

PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE... A COMMUNITY RESPONSE



A New Brunswick Networking Meeting of the Communities United Against Family Violence

A Report on Our Networking Experience, November 2, 3, 2001, Dieppe, New Brunswick

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A REPORT ON OUR NETWORKING MEETING

NETWORKING TO PREVENT FAMILY VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

These notes were taken from the **2001 Conference of the Provincial Caring Partnerships Committee: *Preventing Family Violence...a Community Response*** held in Moncton, New Brunswick November 2nd and 3rd, 2001 at the Coastal Inn.

Caring Partnerships is a network of New Brunswick communities that are taking grassroots action to inform and educate the public about family violence issues and solutions. Each community has created partnerships among local groups, businesses, service clubs, social agencies and individuals who are concerned about family violence and its insidious and widespread affects throughout society. A Provincial Committee of community and government representatives oversees this province-wide initiative. The Committee provides support, resource assistance, and co-ordination. It also fosters networking opportunities, sharing of best practices, public awareness and advocacy on family violence issues generally.

Mary Simpson, a guest at the meeting, complimented the group on their networking initiative. She shared her definition of positive and inclusive networking:

- Making, maintaining and using links with others.
- Sharing information, ideas and resources.
- Building relationships through conversation, exchanges and joint activity.
- Developing trust, understanding, mutuality and respect.
- Facilitating formal and informal communication and cooperation.
- Establishing connections across sectors and organizational and community sectors.

COLLABORATING TO CHANGE PROVINCIAL POLICY

In October 2000, women around the world marched to raise awareness on violence against women and poverty. In New Brunswick, approximately 400 women rallied at the Legislature and presented their concerns and recommendations to government. Soon afterwards, the government established the Minister's Working Group on Violence Against Women. Nancy Hartling, Co-chair for the Working Group, provided the following remarks.

This has been an exciting year. With the culmination of the World March for Women October 2000, it was rewarding to have our work on family violence lead to the creation of the Working Group on Violence Against Women chaired by Honourable Minister Margaret Ann Blaney. To be actually working together at the same table with 23 stakeholders and seven government representatives from around the province has been effective and rewarding. We have not done yet another study; we are completing a process that will bring us to the next step.

I liked this collaborative process, which did not put the government on the spot. The old way was: the community of interest would write a report, then go to the media and start making demands before the government had had a chance to read the report. Working with a collaborative process, we were able to learn about best practices used at the community level. We were able to exchange views between government and community. It was reassuring to sit together and understand the restraints that government is working under.

The Working Group decided to divide the family violence issue into (1) policy and protocol, (2) service delivery, and (3) education and prevention. The report is almost complete so stay tuned and watch for its release this winter.

At the time of the networking meeting, the report was still not out. It can now be viewed at <http://www.gnb.ca/0037/Index.htm>.

NEW BRUNSWICK RESEARCH – NEW FINDINGS

Over the past eight years, the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research has fostered the work of many collaborative, action-oriented research teams. These teams have been exploring a range of family violence issues. The research panel provided an opportunity for two of the teams, namely, the Family Violence on the Farm and in Rural Communities Team and the Workplace Family Violence Team. In this way, research findings come to life and participants may discover new opportunities for addressing barriers and promoting positive responses to abused rural women and to dealing with violence in the workplace.

STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Remarks by Deborah Doherty (based on findings presented in papers co-authored with Jennie Hornosty).

One research objective was to identify strategies and resources for improving community response and eliminating violence and abuse in rural regions. Many rural women did not identify their experiences as abuse even though they felt unhappy and maltreated. Some spoke of being blamed for everything that goes wrong on the farm – from machinery breaking, a failed crop, or animals getting sick. Yet, they viewed “family violence” only as an extreme when women are beaten to a pulp or to death. Those around them tended to make excuses for the abuser or even blame the victim. “It’s just the way men are,” they would explain. “That’s not family violence; that’s just life.”

The Team’s findings are consistent with emerging research in this area, confirming that various factors promote silence and ultimately, acceptance of family violence. The factors include:

- Difficulties in naming the abuse
- Stereotyping sex-roles and patriarchal attitudes
- Geographic and social isolation
- Fear of losing a particular lifestyle
- Ethic of self-sufficiency and autonomy
- Religious values and pressures to keep family together
- Economic and financial dependency
- Lack of educational opportunities
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Fear of increasing poverty
- Fear of living in urban areas
- Lack of anonymity and privacy in the community, yet little to no interference in “private” family issues. Neighbours help out with certain crises (e.g. building the barn, support through crisis and sickness) but there is also a great deal of independence and autonomy. People turn a blind eye to what goes on behind closed doors.
- Rural people do not view service providers in the same way that urban people view professionals. Service providers are known personally and there is a fear of undermined confidentiality.

Over 51% of New Brunswickers live in rural areas with a population of 1000 people or less. There are over 3000 farms in New Brunswick. Participatory researchers asked the women in the study about their experiences with abuse in a rural or farm context and what they saw as solutions.

Most women interviewed had never been asked for their insights on how to help other abused farm and rural women but they had a lot of ideas. What would have made a difference to them?

Strategies suggested by farm and rural women

- Name the abuse and give it a rural texture
- Describe it in all its forms
- Recognize the realities of farm and rural life; acknowledge attachments to farm and animals
- Recognize that threats often involve harming farm animals or children's pets.
- Find temporary places of shelter for animals of the abused woman
- Do not minimize her fears of losing rural lifestyle and identity
- Work to ensure privacy and a sense of confidentiality
- Offer rural outreach services in non-threatening venues
- Increase home visits of public health nurses for pre- and post-natal care
- Explain the impact of family violence on children
- Recognize that stress and drug dependencies may be related to family violence
- Respond positively (never blame)
- Recognize the impact of poverty, lack of housing and transportation and unemployment.

Violence and Abuse in the Workplace

Remarks by Joy Mighty

Family violence and its effects can be felt anywhere. Our first research project looked at how family violence in the home affects the work place. This was an important study that documented the lived reality for many employed women whose experience of family violence affects the way they work, relate to others at work, or feel about their workplace. During that research, several participants expressed great concern about violence and abuse occurring **within** the workplace. This led us to begin a new research project earlier this year that seeks to understand violence and abuse in the workplace. In particular, we are looking at:

- \$ How is it manifested?
- \$ Who are its victims and perpetrators?
- \$ What are its causes?
- \$ What are its consequences?
- \$ What are some possible solutions? How can positive violence free workplaces be created?

Workplace violence has been categorized into four types. These are:

Type 1 - committed by strangers

Type II - committed by non-employees connected to the workplace (e.g. customers)

Type III - committed by co-workers

Type IV - committed by employees' spouses or other family members.

Manifestations of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence may manifest itself in many ways. Among the most common manifestations are:

- < **workplace rage** - not just physical (e.g. beatings, stabbings, suicides, rapes and shootings), but also psychological trauma through obscene phone calls, threats, harassment, being sworn at, shouted at or stalked.

- < **abusive behaviour** - e.g. yelling or screaming, use of derogatory names, the silent treatment, withholding of necessary information, aggressive eye contact, negative rumours, explosive outbursts of anger or ridiculing someone in front of others.
- < **bullying** - vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees; abuse of power in ways that undermine their self-confidence and which cause them to suffer stress; repeated hurtful verbal mistreatment of a person; destructive behaviours that include the use of abusive and vulgar language, humiliation, stealing ideas, sabotaging efforts, failing to promote and reward. Women are the majority of targets of bullying in the workplace and the vast majority of bullies are bosses.
- < **workplace aggression** - any form of behaviour intended to harm current or previous coworkers .

Causes of Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is not an end in itself but is a symptom of something deeper. What's happening in the workplace is seen as a reflection of what is happening in society in general (the family, school, religious communities etc.). As violence has increased in society, there has been a similar increase in the workplace. Some of the causes of workplace violence and abuse include:

- < Macro social factors: poverty, racism, crime, mental illness, substance abuse, and family dysfunction.
- < Workplace stress: induced by changes in employment relationship, downsizing, reorganization, increasing diversity, growing workloads, erosion of job security.
- < Spill over of family violence

Consequences of workplace violence and abuse

Workplace violence and abuse can be costly. It is estimated that, in the USA, it costs businesses \$36 billion annually and employees lose \$55 million in lost wages. However, the non-economic costs to victims of workplace abuse may be immeasurable. Some of the personal costs or consequences of workplace violence and abuse are:

- < withdrawal and isolation
- < living and working in fear
- < being silenced
- < a sense of being undervalued and devalued
- < self-doubt, eroded self-esteem and shame
- < stress-related health issues
- < depleted energy, depression and a reduced sense of fun
- < anger and frustration
- < risk of job loss
- < lack of freedom
- < costs to personal relationships

Clearly workplace violence and abuse can be devastating for individuals, organizations and society in general and require systematic efforts to bring about change. We hope that our research will help us develop workplace policies and practices to deal effectively with such dysfunctional behaviour and, ultimately, prevent it by creating safe, healthy and humane workplaces.

**KEY NOTE PRESENTATION: THE LINK BETWEEN FAMILY VIOLENCE AND
MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

Remarks by Rina Arseneault

Mental health means striking a balance in all aspects of your life: social, physical, spiritual, economic, and mental. Mental health is as important as physical health. A healthy state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being is not merely the absence of disease. Mental illness is the term used to refer to a variety of diagnosable mental disorders. Mental disorders are health conditions that are characterized by alertness in thinking, mood, behaviour (or some combination) associated with distress and malfunctioning.

Major mental illness involves bio-chemical imbalances in the body. Most mental illnesses can be treated. Violence is too often overlooked as a cause of mental health problems. People with a mental illness are at risk of the following forms of violence:

- Emotional and verbal abuse
- Neglect
- Assault (including sexual)

We are only beginning to understand how widespread, dangerous and tragic violence is. A Canadian Mental Health Association study focused on people who had experienced violence after becoming customers of mental health services. Family members, consumers, and service providers are those most likely to be violent towards those suffering mental health problems. Verbal and emotional violence is equally prevalent and harmful.

Even though we know that violence permeates Canadian society, in the home, workplace, schools, sports, religious institutions and the media, there continues to be uncertainty about the link between mental illness and violence. Individually and collectively we must educate and inform. We must shift the power differential. Women and children are particularly vulnerable, and thus subject to violence.

HOW TO WORK WITH THE MEDIA ON THE FAMILY VIOLENCE ISSUE

Remarks by Benoit Duguay, Louise Imbeault and Rhonda Whittaker

The media do not share the perspective of those of you working on important issues who need to educate and inform the community. Therefore, as educators, we need to translate the issue for the media in a way that they can understand. Remember that there is a competition of causes. Yours is must one of many that that editors are sorting through. Here are some pointers:

- Get to know the media. Understand the functions and roles. Know the media organization and what its philosophy is. Know the audiences of various media outlets.
- Decide who your audience is. Who do you want to educate? Is it a certain demographic? Public authorities?
- Craft the message for that particular audience. Choose the media outlet that will reach that audience.
- The media can inform, create interest and stimulate curiosity, but it is your organizations that must generate the content and provide the facts.
- Find a person willing to tell his/her personal story. Statistics alone are not enough. The media needs testimonials. You need the “poster person” - the spokesperson who can speak for victims. Perhaps there is someone who can speak out from the abuser’s perspective. Testimonials backed up by statistics make it an issue.
- Always follow-up with the media. Provide them with documents, statistics, and facts.
- There is so much competition for the media’s time. Make personal contact with the media. Call the editor. Talk to the journalists. Keep in touch.
- Some issues are sidelined to the “ghetto” of public awareness. These are issues that the public does not own; they are swept under the rug. People who work in the media share prevalent public attitudes. Your challenge is to convince the media that this is not small marginalized issue.
- Reporters are hungry for stories. We reporters sort through thousands every day. We are looking for the story that will grab the reader by the lapels.
- There is hard and soft news. Hard news is urgent. If there competition among the media to cover the issue, it is hard news. When it is hard news, you decide whom to approach. You have more control.
- Soft news is not time sensitive and needs a more creative in-depth approach. In this case, you are helping the editor with creative ideas. Know how the information is sorted out and who wants what. Emphasize new information and set it out at the top of press releases. Get to the point. Let the editor or reporter know what you want to see in print.

- Soft news turns into hard news when a tragedy hits. Be ready to provide interviews and background information when family violence occurs that the media is reporting. Help the media to understand the context and background so that the issues can be reported sensitively and responsibly.
- Send out press releases at the right time. Give them 7 days notice of a press conference. Earlier will result in the notice forgotten. Follow up the fax with a human voice. It gives us an opportunity to ask more questions. The answers help us decide whether to pursue the story.
- Spokespeople need to be available prior to deadline. Call in and make sure they got a hold of the people they needed to talk to. Reporters work within very small windows of time.
- Readers don't seek out institutional reporting. The human voice grabs people. People pay attention to the personal stories. It provides context and helps people identify with a social issue such as family violence. Find the person who is brave enough to tell their story.
- Victims have often been through multiple traumas and can suffer years and years from abuse. They may not make the most credible spokespeople who can educate the public in the eye of the camera. Even if they are in a safe place in their lives, they still have children. It is not easy to find the perfect person to give a testimonial. The victim of violence does not have to be the victim. Abusers might speak out about recovery. Transition house workers. Research teams who have been interviewing survivors. We need to contact with average people who are experiencing the message you are trying to get across.

TEN MEDIA COMMANDMENTS:

1. Understand the media.
2. Return calls from reporters as soon as possible. Do not hesitate. Deadlines are looming.
3. Cameras are live. Never refuse an interview. Speak in 20-second sound bites.
4. Never lie.
5. Focus on the message.
6. Be polite. Never argue.
7. Never say "no comment". (There is usually always something the public should know but if there is absolutely nothing to report, one can always say "It would be inappropriate (or irresponsible) for me to comment upon that matter at this time.")
8. Don't repeat negatives. Stay positive.
9. Be cautious with "off the record". Beware of hypothetical questions.
10. Keep a positive attitude.

NETWORKING ON THE CAROUSEL

A carousel discussion allows for meeting participants to learn from several different presenters in a short period of time. Participants chose from about ten tabletop presentations, rotating every 20 minutes. The following organizations were represented. The information here is taken from the organizations' web-sites and/or the carousel menu.

The **Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre** is a feminist collective whose primary goal is reflected in a commitment to work towards the eradication of sexual violence against women and children. We strive to meet this objective through two broad activities: i) public education and ii) the provision of direct services to those affected by sexual abuse.

Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation is a charitable trust, the goals of which are to fund research into the causes, incidence and forms of treatment of family violence, and to promote and sponsor effective public education programs to counter widespread ignorance of the problem. As well, the Foundation assists shelters for the victims of abusive families through the provision of funding for special programs and activities not usually funded by the government.

The **Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research** conducts action-oriented research and public education relating to family violence and violence against women. The Centre is affiliated with the University of New Brunswick and actively builds and sustains partnerships among academics, policy makers, community workers, and community organizations. The Centre supports the work of many research teams, which are conducting collaborative studies into a wide range of family violence issues in the search for determinants and solutions. Ultimately, the goal of the Centre is to identify underlying root causes of family violence with a view to ending violence and supporting the victims and survivors of family violence. The Centre was established in 1992 and is a founding member of the Canadian Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence established in 1997.

Canadian Red Cross RespectED: Violence & Abuse Prevention Program. The RespectEd program provides prevention education programs addressing issues surrounding emotional, physical, sexual abuse, and neglect. Three programs were highlighted in the carousel:

1. **It's Not Your Fault** – abuse prevention program for youth 12 years of age and older
2. **It's More Than Just a Game** – abuse/harassment prevention workshop for coaches, trainers, and parents of young sportsmen
3. **Prevention in Motion:** abuse/harassment prevention workshop for groups working with children and youth.

CHIMO Helpline is a provincial crisis phone line that is accessible 24hrs a day, 365 days a year to all residents of New Brunswick. Our mission is to serve New Brunswick by providing a competent level of crisis intervention, referrals and vital information in a caring, confidential manner.

Victim Services Department of Public Safety. The Victim Services Program of the Department of Public Safety of New Brunswick offers various services to victims and witnesses of crime involved in criminal cases.

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick is a non-profit agency that provides information about legal issues to New Brunswickers in French and English. PLEIS has over 70 publications that are distributed around the province on topics such as youth justice, family law, criminal law, wills and estates, violence, etc. PLEIS-NB offers a video lending library, educational CD-ROMS, posters, speaker's bureau and other services to provide law information.

National Crime Prevention Centre The **National Crime Prevention Centre** is responsible for implementing the National Strategy On Community Safety And Crime Prevention. The National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention enables the Government of Canada to support communities in their efforts to reduce crime and victimization through a social development approach. In New Brunswick, staff is available to provide advice and assistance, information resources, access to video and print materials, presentations, and information about criteria and deadlines for funding programs.

Technology in the Voluntary Sector. Information Management and Information Technology Joint Table. The IM/IT Joint Table has identified the following three steps as central to achieving its goals.

- Identify needs and gaps related to information management and the use of information technology in the voluntary sector.
- Share best practices in information management and the use of information technology in the voluntary sector.

Invest in model approaches to information management and the use of information technology in the voluntary sector.

Violence Prevention Health Centre – Canadian Health Network This health centre has resources on all forms of abuse and family violence, including partner violence, sexual assault, and abuse of children and older adults. We also offer information on violence prevention programs, and resources to assist people who have experienced violence and those who care about them.

PRELIMINARY STRATEGIC PLANNING EXERCISE

November 3, 2001

Short-term Outcomes	Activities	Resources Required	Who will lead?	Time Line
Silent Witnesses are identified, created, and organized for provincial touring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify women who have been murdered by partners. • Support Charlotte County committee's leadership to create Silent Witnesses and package program for use across the province. 	PCPC coordinating Support. Every Caring Committee needs to research women who have been murdered in their communities in the last ___ years.	Charlotte County Caring Community committee.	On-going. Ready for touring by Nov 2002.
PCPC takes on coordinating function.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination. • Information resources. • Allocate money for traveling and inter-committee work • Revamp web site to act as portal for each community committee • Provide technical support. 	Active leadership of PCPC committee members.	PCPC Co-chairs.	
13 Caring Communities actively collaborate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade information and resources. • Actively support and participate in Silent Witness project. • Share tools, speakers, and inspiration. • Provincial committees will visit committee meetings and participate in local initiatives. 	Travel money from PCPC seed money.		
Government policy and programming is influenced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be ready for announcement of Provincial Recommendations on Family Abuse from Minister Blaney in December. • Follow-up with local media and weekly community newspapers. • Get family violence on to the agenda of 			

Short-term Outcomes	Activities	Resources Required	Who will lead?	Time Line
	annual general meetings and provincial conferences. E.g. NB Coalition of Transition Houses, CPANB,			
New Caring Committees are formed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the Carousel on tour. • Provide support in communities that are ready for a Committee. • Network with other community committees and agencies whose work touches on family violence prevention. 	All Caring Committees and PCPC.		
Family violence gets good coverage in soft media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate relationships with reporters in the province (like Rhonda Whittaker) who write about social issues. • Engage members of the media to advise PCPC and local committees. • Identify front-line people and people with experience and provide training to speak with media. • Be ready to call the media and offer an interview when family violence issues surface in the news. 			Be ready to interact with media when Prov. Committee recommendations are announced. Media will want to put face on this issue.
Other opportunities are seized and new relationships are built.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor Voluntary Sector Initiatives. • Link with other Networks who are interested in family violence: Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic, Canadian Health Network. 			

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