



## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S GROUPS COLLABORATE TO TAKE ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories, BC – April 5, 2012** – Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS) and Atira Women's Resource Society have collaborated to deliver **Downtown Eastside Vancouver Community-based Women Assault/Sexual Assault Program**. The Program will deliver a dedicated *Education and Awareness Outreach, Mobile Crisis Response and Follow-up* to support women survivors of violence in Downtown Eastside Vancouver (DTES).

"There is no dedicated women assault/sexual assault service in the DTES. Approximately 90% of all incidences of physical and sexual violence goes unreported and according to Vancouver Police Department, reported incidents of sexual and physical violence against women in the DTES neighbourhood are almost double that of other regions of Vancouver" said Angela Marie MacDougall, Executive Director, BWSS. "Women are less likely to access and service providers are less likely to refer women to anti-violence services located outside of the DTES, due to women's experience of being stigmatized and stereotyped."

It is estimated that 8,000 women are in or navigating through the DTES, with 60/40 ratio of men to women. Women in the neighbourhood are diverse and include Indigenous women, Immigrant women, mothers, single women, young women, senior/elders, women of colour, refugee women, women who do sex work, women who use licit and/or illicit substances, women who are living in grinding poverty, women who are homeless or under housed.

The Program will take action to prevent violence and sexual exploitation through 1) *Education and Awareness Outreach*, 2) *Mobile Crisis Response* and 3) *Follow-up* to enhance DTES communities to become an effective resource in violence prevention and effective intervention for women survivors of gender violence

"Atira Women's Resource Society is delighted to be partnering with BWSS in filling this critical service gap in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Negative experiences with the criminal justice and health systems, fear of retribution and further violence and the pervasive misconception that there must be physical violence inflicted by a stranger for a rape to be considered "genuine" have long prevented women from reporting most of the violence they experience" said Janice Abbott, CEO, Atira Women's Resource Society. "We expect this project will provide the support that allows women the opportunity to make real choices about reporting assault and that the partnership will inspire the community to come together to eliminate the profound incidence of violence against our women."

The Program will draw on strong collaborative relationships with Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, WISH, Vancouver Women's Health Collective, Lu's, BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, Nurse Practitioner Outreach Clinics and Sexual Assault Services strengthening the web of support for women survivors of violence.

Community-based Women Assault/Sexual Assault Program has been funded as a pilot project by Ministry of Public Safety Solicitor General with support from Central City Foundation.