take action to address these global concerns through local solutions. We will continue to bring our zero-waste and ending violence messages to Vancouver Eco Fashion Week in the New Year.

Crazy Cat Days at My Sister's Closet in collaboration with Sound Radio Therapy bringing awareness to mental health and dismantling the harmful stigma surrounding ones facing such issues.

Sarah Jamieson, local community member, who runs each year in memory and honor of her mother who experienced violence and whose life was taken due to its impact. Wanting to support BWSS ending violence work, Sarah donated half of the donations received from her sponsors to BWSS.

A more recent collaboration which will continue on in the New Year was with Blanche MacDonald College. Styling classes conducted by Fashion Director Tyler Udall came to our boutique to have their actual class in store. It was so wonderful to meet and introduce future fashion professionals to a local shop with social purpose and to show how thrift, vintage, and eco fashion clothing can be styling & chic! More who shop local and thrift the less waste to our landfills each year!

2013 also brought two new local artisans to our shop: Mojgan Abolhassani who brings her beautiful spiritual healing art on canvas and Jenna Sokalski who brings her fresh and funky art on buttons, cards, and books. Also a number of youth groups from the Greater Vancouver area who visited our shop to hear more about what we do, why it is important, and see how they can support our efforts. A number of them then decided to join our volunteer team as their way of giving back and doing their part.

thank you...
Our team of
volunteers in
2013

Ailin, Andrea, Ava, Barbara, Beatriz, Carol, Christine, Connie, Dalena, Debbie, Dianna, Doreen, Emily, Emma, Ester, Figen, Fran, Gillian, Gursharn, Hao Ying, Helena, Heather, Irene, Jacqui, Jaclyn, Joanne, Josie, Kathryn, Katia, Kim, Leilan, Lesley, Levana, Lissa, Lise, Lousana, Mary, Mia, Mik Yung, Nanae, Olivia, Paige, Pamela, Penny, Rebecca, Ruby, Sally, Sanam, Shelley, Stephanie, Su, Tina, Toni, Vuitton, Wilma, and Yuka



Looking over the year we have had a number of amazing collaborations of supporting one another and our interconnected missions. Just to name a few:

As a community, sustainable and socially progressive enterprise My Sister's Closet took its place in Eco Fashion Week 6th and 7th Editions. The clothing, textile and fashion industry represents more than \$300 billion of annual revenue worldwide and is one of the most damaging industries to our planet. Our

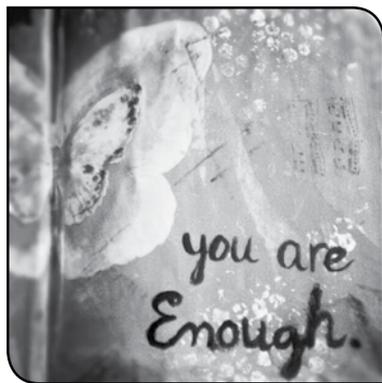
2013 brought so much more to our lil boutique!

To hear more and to know about future events at My Sister's Closet, please join us on **Facebook** and **Twitter** @MSC_BWSS. If you would like to receive our monthly e-letter, please send your email address to

samantha@bwss.org

Supporting
self-determined,
embodied, and
sex-positive healing
for survivors
of trauma

Reclaiming Our Sexual Selves



This Fall 2013, women gathered together in **Reclaiming Our Sexual Selves** to explore the ways that we, as women, have experienced the impacts of sexualized oppression and trauma. Participants engaged in the brave work of exploring two often silenced and disconnected subjects: women's sexuality and healing from violence/abuse.

In this group, women shared a safe space to identify the impacts of violence/abuse on their sexual selves, explore practices for embodied healing, and discover their own unique approach to sexuality. Much of our work involved self-reflection and discussion of deeply rooted beliefs about sex and sexuality.

For survivors of sexualized violence, sex and sexuality were targeted for

abuse. Sexualized violence teaches many damaging and dehumanizing beliefs about sex and self, including that sex is secretive, hurtful, and uncontrollable. For survivors of physical, emotional, and/or sexualized abuse, our sense of trust and safety in ourselves, our bodies, our relationships, and the world is profoundly undermined.

Survivors come up against blame, silence, and shame placed on them by not only abusers, but often their surrounding communities and culture at large. For many women, messages that their bodies are not their own, that their bodies are vulnerable and problematic, and that they are responsible for protecting their bodies from abuse has meant a disconnection from their bodies as a site of safety, intimacy, pleasure, and wisdom.

Throughout **Reclaiming Our Sexual Selves**, women shared their varied and diverse experiences of oppression, trauma, survival, resistance, desire, self-acceptance, and resiliency. Healing from abuse and reclaiming sex and sexuality is a uniquely individual experience for all survivors, shaped by our unique identities and lived realities. It can be uncomfortable work, unsettling deeply ingrained

patterns of behaviour and thought, but the potential for sexual healing to be a site for a holistic healing of the self has made this process deeply rewarding for women in this group. Reclaiming sex and sexuality for ourselves can also be a meaningful form of resistance against sexualized oppression and the devaluing of women's bodies through other forms of oppression.

Women shared that healing sex may or may not involve an intimate partner and that a "healing vacation from sex" and/or reclaiming a sexual relationship with themselves is a central part of their healing process. Women valued the opportunity to define sexuality for themselves – finding and building their own sense of what they want, based in their own needs, feelings, values, and desires.

It is our hope to not only continue to offer **Reclaiming Our Sexual Selves** support groups at BWSS, but to cultivate awareness and competencies within the broader anti-violence movement to support self-determined, embodied, and sex-positive healing for survivors of trauma.

**By Emma Ellison &
Lauren Shay**



"I know this sounds cliché by now, but never give up. Seek out help and don't give in to the little voice that says you can go it alone. Healing treatments have improved over the years. Dedicate some time for healing. It does get easier and you will be glad you started the healing journey."

A.H. – group participant



The Truth about the “Truth and Reconciliation Process”

By Terriea Harris
Indigenous
Women’s Outreach
Counsellor

She was taken by Indian Agents from her community and put on a bus towards a destination unknown. Upon arrival, her hair was cut, her traditional clothes changed to a generic uniform, she is forbidden to speak her language, sing her songs or deal with the abuse by the hands of priest and nuns. As she recounts her story, a camera shines its glaringly bright lights, while another media camera weaves in and out amongst the witnesses, zooming in for a close ups of reactions to the horrific details she shares. She gets to the part where she speaks

of the ongoing impact of the abuse she endured and breaks down, crying uncontrollably. I cannot hold in my tears any longer, watching an elder’s body physically collapse to the point where she needs to be held up by supporters is too much to bear. A woman comes over and asks for my tissue with my tears in it; the tissues are to be burned in the sacred fire. The tears keep flowing and I acknowledge that my sadness is only secondary to my anger.

As some have argued, it should not be the responsibility of survivors to educate the rest of society of the institutionalized abuse and neglect they experienced because of racist, colonial, governmental policies executed by the church. While, the Indigenous Women’s Program at BWSS was present at the Truth and Reconciliation events held at the Pacific National Exhibition, it was not without reservation as to how the “retelling”- done in a way that more resembled “reliving” of the traumatic experience- could be re-victimizing for residential school survivors.

Being mindful of the potential impact for re-victimization, the Indigenous Women’s Program (IWP) was present throughout the events to support. We integrated traditional healing modalities such as smudging with the opportunity for women survivors to connect one-on-one throughout the 4 days. Women that access the IWP program at BWSS, as well as, women that access BWSS’ Women’s Safety and Outreach Program expressed gratitude to be able to smudge or connect whenever needed.

As the Indigenous Women’s Outreach Counsellor, part of my work is to connect with women from the Downtown Eastside (DTES) Community. Indigenous



This space to be “listened to” and to “not be judged”

women are overrepresented in the community. When we analyze Indigenous Women’s experience in the context of the collective trauma experienced as a result of Colonization and its ongoing racist power over mandate, we have a population of women and girls that are constantly being “overlooked” thereby, making them vulnerable to predators. I believe this is why some of the women that I connect with shared that they found the truth and reconciliation process to be a positive experience. For 4 days, during The Truth and

Reconciliation, women did not have to justify coping with substances or justify the reasons why she engages in survival sex work or be asked about the pattern of abusive relationships.

Indigenous women and girls of the DTES community experience violence and abuse at disproportionate rates. When women of the community engage with our Women’s Safety and Outreach Program as to what their needs are, violence is too often viewed as “the norm”, therefore, support around her experience of violence is minimized in favour of getting her basic needs met such as housing and food. During the TRC, the spotlight was on her *experience* of racist Colonial practices of the residential school system and the impact it has on her today. She was given space to feel as though she would not be judged or blamed for her experience, rather her experience could potentially be understood and facilitate a dialogue within the context of Colonial practices.

This space to be “listened to” and to “not be judged” is of a high priority for all the programming we engage in at BWSS, but is fundamental to the Women’s Safety and Outreach Program. In this program, we engage with women where they are at- literally and figuratively. We recognize the many intersecting oppressions that women of the community are navigating. We provide services that are low barrier and survivor-centric. During the Truth and Reconciliation, the IWP collaborated with The Women’s Safety and Outreach Program (WSAOP), to ensure that support services were available both day and evening. Some women shared that they needed to be in nature, and the WSAOP accompanied them to Stanley Park where they could have time to reflect on the day’s events.

The New Family Law Act

Implications for Battered Women and Our Legal Advocacy Work

By Rosa Elena Arteaga

Manager of Direct Service & Clinical Practice



In March 2013, the new Family Law Act (FLA) replaced the Family Relations Act. We started taking action immediately in order to ensure we were prepared to best support women to navigate the new law in the pursuit of justice. Through our Legal Advocacy Program funded by the Law Foundation of BC, we have been offering legal support and information to battered women who are dealing with the Canadian legal system for over twenty years. As part of our commitment to eradicate violence against girls and women we are continually working on law reform and supporting women in our community legal education through our publications and through training. It is impossible to only talk about Family Law in isolation from the other laws as the majority of women who access our services are interfacing with several areas of the law concurrently.

Our work related to the new FLA:

1 In 2010, we submitted our recommendations for the White Paper Battered Women Support Services Response to White Paper on Family Relations Act: Reform Proposals for a New (FLA).

2 Ever since, we have continued our work on this important matter. As part of our innovative work, we co-hosted a forum with West Coast LEAF and UBC law professor Susan Boyd Susan Boyd's presentation: Women Violence BC New Family Law: Applying a Feminist Lens March 9, 2012. In addition, we hosted and attended a number of meetings with our networks to address the legal needs of battered women.

3 Angela Marie MacDougall, BWSS Executive Director, co-hosted a series of radio talks with W2 Morning Radio Project broadcasts on Co-op Radio 102.7 FM Women, Violence and the Law – W2 Morning Project on Co-op Radio, in March 2012.

4 On October 2012, we joined other groups and anti-violence organizations and submitted recommendations for government ministries and professional bodies who are creating regulation, policy, or professional training pursuant to the (FLA) Recommendations on Regulation, Policy and Training Developed Pursuant to the British Columbia Family Law Act. When developing these recommendations the

goal was to ensure that the application of the (FLA) through regulations, policies, and professional training requirements is informed by the lived conditions of women who have experienced violence.

5 Together with Atira Women's Resource Society, Battered Women's Support Services, Women Against Violence Against Women, and the YWCA of Metro Vancouver, we came together to endorse the recommendations in the Imagining Courts that Work for Women. This report was developed through the collaborative efforts of the Jane Doe Advocates' Group.

6 This report began in 2009 with an informal conversation among anti-violence workers and on October 6th, 2010 Angela Marie MacDougall participated in a panel where we were joined by the Representative for Children and Youth British Columbia, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, public forum, exploring the benefits and pitfalls of domestic violence courts. This report offers recommendations for achievable reforms and effective program development, grounded in the perspectives of women who have been through the justice system as survivors of violence and the agencies that work with women every day.

7 We remain vigilant on the issue of women arrest while we continue supporting battered women who are faced with their own arrest and have to navigate the Criminal Justice System. For the last three years, we have developed printed resources for front-line workers and battered

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Continued from previous page

women who are dealing with the issue of women arrest When Battered Women are Arrested: A Growing Problem.

8 We cannot talk about Family Law without talking of other laws and specifically about Immigration Law, the current changes and its impacts. On May, 2012, we issued a media release to expose the impacts of Bill C-31, "The Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act," and the implementation of new changes to immigration policy and procedure that are going to severely impact refugees escaping from violence and persecution, particularly women, queer and trans-identified individuals, and their families.

9 April 2011, Lobat Sadrehashemi, Immigration Law Lawyer wrote an article for Battered Women's Support Services on Gender Persecution and Refugee Law Reform in Canada. This article was updated in 2012 due to the fact that in June 2012 Bill C-11 was replaced by Bill C-31.

10 In 2012, through Idle No More, Indigenous People across Canada draw our attention to the treaties and the Canadian law as it relates to Indigenous people and Canada. When we talk about violence against Indigenous women there is more legal analysis required in understanding the relationship between Indigenous Law, the Indian Act, the Canadian Law and the BC New Family Act. The Idle No More movement has commanded us to be on the right side of history.

11 Annie Zhang, former BWSS Legal Advocate wrote (FLA) Guide-The New (FLA) and its Implication for Battered Women. As part of our commitment to eradicate violence against girls and women we are continually working on law reform and supporting women in our community through our publications.

12 We were also part of the consultation for '(FLA) Plain Language Guide' that provides basic information on the new (FLA) for women who are leaving or thinking about leaving an abusive relationship.

13 In January 2013, Taruna Arora joined Battered Women's Support Services as Legal Advocate and began supporting women during the implementation of the new act. Taruna has worked hard to support women navigate through the numerous forms and requirements as women continue to not have access to Legal Aid due to funding cuts. Taruna has delivered training workshops supporting advocates from across BC better respond to the new (FLA) including delivering a workshop during BC Society of Transition Houses Annual Forum.

14 In October 2013, Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director joined the faculty at Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia (CLEBC) in the delivery of Family Violence Screening Training for Litigators and Dispute Resolution Professionals focusing her presentation on Gender Violence, power and control in relationships and implications for women navigating the legal systems. Our

involvement in this training is significant because the new (FLA) emphasizes out-of-court dispute resolution, and creates new duties for "family dispute resolution professionals" which are defined by the FLA as mediators, arbitrators, and parenting coordinators. BWSS has been critical of the application of dispute resolution when abuse and/or violence is present in relationships.

After eight months since the new act has been in effect, BC hasn't be able to determine if new domestic violence protection orders are being provided, how many have been properly enforced, violated or prosecuted in court. The new protective orders came into effect in March 2013, as part of changes to the new (FLA). The move was intended to protect mainly children and women from harassment or violence by replacing old restraining orders with new protection orders. Violation of a protection order is a criminal offence. Historically, we have noted that police frequently fail to enforce protection orders. Boosting protection orders was a key recommendation in two-high profile tragedies — the murder of six-year-old Christian Lee by his father in Oak Bay in 2007, and the 2008 deaths of three children in Merritt by their mentally ill father, Allan Schoenborn.

We remain vigilant. Since our inception until present day we remain steadfast in our commitment to legal advocacy through supporting individual women navigate the matrix of laws and the legal system, through law reform, legal research, writing publications with legal information, public awareness campaigns and education and training workshops for professionals.



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