

Breaking the Links

*between poverty and violence
against women*

A Resource Guide



Public Health
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To promote and protect the health of Canadians through leadership, partnership, innovation and action in public health.

— Public Health Agency of Canada

This Resource Guide is dedicated to all women who find the courage to make change

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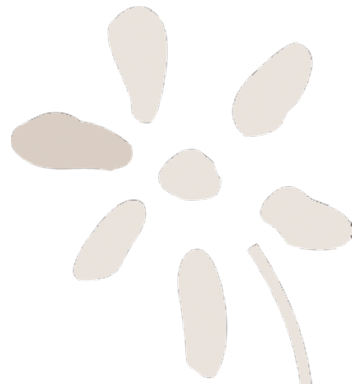
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INTRODUCTION

Poverty and violence are unfortunate and daily realities in the lives of many thousands of women across Canada. Violence against women knows no geographical or cultural boundaries and it affects all women regardless of their level of income. However, for many women, poverty adds another dimension to the pain and suffering they experience as a result of being abused. Poverty limits choices and access to the means to protect and free oneself from violence. It also means more barriers to using services and programs that can help.

The purpose of *Breaking the Links Between Poverty and Violence Against Women: A Resource Guide* is to support the efforts of women's groups, community organizations and service agencies to support low-income women to take control of and deal with the poverty and violence in their lives. A secondary goal is to inspire community-based groups to take action on poverty and violence issues by providing practical examples of what others are doing.

Although other resources have partially addressed the needs of low-income women, this document is devoted to exploring the ways in which poverty and violence are linked, what this means for women and for the groups that are trying to help. Violence keeps women in conditions of poverty, and poverty, or fear of poverty, keeps women trapped in violent situations.

Breaking the Links explores strategies and initiatives of groups actively working with women on violence and poverty issues. It highlights ways that services and programs can be adapted to meet the needs of low-income women. It also includes fact sheets on poverty and violence to use as educational tools. And finally, it presents a list of recommended resources with information on how to order them, if you wish to further explore these issues.

The authors have tried to ensure that the Guide reflects the diversity of women's experiences of poverty and violence in Canada, and celebrates the energy and resources that low-income women bring to bear in just surviving, in making changes in their lives and in challenging the inequities that affect them. The authors have drawn on testimony and information presented in a range of other publications to reflect the experiences of Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, immigrant and refugee women, women of colour, lesbians and heterosexual women, women living in rural and isolated communities, and women of different ages.

Breaking the Links was prepared in the spirit of sharing experiences and best practices by agencies that have struggled to understand the links between poverty and violence. It focuses on increasing understanding of the interplay between poverty and violence, and points to concrete ways that agencies and groups are trying to help. These efforts need to be seen in the larger context of efforts to challenge the fundamental inequality of women in Canadian society.

We invite you to use the information presented in this Guide, to make copies of the most useful sections and the fact sheets, to discuss the ideas and suggestions with your co-workers and activists.

THE REALITY of POVERTY and VIOLENCE

An important step in working with women on poverty and violence issues is to enhance our understanding of their impact in women's lives and how the interplay between the two presents barriers to women's efforts to create better lives for themselves and their children.

This publication cannot claim to represent all women's experiences or to have captured all of the dimensions of poverty and violence. However, the authors crafted the analysis and viewpoints captured here to provide a context for the approaches, strategies and fact sheets that follow.

Living with Poverty

There is no official definition of poverty in Canada and this issue continues to be the subject of much debate. Poverty is generally understood, and will be for the purposes of this Guide, as a situation where a person or household does not have adequate financial resources to meet their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. In addition to this economic-based understanding, we can add that social policy advocates have advanced a *relative* definition of poverty, arguing that to be poor is to be distant from the mainstream of society and to be excluded from the resources, opportunities and sources of subjective and objective well-being which are readily available to others (Canadian Council on Social Development 2001, 2).

While there is ongoing debate about how Canada defines and gathers statistics about poverty, as the fact sheets presented in this Resource Guide show, poverty is a reality for a large number of Canadian women. Despite improvements in women's earnings and incomes relative to men's, women form the majority of the poor in Canada.

Poverty rates for women and men have dropped somewhat since the recession times of the early 1990's (statistics for this section are drawn from a secondary source: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women 2005). Nevertheless, in 2004, 2.4 million (one in seven) Canadian women were living in poverty compared to 1.9 million men. And as governments across Canada

cut funding to social services and other programs, we are seeing the depth of this poverty worsening.

Of all Canadian women who live in poverty today, female lone-parent families are especially vulnerable: 51.6% of lone parent families headed by women are poor. There is also an over-representation of women who are seniors, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, and immigrant women (see Fact Sheets for more detailed

information on these groups of women). These women also face additional barriers – they are often subject to gender discrimination and racism, and in the case of women with disabilities, to a lack of respect and understanding of their physical and mental abilities.

Managing on a very low income is like a 7-day-a-week job from which there is no vacation or relief. Poverty grinds you down, body and soul.

Source: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (2005), p.4.



If you don't get enough money, how do you look after your child's health, like their teeth and their everything, and then you want them to be in society, well if they're not looking like part of society, nobody accepts them.

Source: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (2007), p.5

Lack of affordable, safe housing is a major problem for low-income women and their children. In urban and rural areas this can mean living in sub-standard housing. Many women and children are forced into housing they can afford, which frequently means rundown apartments with dishonest or abusive landlords, in high-crime areas. Women who experience additional barriers of disability, racism and discrimination based on age or immigration status often have to deal with unique hardships in their search for adequate housing.

For low-income women, the constant struggle to make ends meet is extremely stressful, wearing them down emotionally, undermining their self-confidence, and making it more difficult to be healthy and provide a positive environment for their children. Poverty is recognized in Canada as a key factor in determining physical and mental health. People with lower incomes tend to have shorter lives and more health problems (Phipps 2003: 1).

Living in poverty presents women with multiple challenges. These challenges include navigating the

welfare system, finding and keeping a job, finding adequate housing and childcare, and dealing with the stigmas and stares associated with being poor. Many are caught in a seemingly hopeless cycle in which the physical and emotional costs of poverty make it difficult to meet existing challenges and make changes in their lives.

Living with Violence

This Guide recognizes the many forms of gender-based violence affecting women including physical and sexual assault, psychological and emotional abuse, neglect, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and financial abuse. Large numbers of Canadian women continue to experience violence and abuse every year, despite our awareness of violence issues and concerted programs to prevent it. According to Statistics Canada's 2004 General Social Survey, 653,000 women (or 7%) reported that they had been physically or sexually assaulted by a spousal partner during the previous five years (Canada, Statistics Canada 2006a: 17). During this same time period, 18% of women reported experiencing emotional or financial abuse (Canada, Statistics Canada 2007, 18).

Aboriginal and young women are at particularly high risk of violence. Rates of violence against Aboriginal women are more than three times higher than for non-Aboriginal women, and the rates have increased over the past five years (Canada, Statistics Canada 2006a, 65). Rates of violence are the highest among young women. For example, young women under 25 show the highest rates of sexual assault and criminal harassment (p. 36).



People who experience family violence are at greater risk of mental health disorders and problems. Moreover, their general health and well-being are likely to be affected in both the short and long term. They may be injured, maimed, or neglected. They may adopt negative coping techniques that contribute to or worsen medical conditions.

Source: Canada, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2003. p.4.

Violence has devastating short and long-term effects on the physical and mental well-being of women and their children. Health consequences of intimate partner violence include, for example, injuries, infertility, depression and anxiety (World Health Organization 2002: 101). Women who experience violence may suffer from serious physical or psychological trauma which makes the daily challenges of life – caring for children, holding down a job, educational pursuits and skills upgrading – much more difficult.

In addition to concerns shared by all abused women (such as concerns for health, physical safety and security), Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, and immigrant and visible minority women experience systemic barriers that further compound their situation, as they encounter problems related to stereotyping, racial discrimination, social isolation, service access and marginalization (Canadian Council on Social Development 2001, 36).

Women living in poverty also experience isolation and feelings of powerlessness and face many challenges to maintaining good health. The similar effects that violence and poverty have on women have led some to conclude that to live in poverty is a form of societal abuse.

Living with Poverty and Violence

Poverty and violence play a kind of toxic dance in women's lives. Poverty marginalizes women, increasing their risk of victimization, while violence also isolates women, as the mental and physical effects grind away at women's sense of well-being, limiting what is possible.

The combined effects of poverty and violence create a formidable barrier to women's equality, well-being and full participation in society. Both reflect unequal relationships of power which result in the systemic discrimination of women. This systemic discrimination means that women are less likely to get well-paying jobs and to meet their needs for decent housing, education, child-care and health services.

These effects are most pronounced where rates of violence and poverty are highest, for example in Aboriginal communities. In some Aboriginal communities, particularly those on-reserves, women who have experienced abuse report having little access to relevant information and resources (Canada, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence 2008, 18). There is often a lack of resources, in general, and of family violence intervention and prevention services in

particular, and few trained Aboriginal staff available to provide support (p. 28).

The experiences of women from other communities also show connections between economic dependence and violence. Rural-based women living on low incomes, for instance, find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship or to access counselling support. Services may be a long distance away; long distance telephone calls may be beyond their means. They may not have a car and may live in areas that do not have alternative public transport. Relying on neighbours can compromise their privacy, and there may be a lack of confidentiality generally in their home community.

Far from extended family supports, immigrant and refugee women are often dependent on their husbands financially as well as in terms of their official status in Canada. For this reason, these women face additional challenges when contemplating leaving an abusive relationship. Unfamiliarity with Canadian law and

social services and/or with the English language can create additional layers of marginalization. Immigrant women may also face difficulties in finding employment because their foreign credentials and experience are often not recognized in Canada.

Often the only cushion between a woman with a disability and poverty (either on social assistance or poverty on minimum wage) is the financial support of family. Yet dependence on family is a demeaning and can even be a dangerous place for women, especially women with disabilities. Battering, incest and other forms of abuse against women with disabilities are endemic and often unrecognized by support services (Meister 1990, 42). Moreover, many support services are inaccessible.



I did not want to say anything because I didn't know what they would say to police and the police would send me back to my country. I went back to him. No friends, no income, no work permit, no housing, no social assistance and pregnant. He's the one feeding me, the one who is going to process my paper.

Source: Mosher (2004), p.73

I would have been on my own but I had to find, really I had to find a guy to live with or a guy to take care of me. That's what I had to do. So I thought, you know, I made my best choice. I obviously didn't make the best choice but I made the best choice I could at the time.

Source: Mosher (2004), p. 19



Our Challenge: Ending Poverty and Violence

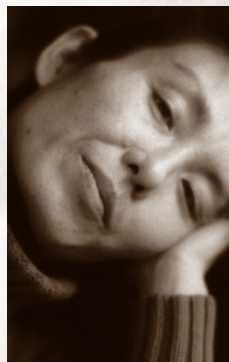
Individual women are not responsible for poverty or violence. Poverty and violence exist because of inequalities in our society. Hence, we are collectively responsible for ending both poverty and violence against women, goals that will take a long time to achieve.

Violence against women is costly not only to its victims, but to society as a whole and these costs continue to rise. A 1995 study of all types of violence against women, the most recent of its kind, found that the resulting direct medical costs totaled \$1.1 billion (Canada, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence 2002, 7). At the same time, cuts to social services and challenges in the health and educational sectors are deepening the marginalization of families living below the poverty line. Increasingly, low-income women talk about how the situations they are dealing with are becoming more complex (MacQuarrie 2004, ii-iii).

Where do we go from here?

As a society we need to continue working to set social conditions to support women to get themselves permanently out of a violent situation. This would include the provision of adequate welfare support, access to affordable and safe housing, access to childcare, and access to employment that pays a living wage (Mosher 2004, v).

While these tasks may seem enormous, there are many examples across Canada of groups of women who have attempted to grapple with the multiple effects of poverty and violence for women and have designed programs and strategies that can help. A sample of these initiatives can be found in the Strategies and Initiatives section of this Guide. It is followed by a section which examines approaches to working with women experiencing violence.



Economic independence will make women safe from abuse. With money to survive for her and her kid, this woman has the power to decide her life and to live a better, safer life.

Source: Mosher (2004). p.25



WORKING with WOMEN LIVING in POVERTY on VIOLENCE ISSUES

STRATEGIES and INITIATIVES

■ Introduction

Increasingly, women who have experienced violence have needs that are related to a lack of adequate income (Canada, Statistics Canada 2006a, 40). And, it is more and more apparent that women cannot start the process of healing unless they can put food on the table, a roof over their children's heads and clothes on their backs. To be effective, energy and time must be spent helping women to find safe and affordable housing, access legal services, deal with transportation issues and obtain family benefits and other services to which they are entitled.

As they struggle to address the multiple needs of low-income victims of violence, agencies and organizations are recognizing the added value of collaborative approaches. Many communities have established inter-agency coordination to address violence and poverty issues. Members of these groups and coalitions have developed protocols, implemented policy changes in their organizations, offered training and established new programs to increase women's access to services. They have also tried to ensure that their initiatives are sensitive to the reality and needs of various communities.

Women's organizations have also entered coalitions to advocate for low-income single-parent families and abused women and have mobilized to push governments into action. Sometimes these social action initiatives have had a high profile. For example, the 1995 Bread and Roses March from Montreal to

Quebec City, which made demands on the Quebec government related to economic justice, received significant attention.

Below are some examples of strategies and initiatives that are making a difference, largely because they are designed by low-income women or by groups that have taken the time to understand the reality of poverty and violence. You are invited to contact the organization listed for more information (see detailed information in the section called Contact Organizations).

Participation is four times higher since the centre moved to its new location.

■ Outreach

Outreach to potential users of a service, to draw them to a centre or program, or to take services closer to them, is an important step in improving access to programs and services. Low-income women may find it difficult to travel a long way to services and may be less comfortable outside their neighbourhood. Organizations are developing ways to overcome these barriers.



Reducing Barriers to Services

Here are some ways to make services and programs more accessible to low-income women:

- locate your office in the neighbourhood where women live;
- offer counselling support groups at locations where women spend time;
- advertise support groups at different locations in the neighbourhood;

make your services accessible to women with disabilities – locate your office in a building with wheelchair access; use large lettering to advertise your services; obtain a TTY (teletypewriter); for outreach, try door knocking to reach women in their homes; and hire women with disabilities to work in your organization.

Women with disabilities have had to do a lot of awareness-raising about the many barriers faced by women in using services related to violence.

Improving Services for Women with Disabilities

Women with disabilities continue to raise awareness about the many barriers faced by women in using violence and abuse services. While listening to a presentation by an advocate, the Executive Director of *Harmony House*, a women's shelter in Ottawa, asked herself if the shelter was accessible to women with

disabilities. The answer was no. This realization led to an initiative with several elements, all aimed at providing better services and access to services for women with disabilities in the community.

A multi-agency action group that included women with disabilities who were abuse survivors was set up to guide the project. The action group designed and implemented an accessibility survey covering both physical and attitudinal dimensions of access. The survey process resulted in concrete improvements being made by agencies that work with women. Many of the area shelters were supported by the action group in improving their physical accessibility. Staff were also provided with training about the needs of women with disabilities.

Similar to the specific work done at *Harmony House*, in 2007, *DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN) Canada*, a national organization of women with various disabilities, started a National Accessibility and Accommodation Survey (NAAS) focusing on women's shelters in Canada. The survey allows each shelter to do a complete audit of its facilities and provides shelter administrators and managers with information and resources to make improvements and set objectives towards a goal of 100% accessibility. *DAWN Canada*



will use the outputs from the survey to provide online and printed toolkits for women's shelters and to develop other resources for increasing accessibility. Ongoing training and development for shelter and outreach workers is another important part of this ongoing initiative.

Contact: Harmony House and DAWN Canada

Reaching Women in Their Communities

In recent years, the *Bay St. George Status of Women Council* has become increasingly aware that low-income women in their region are not accessing the programs and services that are available to them. Poverty and violence can lead to social isolation and it seemed that many women were not aware how or where to get help. Also, many women found it difficult to navigate the often complex requirements of some programs and services.

In response, in 2008 the *Council* launched a project called "Women's Access to Community Resources for Social Inclusion", through which a full inventory of programs and services for low-income women is being collected and will be made available to them via workshops. The project is supported by resource people or 'champions' in each community; the champions are volunteers from each community (Bay St. George, Port aux Basques and Cornerbrook) who are trusted to support other women in their area. The goal of the project is not just to provide a superficial inventory but to gather detailed information about how women can access these programs and services.

Contact: Bay St. George Status of Women Council

Serving Immediate Needs

Lachute (Quebec) has a population of approximately 12,000. The unemployment rate in Lachute is very high due to plant closures in recent years, and violence and poverty are part of many women's lives. *Le Carrefour des femmes du Grand Lachute* is a women's centre that has been working on these issues since it opened in 1983. To support low-income women to feel more comfortable, *Le Carrefour* relocated to a low-income housing complex several years ago. Participation in the centre has quadrupled since the change was made.

In its efforts to address poverty and violence *Le Carrefour* has placed a priority on meeting women's most urgent needs. Often this involves helping women to feed their families; *Le Carrefour* offers a food bank and an 'eggs, milk and oranges' program for pregnant women. The food bank is managed by the women clients themselves. And, unlike many other food banks, the women who go to *Le Carrefour* are not required to justify why they need to use the service or to prove that they are living on a low income.

Le Carrefour also set up a clothing and household goods exchange, along with daycare services for children up to 6 years old (the daycare is open four days per week at a cost of \$0.50 per hour). Respite childcare is also available for mothers who are in need of a break and who do not want to depend on governmental agencies for childcare (again the cost is minimal at \$5 per family). In addition, staff at *Le Carrefour* support women in learning how to budget.

For women who are also dealing with violence issues *Le Carrefour* offers a range of programs and activities

to support them in developing their sense of self-esteem and to gain greater independence and control in their lives.

Contact: Carrefour des femmes du Grand Lachute

■ Innovative Projects and Programs for Low-Income Women

There are many examples across Canada of innovative projects and programs designed to meet the specific needs of women survivors of violence who are struggling financially and who want to break out of the cycle of poverty and violence. These projects range from helping women to find a safe place to live, to helping women increase their chances of finding work and securing their independence. Here are a few examples.

In many areas of the country, there is a critical shortage of affordable housing for women fleeing abusive relationships.

Meeting Women's Housing Needs

In many areas of the country, there is a critical shortage of affordable housing for women fleeing abusive relationships, in spite of the fact that abused women and their families are to be given priority for subsidized housing. In Ottawa, a group of community activists working with abused women wanted to increase women's access to social housing.

The group started a dialogue between service providers working with abused women and social housing organizations. This collaboration led to the adoption in 2006 of a protocol to help women gain easier access to social housing and to improved communication between the two networks. Joint workshops were held to help social

housing suppliers better understand the situation of abused women, and how to help service providers learn more about social housing rules and regulations. Transition house workers are actively involved in helping women find affordable housing and some of the barriers have been eliminated by the protocol.

Contact: Maison d'Amitié

Increasing Women's Safety at Home

On the urging of survivors of violence, some housing co-ops across Canada have declared themselves "domestic violence free" zones and have enacted by-laws that permit the co-ops to evict residents who are accused of domestic violence. This initiative is a concrete example of action taken to ensure that women can be safe in their own homes by placing the burden of finding alternate housing upon the perpetrator. Rent subsidies can also be provided to women who are unable to pay the rent after their abusive partner has been evicted.

Contact: Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada

Improving women's ability to get a job greatly enhances their independence and their ability to change or leave an abusive situation.

Helping Women in Transition with Supportive Housing

The PEI Transition House Association was established in 1980 and serves women and their children who are experiencing abuse in Prince Edward Island. The Association includes Anderson House, an emergency women's shelter in Charlottetown, and outreach workers who assist women in smaller communities (Montague, Summerside, O'Leary, and Queen's region) who are

experiencing violence and have opted to remain in their home communities.

Recognizing that when women are required to leave the shelter they can still be at risk of violence, the *Association* began offering second-stage housing for women and their children who wish to make changes in their lives after they stay at Anderson House. Anderson apartments are independent, high-security units with outreach support services on site. Women can stay for up to one year, giving them the opportunity to think about and plan for a future without fear.

Contact: PEI Transition House Association

Improving Women's Employability

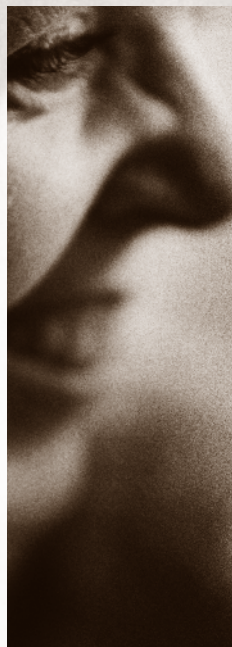
Bridges for Women Society is a Victoria-based, non-profit organization that helps low-income women who are survivors of abuse to develop the skills they need to access paid work and gain their independence.

Since 1988, *Bridges* has provided courses to help women overcome the barriers to employment that are related to recovery from trauma. The courses cover personal skills such as communication, assertiveness and conflict resolution techniques; employability skills such as computer training and resume preparation; other skills upgrading; and bridging skills such as writing, workplace information gathering and mapping community supports.

Bridges recognizes that low-income women who have experienced abuse face particular challenges. The trauma of being abused can result in a multitude of physical and psychological impacts that affect women's employability.

For instance, women who have experienced abuse can suffer from anxiety and depression; they may have

difficulty concentrating or maintaining disciplined practice; and they may be suspicious or forgetful. It can take them more time to go through job-training programs than other women. They may have to work harder to build up their self-confidence and be more concerned about their safety. The overall goal of the *Bridges* courses is to help women to break the abusive cycle and to develop the skills needed to move from dependence and reactivity to independence and self-direction.



I knew that if I got emotionally healthy I could pass that on to my kids. I learned about communication, healthy boundaries, how to assert myself in a respectful way, conflict resolution and the importance of self care. I also learned what a treasure trove of strengths and skills I have and how I can use them in my personal and work life.

A Bridges graduate

For women living outside of Victoria who may not have access to similar programs, *Bridges* offers an on-line program. Working with computer access points around the region, libraries and women's support agencies, women can take the courses online.

Contact: Bridges for Women Society

The Impact of Poverty on Employability

Women who have experienced abuse often find themselves living in poverty, either on income assistance or in low-paying jobs. The consequences of living in poverty often manifest in physical and emotional health problems.

How does poverty impact employability?

- Inability to pay for adequate childcare
- The high cost of childcare makes it difficult for women to afford food, clothing and other necessities
- Poverty may influence a return to an underpaid job or high risk activity
- Poor nutrition can lead to inability to concentrate and physical weakness
- Financial crises and worries impact ability to attend or be effective at work

A Bridges for Women Society (2007), p.35.

Empowering women to change not only their own lives but to bring about change in the conditions that affect them is a critical long-term strategy.

Meeting Women's Practical Needs

The *Victoria Women In Need Community Cooperative (WIN)* is a not-for-profit social cooperative that operates resale

shops in Victoria, British Columbia and is entirely self-sustaining in providing programs for women in transition to self-sufficiency.

WIN's mission is to create opportunities for women and their families to be self-sufficient, employed, inspired, socially and environmentally aware and connected to their communities. *WIN* works directly with Victoria area transition houses and second stage housing projects, along with many other community organizations that support women's self sufficiency.

WIN's programs include:

- The **Gift Certificate Program** provides women and their children with clothing and other essential items when they enter a transition house.
- When they leave the transition house, the **New Start Program** provides all the household goods and furnishings needed for a woman to set up her own home. To date, over 1600 women have received a New Start set-up.
- The **Community Gifts in Kind Program** provides essential items to organizations to support them in delivering programs to their clients. Individual community members can also access this program on a walk in basis.
- The **Resale Shops** provide a resource for affordable high quality second hand items for the community, as well as creating employment and volunteer opportunities. *WIN* also supports the environment by diverting 92% of the approximately 1000 tons of donated goods that they receive each year from the landfill.

Contact: Victoria Women In Need Community Cooperative

Although it is not always easy to practice, it is important to recognize and continually challenge the traditional client/service provider relationship and transform it into a mutual learning experience.



When I came to the shelter I had absolutely nothing to begin again. He had left us in debt. I had no beds for the kids, no pots, no towels. How was I going to set up a home?

Source: Mosher (2004), p.68.

■ Direct Services

Many agencies that provide services to women living in poverty and facing violence start by recognizing women's strengths and take an asset-building approach to supporting women. These organizations are developing programs that increase women's self-esteem and sense of safety, deal with practical problems and barriers, and address multiple needs. As the challenges facing women become more complex, agencies are moving toward a community development approach that addresses the different dimensions of women's lives – personal, physical, human, social and financial.

Community Advocacy and a Non-Directive Approach to Counselling

Women living in poverty and experiencing violence must re-establish trust with those around them before sharing their experiences and asking for help. For many

years, the *North End Women's Centre* in Winnipeg has been providing a non-directive approach to counselling. Counsellors offer comfort and safety to women and provide opportunities to talk, but wait until the woman is ready to speak openly about violence or any other issues she wants to deal with. Most of the women who participate in activities at the centre live on low incomes and many are Aboriginal. For some, it takes years before they are able to talk about the violence in their lives.

Many women who have been abused are made to feel that they are responsible for the violence. As well, low-income women often have had negative experiences with people who judge them and subtly blame them for their poverty. To address these challenges, women in crisis need an advocate, someone who understands their situation and can liaise with the healthcare system, the courts, social service groups and sister agencies. The *North End Women's Centre* now provides a proctor service to address this gap, and there is an advocate on staff to ensure that women not only have their basic needs met, but that they are treated with respect and dignity.

Contact: North End Women's Resource Centre





Women in crisis need an advocate, someone who understands their situation and can liaise with medical practitioners, the courts, social service groups and sister agencies to help explain their situation and ensure their needs are met. It is about women helping women to meet basic needs

Elyiana Angelova, North End Women's Centre

Addressing Immediate and Longer-term Needs

The *Downtown Eastside Women's Centre* in Vancouver, British Columbia is unique because it is one of the only safe spaces within the area specifically and exclusively for women and their children living in extreme poverty. As well as providing shelter, the Centre provides basic necessities including daily hot and nutritional meals, a secure mailing address, phone access, functioning and secure toilet and showers, toiletries, clothing, computer access, harm reduction supplies and first aid to over 250 women and children each day. The Centre also provides an emergency drop-in shelter to over 50 women each night.

The *Downtown Eastside Women's Centre* exists to support and empower women and children living in poverty. High levels of violence, homelessness, addictions and poverty characterize this community. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, injustice and injury. As well as providing practical supports, the *Centre* provides advocacy, outreach, counselling, victim's services and skills development to support women to make long-term change and participate in the larger community.

Contact: Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

Working with Marginalized Women

Some women, such as those who are homeless, face extreme poverty, isolation and marginalization. These women need flexible services and a supportive environment where erratic behaviour is accepted. *Sistering* is a community-based organization in Toronto which works with homeless and low-income women. Many have long histories of mental illness, interrupted education, homelessness, violence and poverty.

Sistering offers support to these women through programs that are adapted to their reality. For instance, support groups for women who have suffered abuse are flexible in that almost no demands are made on women to attend support groups regularly, and an informal approach is taken in the groups. Women can come and go as they wish, and group leaders respond to sudden outbursts of rage or frustration, which are not uncommon, in a nonjudgmental fashion. Women who are extremely disruptive are asked to leave the group for a specific period of time, but are always welcomed back.

Contact: Sistering



Homelessness, visible and hidden, is a significant women's health issue. It seriously impacts women's emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical health.

Source: *Sistering* (2002), p.x.

Information for Women of All Ages

Women at any age can become cut off from vital sources of personal and financial support after leaving an abusive situation. A lack of knowledge of community resources is often identified as one of the barriers faced by women who have been abused and are economically vulnerable. The *Support Network* in Edmonton, Alberta offers a 24-hour distress line for victims of abuse and third parties concerned about loved ones. Operators on the distress line conduct risk assessments, safety planning, provide resources and referrals, and teach third parties how to support people in abusive situations. About one-quarter of the calls they receive each day are violence related – a woman reaching out for a solution to a crisis, looking for resources on how to leave an abusive situation or looking for support to face an uncertain future.

Seniors are particularly vulnerable to financial abuse, and often do not know where to turn when they find themselves exploited by family members or caregivers. In fact, staff at the *Support Network* identify financial abuse as the most common form of abuse reported by seniors. According to the *Support Network*, this is a growing trend and they receive calls every day from distressed seniors on fixed incomes who are being manipulated for their life savings by a family member or power of attorney. They have developed a specific Seniors Abuse Helpline to address this need and offer a follow-up program to provide post-crisis support and long-term planning for seniors.

The *Support Network* also operates a 211 information and referral service which provides links to hundreds of agencies in the Edmonton area.

Contact: The Support Network

Helping Women in Remote Communities

Women who live in small remote communities in Nunavut face a broad range of challenges in deciding to relocate to escape violence, unique to their physical location. Along with the complex emotional pressures involved in leaving their ‘home’ community, especially when they have children, they also have to consider the financial impact of moving to a new town. The high cost of living in the North and the cost of air travel to ‘get out’ and go to a shelter are daunting financial barriers. Having made the decision to leave, some women are able to obtain financial support from health and social service authorities to cover their airfare.

The women’s shelter located in Inuvik on Baffin Island provides short-term safety and support to women and their children from the town and from the remote communities of the Beaufort Delta region. Because many of the women they work with have had to leave their home communities to find safety, the shelter has placed a priority on helping women to find permanent housing in Inuvik so that they may settle there. This can mean advocating on a woman’s behalf with the income support program to obtain a housing unit, canvassing the town to find donations, and providing assistance to move a woman out of the shelter and into a new home.

Contact: Inuvik Transition House Society

■ Mutual Support

As the issues facing communities become more diverse and complex, communities are looking to provide mutual support and identify local solutions. More and more, marginalized communities are working together to address issues of violence.

Working Together as a Community

The *West Flat Citizen's Group* was started by a group of determined citizens in a low-income neighbourhood in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. They believed that they would be more successful if they worked in partnership with social services to address violence in their community. The *Group* began when five mothers, who were worried about their children and others, surveyed their community to identify common problems. The community was concerned about issues of housing, crime and violence, poverty, child care, education and the lack of recreational facilities.

Their initiative led to the creation of a community association, administered by a board of directors, which secured grants for projects. In addition, the board started to work in partnership with social services to offer programs through the community centre. These programs include traditional parenting classes, training in life skills and healthy lifestyles, mediation, as well as sports and recreation and youth programs.

Now under new leadership, the *Group* continues to reach out the community to provide a warm, informal approach that brings together elders and community workers to point families to the support and services they need. Their work is based on a holistic approach and traditional Aboriginal teachings, guided by the medicine wheel and spiritual practices, such as smudging and prayer. They emphasize traditional parenting teachings that encourage respect and self-care, viewing children as gifts within the family structure.

Contact: West Flat Citizens Group

The Travelling Song Blanket

Sometimes it takes a particular event or activity to bring women together. The community of women at *Minwaashin Lodge*, a centre for Aboriginal women and children affected by violence in Ottawa, was called by the *Aboriginal Action Circle* to create a blanket for the *Sisters in Spirit Initiative*. The Initiative is being led by the Native Women's Association of Canada to improve the human rights of Aboriginal women and to address violence against Aboriginal women in Canada, in particular the high rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

"The Travelling Song Blanket" was made during the winter of 2007 by 14 First Nations, Inuit, Metis and non-Aboriginal women. Traditional teachers were on hand to advise the women throughout the process. The blanket was created as a sacred object with a message. It was given a name and feasted in the traditional way.

For the women at *Minwaashin Lodge* the, the blanket project provided them with an opportunity to explore how their own cultural traditions could be sources of strength and inspiration in their healing journey. It was also a symbolic way for the women to express activism in support of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

The blanket brought the community together and has been honoured at many festivities including drumming circles, feasts and community events.

Contact: Minwaashin Lodge & Native Women's Association of Canada

Community Supported Services to Reduce Isolation

Many women from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds do not want to risk being socially isolated from their community, making it a barrier for them to report abuse or seek the support they need. The *Muslim Family Safety Project (MFSP)* was established to build bridges between the Muslim community and anti-violence agencies to address woman abuse in a culturally competent manner.



One of the main outcomes of this project was the establishment of the *Muslim Family Support Service (MFSS)* in London, Ontario. The MFSS provides culturally competent resources and supports to Muslim women and children affected by woman abuse. Many women served by the MFSS are immigrants and refugees from conflict zones, and their post-migration experience often includes loss of status, unemployment or underemployment, trauma and other stressors that put them at risk of experiencing poverty.

The *MFSS* breaks down the social isolation faced by Muslim women and families by working within the social fabric of the Muslim community and mobilizing the community to develop their own response to family violence. It links families affected by domestic (or intimate partner) violence with existing services, while also connecting these services with resources that reflect the importance of the experiences, values, perspectives and concerns of the Muslim community.

The project has been successful in mobilizing a community response. The local mosque has provided financial assistance to the initiative and local Muslim leaders have spoken out against family violence by incorporating Canadian and Islamic views. Community efforts include public presentations, Friday sermons, and published articles on woman abuse and family violence in local Arabic newspapers and in newsletters of the two local mosques.

Contact: Muslim Family Support Service



There is a need to continue working collaboratively and creatively with other local agencies in order to provide members of the Muslim community with appropriate and responsive supports in community settings, and to ensure Muslim women and families are not isolated.

Mohammed Baobaid, founder of the Muslim Family Safety Project, London, Ontario

APPROACHES

■ Introduction

The strategies presented in the previous section of the Guide were designed, planned and delivered by the service-providing groups based upon their understanding of the root causes of poverty and violence and their impact on women. While counselling and other support services are critical to helping abused women gain the psychological independence they need to overcome violence, personal supports must be combined with a community response that takes into account the systemic barriers that isolate women and prevent them from leaving abusive situations.

As will be outlined, community approaches require an integrated and holistic perspective which involves working alongside others to raise awareness about violence and to address the fundamental dynamics of inequality that form its roots.

This section presents some approaches that are being used by groups to guide their analysis, planning and delivery of strategies. What these approaches have in common is that they are about working collaboratively to challenge violence against women and poverty in their communities. These approaches are to be used as tools to guide the way in working with women and with the broader community to create the conditions – both systemic and personal – to help women break out of the cycle of poverty and violence. These approaches draw from the experience and knowledge of feminist groups and movements, community development initiatives and Aboriginal people.

■ A Feminist Approach



There is no single way to describe feminism....What unites us as a movement is a desire to transform our communities, organizations and even the world into safe and equitable places.

Source: Smith (2003), p.9.

Feminism is a theoretical framework for understanding violence against women that has guided approaches to services for abused women in Canada for many decades. Feminism is rooted in the fundamental view that violence against women stems from an unequal power relationship between men and women.

Through feminism our understanding of violence has evolved to reflect a better recognition of the complex ways in which gender, race and class intersect and how this further marginalizes women, especially Aboriginal women, women of colour, immigrant and refugee women, rural, poor or homeless women, women with disabilities and lesbians.

The feminist approach shown below was developed over 10 years ago by the Ottawa's Regional Coordinating Committee to End Violence Against Women. It remains a useful tool for groups that are interested in the feminist approach to service provision for abused women. The Coordinating Committee, which is now called The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW), also offers a number of more recently-evolved feminist principles: that violence against women is an equality rights issue; that service providers need to actively design services

for inclusiveness rather than simply respecting differences; and that the concept of 'choice' should better

account for the social and economic barriers that keep women from accessing services.

Basic Beliefs Underlying Services for Abused Women



- It is a basic human right for all individuals to live their lives in a non-violent environment.
- Understanding and naming the issues of power and control are fundamental to the task of ending violence against women and children.
- The service network must address the issue of violence at both the individual and the systemic level in order to create a non-violent community.
- Psychological, emotional, sexual, physical and financial abuse against women are major social and health problems. Women should have access to appropriate help for all forms of abuse.
- Violence against women is not a private family matter but it is a criminal offence which demands that perpetrators, not their victims, be held responsible for the violence.

- Women who have additional needs due to age, language, culture, disability, poverty, geographical location or sexual orientation require services that are sensitive to and reflect these needs.
- Children who witness their mothers being abused are victims of abuse. Advocating for and ensuring the development of appropriate services for these children are essential to meeting their needs and the needs of their mothers.
- Women can take control of the personal aspects of their lives provided they are given true choices, accurate information and the opportunity to be equal partners in all aspects of society.
- A coordinated, comprehensive community approach to service delivery is essential to create the choices noted above and to meet the many needs of abused women and children.
- Ending violence in the family is everybody's responsibility. Governments, businesses, voluntary groups, institutions and service providers must be involved in public education and activities that contribute to social change.
- Women survivors of violence are essential partners in the work of service development, public education and social change.
- Services which are helpful to abused women and their children must be accountable to the women who use the service and the staff, the volunteers and the community.

Source: Regional Coordinating Committee to End Violence Against Women (1993), p.11.

For more information, please contact: OCTEVAW,
312 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, ON, K1Y 4X5,
Tel.: 613-725-3601 / Fax: 613-725-3605
E-mail: contact@octevaw-cocvff.ca
Web: <http://octevaw-cocvff.ca/node/1>

■ A Community Development Approach

Community development is generally understood as a process whereby people who share a common geographical location, identity, interest or problem, come together to improve the quality of life in their community. At one time, community development was viewed rather narrowly as community economic development, ignoring the non-material aspects of peoples' lives. The concept has evolved and is now more often understood as a process whereby community members actively engage in improving their quality of life in terms of access to economic opportunities, respect for their rights and participation in decisions that will affect their lives.



The re-creation of communities so that they are capable of sustaining human well-being is certainly one of the most difficult and challenging issues facing the human family as we enter the twenty-first century.

Source: Bopp & Bopp (2006), p.3.

In recent years poverty reduction has become a focus of community development initiatives. Advocates have recognized that community development approaches for low-income women who have been abused must address not only the personal and economic barriers that women face, but also the physical, human and social barriers such as access to child/elder care, secure housing, information, skills, ability, health, social networks and political agency.

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach was developed by the Women and Economic Development Consortium (WEDC) in 2001 building on work done in Britain by the



Sustainable livelihoods is a holistic, asset-based framework for understanding poverty and the work of poverty reduction. It is attractive because it can be used as a broad conceptual framework or as a practical tool for designing programs.

Source: Eric Leviten-Reid, Consultant, Caledon Institute of Social Policy, www.caledoninst.org

British Department for International Development and the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex. It “reflects a growing perspective that economic development work with low-income women requires a comprehensive approach, respecting the diversity and complexity of their lives. It explores the dimensions of women’s livelihood assets, their vulnerability context, their asset-building strategies and the stages that women go through in their transformation toward a sustainable livelihood” (Murray & Ferguson 2001, 3).

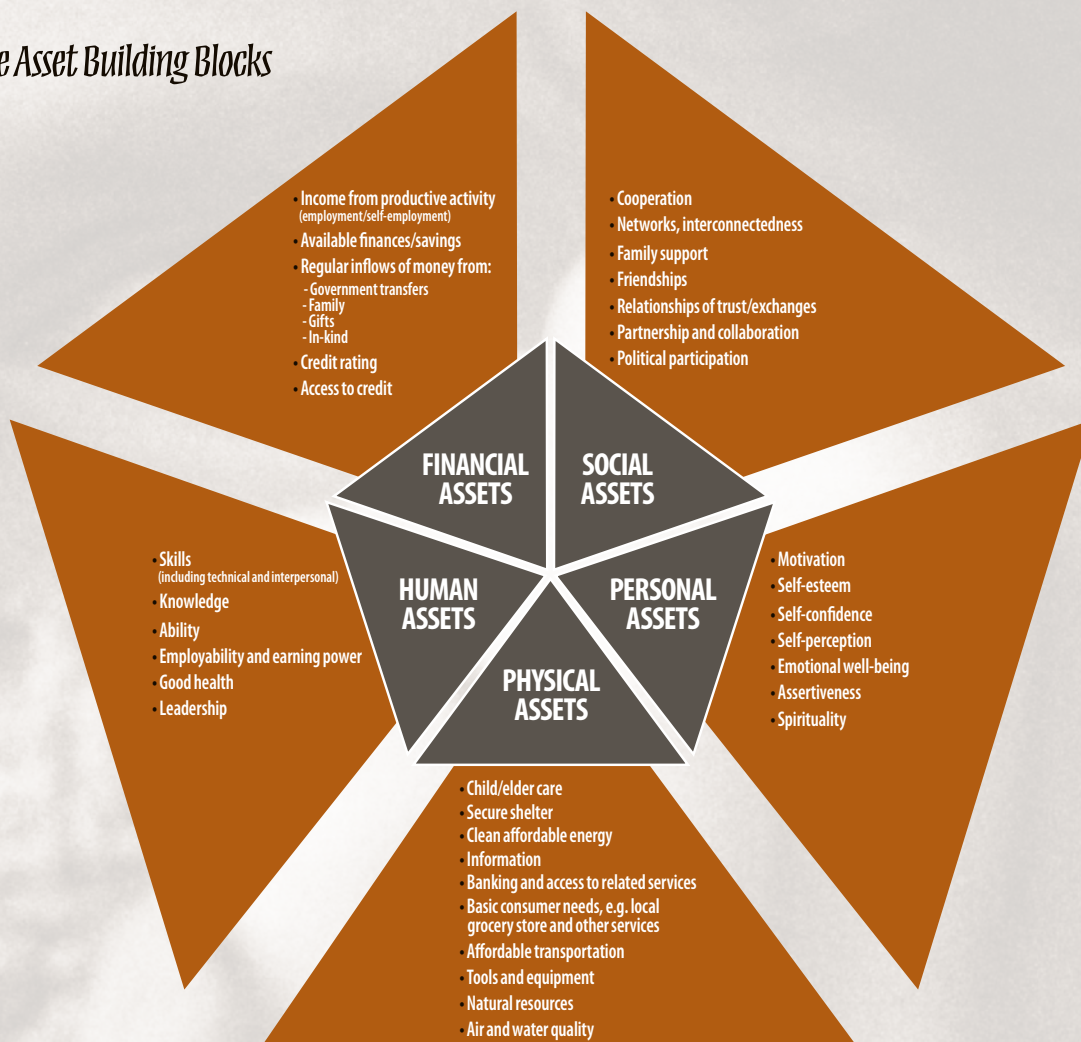
This new asset-building perspective focuses not on the deficits of those living in poverty, but on the assets or building blocks that women themselves can invest in to become more self-sufficient and to achieve their objectives (Murray & Ferguson 2001, 3). This asset-building model is comprehensive, multisectoral, and

takes into account the financial, human, physical, personal and social dimensions of women's lives.

The Five Asset Building Blocks diagram presents the components of an asset-based approach to community

development. The building blocks highlight different aspects of women's lives and the areas in which they may face barriers, factors that should be considered in any poverty reduction effort.

The Five Asset Building Blocks



The Sustainable Livelihoods framework serves as a useful tool for talking about the different dimensions and levels of action. With this framework, agencies that are working with low-income women can organize efforts to support women in building their assets. Eko Nomos, a Canadian company, refined the model to make it more accessible and applicable to the Canadian context (see <http://www.ekonomos.com>). A wide variety of community groups have found it useful as a resource for thinking about their work.

For more information refer to the *Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets*, Department for International Development (DFI) www.dfid.gov.uk/.

■ Community Development from an Aboriginal Perspective



...the circle represents the hoop of the people. All of the people are a part. No one is excluded. The hurt of one is the hurt of all. The honour of one is the honour of all.

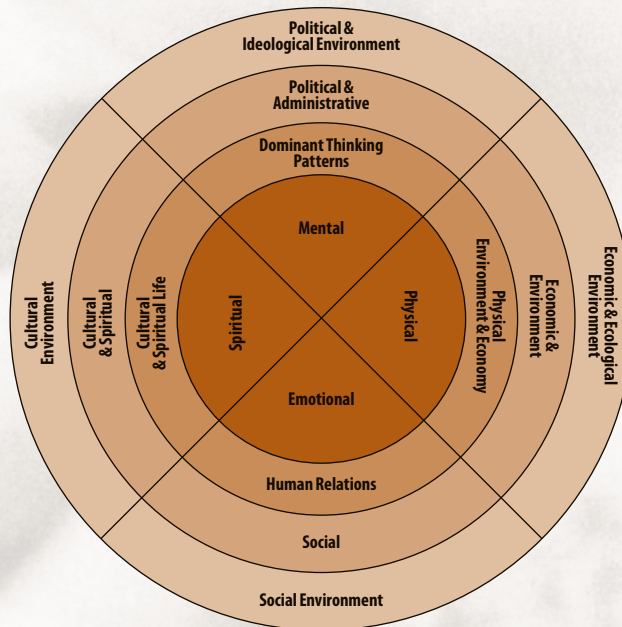
Phil Lane Sr., Yankton Sioux elder
Source: Bopp & Bopp (2006), p.23.

Some Aboriginal people are turning to the traditional medicine wheel as a model for understanding the community development process. The medicine wheel is an ancient symbol which represents an entire world view (a way of seeing and knowing) and the teachings that go with it. The circle means that everything is connected to everything else in life. Nothing can happen to any one part of the circle without affecting all other parts.

One of the unique teachings of this approach is that the spiritual dimensions of human development are as important as other the areas of development (mental, emotional and physical).

The Medicine Wheel Model

“Fitting it all Together”



In this approach, human and community development mean the following:

1. The development of the person, with respect to the mental, emotional physical and spiritual dimensions.
2. The development of the family and small groups with respect to dominant thinking patterns, human relations, physical environment and economy, and cultural and spiritual life.

3. The development of the community with respect to its political and administrative, economic, social, and cultural and spiritual life. The context of the wider world within which human and community development is taking place. This context includes the political and bureaucratic environment, the social environment, the economic environment, and the dominant cultural environment.
4. The context of the wider world within which human and community development is taking place. This context includes the political and bureaucratic environment, the social environment, the economic environment, and the dominant cultural environment.

The diagram presents four large categories of development, all going on at the same time, with each level affecting all the other levels.

For more information please refer to: Bopp, Michael & Bopp, Judie (2006). *Recreating the World: A Practical Guide to Building Sustainable Communities*. Cochrane: Four Worlds Press, pp.21-34. This publication is available from: Four Worlds Press, P.O. Box 395, Cochrane, ALTA, Tel: 403-932-0882 / Fax: 403-392-0883 / Email: anyone@fourworlds.ca / Web: www.fourworlds.ca.

■ Inuit Principles for Healing and Working Together

Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada recently developed a guide that builds on a holistic approach to preventing abuse in Inuit communities and includes traditional knowledge and wisdom which could benefit people or groups

Applying Inuit Principles of Healing

Piliriqatigiinniq – working together for the common good

This principle implies knowing one's role within a family, community or organization, and making judgments and decisions that benefit everyone rather than a few.

Avatikmik Kamattiarniq – environmental wellness

This principle can be interpreted as a balanced and healthy interconnectedness of the mental, physical, and spiritual dimensions of the individual, the family and the community.

Pijittsirarniq – service to others and leadership

These concepts together contribute to the common good and are not mutually exclusive, but inherently part of the same ideal of wisdom in Inuit culture.

Pilimmaksarniq – empowerment

Inuit can and should use all sources of appropriate information, gathering it and using it to right social and spiritual wrongs, and to work toward a balanced and strong Inuit society.

Qanuqtuurunnarniq – resourcefulness and adaptability

Inuit have great capacity to be creative, flexible and solution oriented.

Aajiiqatigiinniq – cooperation and consensus

The Inuit healing process is successful only to the extent that it is reciprocal, based throughout on the opinions and contributions of clients and counselors, leaders and community members, each recognizing the value of the other's perspective. Thus, solutions are reached by consensus and therefore are sound.

Source: Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada (2006). *National Strategy to Prevent Abuse in Inuit Communities, and Sharing Knowledge, Sharing Wisdom: Guide to the National Strategy*, pp.5-6.

seeking to address violence in their community. Six guiding principles of Inuit traditional knowledge form the basis for Inuit counselling practices and action steps serve as a guide for effective joint actions to prevent abuse and promote healing. These principles are:

This Strategy and Guide are available in Inuktitut and English from Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, call toll free: 1-800-667-0749; telephone: 613-238-3977, or download it from the website: www.pauktuutit.ca.

CONCLUSION

Poverty and violence are realities in too many women's lives in Canada. As the gap between the rich and poor widens, and stable employment and affordable housing are harder to find, women living in or recently escaped from violent situations are in even more precarious positions. To make matters worse, many of the programs designed to help low-income women, such as income supports, social housing, employment re-training, subsidized child care and emergency shelters, have been reduced or eliminated completely over the past ten years.

All of us can and should do much more to ensure that all women live free from violence. Low income should not be a barrier to independence, and women from diverse backgrounds should have access to the services and programs that will aid in their healing from abuse. So much can be learned from community agencies and low-income women themselves, who, despite daunting obstacles, are working together to prevent violence and support each other.

Low-income women and their advocates are working in women's centres, social justice groups and anti-poverty organizations to address the injustice of poverty and violence. Immigrant and refugee women,

Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, lesbians, rural and isolated women, young women and older women are participating in programs that address their real needs. This resource is offered in support of this work.

Please use the information in the section *The Reality of Poverty and Violence* to increase understanding and counter some of the stereotypes about low-income women who are victims of violence. The Fact Sheets provide a graphic presentation of this information which can be used in educational presentations or as informational handouts.

The examples in the *Strategies and Initiatives* section provide ideas that enable women to break the cycle of poverty and violence. By improving accessibility and by responding to women's real needs, they are making a difference in the lives of low-income women.

While the situation of low-income women is critical, strength can be drawn from their courage. Perhaps together all of us can help break the links between poverty and violence.

The feminist, community development, sustainable livelihood and Aboriginal approaches can be used by many groups – social justice groups, anti-poverty organizations, health and social service providers, and women's grass-roots organizations – to understand and respond to poverty and violence in ways that contribute to change. The models can be combined to fit the philosophy and experience of the group using them. Groups that may not have worked together previously might consider joining with others to develop community strategies that are comprehensive and inclusive.

FACT SHEETS

This section of the Resource Guide provides statistical information and other facts about poverty and violence in women's lives in Canada. The fact sheets can be copied and handed out or made into overhead transparencies or computer-aided presentations.

The fact sheets also highlight how poverty and violence affect particular groups of women. It is important to remember that a woman can belong to more than one group; she can experience the world as an immigrant and visible minority woman, or as an Aboriginal woman living in a remote community.

Violence in Women's Lives

- Violence against women exists in all communities and cuts across all cultural, racial and religious groups and income levels.
- In 2004, 7% of women reported being physically or sexually assaulted by a spouse, down from 8% in 1999, and 12% in 1993.
Canada, Statistics Canada (2006a), pp.16-17
- The spousal homicide rate has declined by 57% since 1975 for women. The rate of spousal homicides against women is 3 to 5 times higher than the rate of spousal homicide against men.
Canada, Statistics Canada (2007a), p.10
- In 2004, 44% of female victims of spousal abuse suffered injury, 13% sought medical attention, 34% feared for their lives and 29% took time off from their everyday activities because of violence.
Canada, Statistics Canada (2005), pp.16-17
- In 2004, more than 10% of women reported being stalked in the past five years in a way that

caused them to fear for their lives or the safety of someone known to them.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.164

- Eighty percent of all federally sentenced women report having been physically and/or sexually abused. This percentage rises to 90% for Aboriginal women.
Canada Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (2008), p.3
- In 2004, twice as many women than men were beaten by their partners, and four times as many were choked. Moreover, 16% of women who were victimized by a spouse were sexually assaulted, and twice as many female as male victims of spousal assault reported chronic, ongoing assaults (10 or more).
Canada, Statistics Canada (2006a), p.19
- For females, police-reported rates of spousal violence were highest for those aged 25 to 34 (678 per 100,000 females). Rates were much lower for the older age groups.
Canada, Statistics Canada (2004b), p.6

Women's Experience of Violence in Diverse Groups

■ **Aboriginal Women**

Aboriginal women are more than three times more likely to be victims of spousal violence than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In 2004, 24% of Aboriginal women reported violence from a current or previous partner in the five-year period up to 2004, compared with 7% for non-Aboriginal women.
Canada, Statistics Canada (2004b), pp.16-17

In the five-year period up to 2004, over half (54%) of Aboriginal women who were victims of spousal violence reported experiencing severe and potentially life threatening violence, including being beaten

or choked; threatened with, or had a gun or knife used against them; or had been sexually assaulted, as compared to with 37% of non-Aboriginal female victims of spousal abuse.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.195

Eighty four percent of homeless Aboriginal girls in Vancouver have experienced sexual abuse.

National Working Group on Women an Housing (2007), p.2

■ Young Women

In 2002, children and youth accounted for 61% of sexual assault cases (compared to 20% of victims of physical assault). Girls represented 81% of those cases.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2004b), pp.16-17

In 2005, the rate of sexual assault against children and youth was over five times higher than for adults.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2007), p.20

Violence against girls and young women plays a significant role in the dynamics of their homelessness. While most homeless youth have histories of family instability, conflict and abuse, more young women than young men have experienced sexual and physical abuse within their families. Young women who have been abused, especially sexually abused, are more vulnerable to re-victimization.

Canada, Housing and Renewal Association (2002), p.vii

In 2005, girls under the age of 18 experienced rates of sexual assault that were almost four times higher than their male counterparts.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2007a), p.21

■ Senior Women

In 1999, approximately 7% of seniors reported experiencing emotional or financial abuse in the past five years, with the vast majority committed by spouses.

Canada, Justice Canada (2006)

Almost 65% of all older adult victims of family violence reported to a sample of police agencies in 2000 were women.

Canada, Justice Canada (2006)

Between 1974 and 2000, older women were at higher risk of spousal homicide than older men. More than half (52%) of the older women who were victims of family homicide were killed by their spouses.

Canada, Justice Canada (2006)

■ Lesbians

In the 2004 General Social Survey, the overall proportion of those who reported experiencing spousal violence and who indicated that they were gay or lesbian was low, however the rate of spousal violence reported between same-sex couples was twice the rate of violence between heterosexual couples (15% versus 7%).

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006c), p.19

Two and a half percent of police-reported incidents of spousal violence occurred between same-sex couples. The proportion of these incidents in which the couples were gay males is 2.5 times that of lesbian couples (72% versus 28%).

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006c), p.19

■ Rural and Isolated Women

Women who live in the country and have been abused have a much harder time accessing services than those in towns and cities.

MacQuarrie (2004), p.xii

Even in rural areas that have local health and social service providers, many are ill equipped to address their clients' family violence law information needs.

Hornosty & Doherty (2002), p.20

In rural communities, women are often blamed for triggering abuse while the community tends to minimize and normalize abusive behaviours.

Hornosty & Doherty (2002), p.12

■ Women with Disabilities

It is estimated that 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually abused in their lifetime; of girls with intellectual disabilities, it is estimated that 40% to 70% will be sexually abused before the age of 18.

Canada, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (2004), p.2

■ Immigrant and Visible Minority Women

Immigrant, refugee and women of colour are at high risk of violence because of the multiple and overlapping impact of sexism, racism, and socio-economic factors.

Meyer & Estable (2000), p.9

Stereotypes about immigrant and visible minority women often crystallize when discussing violence. These include the mistaken beliefs that immigrant and visible minority women are more accepting of abuse.

Meyer & Estable (2000), p.28

Only one in 10 immigrant and visible minority women who had experienced partner abuse had reported the abuse to police. A higher proportion had sought help from someone other than the police such as a friend (21%), co-worker (9%), doctor (12%), family member (20%), lawyer (8%) and 5% reached out to a spiritual advisor. Only 17% contacted a service agency to seek help for the abuse.

Canadian Council on Social Development (2006), p.19

Women and Poverty in Canada

- Women form the majority of the poor in Canada. One in seven Canadian women is living in poverty.

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (2005), p.1

- Women make up a disproportionate share of the population in Canada with low incomes. In 2003, 1.9 million females, 12% of the total female population, were living in an after tax low-income situation.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.143

- Women generally have lower incomes than men. In 2003, the average annual pre-tax income of women aged 16 and over from all sources was \$24,400. This was just 62% of the average annual pre-tax income for men, which was \$39,300 that year.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.143

- In 2005, women working full-time for the full year earned an average of \$39,200, or 70.5% as much as comparable men who earned an average of \$55,700. The pay gap is even greater for university-educated women, who earned just 68% as much as men in 2005, down from 75% a decade ago.

Canadian Labour Congress (2008), p.1

- Rates of spousal assault were twice as high for women with a household income of less than \$60,000 compared with those with higher incomes.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006a), p.40

Women's Experiences of Poverty in Diverse Groups

■ Lone-Parent Mothers

The poverty rate for lone-parent mothers was 48.9% in 2003, the highest rate for any family type.

National Council of Welfare (2006)

In 2003, 38% of all families headed by lone-parent mothers had incomes which fell below the poverty line compared to 13% of male lone-parent families and 7% of non-elderly two-parent families.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.144

The average income of families headed by female lone parents in 2003 was \$32,500, 38% the figure for non-elderly two-spouse families with children and less than 60% than that of lone-parent families headed by men (who had an average income of \$54,700).

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.134

In 2003, 43% of all children in a low-income family were living with a single female parent, whereas these families accounted for only 13% of all children under age 18 that year.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.144

■ Senior Women

Wage gaps and low-income over the course of a working lifetime condemn many older women to low-income, with the low-income rate of single elderly women significantly exceeding that of men (8.4% compared to 3.2% in 2005).

Canadian Labour Congress (2008), p.7

In 2003, senior women (aged 65 and over) had an average income of just over \$20,000, more than \$10,000 less than senior men.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.278

In 2003, the share of senior women with low incomes was twice as high as that of senior men.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.143

■ Aboriginal Women

In 2000, 36% of Aboriginal women, compared with 17% of non-Aboriginal women were living in poverty.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.200

The median income of Aboriginal women in 2000 was \$12,300, compared to \$15,500 for Aboriginal men, and \$17,300 for non-Aboriginal women.

Aboriginal women living on reserve had the lowest median income at just under \$11,000, while those living in Census Metropolitan Areas had a median income of almost \$14,000.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.199

In 2001, 17% of Aboriginal women in the labour force were unemployed, compared with 7% for non-Aboriginal women. Those living in reserve areas experienced the highest unemployment rate at 22%, compared to 17% for those living in small and mid-sized urban centres, 16% for those living in rural non-reserve locales, and 14% for those living in major metropolitan areas.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.199

■ Visible Minority Women

In 2002, 13% of visible minority women reported that they had experienced some form of discrimination in a work place setting either while on the job or when applying for a job or promotion in the five previous years.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.255

Black women are in double jeopardy in terms of income. Being Black, they belong to a minority whose income is among the lowest in Canada. Being women, they have less income than Black men.

Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005), p.2

The average wage of Black women is 79% of what Black men earn and only 57% of what all Canadian men earn.

Canadian Association of Social Workers (2005), p.2

■ Immigrant Women

The average earnings of recently arrived immigrant women are relatively low. Foreign-born women who arrived in Canada between 1991 and 2000 averaged a little over \$28,000 for full-year, full-time employment in 2000, roughly 20% below the figures for both all immigrant and non-immigrant women.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.226

Education does not reduce the income gap between immigrant women and Canadian-born women. This is partly because of overt racism, but also structural racism, including the lack of recognition of foreign credentials and experience.

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (2005), p.2

The average income of female immigrants aged 15 and older was just 61% of that of their male counterparts in 2000, about the same as the figure (62%) among the Canadian-born population.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.227

In 2001, 8.1% of all female labour force participants born outside the country were classified as unemployed, compared with 7.0% of those born in Canada.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.225

■ Women With Disabilities

In 2000, 26% of all women with disabilities aged 15 and over lived in poverty, compared with 20% of men with disabilities and 16% of women with no disabilities.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.297

In 2000, women with disabilities aged 15 and over had an average income from all sources of \$17,200, versus \$26,900 for men with disabilities in this age range.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.296

The unemployment rate among women with disabilities in the labour force was 10% in 2001, double the figure for other women that year.

Canada, Statistics Canada (2006b), p.295



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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Addressing Family Violence: Peace Begins at Home

Cost: shipping & handling only
Halte-Femmes Montréal-Nord
634 Boulevard Leger
Montréal-Nord, QUE H1G 1L5
Tel: 514-328-2055 Fax: 514-328-2047
Email: HalteFemmes@videotron.ca

Addressing Family Violence is a compilation of tools and resources for understanding and addressing family violence. The toolkit contains three booklets each written for a different audience and purpose. The first two booklets are designed for parents, and staff and caregivers of organizations that work with women and children, to help them understand family violence and how to help. The third booklet is designed to promote collaborative efforts with other individuals or groups on family violence issues. The third booklet also includes a CD-ROM with all of the booklets in pdf format, slide presentation material, all of the references and resources in the booklets with clickable links for easy access, and a guide to help improve community partnerships.

Asking Women about Abuse and Responding to Disclosures of Abuse: A Guide for Addictions and Mental Health Professionals

Cost: Free
Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women and Children
The Faculty of Education
The University of Western Ontario
1137 Western Road, Rm. 1118
London ON N6G 1G7
Tel: 519-661-4023 Fax: 519-850-2464
Website : www.crvawc.ca

Asking Women about Abuse was developed to assist addictions and mental health professionals to ask women about abuse and to help them respond to disclosures of abuse. The Guide was developed through a collaborative process that involved representatives from the violence against women sector, the addictions sector and the mental health sector.

Building Bridges Manual

Cost: \$50 +\$10.00 (shipping & handling)
Bridges for Women Society
320-1175 Cook Street
Victoria, BC V8V 4A1
Tel: 250-385-7410 Fax: 250-385-7459
Toll Free: 1-866-896-3356
Website: www.bridgesforwomen.ca

The *Building Bridges Manual* provides information on a unique employment preparation program for women who have survived abuse. The program's goal is to assist women to make a successful transition to personal and financial independence by overcoming individual and systemic barriers that prevent them from getting and keeping a job. (Also available in French)

Don't Tell Me to Take a Hot Bath: Resource Manual for Crisis Workers

Cost: Free
DisAbled Women's Network Canada
110 Ste Therese Road, Office # 005
Montreal, QC H2Y 1E6
Tel: 514-396-0009 Fax: 514-396-6585
Toll free (Canada): 1-866-396-0074
Email: admin@dawnncanada.net
Website: www.dawnncanada.net

Don't Tell Me to Take a Hot Bath presents information about the lives and needs of women with disabilities. It addresses the types of abuse experienced, some of

their effects and ways in which services can better address these needs.

Common Occurrence: The Impact of Homelessness on Women's Health – Phase II – Community Based Action Research – Final Report

Cost: \$20 plus \$5.00 shipping & handling

Sistering

962 Bloor St. West

Toronto, ON M6H 1L6

Tel: 416-926-9762 Fax: 416-926-1932

Website: www.sistering.org

This ground-breaking report looks at the particular nature of women's homelessness and its impact on women's physical, mental and spiritual health. Efforts were made to reach women not usually included in studies on poverty and homelessness, including women who are not in the shelter system but who are in impermanent living conditions, such as a sofa at a friend's house or on the floor of an adult child's apartment. Over 125 women were interviewed in over 12 languages for this report, which also looked at the barriers women face as they try to access the current system of support through the current determinants of health and health care.

From Dark to Light: Regaining a Caring Community

Cost: \$50

Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories

4th Floor Northwest Tower

P.O. Box 1320

Yellowknife, NWT X1A 2L9

Tel: 867-920-6177 Fax: 867-873-0285

Toll-free in the NWT: 1-888-234-4485

Email: council@statusofwomen.nt.ca

Website: www.statusofwomen.nt.ca

From Dark to Light is a “how-to” book on delivering workshops on family violence and healthy family issues. Designed to meet the needs of Northern people, this resource was developed through careful consultation and evaluation with communities across the Northwest Territories. (Also available in French and Inuktitut)

Recreating the World: A Practical Guide to Building Sustainable Communities

Cost: \$40 plus GST, shipping & handling

Four Worlds Press

P.O. Box 395

Cochrane, ALTA T4C 1A6

Tel: 403-932-0882 Fax: 403-932-0883

Email: anyone@fourworlds.ca

Website: www.fourworlds.ca

Rooted in decades of work with indigenous communities in the Americas, as well as extensive experience in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the former Soviet Union, *Recreating the World* is really two books woven together. The first is a down-to-earth exposition of models, principles and strategies for understanding what community development is and how it can be promoted. The second is a rich collection of stories, games, activities and tools that can be used to help others to learn about various aspects of community development practice.

Assisting Immigrant and Refugee Women Abused by Their Sponsors: A Guide for Service Providers

Cost: Free

The BC Institute Against Family Violence

Suite 551 – 409 Granville Street

Vancouver, BC V6C 1T2

Telephone: 604-669-7055 Fax: 604-669-7054

Toll free (Canada) : 1-877-755-7055

Website : www.bcifv.org

Immigrant and refugee women who are abused by their sponsor face particular difficulties in accessing personal safety and protection. If these women do not have landed status, or are at risk of deportation for other reasons, the consequences of leaving an abusive sponsor can complicate their immigration status. This guide is written for service providers working with any client who: a) is an immigrant or refugee woman; b) has been sponsored to come to Canada by a partner/fiance/spouse under the family class sponsorship guidelines; c) is experiencing abuse by her sponsor; and d) wants to separate from her sponsor but is at risk of deportation.

Guide Répondre aux besoins des femmes immigrantes et des communautés ethnoculturelles : Les défis de l'adaptation des services en violence conjugale

Cost: \$15 (shipping & handling included)
Service aux collectivités de l'UQAM
Case postale 8888, succursale Centre-ville
Montréal (Québec) H3C 3P8
Tel: 514-987-3000, x 4879
Website : www.sac.uqam.ca

This practical guide proposes an approach, intervention tools and a number of measures to adapt support services for abused women to the needs of immigrant women and ethnocultural communities. It was produced by the *Fédération de ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec (FRHFVDQ)*, the *Table de concertation en violence conjugale de Montréal*, and the *Service aux collectivités de l'UQAM*, in collaboration with *Le Bouclier d'Athéna Services familiaux*. The guide can also be viewed on the FRHFVDQ website at: <http://www.fede.qc.ca> (Available in French only)

Training for Change: A CD of Practical Tips and Strategies for Political Action

Cost: \$10.00
Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)
2 Carleton Street
Toronto, ON M5B 1J3
Tel: 416-977-6619 Website: www.oaith.ca

Training for Change CD contains information about getting started in organizing social change action on violence against women. It was created especially for women working in women's emergency shelters but can be used by anyone wanting to learn basic strategies for social change.

The CD includes short tips for creating an overall strategy, building coalitions and campaigns, lobbying government, working with media and doing public action to raise awareness of political issues.

A Women's Resource Booklet: Overcoming the Impact of Abuse on Employability

Cost: \$2.50 + shipping & handling
Bridges for Women Society
320-1175 Cook Street
Victoria, BC V8V 4A1
Tel: 250-385-7410 Fax: 250-385-7459
Toll Free: 1-866-896-3356
Website: www.bridgesforwomen.ca

This booklet is written for women who are working to overcome abuse and to improve their employability but it also aims to help those working with abused women to better understand and help in the healing process. It presents information about the impact of violence on women and the ways that this can affect their employability along with practical suggestions for how women can help themselves and get help from others.

Youth Council Violence Prevention Toolkit

Cost: This resource is free for non-profit and community organizations

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC)

1292 Wellington Street West

Ottawa, ON K1Y 3A9

Tel: 613-722-3033 Fax: 613-722-7687

Website: www.nwac-hq.org

The *Violence Prevention Toolkit* community training tool is designed to educate and train participants to promote the prevention of violence against youth, specifically Aboriginal girls. The initiative was undertaken by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and developed with NWAC Youth Council from a youth perspective.

The *Toolkit* contains: five comprehensive youth Power Point Workshops developed by NWAC youth dealing with the subjects of Domestic/Relationship Violence, Sexual Assault, Date Violence, Emotional/Psychological Violence, and Bullying; the Facilitator Guide which instructs facilitators how to use the *Toolkit* and deliver the Workshops; Fact Sheets and Handouts on all five topics including the additional topic of Community Action which teaches youth and communities how to get involved in violence prevention in their communities; Evaluation Forms for delivering the Workshops; and the CD containing all *Toolkit* materials.



CONTACT INFORMATION

This is the contact information for the project profiles shared in the *Strategies and Initiatives* section. You are invited to contact any of the organizations listed to find out more about their projects.

Bay St. George Status of Women Council

P.O. Box 501
Stephenville, NL A2N 3B4
Tel: 709-643-4702 Fax: 709-709-643-4707
Toll-free: 877-643-7444
Email: bsgswc@nf.aibn.com

Bridges for Women Society

320-1175 Cook Street
Victoria, BC V8V 4A1
Tel: 250-385-7410 Fax: 250-385-7459
Toll Free: 1-866-896-3356
Website: www.bridgesforwomen.ca

Carrefour des femmes du Grand Lachute

310 rue de l'Église
Lachute, QUÉ J8H 4A8
Tel: 450-562-7122 Fax: 450-562-0690
Email: info@cafela.org

Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada

225 Metcalfe Street, Suite 311
Ottawa, ON K2P 1P9
Tel: 613-230-2201 Toll-Free: 1-800-465-2752
Email: info@chfcanada.coop

DAWN Canada

110 Ste Thérèse Road, Office # 005
Montreal, QUE H2Y 1E6
Tel: 514-396-0009 Fax: 514-396-6585
Email: admin@dawnCanada.net
Website: www.dawnCanada.net

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

302 Columbia Street
Vancouver, BC V6A 4J1
Tel: 604-681-8480 Fax: 604-681-8470
Email: info@dewc.ca
Website: www.dewc.ca

Harmony House

P.O. Box 57082
Somerset Postal Office
Ottawa, ON K1R 1A1
Tel: 613-233-3386 Fax: 613-567-1707
Email: info@harmonyhousews.com
Website: www.harmonyhousews.com

Inuvik Transition House Society

P.O. Box 2628
Inuvik, NT X0E 0T0
Tel: 867-777-3877 Fax : 867-777-3941

Maison d'Amitié

c/o 40 Coburg Street
Ottawa, ON K1N 8Z6
Tel: 613-747-0020 Fax: 613-747-9136
Website: www.maisondamitie.ca

Minwaashin Lodge

424 Catherine Street, 2nd Floor
Ottawa, ON K1R 5T8
Tel: 613-741-5590 Fax: 613-748-8311
Website: www.minlodge.com

Muslim Family Support Services

c/o Changing Ways
388 Dundas Street, Suite 302B
London, ON N6B 1V7
Tel: 519-438-9869 Fax: 519-438-9780
Website: www.changingways.on.ca

Native Women's Association of Canada

1292 Wellington Street West
Ottawa, ON K1Y 3A9
Tel: 613-722-3033 Fax: 613-722-7687
Sisters in Spirit: 1-866-796-6053
Website: www.nwac-hq.org

North End Women's Resource Centre

394 & 382 Selkirk Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R2W 2M2
Tel: 204-589-7347 Fax: 204-586-9476
Email: info@newcinc.org
Website: www.newcinc.org

PEI Transition House Association

P.O. Box 964
Charlottetown, PEI C1A 1M9
Tel: 902-894-3354 Fax: 902-628-8718
Toll-free: 1-800-240-9894
Email: tha@peitha.org

Sistering

962 Bloor St West
Toronto, ON M6H 1L6
Tel: 416-926-9762 Fax: 416-926-1932
Website: www.sistering.org

The Support Network

400, 10025 106 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 1G4
Tel: 780-732-6647
Email: www.thesupportnetwork.com

**Victoria Women in Need Community
Cooperative**

812 Cormorant Street
Victoria, BC V8W 1R1
Tel: 250-480-4006 Fax: 250-412-0654
Email: win@womeninneed.ca
Website: www.womeninneed.ca

West Flat Citizens Group

1350 15th Avenue West
Prince Albert, SK S6V 5P2
Tel: 306-763-9378
Email: wfcc@sasktel.net

