

# WOMEN

## *making waves*

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## BWSS Seeks Law Reform for Women

Many women who access the BWSS Legal Advocacy Program are representing themselves in court or finding it necessary to prepare and manage their own family law cases. This is a direct result of financial, social, or cultural barriers that foster inequality and perpetuate the abuse that has already occurred.



BATTERED WOMEN'S  
SUPPORT SERVICES

BWSS has partnered with the Law Foundation of BC to expand legal advocacy services for women survivors of violence. On February 15, 2008, BWSS will offer a Legal Resource Room for women who are preparing to represent themselves in court. Women will have access to computers, the Internet, software, print and other resources so that they can research and prepare for their court appearances.

This resource is our response to what is a reality for many women. BWSS seeks to arm women with information so that they can have a chance as they seek justice. The real question, however, is why our legal system requires that women must appear in court without legal representation. Women arrive at court every day to present their cases in front of a judge while their abusive partners or husbands stand a few feet away from them. These women often have limited or no English language skills, no legal training, and no lawyer while their partner or husband almost always has the benefit of legal representation or lawyers.

In late 2007, BWSS submitted a Family Relations Act Review to the Justice Services Branch of the BC Ministry of the Attorney General. This review highlighted the BWSS position that recent changes and revisions in family law have increasingly resulted in gaps in the family legal process that contribute to the oppression of women. Many women who find they need to self-represent are immigrant women who do not speak English as a first language.

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### BWSS has submitted a proposal for a sponsored law student to:

- Investigate how family law case outcomes can differ when women have or do not have access to legal representation or support
- Uncover barriers in legal processes or programs that are postulated to help women from a legal perspective
- Establish the viability of existing legal aid options and demonstrate how legal avenues may be exploited by abusers to ensure ongoing oppression of women
- Examine the outcomes of cuts and revisions in Family Law that have a particular impact on Immigrant or Aboriginal women in our community

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The issue of women needing to self-represent is an important one for our legal system to resolve. BWSS is bringing the voices of women affected by this imbalance of access to our initiatives and quest for law reform.

### In This Issue

Women who are involved at Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS), write about their experiences. A significant number of women of African heritage access our services, act as volunteers, and collaborate

and work with us. This issue of 'Women Making Waves' is a reflection of the increase in the presence of people of African descent in British Columbia and the Lower Mainland, and it also reflects our longstanding commitment to diversity at BWSS.

The enduring quest for freedom was the focus at abolitionist sites I visited last year in France with a delegation of international journalists. While in a museum honouring such efforts in a small town near Paris, I was introduced to Lionel Etienne, the Haitian Ambassador to France. I knew that Governor General Michaëlle Jean, a long time advocate for battered women and the first black woman to serve as Canada's ceremonial head of state, had immigrated to Montreal from Haiti as a teen, and so I mentioned her name to the Ambassador.



Image source: The Office of the Secretary to the Governor General

# Governor General Michaëlle Jean was the bridge between us.

**By Evelyn C. White**

“You know Michaëlle?” he asked, appearing stunned by my familiarity with her history and background. “Well, not personally,” I responded, “but I’ve read about her and I am inspired by her achievements.”

Thrilled to discuss the spectacular rise of a “native daughter,” Etienne turned from a museum display. “We are very proud of her,” he said, his face beaming. “She is a beacon of light for immigrants all over the world.”

As a black woman and product of the US Civil Rights Movement who was born in Chicago and now resides in Canada, I learned of Jean’s landmark appointment to Governor General in August 2005 from the front page of a newspaper emblazoned with the headline: “Royal Role for ‘True Citizen’”.

I have also borne witness to the ascent of black women in the past 30 years including media mogul Oprah

Winfrey, Nobel Literature Laureate Toni Morrison and tennis champions Venus and Serena Williams. To say nothing of Mae Jemison who, in 1992, became the first black woman astronaut. With her work as a mission specialist Jemison gave new meaning to the “follow the North Star” directive that prompted enslaved blacks to seek freedom in Canada via the Underground Railroad.

Still, there was something about Jean’s status as a former refugee who’d fled the brutal Duvalier regime in Haiti that struck me as emblematic of the sweeping possibilities for present day émigrés to Canada. Offering poignant words during her swearing-in ceremony Jean said “The story of that little girl, who watched her parents, her family and her friends grappling with the horrors of a ruthless dictatorship, who became the woman standing before you today, is a lesson in learning to be free.”

Abolitionist sites are readily accessible and provide educational and uplifting adventures for all who believe in the principles of freedom, justice and equality that elevated an immigrant from Haiti to one of the most prestigious positions in Canada

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**Evelyn C. White** is a 5 graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. She earned a Master’s degree in public administration from Harvard University and is a 1976 graduate of Wellesley College. Ms. White is Alice Walker official biographer and author of the acclaimed biography *Alice Walker: A Life* (W.W. Norton, 2004). She is also the author of *Chain Chain Change: For Black Women in Abusive Relationships* (Seal Press, 1994), among others.

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I was born in the West African country of Liberia. In 1990 a senseless civil war resulted in the assassination of the President and the removal of the government. More groups joined in and began killing innocent people. When the civil war started people sought safety in Ghana, the US, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Nigeria, and South Korea because they feared prosecution and death. Mothers and children became separated from each other.

I was beaten, slashed with a knife, held at gunpoint, sexual violated, kicked in my stomach, and thrown to a cement floor. I fled to Ghana with my two children and stayed at a refugee camp for seventeen unbroken years. My brother was killed in the camp and if you saw a picture of his body you would not think that was a person. His wife is still there with their young daughter. Who knows what is going to happen to them.

In the camp I was pleased to work as the coordinator for women and children for the executive Liberian Refugee Welfare Council. I was a leader for the Women's Initiative with Self Empowerment (WISE) crisis response team and we took the cases of victims of all sorts of abuses and violence. We handled follow-ups with the police, hospitals, and the court, and the women were able to request funds to start businesses, trades, attend school, or receive skills training.

From 1990 until I left the camp there was some improvement. Women learned that they had rights. African women find it difficult to talk about domestic violence because of our practices and beliefs. If a man pays a dowry for you it gives him ownership rights so how can you persecute someone who owns you? We learned a lot through the WISE awareness programs and the lectures on violence and abuse. We helped women realize that what happened to them was not their fault and that society had a part to play as well as the abuser. Society has made it acceptable for women to be abused.

When a woman experiences rape, it is very difficult for her to report it and she is labeled "damaged" or called a

"prostitute" or told that she "wanted it". With those labels it is very difficult for a woman to find a husband. The man who commits rape is viewed as a good man or even a strong man. The stigma makes women behave like "snails" that retreat quickly and have to walk on eggshells as a result of fear.

Just before I came to Canada, WISE was making a positive impact on the number of cases of domestic violence and now Ghana's parliament has passed a bill that allows WISE to continue their work. There may be a way to develop a connection with BWSS because WISE does violence prevention work as well as intervention work with children, youth and women in the same way as BWSS.



*I will take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to all the countries and their peoples who continue to help the resettlement of Liberian refugees.*

*I am appealing to other countries, organizations and individuals to help with resettlement of Liberians in Ghanaian refugee camps.*

The UN is not giving everyone food in the refugee camp but only feeds the elderly, the children and the most vulnerable. How do you determine the most vulnerable? When you are a refugee you are all vulnerable.

What makes me very happy about being here in Canada is the security. I am not afraid someone will come and kill me. I was glad to leave the refugee camp but I can't go home to Liberia. Some people I met in the camp have voluntarily returned to Liberia are believed to have died from frustration.

I've been in Vancouver for just four months. The United Nations have refugee/immigration programs and they choose where you will go. When I arrived, the Immigrant Services Society saw my resume and gave me a placement to do my practicum at BWSS.

My experiences here in Canada are okay but it's too early for me to determine. There are so many differences in culture. I miss my food. I miss my people. I miss my family, the friends I met in the refugee camp, and the women and children I worked with through WISE. I was hoping to find work similar to what I did in the camp but it is taking longer than I thought.

*Let there be  
peace in  
the world.  
Let there be  
an end to  
violence*

**Submitted by:  
"K" – a woman  
who accesses  
services at BWSS**

# What it's like being a Black Woman in the world.



I was born in Toronto to an interracial family of six kids. Growing up was hard and as a young child, then a teen, I went to special schools. Kids would call me "nigger". They would gang up on me and push me against a wall, not letting me go. A student threatened to bring a gun to school and kill me. I was thrown in the mud and once I was tossed from the back of a bus when the doors opened.

I was born into this world as a black child and now I am a grown woman. But where do I fit in? It's been very painful and yet I have resisted the racism and discrimination in order to pursue my life and define myself.

When I was living in London, Ontario, I volunteered at a nursing home and was the top Recreational Assistant for five months. When my supervisor left, she promised me that I would still have that position. After she left, I was told that I was no longer needed.

The same thing happened when I babysat at a hotel. When my supervisor left, they let me go.

Moving to Vancouver in 1998 was the same experience of people and their racial prejudice. I was pushed against a pole on the Skytrain. I was in shock and I was bruised from the hip down. I have also been discriminated against because of my mental challenges.

I volunteered at Family Services of Greater Vancouver in New Westminster for two years. I looked after and cared for children from birth to five years old. I would rock the babies to sleep. I organized play activities, and arts and crafts, and I read stories. Government cutbacks ended this.

What help me persevere are the positive things I do for myself. I have been in the support group for three years, doing Trauma 1 and Healing Trauma through Art and seeing my BWSS counsellor. I get my strength from writing, poetry, playing the organ, yoga, and lighting my candles for healing.

# Bi Racial

**By "G"**

**a woman who accesses services  
at BWSS**

I was born in Guatemala to a Salvadorian mother and an African American father. I experienced discrimination from a very early age.

I grew up with my maternal family in a place where I was the only person of colour. All through childhood and adolescence I questioned myself. Why I was born so different from all my family? Why were my coloured features so evident? Nobody taught me to love and learn about my roots and I always felt like a stranger in my own country.

Here in Canada when Hispanic people ask where I am from they are surprised when I say Guatemala. They tell me that I don't look Guatemalan. They say that I am so black but tell me not to 'feel bad' about it. They think automatically that I feel bad about being black and that they help me feel good by saying that.

I have been a single mother for 14 years. I educated myself and I am proud to be bi-racial and grateful to God and life for having had the chance to immigrate to Canada. For the first time I can express my feelings and live freely. My children are growing up in a multicultural country where I teach them to love themselves and respect others, not care about race, religion or sexual orientation.

It is not easy being discriminated against. But life has taught me that I have to live and let live and treat others the way that I want to be treated — not to make generalizations because we are not all the same.





# An Ethic of Resistance

## Frontline worker as activist

By Vikki Reynolds

**I believe that frontline work dealing with violence is *activism* and a collective resistance to an unjust society. Frontline workers are asked by society to deal with the life experiences of people whose human rights are ignored or abused. The cost of this unjust society falls on both the impoverished and the frontline workers who struggle alongside them and bear witness to the suffering that other citizens have the privilege of choosing not to see. This inherently political work requires an *Ethic of Resistance* that takes a position for justice.**

Activism is not just tolerable but necessary. I am a professional and I have never been neutral about sexual abuse, torture or violence. An *Ethic of Resistance* is not apolitical, and invites an overt and just positioning of the frontline worker.

I am often identified as political, a political frontline worker, a political activist. Of course all frontline workers are political; we deal in relationships of power. There has been scrutiny of politically located workers and some concerns that we may be “doing politics” with the people we work alongside. My supervisory experience informs me that frontline workers who are co-located as activists are more aware of their power, and the supervisory relationship addresses the need to de-center their activism in the helping relationship. Workers who identify as neutral and non-political may not acknowledge their access to power or their political locations. They are more likely, then, to replicate both acts of power-over and status quo agendas in the helping relationship.

Accommodating people to private lives of hell is not something any of us wants to do. But if we reflect on our practice this is a possibility, given the helping fields’ connections to ideals and values of neutrality and objectivity. Many progressive frontline workers have spoken of the activist analysis of private pain-public issue where an individual woman is judged as an unfit mother and held responsible for the squalor of her children’s lives. There is rarely acknowledgement of the welfare poverty, the level of men’s violence in their lives, and the contexts of racism and colonization in which they live. Naming these injustices is activism, and not naming them is equally political. An *Ethic of Resistance* requires that we name the unjust problems and not simply blame people or make up a story that seeks to accuse.

An *Ethic of Resistance* invites collective social responsibility. It speaks to an understanding of the unfair structures of society. All people do not have equal access to safety or food or a bed, and so there must be a balance of power and responsibility. The person is held responsible for their actions, but not for the social context. Responsibility must be in balance with access to power. Collectively, society is responsible for a social context that upholds and tolerates child abuse, violence, and poverty. Building a just society is a collective responsibility that demands all frontline workers become activists for social change both in their work with the person and in their lives.

If we view our work as Doing Justice, we need to embrace our power and work transparently to transform the social contexts of oppression. Collective accountability is not an individual response; rather, activism teaches that there are structures that support problems of injustice. We must address problems together, both in the individual lives of the people we work with, and also in the wider society.

For me activism is the doing of love, and an *Ethic of Resistance* unapologetically embraces therapeutic and revolutionary love. Despite the disappearance of love from professionalism, probably a result of legal advice in a litigious society, therapeutic love and revolutionary love are at the center of an *Ethic of Resistance*. To quote Che Guevara, “Let me say at the risk of sounding ridiculous, the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love.”

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**Vikki Reynolds** is a therapist/activist interested in liberating justice, resistance, and solidarity from the margins of our work into the ethical center. She is currently writing a PhD addressing her stance for a supervision of solidarity that incorporates witnessing and commitments to both an ethic of resistance and the practices of social justice into sustaining and honouring supervision

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Social enterprise is a way of describing how non-profit organizations have engaged in the trade of goods or services over the past century. Though not really new, the concept has emerged in British Columbia and other parts of Canada as a “new” concept with its own lexicon, leaders, investors, and

entire organizations devoted to the exploration and development of social enterprise.

Social enterprise — also known as business with a social purpose — makes up a third sector that is quickly gaining importance in the overall economy in which groups such as Salvation Army and

planet capital and profit performance objectives (Elkington 1994). But over the past 15 years we have evolved our knowledge and experience as women social entrepreneurs so that today we can deliver on a BWSS-oriented triple bottom line of:

- Women's Empowerment and Social Change
- Mother Earth Sustainability
- Financial Freedom, Independence and Long-term Sustainability

We recently partnered with Vancity Community Foundation to assess how well we are delivering on our performance objectives also known as Social Return on Investment (SROI). Upon completion of this assessment process we will publish our results. Some early and positive indicators of our performance returns over the past six years include the following facts:

- 7,200 women have accessed our clothing and hamper voucher program
- 330 women have used BWSS programs/services to complete their community hours resulting from criminal conviction sentences
- \$216,000 worth of household items has been given to women in transition
- \$288,000 worth of clothing has been given to women in transition
- 20,000 hours of free or affordable skill-based training has been provided to front-line workers
- 800 people have attended our training programs
- At any given time over 65 women are volunteering at BWSS gaining valuable work experience, knowledge and skills
- BWSS has diverted tons of “waste” from the landfill
- Our progressive training workshops and programs cultivate social consciousness steeped in women-ist knowledge, Indigenous teachings, anti-oppression analysis and social action

In addition, we promote women-ist leadership across Aboriginal, Moslem and minority women populations, and engage in community development/mobilization and resources/surpluses that are re-invested and allow us to compensate our social enterprise staff with wages and benefits that exceed market rates. Our innovative program development includes Youth Engagement in Violence Prevention, BWSS Children's



## Women Social Entrepreneurs

**By Angela Marie MacDougall**

*Executive Director  
Battered Women's Support Services*

Girl Guides have participated in for decades. Social enterprise is based in sustainability and offers real potential to heal, repair and rebuild from the impacts of globalization, social and environmental erosion, and the exploitation of the earth's resources for profit.

Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) understands at an intuitive level that social enterprise makes sense. Since the early 1990's we have been women social entrepreneurs; at first through the marketing of our skill-based feminist counseling training program then later through the opening in 2001 of the My Sister's Closet Thrift Boutique on Commercial Drive in Vancouver. We have grown to fully realize what it means to be successful social businesswomen and we work to ensure that our business model:

- Is consistent with our organizational mission
- Promotes and mentors women-ist leadership
- Fosters women-ist teamwork, collaboration and partnership
- Embraces change, respects what is working, and integrates new learning
- Reflects our commitment to delivering results in this critical area
- Views problems as opportunities

At the beginning, BWSS couldn't articulate the theory of social entrepreneurialism or describe how it might deliver on a triple bottom line consisting of human capital,

Programs, BWSS Strategic Interventions (a social action and training initiative), with more social enterprises including the pilot of The OZ Project and visioning of The Next Chapter underway. Significantly, all of our innovation is directed at ending violence against women, redressing climate change, promoting social advancement, and working toward systemic changes including the support of front-line workers and non-profit organizations that strive to bring social action into their service work.

BWSS social enterprise is also about leadership and promoting social responsibility through engaging our communities to participate in social change in order to actively diminish the impact of oppression and violence for marginalized people. At our newest retail location in Yaletown, people are eager to learn more about violence against women, and men are eager to shop, donate and become part of the solution towards ending violence against women. We are active members of the Commercial Drive Business Improvement Association and Yaletown Business Improvement Association in order to ensure we can contribute to the business community and extend our influence and leadership.

There is little doubt that social enterprise has strengthened BWSS and raised the social consciousness of our investors, stakeholders, community partners, business colleagues, patrons, donors, women who access our



services, volunteers, staff, leadership team and board of directors.

#### Our Entrepreneurial Pursuits:

- Strategic Interventions – Courage on the Frontlines (community directed skill-based training workshops and programs for front-line workers)
- BWSS Retail Program – My Sister's Closet and MSC 1092 (retail stores located on 1029 Commercial Drive and 1092 Seymour Street in Vancouver)
- The OZ Project – an interior design business that offers complete interior design services to women in transition
- The Next Chapter – a new direction ... stay tuned

**References:** John Elkington in 1994 Cannibals with Forks: the Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business 1998

*For more information about BWSS Social Enterprise or starting your own social enterprise you can email us at: [strategicinterventions@bwss.org](mailto:strategicinterventions@bwss.org)*

As the President and Chair of the BWSS Board of Directors since 2001 Ninu Kang provided strong, quiet, and dignified leadership during a critical period in our evolution. Ninu's approach to leadership was grounded in negotiation and collaboration. As a consummate practitioner of diplomacy, she embodied the concept of balance as BWSS experienced transition and change.

Ninu consistently demonstrated her strong belief in the vision of BWSS and our potential to re-conceptualize anti-oppression feminist work in the 21st century. She demonstrated a strong commitment to our mission and she understood our importance as a resource for women and the community.

Ninu Kang also demonstrated her belief that women of colour, Aboriginal women and immigrant women are leaders who must join with the community of women and our communities at large to foster change and

create a future of liberation. She believed in and supported the potential of marginalized women to emerge.

Ninu attended a BWSS training program in 1992 and that experience raised her awareness and helped her build a framework of feminist practice. The BWSS group process informed Ninu's endeavours as a community worker, activist and leader. As the Director of Family Programs at MOSAIC she will continue to be involved with our work towards ending violence against women.

*BWSS will miss you, and your positive influence will continue to be a vibrant thread as we sew the fabric of our future.*

#### Farewell to Ninu Kang

Thank you, Ninu







# I Stand With the Disorder

I am from the Okanagan, a part of British Columbia that is dry and hot. Around my birthplace are two rocky mountain ranges: the Cascades and the Selkirks. The Columbia river flows through our lands. My mother is a river Indian and the Kettle River people are in charge of the fisheries in the northern parts of the Columbia River system. My father's mountain people occupied the northern part of BC known as the Okanagan Valley and were hunters.

When we say the Okanagan word for ourselves, we are saying "the ones who are dream and land together." But our word means "the unseen part of our existence as human beings." We are dream, memory, and imagination.

Another part of the word means that if you take strands of hair or twine, place them together and rub your hands and bind them, they become one. You use this thought symbolically to refer to being tied into and part of everything else.

When we Okanagans speak of ourselves, we speak of four main capacities that operate together: the physical self, the emotional self, the thinking-intellectual self, and the spiritual self.

Okanagans teach that our flesh, blood, and bones are Earth-body. We are everything that surrounds us, including the vast forces we only glimpse. If we cannot continue as an individual life form, we dissipate back into the larger self. Our word for body literally means "the land-dreaming capacity."

The emotional self connects to other parts of our larger selves. We say that we as people stay connected to each other, our land, and all things by our hearts. The thinking-intellectual self has a name that translates to "the spark that ignites" which we use to mean that the ignited spark of memory directs the other capacities we engage in when we take action.



The Okanagan teach that each person is born into a family and a community. You belong and are affected by the actions of any one individual. Not to have community or family is to be scattered or falling apart.

The Okanagan refer to relationship to others by a word that means “our one skin.” Our most serious teaching is that community comes first in our choices, then family, and then our selves as individuals.

#### Language of the land

The Okanagan word for “our place on the land” and “our language” is the same. As Okanagan, our most essential responsibility is to bond our individual and communal selves to the land. The discord that we see is at a level that is not endurable. Suffering is felt deeply and continuously and cannot be withstood, so feeling must be shut off.

The Okanagan word to describe this can be interpreted as “people without hearts” and refers to collective disharmony and alienation from land. Nations reconfigure boundaries into a world economic disorder to cater to big business. This causes a flow of refugees from disasters, compounded by disease and

A market economy where whole cities are made up of total strangers on the move from one job to another is unimaginable to us. I know that community is made up of extended families moving together over the landscape of time, through generations converging and dividing. The solidarity of peoples bound together by land, blood, and love is the largest threat to those wanting to secure control of lands and resources.

Land is seen as real estate to be “used” and parted with if necessary. I see the separation is accelerated by the concept that “wilderness” needs to be tamed by “development” and that this is used to justify displacement of peoples and species.

I know what it feels like to be an endangered species. It is my body that is being torn, deforested, and poisoned by “development.” Every fish, plant, insect, bird, and animal that disappears is part of me dying.

The transiency of peoples must halt, and people must commune together on the land to protect it. Self-sustaining indigenous peoples still on the land present an opportunity to relearn and reinstitute the rights we all

# You Against

by **Jeanette Armstrong**

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Learn from a people who are “dream and land together.”

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famine as people are displaced in the chaos. War becomes continuous as dispossession, privatization of lands, and exploitation of resources becomes the mission of “peace-keeping.” Finding new markets is justification for the westernization of “undeveloped” cultures.

Indigenous people do not survive well in this atmosphere of aggression and dispassion. Without being whole in our community, on our land, with the protection it has as a reservation, I could not survive.

The way of creating compassion for ...

The customs of extended families are carried out through communing rather than communicating. Communing signifies sharing and bonding. Communicating signifies the transfer and exchange of information. The Okanagan word for communing is “the way of creating compassion for.” In a healthy whole community, people “commune” in the everyday act of living. Without this, it becomes possible to violate and destroy others and their property without remorse.

have as humans. I do not stand silently by. I stand with you against the disorder.

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**Jeanette Armstrong** (Okanagan) is an author and director of the En'owkin Centre, Okanagan Indian Educational Resources Society. This article was adapted from *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Economic Globalization*, edited by Jerry Mander and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and published by the International Forum on Globalization, [www.ifg.org](http://www.ifg.org).

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For the past 17 years Battered Women's Support Services has operated a dating violence education program. Trained speakers attend career and personal planning classes to raise awareness of violence in intimate relationships as well as review the elements of healthy relationships. BWSS has evolved our program to represent the voices of girls and young women while seeking input from boys and young men. This program is called BWSS Youth Engagement in Violence Prevention.

## Girl Violence: Dispelling Myths & Revealing the Truth.

By Angela Sterritt

*The writer of this paper recognizes that we are on unceded (not surrendered) land of the Coast Salish People (the Skwxwú7mesh, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam Nations).*

Teen girls are a vulnerable, powerless group with high rates of sexual and physical violence and limited support and resources. Approximately 1 in 6 girls live in poverty, and many encounter abuse or neglect in government facilities such as youth prisons and child welfare agencies. They have virtually no access to girl-only shelters, and they make up approximately 10% of the homeless in Canada.

Indigenous and girls of colour face further marginalization, abuse and violence in our patriarchal and Eurocentric society. Indigenous, immigrant and refugee girls experience higher rates of violence because of dislocation, racism, and sexism within their own communities and from external society. Amnesty International (2004) reports that Aboriginal women aged 25-44 are five times more likely than other Canadian women of the same age to die as a result of violence.

More than 500 Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been murdered over the last 30 years. Systemic racist and discriminatory factors inherent in Canadian society play a role in this violence.

Recently we held a discussion with a group of girls, aged 14 to 20, to explore their views on the origins of and prevention of violence. The young women explained that violence is often seen as "...funny...hard to take seriously...[and] based on insecurities." One study conducted within five U.S high schools revealed that girl violence is often considered "insignificant and meaningless" in comparison to male violence." [Note:iv]

Girls may experience abuse in their intimate dating relationships with abusers seeking to exert power and control. Physical, sexual or psychological abuse may be perpetrated by an abuser alone or with a group of people. Many victims have also faced violence or abuse in the home.

- Girls made up 79% of all family-related sexual assault victims in 2002
- Young women under 25 make up the highest risk group related to violence
- Almost 80 percent of reported victims of family sexual assault are girls

Girls who are violent report significantly greater rates of victimization and abuse in the home and with their partners than non-violent girls. Learned behaviors often mirror the power structure in society where marginalized people oppress those with less power instead of critiquing the existing structures. The BWSS group explained, "We learn from what we see and we follow society's standards." This can be dangerous for those trying to assert power and individuality based in mainstream culture. Girls want new standards based on community and girl powered protection, strength, and empowerment.

## Protection and Security: Devising a Plan for Safety and Empowerment

The youth from Coast Salish territory made it clear, "Young women have to take control of their lives through education, awareness and action." It is important to recognize societal power structures that oppress and encourage violence, aggression and abuse toward marginalized groups. Becoming aware of the roots and manifestations of violence is a first step towards finding ways to end it.

- Girls, especially Indigenous girls and girls of color, need spaces that encourage activism and voice
- Advocates and allies require a consciousness about gender and race "neutral" language and actions that can have unintended but terrible consequences
- Girls and allies need to promote better and more nuanced analysis that underscores systemic oppression and violence as a framework for understanding individual and group behaviors
- We must challenge media images of crime that sensationalize girl violence rather than contextualize it
- Violence in the home and male violence needs to be exposed exponentially. Girls need to be able to identify abuse and violence, support each other, build allies and address violence
- There needs to be more girl specific housing and safe places. Communities need to take responsibility and provide safety
- Warriors (male and female) need to stand up for each other! It is our duty as oppressed people to assist those who do not have the means to free themselves from oppression by providing them safety, security, and empowerment

## Take Back Your Life! End Violence Against Girls!

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## The Fierce Urgency of Now



energy to raise the voices of women who are living with violence right now to engage the larger community, people who care about what is clearly some of the very worst that humans can do to humans. Our goal is to continue raising the profile of women in our communities as leaders, life givers, the centre of families and communities.

To that end, Battered Women's Support Services is involved in the following community initiatives:

- **Downtown Eastside Smudge Ceremony** held on December 6, 2007 and several volunteers, women who access services and staff attended the event.
- **Commercial Drive Business Improvement Association** toward the development of a Security and Safety Model that bridges the needs of individuals, businesses and the community.
- **17th Annual Women's Memorial March** an event that is held each year to honour, mourn and seek justice for women who have gone missing or who have been found murdered in our communities, particularly in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. The Women's Memorial March is held every February 14th.
- **International Women's Day** planning committee working with diverse women's and community organizations to plan events on or around March 8, 2008.
- **Women's Addiction Provider Committee** which brings together service providers who are supporting women who have substance use issues.
- **Vancouver Victim Service Protocol and Stopping The Violence Counselling Networking Committee** that meets regularly to discuss issues and seek solutions relating to working with survivors and systems in the greater Vancouver area.

## HELP END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



Spring 2008

## Battered Women's Support Services Prevention and Intervention Volunteer Training Program

Twice a year BWSS offers training for women who want to volunteer on our Crisis and Intake Line and provide crisis support to women survivors of violence

### Participants will learn:

- Crisis Intervention
- Peer Counselling and Communication
- Theoretical Framework of Violence Against Women
- Group Facilitation and Group Design
- Criminal, Civil, Family and Immigration Law
- Anti-oppression Analysis
- Safety Planning
- and more...

Upon completion of the program women join Battered Women's Support Services And provide support to women survivors of violence on our Crisis and Intake line, facilitate support groups for women survivors of violence, work in our retail program, deliver workshops for youth, participate in special projects.

**What:** Spring 2008 Training Session

**When:** Every Friday 9:30 am to 4 pm  
March 28th - June 13th

Information Sessions  
held on February 13th.

To register call Jaclyn  
at 604-687-1868 ext. 306  
or email [intake@bwss.org](mailto:intake@bwss.org)

Funded by BWSS Social Enterprise, BWSS donors, The City of Vancouver, Ministry of Solicitor General Gaming Enforcement Branch

## FEBRUARY - MAY 2008

## Support Groups at BWSS

### Drop-in Group.

**When:** Every Tuesday  
**Time:** 12am to 2pm

### Ten-week Group at DEWC

**Day:** Tuesdays  
**Time:** 6pm to 8 pm

### Women, Trauma, Recovery and Empowerment Group. Stage II

**When:** January 16, 2008  
**Time:** 6pm to 8pm

### Understanding and Healing the Wounds of Broken Connections

**When:** February 5, 2008  
**Time:** Every Tuesday  
6pm to 8:30pm

\*FULL

### Understanding and Healing the Wounds of Broken Connections

**When:** February 27, 2008  
**Time:** Every Wednesday  
12:30pm to 2:30pm

### 16 Steps for Discovery & Empowerment Group

**When:** February 7, 2008  
**Time:** Every Thursday  
from 1pm to 3pm

### Support Group for Spanish Speaking Women

**When:** Every Monday  
**Time:** 10am to 12am

### Ten-Week Support Group

**When:** April 2, 2008  
**Time:** 12:30pm to 2:30pm

### Women's Only Pro-Bono Clinic

**Comments:** We have partnered with Access Justice to hold in-house pro-bono clinics. The clinics are half hour free legal advice on family law issues. The lawyers do not represent women in court.

### Legal Advocacy Workshops

**When:** Starting on  
February 12, 2008 to  
May 27, 2008  
**Time:** Tuesdays 12pm to 2pm

**Facilitators:** Volunteer lawyers



Ministry of Solicitor  
General Gaming  
Enforcement Branch  
And Ministry Of  
Solicitor General Victim  
Services And Crime  
Prevention Branch



Funding Partners:



For more information and registration call the Intake and Crisis line at 604 687 1868

bwss strategic interventions courage on the frontline



# WOMEN *making waves*



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

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...  
**Graphic Design:**  
www.oaxacastudio.com  
...  
**Editors:**  
BWSS Staff and Volunteers

**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 1<sup>st</sup>  
of each month. I understand that I may cancel my  
contribution at any time with written notice.

## Payment Information

☐ Enclosed cheque payable to BWSS  
☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Card Number   
Name on card   
Expiry Date  /   
Signature

## Contact Information

Name   
Address   
Phone   
Email

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

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

**Please send your completed form & donation to:**

<b>BWSS</b>	<b>OR</b>
P.O. Box 21503	<b>By Phone</b> 604.687.1868 ext. 315
1424 Commercial Dr.	<b>By Fax</b> 604.687.1864
Vancouver, BC V5L 5G2	<b>Online</b> www.bwss.org

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

## A Letter From A Donor

## Members of our community donate to BWSS



*Please find enclosed donation. I wish I was  
rich and could support your organization  
more often, however, I am a single senior  
(76) on only one old-age pension.*

*However, I have myself once, 30 years ago,  
experienced abuse from a husband and had to flee  
from our home. I was not injured too much but  
the fear was always there even after the divorce. He  
has passed away now and finally I can let go of the  
fear. Although we lived apart after the incidents  
and I never saw him again, it always was with me  
in those years. I had an unlisted address and phone  
number and was quite safe but you can not reason  
with fear, it lurks in places and never lets go.*

*I feel for every woman and child who this happens  
to. I shall keep your address and hopefully I can  
send you some money from time to time. My family  
is very good to me and usually gives me money for  
Christmas or Birthday and then I pass some on to a  
worthy cause as yours.*

*On behalf of all women in dire circumstances:  
"Thank you Ladies!" For all your help and work.  
Very best greetings and a blessed year to you all.*

*Sincerely yours, Name Withheld on Request*



P.S. At the time of the above mentioned incidents I took a  
lawyer and could have sent my husband to jail. Why did I  
not do it? I did not want my two little girls to have a father  
in jail!! I am happy to tell you he did marry again and this  
lady is tough as nails and pays him back in spades!!!