



\$100 Million to Help End Violence Against Aboriginal Women

Ontario will be spending \$100 million over the next three years on a long-term strategy to end violence against Indigenous women. Most of the money will be used to provide support for families.

While Indigenous people comprise just 2.4% of the population of Ontario, they account for 26% of children in care. Also, 6% of the province's homicide victims are Indigenous women.

"Behind these grim statistics lie violence," said Premier Kathleen Wynne. "Behind these grim statistics lie the heartbreaking stories of mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, and grandmothers that we've lost."

For decades, governments across Canada have neglected to address the harm that this has inflicted upon Aboriginal communities. "An entire society looked the other way – or worse, shrugged our shoulders – as too many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women continued to experience violence, go missing, or be murdered," she said.

The provincial strategy, called "Walking Together", is part of the Liberal government's action plan to end sexual violence and harassment. It will include \$80 million for a family well-being program – to support Indigenous families in crisis, and to help their communities deal with the effects of inter-generational violence and trauma. There will also be \$15.75 million to ensure that Indigenous women and their communities have effective support when dealing with the justice system, and to help develop a survivor-oriented plan for the prevention of human trafficking. Another \$2.32 million will be used to help police investigations during missing-

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person cases, improve training for police officers and Crown attorneys, and provide new tools for First Nations police forces.

The provincial strategy will also integrate a number of the calls to action from the national "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" – including mandatory, Indigenous, cultural-competency and anti-racism training for all civil servants. The Premier added that because the national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls will take some time to complete, Ontario intends to move forward in addressing this issue in the interim.

References:

- CBC NEWS (February 23, 2016)
- GLOBE AND MAIL (February 23, 2016)

IWD Reception at Queen's Park 2016



Things to Celebrate on “International Women’s Day” (IWD) in Ontario:

- ✓ a feminist Premier who has publicly identified the priorities of social justice and gender equality
- ✓ a provincial sexual violence and harassment action plan that is clear in condemning misogyny and rape culture as root causes of violence against women
- ✓ the Premier establishing a permanent VAW Roundtable
- ✓ a new Prime Minister who has identified as a feminist and has made domestic violence a priority issue
- ✓ Prime Minister Trudeau committing to moving on the recommendations from the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission”, and to a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women



Finding Our Way: Network Leadership

This past year has seen a lot of activity for BUILDING A BIGGER WAVE ONTARIO NETWORK.

- March 2015: We supported a group of community leaders and experts who worked to draw attention to the plight of the “Partner Assault Response” (PAR) program. In a letter to the Attorney General, they requested that: no further changes should be made to PAR; and, a comprehensive review of the program should occur. The group offered to participate in redesigning the program with PAR providers and MAG.
- In the spring, the BBWON membership was surveyed about the community impact of funding decisions made by the MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (MAG). 44 VAWCCs provided input – from which a report was compiled and shared with the Network and the Ministry.
- A two-day BBWON Forum was held in October 2015, with 47 VAWCCs participating.
- The first phase of a provincial research project on mandatory charging was successfully funded when VAWCCs and other VAW partners contributed money. \$7500.00 was raised, and then matched by the funder, MITAC (a research foundation that supports connections between universities and communities).
- Three newsletters were produced and shared with the Network.
- The new website is under development.

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FINDING OUR WAY: NETWORK LEADERSHIP (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2):

These activities prompted different questions about the role and mandate of the Network. They are helping us clarify and define the scope of BBWON leadership and service potential to VAWCCs.

1. How is the mandate determined?

BBWON is not a government-funded body and is, therefore, able to respond to issues and ideas identified by coordinating committees as they arise. Individual VAWCCs can use the Network to raise issues, ask for support, and promote ideas and events. The following priorities – identified at two provincial Forums – also help us stay true to the Network path:

- Increase the profile of VAWCC work by making coordination more visible through Network activities.
- VAW committees include members from both the domestic- and sexual-violence fields.
- Inclusion is a core value and practice – and we want to be even more inclusive.
- BBWON includes Francophone leadership.
- Women with lived experience have important roles to play at community tables and with the Network.
- We want to engage men and youth in our work.

2. How is BBWON different from other VAW provincial organizations?

BBWON is not an organization – it is a network that provides the infrastructure for VAWCCs and their allies to share, connect, and coordinate efforts at local, regional, and provincial levels. Provincial VAW organizations and associations such as OAITH (ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF INTERVAL TRANSITION HOUSES), OCRCC (ONTARIO COALITION OF RAPE CRISIS CENTRES), and AOcVF (ACTION ONTARIENNE CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES) are feminist organizations which provide provincial representation for women’s shelters, sexual assault centres, and the VAW Francophone community, respectively. As allies and partners, these provincial organizations can use the Network to communicate with the broader VAWCC community.

3. Should BBWON be a signatory on letters to the government?

Early in 2015, BBWON was asked to sign a letter written by a community leader who was looking for support on an issue. Because BBWON does not represent individual VAWCCs, it was decided through discussion with the Advisory Committee that the Network will not sign letters. With respect to the PAR crisis, we can, however, provide assistance by offering connecting functions, administrative support, and facilitation.

Learning as We Go ...

Growing the Network is a learning process that calls for ongoing reflection and analysis. The Advisory Committee is an open group – anyone with an interest is welcome to join us. We listen as a group, and make decisions that are intended to keep us true to our core values of inclusivity and diversity – along with the principle that all voices matter and need to be heard. We see the primary role of the Network as amplifying different voices, with the goal of generating a bigger picture on VAW matters in the province.

Margaret MacPherson

GLOBE AND MAIL Opinion Piece by Nicole Pietsch

Friday February 5, 2016: Don't Dismiss Ghomeshi's Accusers Over Their After-the-Fact Behaviour

This week saw two witnesses testify in the Jian Ghomeshi trial. Ghomeshi, a former CBC Radio host, has pleaded "not guilty" to four counts of sexual assault and one count of overcoming resistance by choking – all related to alleged assaults from 2002 to 2003.

Both women shared their descriptions of being romanced – and then suddenly slapped, choked, or otherwise assaulted – by Ghomeshi. However, instead of considering the impropriety of the attacks themselves, the focus of the court's attention has landed on the women's reactions to, and continued relationships with, Ghomeshi, following the abusive incidents.

"Kissing the man who just assaulted you, and tried to choke you, and slapped you was inconsequential?" Defense Attorney Marie Henein pressed a witness on Wednesday.

"Yes," the witness replied. Hoping to process, normalize, or better understand the out-of-the-blue and violent episode, she persevered through the date, met up with Ghomeshi again over the next few days, and resumed a positive rapport with him. Following this, she stated that she shared and initiated e-mail contact with him – as did another witness, who testified about a different (though notably similar) attack.

In addition, in many sexual assault cases, a "victim's apparent lack of resistance becomes the focus of assessment and intervention"¹ in court.

Both witnesses in the Ghomeshi trial said that they had no intention of ever reporting his assaultive behaviour until they heard former Police Chief Bill Blair urge women to do so in October 2014. Thus, it is very unlikely that they ever imagined that extraneous minutiae (e.g., "Were you wearing hair extensions?" "Did he slap you first and then choke, or choke first, then slap?") or socialized human nature ("I felt sorry for him," one witness said, and noted that in not wanting to anger Ghomeshi or seem rude, she sustained the date.) would become such near-algebraic tests of memory, implied complicity, implied consent – or worse, implied dishonesty – before the courts.

Add to this the fact that, as in most sexual assaults, the accused is known to the victims. Studies show that acquaintances, friends, and/or dates are more likely to use tricks, verbal pressure, brief or minor physical aggression (e.g., arm-twisting or holding), victim-blaming rhetoric (e.g., "You know you wanted this." "I heard you like it rough." "If you tell about what happened here, we'll both be in trouble."), or other negative consequences during episodes of sexual coercion.² Thus, there may be less physical evidence of an assault.

This conflates violence with normalcy and rapport, thereby impacting a victim's capacity to resist or react to what has happened – or define *it* for what *it* is: "All I could register was not being able to breathe, and shock, surprise," Wednesday's witness told the court. "It's pretty shocking when someone hits your face." She didn't think, however, that what happened qualified as an assault.

GLOBE AND MAIL OPINION PIECE BY NICOLE PIETSCH (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4):

Survivors' reasons for wishing to maintain contact with offenders can include: being uncertain about whether or not violent incidents were, in fact, violent; wishing to improve relationships; feeling responsible for improving relationships; or, seeking clarifications or explanations about the abusive behaviours. Some survivors – for example, in domestic violence cases – may cite additional reasons, such as dependence on the offenders for emotional or practical needs, or the lack of appropriate support systems.

The witness in the Ghomeshi case shared a poignant reflection that many survivors of violence perpetrated by known, highly-respected, or loved offenders could likely also relate to: "I was thinking maybe this assault was a one-off. Everyone makes gaffes."

This sentiment reflects some of the reasons why sexual and relationship violence thrives in silence, and often remains solely between the accused people (who may have positive reputations) and their more-marginalized victims. "He sounded plausible and open," the GLOBE AND MAIL's Margaret Wentz admits in her 2014 column on Ghomeshi.

As one court observer described with respect to her interest in the case on Monday, "All of a sudden, he was off the air, and I couldn't believe it."

It's not just *the witnesses* in this case that didn't wish to face what Jian Ghomeshi appeared to have done – it was many of us. And we continue to hang around and seek clarification, explanations, or accountability.

References:

¹ Coates, L. and Wade, A. (2004). *Telling It Like It Isn't: Obscuring Perpetrator Responsibility for Violent Crime*. DISCOURSE & SOCIETY. Volume 15, page 503.

² Hakvag, H. (2010). *Does Yes Mean Yes? Exploring Sexual Coercion in Normative Heterosexuality*. CANADIAN WOMAN STUDIES/LES CAHIERS DE LA FEMME. Volume 28, Number 1. YORK UNIVERSITY: 122.



Nicole Pietsch is the Co-ordinator of the ONTARIO COALITION OF RAPE CRISIS CENTRES (OCRCC), and is a community research associate with THE LEARNING NETWORK ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. To access further information about the learning network, please follow this link: www.vawlearningnetwork.ca.

If you have experienced sexual violence, there are people who will believe and support you. You can talk to a trusted friend, family member, or contact a sexual assault centre support line. You can also access a sexual assault centre from any community in Ontario (refer to the OCRCC website for specifics at: www.sexualassaultsupport.ca).

The OCRCC Responds to the Ghomeshi Trial

In response to recent disclosures of violence against women, and Jian Ghomeshi's departure from the CBC (and his response to this), the ONTARIO COALITION OF RAPE CRISIS CENTRES (OCRCC) is reaching out to those affected by sexual violence in Ontario.

We recognize that you are likely to hear many interpretations of this situation in your community and in the media. To us, the stories of women who have faced sexual harassment in the workplace, physical and sexual violence, and violence in dating scenarios are too common.

The accounts of these women do not detail “adventurous forms of sex that included role-play, dominance, and submission”¹ or benign miscommunication within BDSM practice. Instead, they reflect these women's experiences of sexual and physical violence.

We are also aware of survivor-victims' fear of reprisal for sharing their stories. In the recent cases, many of the women chose not to file police complaints, and “the reasons given for not coming forward publicly include the fear that they would be sued or would be the object of Internet retaliation.”²

These fears reflect the concerns of all survivor-victims of sexual violence. They also point to the many root causes of low reporting and conviction rates with respect to sexual assault in Canada. Some of the factors responsible for this include the following:

- Many survivors do not report due to stigma, embarrassment, self-blame, a fear of not being believed, and concern for repercussions in their personal relationships – particularly when the offender is a friend, family member, acquaintance, or co-worker.
- The majority of sexual assault offenders are, in fact, known to the victim in some way.³
- Acquaintances, friends, dates, or relatives are more likely to use tricks, verbal pressure, victim-blaming rhetoric (e.g., “You know you wanted this.” “If you tell about what happened here, you will be in trouble.”), or other negative consequences during episodes of sexual coercion.⁴ This inevitably impacts a victim's ability to react, resist, and/or report what happened.
- False allegations of sexual assault are not a common social problem – nor are any accidental misunderstandings of consent during sex. The laws on consent are clear. What *is* a common social problem is: (1) the reality that survivors of sexual assault are often not believed or supported when they disclose their abuse experiences; and, (2) that offenders are often not held accountable for their actions.

In reality, the majority of all sexual-assault occurrences are simply not reported at all (less than 10%)⁵ – and those that *are* reported are not always resolved through the criminal-justice system. Due to the limitations of criminal-justice responses, only a small percentage of those initially charged with sexual assault will actually be convicted of this offence.⁶

THE OCRCC RESPONDS TO THE GHOMESHI TRIAL (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6):

With these realities in mind, we reach out to survivors of sexual violence, their support people, and to those who may find themselves as bystanders in such situations – particularly in the workplace. Here are some examples of situations in this context:

- A friend, acquaintance, or co-worker tells you that sexual violence happened to her/him.
- An employee tells you about sexual violence that s/he went through.
- You have an experience with workplace violence or sexual violence yourself.

If something has happened to you, there are people who will believe and support you. You can talk to a trusted friend, family member, or contact a sexual assault centre support line. You can also access a sexual assault centre from any community in Ontario. If you are considering making a report, we can help you think through your options. If you do not want to make a report, that’s okay too. All help is free and confidential.

If you are a friend or colleague of someone who is dealing with sexual violence, there are things you can do. For example, you can be an ally to the person who is victimized, instead of another aggressor.

If you are an employer, there are also things you can do. You can speak up or step in. You can ask for help from others, and then intervene together. You can be an ally to the person who is victimized, instead of another aggressor. You can take leadership – by understanding your safety obligations as an employer, and by ensuring that these have been implemented at your workplace.

The OCRCC recognizes the impact of sexual violence on women in Ontario. We believe that education and information go a long way toward the prevention of violence. Together, we will make a difference.

References:

¹ Donovan, K. and Brown, J. (October 26, 2014). *CBC fires Jian Ghomeshi over sex allegations*. THE TORONTO STAR. (www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/10/26/cbc_fires_jian_ghomeshi_over_sex_allegations.html)

² Ibid

³ STATISTICS CANADA - THE DAILY (July 25, 2003). *Sexual Offences*. (www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/030725/dq030725a-eng.htm)

⁴ Hakvag, H. (2010). *Does Yes Mean Yes? Exploring Sexual Coercion in Normative Heterosexuality*. CANADIAN WOMAN STUDIES/LES CAHIERS DE LA FEMME. Volume 28, Number 1. YORK UNIVERSITY: 122.

⁵ METRAC. *Sexual Assault Fact Sheet*. (www.metrac.org/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2014/07/ass_fact.pdf)

⁶ Johnson, H. (May 2012). *Few Sexual Assaults Lead to Court Convictions*. THE LEARNING NETWORK. Volume 1, page 2. (http://vawlearningnetwork.ca/sites/vawlearningnetwork.ca/files/LN_Newsletter_May_2012_Issue_1.pdf)

Nicole Pietsch, Coordinator, ONTARIO COALITION OF RAPE CRISIS CENTRES

Phone: 1-905-299-4428

E-mail: ocrcccoordinator@hotmail.com

Website: www.sexualassaultsupport.ca

Campaign: www.draw-the-line.ca

The Ghomeshi Trial and the Media

When I volunteered to write an article about the Jian Ghomeshi trial (the good, the bad, and the ugly of the media coverage), I expected that I would be surveying a broad spectrum of perspectives – from insightful revelations about the trauma of sexual violence, to the nasty, victim-blaming tirades that pervade both mainstream and social media. And, I was mostly right. But, it wasn't all bad. In fact, there may have been more good than bad. For the good, please see: www.feministcurrent.com/2016/02/08/any-woman-whos-been-abused-or-assaulted-know-how-easy-it-is-to-go-back. For the bad, you can check out “letters to the editor”, such as this one: www.thesudburystar.com/2016/02/23/sudbury-letter-let-judge-decide-ghomeshis-fate. Many more similar ones appeared in the POSTMEDIA or SUN MEDIA dailies around the province. For the ugly, there's just about everything written by the NATIONAL POST's Christie Blatchford and the GLOBE AND MAIL's Margaret Wente.

There was fairly-balanced coverage, as well (e.g., by Anne Kingston in MACLEAN's). Critical perspectives were offered of the criminal-justice system (<http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/michael-stewart/2016/02/prosecution-ghomeshi-trial-isnt-incompetent-game-rigged>) and of the persistent, gendered double-standard that pervades our entire culture – not just our dating relationships (www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2016/02/15/jian-ghomeshi-trial-exposes-troubling-double-standard.html). A particularly-insightful piece appeared in THE TORONTO STAR about another trial taking place one floor up: www.thestar.com/news/insight/2016/02/07/the-sex-assault-trial-one-floor-above-ghomeshi-porter.html

This spectrum was also found in web-based coverage. I won't give space to the truly-vehement, victim-blaming misogynists, but some social-media posts challenged persistent myths and lies from Ghomeshi's defence team: www.pressprogress.ca/5_dangerous_myths_about_sexual_assault_perpetuated_by_the_jian_ghomeshi_trial. Still others used the trial to proffer an alternative to rape culture: <http://norasamaran.com/2016/02/11/the-opposite-of-rape-culture-is-nurturance-culture-2>.

What this coverage tells me is that, while the judge may still be out on this trial, the jury's clearly in on one issue: the Ghomeshi trial won't serve as a pivotal moment in the history of sexual violence in Canada. Despite pre-trial hype, not much (if anything), will change post-trial. Women won't be any safer, and men won't be any less likely to perpetrate sexual violence – regardless of the verdict. Too many people (in fact, nearly half of Ontario men – according to a very recent poll conducted by ANGUS REID for INTERVAL HOUSE: www.intervalhouse.ca/node/426) still believe that men's construction of sex is the one to which we must all acquiesce, and women will continue to be shamed, blamed, and painted as liars or provocateurs for failing to understand this. How is this still possible after years of law reform – including precedent-setting cases, mandatory charging, and rape-shield provisions? It may very well be that our criminal-justice system is broken or ineffective for victims of sexual violence. The reality is, however, that women must be assaulted before we can use the system – so in terms of prevention, it starts out as ineffective. More pointedly, I wonder why, after 30 years of sexual assault / violence awareness (and millions of dollars spent on training and public-education campaigns) that sexual violence is still so prevalent in our society? This question likely deserves more of our attention. So many of our current attempts to prevent sexual violence are focused on consent; and yet I'm not sure that we understand what that means in a culture which presumes that men are inherently entitled to “get consent” and where many women aren't truly free to give it. To paraphrase myself (from 1999): men's sexual violence against women is both a cause and a product of societal inequality based on gender. No court system can possibly be solely expected to redress that reality.

Even though consent wasn't explicitly the defence argument in the Ghomeshi trial, it was at the heart of the defence strategy: women are liars. (To be clear, it is not legally possible to consent to being punched in the head, slapped, or choked.) When we truly give consent, there are no take-backs. Consent isn't something we *get*, it's something we *give* – and we can't truly give it until not giving it is respected. And in that light, when people come forward and report that they didn't consent, we have to believe them. That's how consent works.

Pam Hanington, SWRCC Member (*The opinions expressed are the author's only and may not be those of BBWON.*)

The Francophone Media Weighs in on the Ghomeshi Trial

The following were interesting, and some of the better articles, in the Francophone media:

- ❖ Le Droit (1 février 2016): [Jian Ghomeshi, un terrifiant «parfait gentleman»](#) (highlighted the incoherent behaviour of Ghomeshi – gentleman one moment, abuser the next)
- ❖ L'Actualité (2 février 2016): [Tout ce que vous devez savoir sur le procès de Jian Ghomeshi](#) (explained what we needed to know about the trial – before it began)
- ❖ Le Devoir (10 février 2016) : [Fais-moi mal, Johnny](#) (highlighted stigmas about rape victims, how they are judged, and what should be heard in this trial regarding Ghomeshi's manipulation of his victims)
- ❖ Le Devoir (15 février 2016): [Quel procès pour la violence à caractère sexuel?](#) (showed the defence attorney's method of highlighting the romantic aspect of the victims' relationships with Ghomeshi, to minimize the violence that occurred with them)
- ❖ Le Devoir (15 février 2016): [Le traitement problématique des agressions sexuelles](#) (addressed the issue of "saving face" for employers, as well as professional ethics)
- ❖ La Presse (15 février 2016): [La violence sexuelle et la loi](#) (questioned whether or not violence in sexual relationships is acceptable under the law – even when consensual – as in the case of SM)

Laure Prévost, Directrice de Projet,
Centre de Services Juridiques pour Femmes Francophones de l'Ontario
ACTION ONTARIENNE CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES: www.aocvf.ca



New Facebook Group: Network of Women with Disabilities

Formed in early February 2016, this new Network is for women with disabilities, Deaf women, and our allies. It seeks to exchange information and opinions on the issues of violence against women and accessibility.

People with disabilities face a myriad of barriers in day-to-day life. Experiencing abuse, such as street harassment, is a reality for many of the 15% of Ontarians who identify as having a disability.

If you are looking to learn more about inclusion, find participants for a consultation, or connect with like-minded folks, please look on Facebook for the NETWORK OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES (NOW).

Marianne Park, Founder,
NETWORK OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Educating Hockey Players on VAW Issues

Just when you think you've done all you could in the field of violence against women, something happens to remind you that the work is never done and that the opportunities never end. After 21 years as the Executive Director of a women's shelter, that is just what "keeps me in the game"!

I never thought we'd be working with hockey players, but that's what happened. In the fall of 2014, the media was full of stories about the appalling behaviour of high-profile athletes, entertainers, and media-types such as Jian Gomeishi. Around that time, news also broke in Stratford about the conviction of a Culliton hockey player on three counts of sexual assault. (The Cullitons are our much-beloved, local Junior B team.) Our shelter was following the Culliton story and talking about what we might do, when a photo of the sentencing hearing was released. It showed the convicted player leaving court surrounded by some of his team-mates, who were wearing Culliton jackets to show their support.

The president of the Culliton organization – Stratford Mayor, Dan Mathieson – happened to be a long-time shelter supporter. I e-mailed Dan to express our position that the wearing of team jackets in court had to be addressed. I asked what our organization might do to help. Mayor Mathieson asked us to provide a workshop on violence against women. On February 14, 2015, we came together with the players and team officials to talk about sexual assault issues.

Many people told us that the young players would not be open to working with us – however, I was sure that we could do it, because our three staff members who would be delivering the workshop were skilled, competitive, women hockey players AND seasoned violence-against-women advocates! As it turned out, this was a big key to our success.

The first workshop in February dealt with abuse issues, male privilege, and male hockey privilege. The concept and importance of consent was also taught. We discussed how to be an appropriate supporter of a team-mate in trouble, as well. On October 31, 2015, we gave a second workshop for the team. As there were new players, we dealt less with the charges, and instead explored issues of consent and how to be a community role model to a greater extent.

We are giving a lot of thought to "What next?" in our hockey journey. We were invited to drop the puck at a Culliton game in November ("Woman Abuse Awareness/Prevention Month"). We have enlisted help from the team for our "Walk a Mile" event in April, as well. We are also discussing how to engage some of the older players in helping us plan and deliver the next workshop.

Recently we presented our hockey experience to an Executive Management Group meeting at the MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES – where many excellent suggestions for follow-up were made. We would like to see our fledgling initiative grow to educate younger players (both male and female), coaches, and even parents. We believe this could also be done with other sports teams – soccer, rugby, football, etc. The question is, who can take this on, and how can it be completed most effectively and efficiently? We'd enjoy hearing your feedback, and if you would like a copy of our hockey workshop agendas, please feel free to contact me at: amcdonnell@optimismplace.com.

Anne McDonnell, Executive Director,
OPTIMISM PLACE WOMEN'S SHELTER AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Master's Thesis Research Project

My name is Sandy Erb, and I am a second-year Master's student in Clinical Psychology at the UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH where I am completing my Master's thesis under the supervision of Dr. Paula Barata, Associate Professor, from the Department of Psychology.

I am currently investigating the role of self-compassion on the shame and self-blame so frequently experienced by women exposed to violence in intimate relationships (Beck et al., 2013; Shorey et al., 2011). I am also interested in whether or not the ability to show compassion toward oneself affects the likelihood of seeking help for the violence and its negative effects – as shame and self-blame are often identified as internal barriers to intimate-partner-violence (IPV) disclosure (Buchbinder and Eisikovits, 2003).

Recently, self-compassion training (Gilbert and Proctor, 2006; Neff, 2003) has been shown to be effective in other areas where shame and self-blame pose significant challenges (Gale et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2014); but, it has yet to be explored within the context of IPV. According to Neff (2003), self-compassion involves three main aspects: treating oneself kindly, instead of with self-criticism or judgment; viewing one's thoughts, feelings, and experiences within the context of the common experience of humanity; and, accepting one's pain and suffering with mindfulness and a "balanced awareness, rather than over-identifying with them" (page 89).

I also hope to explore whether or not the relationships between the above factors differ among two types of IPV that have been identified in the literature (Johnson and Leone, 2005): "intimate terrorism" (which is primarily male-perpetrated, severe violence that involves coercive control); and, "situational couple violence" (which is often bidirectional, and results from discord and distress without the element of control).

This project is currently under review by the "Research Ethics Board". After it receives ethics approval (hopefully by mid-March), I will be able to actively recruit participants to complete a 25-minute, anonymous, online survey. Adult women who have been in a romantic relationship that has involved serious conflict and/or violence within the past five years will be eligible to participate.

I will be recruiting from a variety of areas, including organizations that provide services to survivors of IPV (e.g., women's shelters, hospital-based sexual assault / domestic violence treatment centres, transition programs, community-based violence-against-women groups, and related organizations). The survey will include an information and consent letter that outlines details regarding the project, safety precautions, gift-card draw instructions, confidentiality and privacy considerations, and a list of counselling resources. Women will be informed that participation is voluntary and will not be connected to any services that they are receiving.

Please e-mail me at serb@uoguelph.ca for further information regarding this project, or if you are interested in promoting the study within your organization.

I want to thank the BUILDING A BIGGER WAVE ONTARIO NETWORK for the opportunity to present my proposed research study in this newsletter. A summary of results will be made available upon request after project completion.

Shelter Work and the Media

The media can play an important role in assisting in the work that we do. It provides coverage of the events and special activities we host, brings attention to the issues of violence against women, and covers stories that depict the state of women in our society. Our local media has done that and so much more. In these times of others being critical of the media, we felt it was only fair to shed light on a positive working relationship in Rainy River.

When the MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES announced shelter-enhancement funding for the retention or professionalization of current staff, our employees opted for exceptional staff training experiences. Therefore, in 2015, each of our staff members attended a special training session. Some went to The Hague for the “World Conference of Women’s Shelters”, while others attended the “Canadian Domestic Violence Conference” in Toronto or went to Las Vegas for a conference on sexual assault. Each staff member chose an area of interest and was excited to be able to engage in a learning opportunity.

Unfortunately, while attending these learning sessions, several staff members posted photos of their trips on social media, which caused some people in town to believe that money was being spent inappropriately by a non-profit organization. Rumours circulated. One of our board members attended a board meeting which determined that, in the future, staff should not post photos while attending training sessions out of town, in order to avoid negative perceptions.

Management knew that something needed to be done to address these rumours. A staff-training day had already been discussed, where each staff person was scheduled to provide a 15-minute presentation on the highlights of her learning opportunity. In this way, it was believed that all staff would benefit from the “Year of the Training” – as we were all aware that this was out of the norm, was something that had never happened previously, and would likely not happen again. We wrote to the editor of the local newspaper and invited him to attend our staff-training day.

The entire situation was explained to the editor. He was sensitive to what had happened and receptive to the idea of assisting us in rectifying the problem! He attended the staff-training day, offered his thoughts, and asked insightful questions. The article he wrote for the newspaper began with: “Special one-time funding for professionalization allowed a dozen SHELTER OF HOPE staff and board members to attend national and international conferences this past year.” He went on to describe some of the training sessions. The article was comprehensive and spanned two separate editions of the weekly newspaper!

It was clear that the editor had done his own research into the events on which he was reporting, since he added information that was not brought forward during the presentations. It was a very impressive article. We were so very grateful to him for running the story, and we are happy to report that no further rumours have circulated since he published the two consecutive articles. We need a positive rapport with the media, for more reasons than one might initially think. We had previously asked the editor to join our Board of Directors, but he respectfully declined after stating that he was too busy. Nevertheless, it is clear that by engaging with the media as often as possible to help build an in-depth understanding of the work that we do (and honouring them when they are present), we remain hopeful that we can continue to enjoy this positive relationship. Their role in society is as critical as ours.

Donna Kroocmo, Executive Director, RAINY RIVER DISTRICT WOMEN'S SHELTER OF HOPE

“The War at Home” CBC Telecast

CBC Telecast
THE WAR AT HOME
 Thursday March 17, 2016 at 9pm - CBC FIRSTHAND
'Women battle an epidemic of violence in the one place that should be safe, their home.'
 "It's a hidden war and when they call in the troops its already too late."
 These are the opening words to a story that takes us into a private battlefield, where thousands of women live in fear in the one place they should feel safe - their home. In a personal form of terrorism, domestic violence killed more Canadian women in a ten-year period than all our troops killed in Afghanistan.
'The War at Home'
 A documentary by Emmy Award winner Shelley Saywell.
 Canada Media Fund
 CBC
 BISHARI
 FILM PRODUCTIONS INC.

If you missed this show, it can be viewed online at: www.cbc.ca/firsthand/episodes.

FROM THE CBC WEBSITE: "It's a hidden war, and when they call in the troops it's already too late.' These are the opening words to a story that takes us into a private battlefield, where thousands of women live in fear in the one place they should feel safe – their home. In a personal form of terrorism, domestic violence killed more Canadian women in a ten-year period than all our troops killed in Afghanistan.

The murder of Celeste Yawney, an abuse counsellor at a woman's shelter in Regina, was striking for its irony. Her boyfriend was charged with murder, and it was not the first time he had been arrested for assaulting her. Why would a woman with her knowledge and support be so vulnerable? The answer, according to women survivors is simple: because it can happen to anybody, including friends and neighbours of Celeste herself.

Across Canada, a woman is killed every six days by her intimate partner. 3,000 more flee their homes each night, seeking refuge in our shelters. Social stigma and a broken justice system leave the perpetrators nearly unaccountable, and re-victimize women who try to get out. Yet people still ask, 'Why didn't she just leave?' For survivors of domestic violence, these words cut the deepest.

The War at Home takes us into their world."

Community Projects and Updates

UPDATE FROM OXFORD DART:

OXFORD DART continues to find creative and effective ways to reach the youth in our community. In March of 2015, they rolled out their social-media awareness campaign, **#rightthing**. Through the use of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, the message was clear to youth and everyone else: “Do The Right Thing. Report Sexual Violence. Report Domestic Violence.” Please check it out and “Like” us on Facebook at **Rightthing #rightthing**.

At present, another initiative is being created for the youth audience. The goal is to teach young people about healthy relationships, so that, over time, we will see domestic-violence statistics drop. The aim is to educate both boys and girls about how to have healthy, happy relationships. We will have more to share with you about this project in the next BBWON newsletter.

These are only two of the exciting initiatives in the works here in beautiful Oxford County. OXFORD DART remains committed to educating the community on all aspects of violence against women and children. We are fortunate to have committed members who “walk their talk”.

Linda Armstrong, Coordinator/NFF Trainer (dartcor@gmail.com)
OXFORD DOMESTIC ASSAULT REVIEW TEAM (DART)

THE POETRY OF HOLLY PAINTER:

Holly Painter is a spoken-word artist, public speaker, and teacher who brought the BBWON Fall 2015 Forum to a thoughtful and emotional close. Please check out her website at: www.hollypainterpoetry.com.

A Woman Who Has Known Violence

If I asked you to draw a picture
of a woman who has known violence,
would you start first by sketching her heart
on the outside of her chest?
would you mark her magic in pen strokes
imagining her with the same love
her mother did when dreaming her before birth,
would you spend meticulous time
drawing maps in her eyes
x-marking the spot
a safe place she could call home?
would you shape her face
to resemble anyone you know?

If I asked you to draw a picture
of a woman who has known violence,
would you draw her arms like a grandmother's
freckled and weathered from the sun,

COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND UPDATES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

would she be school-aged
 young like a tree sapling or seed,
 or somewhere in between?
 would she look more like your neighbour
 or a cross-continent stranger,
 would you shade her skin different
 or the same flesh tone as your own?
 would you paint her pockets and belly
 empty or full,
 would you drape her body
 in suggestive short and tight clothes,
 would you try to highlight the ways she is different
 than every woman you know,
 would you conjure a picture
 based only on what you have seen on TV,
 would you hesitate long enough to question these beliefs?

If I asked you to draw a picture
 of a woman who has known violence,
 would you abandon colouring the blush of her cheeks
 or the curl of her smile altogether
 reaching first for the violet crayon
 to draw obvious bruises the size of fists around her eyes?
 would you forget to spend time etching the delicate details of her humanity
 instead scratching her silhouette rough like the hands
 you imagine have held her,
 would you illustrate all the ways she has been fractured?
 would you paint her clothing blood-red
 to represent the torture she has tasted
 some days even before breakfast,
 would you pencil wrinkles at the corners
 of her downturned mouth,
 one for each time she has felt pain,
 would you bother to give her a name?
 would you outline her body in black ink like white chalk,
 would you focus solely on her damage,
 her injuries and her sorrow
 would you skip sketching her as a person altogether
 and just simply draw a tombstone?

If I asked you to draw a picture
 of a woman who has known violence,
 I hope you would create her as a growing garden.
 I hope you would show the way something wonderful
 can be born from a house of dirt,
 how a landscape of hurt can be transformed

- continued on page 16 -

COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND UPDATES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15)

by the sun of someone who knows softness and life,
I hope you would give her vegetables as both her hands and her feet
for she is bitten but also tended,
she is give and she is need,
she is frailty as well as sustenance,
she is harvest and she is seed,
I hope you would make her look like a greenhouse
full of warmth, full of light
I hope you would look into her windows long enough
to capture the true beauty inside,
we must not let people wither,
we must help the winter of their lives subside.

If I asked you to draw a picture
of a woman who has known violence
and beside her
people with the ability to help,
would you first add to the frame
her own friends and family members?
would you scribble the smiles
of staff from emergency shelters,
would you pencil in police and politicians
badges or brawn,
would you draw an army of activists and volunteers
with helping hands and overflowing hearts?
would you trace the faces of those
with the wealthiest of wallets,
would you craft crisis call crews
providing life lines over phone lines,
would you stain the paper with splashes
of red and blue emergency lights,
medical staff and surgeons gowned in hospital whites?

If I asked you to draw a picture
of a woman who has known violence
and beside her
a person with the ability to help,
would you pick up your pen and think to draw yourself?

The truth is this is not a picture at all
but an ongoing mural to be drawn,
never complete until all women are recognized
and every single one of us comes together to comprise
the rest of the scene
it would end up a piece of artwork
embodying the very definition of community,
but we don't need pens, crayons, brushes, or paint,
we just need to use our thoughts, our voices, and our actions to create change.

“INTO THE OPEN COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLES ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION” (2014-2016):

How do we talk about sexual violence in a rural community? Why is it so difficult to talk about this important issue? How can we act on sexual-violence issues and be proactive, when we are stuck in silence and discomfort? How can we engage the broader community to begin a dialogue and get everyone involved in action for change? Would anyone come out to talk about sexual-violence prevention?

These were some of the questions that VIOLENCE PREVENTION GREY BRUCE (VPGB) began to examine 2014. A sub-committee was formed to “engage the broader community”, and the thinking and planning began!

We wanted to write this short article about our experiences in Grey Bruce with “Community Roundtables on Sexual Violence Prevention” to encourage other VAWCCs to try this approach, and to hear from others if they have already done similar work. Grey Bruce is a large rural area, and, in many ways, off the beaten track. Lots of innovative and successful work has taken place with domestic-violence issues in the area, but sexual-violence issues have had a low profile. We were inspired by work done in London called “Opening the Circle” – that brought together diverse people to develop strategies and build relationships across sectors and perspectives. This approach seemed to hold promise for our community, so we borrowed ideas and thank them for their support and vision.

We started in November 2014 with our first “*Into the Open Community Roundtable on Sexual Violence Prevention*”. An invitation was sent out to community agencies, VPGB committee members, women and men who used sexual-assault services, and to the public, through an invitation in the local newspaper. Then we waited. We offered a light supper, two speakers, and an opportunity for people to come together and talk about sexual-violence issues and how to prevent violence in our community. Would anyone come?

The response to our invitation, and the deep, energetic, and positive discussion that occurred, exceeded our expectations. About 40 people attended the first Roundtable. They came from all walks of life, experience, and age groups, and with so many diverse perspectives (e.g., survivors, family members of survivors, advocates, community agency staff and volunteers, First Nations and Métis service providers, and interested community members). We sat in a circle, and talked with great respect and inclusion about the culture of shame and secrecy in Grey Bruce. We identified seven key issues, and sketched out some potential strategies for our community. At the end of the evening, everyone agreed that it was an exciting beginning and that there had to be another Roundtable.

In March 2015 the second Community Roundtable took place, with 50 people in attendance. The topic of discussion was: “What does prevention look like?” John Swales and Carrie Saward spoke about their experiences as survivor/advocates. Small groups identified their own “circles of influence” and how they could utilize these to make change. One woman said she always carries a tube of lipstick with her, and whenever she sees a sexist or discriminatory ad or quote, she just writes something over it. Who knew that lipstick could be so revolutionary! There was a broad discussion on overcoming secrecy and shame, and small groups worked on specific topics, such as:

- How do we build a culture of healing for individuals, families, institutions, and society?
- What are the stories of change in Grey Bruce, and who needs to hear them?
- What is the collective impact we want to see in Grey Bruce?

COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND UPDATES (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17):

The evening ended with a request for another Community Roundtable, which took place in June 2015. Once again, over 40 people came (many from previous Roundtables, and a good number of new people). We were searching for a way to include the many layers of experience, influence, and learning that contribute to our present understanding of sexual violence – and one that could inform both understanding and action. We began by building a model using the background and knowledge of the person in the middle of the circle, and added family, community, culture, and society as outer circles that contributed to the individual's experience and understanding of sexual violence. A First Nations participant then drew a "medicine wheel" over the circles to add the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental dimensions that are present in each ring of the model. This was a powerful and important moment, and gave us a model of understanding for the work ahead. The group then identified six areas for action to prevent sexual violence in Grey Bruce:

- Making a Noise and Media Action (responding to sexual-violence issues and informing the public)
- Changing Community Messages (through a community arts project)
- Working With Local Schools and Students
- Developing Protective Spaces for Men
- Engaging and Educating Service Providers to Help Stop Re-Victimization
- Prevention and Community-Education Campaigns for the Public

Our latest Roundtable ("The Road Forward") was in February 2016. 40 people attended, and worked in small groups on specific action areas identified from the previous session, to build plans for 2016 and beyond.

There is so much to celebrate from the Community Roundtable process, as follows:

- ✓ Many new and engaged people from the community are bringing skills, insights, and passion to the work.
- ✓ A new relationship has been made with First Nations and Métis service providers, and a deep sense of connection came from our work together.
- ✓ Some great work is moving ahead. For example, HER GREY BRUCE (a survivor/advocate group) has initiated a poster and calendar campaign called, "It Starts with Me" – which profiles local men speaking about sexual-violence prevention. The calendar campaign is now present in over 200 businesses and agencies in the area, and posters are being distributed everywhere with the help of the "Into the Open" participants.
- ✓ A community arts project that will engage 80 people in the work of creating new messages to prevent sexual violence will take place in April. Artists and survivor-mentors will work together with workshop participants, and their efforts will be showcased at a public event in May.
- ✓ A proposal for a school-based project was developed, and we are hoping for funding!
- ✓ Participants of the "Into the Open Community Roundtable on Sexual Violence Prevention" are still engaged and connecting, and there is now interest in holding Roundtables in other locations in the area.

We hope to write an in-depth report on our Community Roundtable experiences soon, and we would welcome any comments, ideas, or insights from other VAWCCs in the province about this project, or about your initiatives and actions to prevent sexual violence. Please contact me at: cpurdon@bmts.com!

Colleen Purdon, Coordinator,

VIOLENCE PREVENTION GREY BRUCE (www.violencepreventiongreybruce.com)