

# **Final Report**

## **Silent & Invisible: *What's Age Got To Do With It?***

### ***Component 2 – Extension Specialized Training and Educational Materials***

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## Introduction

This final report to the National Crime Prevention Strategy reviews the activities and material developed under the extension to Component 2 of the project entitled “*Silent and Invisible: What’s Age Go to Do With It?*” This extension was intended to improve inter-provincial cooperation by enabling collaborative educational activities between Education Wife Assault (EWA) in Toronto and the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses (BCYSTH) in British Columbia. Both organizations are active in their respective provinces in developing appropriate services and educational materials on issues of violence and abuse of women in later life. The activities undertaken and discussed in this report include:

- Enhancing the training curriculum for frontline workers in the anti-violence field to improve contents on immigrant and refugee women, lesbian women, women with disability and deaf women through consultation with diverse communities
- Adding information to the curriculum on provincial and territorial legislation and public policy relating to protection of older adults and violence against women
- Translating the booklet “Are You Afraid In Your Own Home: An Information Booklet for Older Women” into six languages
- Improving public and professional understanding of older woman abuse at community, regional and national levels and encouraging age and gender sensitive practice through an interactive forum held in Vancouver and modeled on a similar forum held in Toronto
- Participating with Education Wife Assault in two conferences and group meetings in Toronto around issues of older woman abuse

The following section elaborates on these processes and associated activities and difficulties. The concluding section summarizes the project and makes suggestions as to the next steps in addressing issues of violence and abuse of older women. Included in this report in the Appendix are the recommendations from the forum in Vancouver, and the forum report and participant evaluation. The forum proceedings accompany this report.

## Discussion

In January 2004, the coordinators of Component Two — Specialized Training and Educational Materials were invited to be keynote speakers at the Education Wife Assault conference entitled “*Weaving the Web*”: A Conference to Support an Integrated Response to Older Woman Abuse in Toronto. The goal of this conference was to bring together frontline workers and managers in the woman abuse and elder abuse sectors with police, community service, health care and justice system personnel.

It was clear from exchanges of ideas and experiences at the conference that inter-provincial partnerships and sharing of resources would be very beneficial. An in-depth discussion followed between the staff of Education Wife Assault of Ontario and the coordinators of a project of the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, *What’s Age Got To Do With It?* It was agreed that a collaboration that focused on adapting existing resource materials developed in British Columbia would be cost effective, encourage inter-provincial sharing and move us more quickly toward our shared goal of improving

public and professional understanding of older woman abuse at community, regional and national levels, and encouraging age and gender sensitive service delivery.

The goals of the collaboration between Education Wife Assault and the project coordinators of the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses have focused on the following areas:

- Better identification in the training curriculum of the needs of communities of older women who identify as first nations women, immigrant and refugee women, women with disabilities, deaf women and other vulnerable groups
- Broadening the awareness that violence and abuse in the lives of older women as with younger women is a social, economic and justice issue
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of the gaps in services and the benefits of coordination and collaboration among and between sectors, agencies and advocates working in the fields of elder abuse and violence against women
- Improving public and professional understanding of older woman abuse at community, regional and national levels and encourage age and gender sensitive service delivery by delivering an interactive forum in Vancouver

The activities that have formed part of this collaborative partnership are described below.

### ***Enhancement of the Training Curriculum: Working with Women who are Victims of Violence in Relationships***

A training curriculum was developed as part of the specialized training and education component of “*What’s Age Got To Do With It*”. An Adult educator at the Justice Institute of British Columbia developed the curriculum in cooperation with BCYSTH. While the pilot testing of the curriculum was very successful, the project coordinators felt that additional attention could be paid to the needs of immigrant and refugee women, lesbian women, women with disability and deaf women.

Knowing that Education Wife Assault worked closely with agencies serving these communities, the collaborative project provided a good opportunity to add to the material. EWA assumed the task of coordinating this process. The curriculum was circulated by EWA to mainstream community agencies in Toronto and to organizations serving immigrant and refugee women, lesbian women, women with disability and deaf women. These agencies reviewed the existing curriculum and made specific suggestions on expanding and enhancing the material.

After reviewing the comments and suggested changes, Jill Hightower and Greta Smith met with the course writer at the Justice Institute who had written the original text. Together they determined the most effective method of expanding and reorganizing some of the curriculum. Ongoing consultation via phone and email resulted in an enhanced section of the curriculum text. This will prove most valuable in any future training activities.

In the same way, the curriculum has been enhanced for use in the rest of Canada (outside of BC) through adding information to the section that focuses on federal, provincial and territorial legislation and public policy relating to protection of adults and issues of abuse in later life. Reference to relevant legislation in all provinces and territories has been added to this section.

## ***Are You Afraid In Your Own Home***

The funding extension made it possible for EWA to utilize their close association with many immigrant-serving agencies in Toronto to facilitate the translation of this information booklet for older women into other languages. Based on the demographics of the Toronto and Vancouver areas, the languages agreed on for translation were French, Punjabi, Chinese, Spanish, Farsi and Tamil. Education Wife Assault and Family Services of Toronto undertook the responsibility for arranging the translation, printing and distribution of the booklet in Ontario. As part of the design and layout process, they consulted with a group representing visually impaired adults to ensure the readability of the booklet. Their recommendation was to change to blue some text originally printed in red. This preserves the desired contrast and emphasis of the highlighted text, but follows the preferred practice of using dark print on a light background for easy readability.

Camera-ready images of the booklet in the six languages are being sent to British Columbia with the appropriate contact information and BCYSTH logo inserted in preparation for printing and distribution in British Columbia. The Society is assuming responsibility for printing and distribution in British Columbia.

## ***Building Bridges for the Prevention of Older Woman Abuse: A Forum For Dialogue***

The purpose of holding this conference in Vancouver was to bring together representatives from federal, provincial and non-governmental agencies, researchers, service providers and advocates working in the fields of elder abuse, woman abuse, health care and justice system personnel in an interactive educational forum.

Related objectives included:

- Increasing knowledge and understanding of this serious social problem, and to support more of its victims with improved gender appropriate delivery of services,
- Increasing awareness of older abused women who identify as immigrant and refugee women, women with disabilities, lesbians and bisexual women, poor and under-housed women and other vulnerable groups,
- Encouraging cooperation and collaboration between sectors and agencies responding to this abuse, and
- To highlight the safe home project for older abused women.

The British Columbia/Yukon Society of Transition Houses in partnership with the Gerontology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University hosted this forum in February 2005. Community partners included BC Institute Against Family Violence, BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors, Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services and Pacific Association of First Nations Women.

In addition to funding by the Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy, provincial support for the forum was received from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Ministry of Health Services, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and BC Housing. Financial support was also received from the VanCity Foundation, the Lohn Foundation and the Bruce and Lis Welch Foundation.

## **Forum Planning**

Program planning began in the summer of 2004. The advisory committee for the older women project served as the program planning committee. At this time, proposals for funding were developed and submitted to federal and provincial government agencies and foundations. Confirmation of major funding came in the late fall leading to serious but hurried program planning

The Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University was chosen as the preferred venue. It is a purpose-built environment "of enquiry and learning", which was expected to encourage respectful and active discussion. The facility was able to hold 150 participants comfortably. There were 125 individuals registered and ten or more unregistered participants including volunteers. Simon Fraser University through the Welch Foundation provided a grant to help cover the cost of the facility.

The forum was held on the evening of Thursday, February 17th and all day on Friday, February 18th. It had been hoped that this time frame would facilitate the attendance of the federal Minister Responsible for the Crime Prevention Strategy. Unfortunately the Minister was unable to attend.

Invited speakers for the forum program came from British Columbia, Ontario, the United States and Australia. All the speakers were involved in addressing issues of violence and abuse of older women in later life. A pre-forum meeting was held Thursday afternoon to bring together the invited forum speakers, advisory committee members, project outreach workers, and policy analysts from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

The proceedings of the Forum, including the recommendations that emerged from it, have been published separately, and copies of it are being distributed with this report. Also distributed with this report is an evaluation report based primarily on participants' responses to a questionnaire distributed at the Forum.

Thirty-eight specific recommendations were developed from the forum. These were drawn from formal presentations, networking and focus group discussions.

As noted in the forum proceedings:

*We emphasize, that it is critical that all research, policy, program development and training that addresses issues of health, economic security, and abuse of older adults pay particular attention to the needs of older women.*

The recommendations are organized under the headings Public Policy, Research and Practice, Education and Training, and Community Development. The full recommendations are included in the Appendix.



## ***Education Wife Assault – Issue Paper***

**E**ducation Wife Assault received related funding to develop an issue paper on older woman abuse. As part of her information gathering process, Jenny Horsman, the author of the paper, facilitated a focus group composed of service providers and advocates from agencies working with seniors, families, first nations women, immigrant and refugee women, women with disabilities, deaf women and other vulnerable groups. The BC coordinators participated in the focus group and were among those interviewed individually by Ms. Horsman.

A draft paper was sent out for review. Significant changes were suggested to the paper by some of the focus group participants including both Jill Hightower and Greta Smith from the BC project. A second draft has been produced and is now being edited for publication.

### ***Summary***

**T**he development of the partnership between the BCYSTH project coordinators and Education Wife Assault staff is an important first step in developing broad inter-provincial collaboration across Canada to address older woman abuse, and promote inter-agency cooperation and women-centered services for older abused women.

This funding extension has made it possible to:

- Strengthen the training curriculum
- Translate the booklet for older women into six languages
- Hold a conference in Vancouver dedicated to older woman abuse
- Publish the conference proceedings

The collaborative process has been a positive experience overall, building on the programs and resource development experiences in British Columbia and Ontario and focusing on addressing the needs of older abused women through the development of older women-centered services and materials.

Some delays in various aspects of the project occurred when the staff member of EWA who had been instrumental in the development of their work in this area of older woman abuse left the organization. She had been primarily responsible for developing the collaboration from the Toronto end. Her departure left EWA with a significant staffing deficiency for work on the issue of abused older women. Overcoming the loss of a member of the team who specialized in this area has been challenging for EWA and at times the project as a whole.

Working together over distance has been both a challenging and a very rewarding experience. Having the opportunity to meet with individual service providers and advocates from various community groups on our visits to Toronto has increased our knowledge base on the many aspects of older woman abuse. Accessing a great pool of knowledge and experience from the various community groups has provided additional material and perspectives on how to encourage inter agency collaboration particularly from agencies who address abuse of older women though the lens of elder abuse.

It was gratifying to learn that the curriculum was well received by readers from various ethnic groups who reviewed the material. In addition, it is satisfying to hear that Family Services of Toronto and other agencies are already utilizing parts of the curriculum in their training activities. EWA's access to translators and foreign language printers in Toronto has been of enormous value in having the booklet, *"Are You Afraid In Your Own Home"*, published in six other languages.

The forum, held in February in Vancouver, has improved the understanding of the issues of older abused women at community, regional and national levels. Having a prominent researcher working in this area of older woman abuse from the United States give a keynote address illustrated that this issue is also an international issue, further supported by a presentation from an Australian researcher.

The collaboration between EWA and BCYSTH has been a positive and mutually beneficial learning experience for both organizations. It has served to refine and expand educational materials, and promote broader knowledge of the issue of older woman abuse. It is an important step in promoting inter-provincial cooperation. Within the province of British Columbia, a significant number of organizations are now beginning to develop services specific to older abused women. BCYSTH is receiving an increasing number of requests from organizations in other regions of Canada for the educational materials developed through Crime Prevention including the video, pamphlets and training material.

## ***Next Steps***

The next steps needed to move forward the issue of older woman abuse and actions toward its elimination are:

1. Working with the project advisory committee on joint development of an action plan based on the Forum recommendations (see Appendix) and on building support for action toward achieving those objectives
2. Completing the educational and training materials with a Best Practice Guide and Resource Manual on working with Older Abused Women. This manual will draw on all the research and program initiatives undertaken through the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses around older women and input from older women. Content experts will provide specialized social and health information.
3. Pursue inter provincial cooperation and education around the issues with Education Wife Assault and women serving agencies in other provinces and the territories.
4. Advertise and share the education and training materials online wherever possible

In conclusion, it is important to remember that these steps must be taken within the context of gender and violence. This was eloquently summarized by Angela Robertson reflecting on her experience at Sistering, a woman-centered multi-service agency in Toronto, in her address to the Forum. (Proceedings, page 65)

When we talk about older women and we talk about elder abuse, we erase the issue of the gender of violence against women. I suggest that we do not de-gender violence against women by using the term "elder abuse". That term, purely based on age rather than the nature and circumstance of the abuse, masks the reality for older women experiencing a continuum of violence against women.

## **Appendix**

### **Recommendations from the Forum**

The thirty-eight recommendations from this forum are drawn from group discussions, the presentations and networking at the forum. They reflect the needs and experiences of the four older women who told their stories on the first day of the forum. These needs are similar for all other abused older women here in British Columbia, in Ontario and other jurisdictions where older women have shared stories of violence and abuse in their lives.

We emphasize, it is critical that all research, policy, program development and training that addresses issues of health, economic security, and abuse of older adults pay particular attention to the needs of older women. This theme is reflected in the recommendations summarized below under the following headings:

- ◆ Forum Outcome Recommendations
- ◆ Public Policy
- ◆ Research and Practice
- ◆ Education and Training
- ◆ Community Development

These categories are not mutually exclusive, so recommendations may fall under several categories and will be referenced as such. Each recommendation is followed or accompanied by suggestions as to who should be responsible for leadership in moving the issue forward. Where appropriate, several possibilities are suggested.

#### **Overall Forum Outcome Recommendations**

1. Education and awareness are the first steps towards change. The forum proceedings can be used as a tool to support lobbying and advocating for services for older abused women.
2. Make use of the participant information list from the forum to share information and develop networking strategies to move the response to the issue of older woman abuse forward.
3. BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses takes the lead in reconvening this forum in Autumn 2008 to assess the progress of the forum recommendations and associated responses in policy, research and practice.

#### **Public Policy**

4. That Ministries of the provincial government consider the effects of gender, age and of disability in their development of policies and programs, especially with respect to the compounded disadvantages experienced by older women with disabilities

##### ***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development*

5. That the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development in consultation with the Health Authorities review the work of the designated agencies under the Adult Guardianship Legislation to investigate situations of abuse, neglect and self-neglect of adults. This review should include an assessment of available resources in community care, mental health and acute care social work.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development and Regional Health Authorities*

6. Seek modification of immigration policies making older women perceive that they are vulnerable to deportation if they leave a relationship with a sponsor due to abuse

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Citizenship and Immigration Canada*

7. Develop a set of best practice guidelines based on research and consultations with older abused women to ensure accountability when dealing with cases of abuse of older women. These guidelines to be incorporated in police, Crown and other criminal justice personnel training.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General*

8. The protection enforcement order matrices currently being revised by Solicitor General should be distributed to agencies working with older abused women for review, feedback or comments.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General*

9. Encourage senior police officers of all forces and police training institutions to emphasize information and training exercises on abuse of older women which addresses ageism, sexism, paternalism, and appropriate interviewing techniques.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Justice Institute of BC, and RCMP and municipal forces*

10. Develop training on abuse of older women for Judges and Crown Counsel, police services and court services.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General*

11. Victim Services and Community Service Division have distributed the video “*What’s Age Got To Do With It*”. In some communities, their frontline workers have attended the two-day

training on older woman abuse. Given the increase in awareness of older women abuse at the community level and associated demand for services, we recommend the division undertake an assessment of this need and associated cost pressure on existing services.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General*

12. Address the need for long-term, safe and affordable housing for older women who leave their abusive relationships.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*BC Housing, Ministry of Health, Health Authorities, SAFER, local governments*

13. Governments must address income assistance and entitlements gaps for older women who leave abusive relationships.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance, Social Development Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Women Elders in Action*

14. Federal and provincial government agencies funding information resources to assist immigrant and refugee women abused by their sponsors must ensure that the information provided in their public documents include reference to older women sponsored by family members.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Heritage Canada, Ministry of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues, Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism*

15. Fund the development of public education on use and mis-use of power of attorney.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism*

16. Improve access to Legal Aid for older women suffering from abuse or neglect.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism*

17. Victim Services Division provides funding for specialized anti-victimization programs for (older) lesbians.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General*

18. Ensure that both professional and frontline staff of Health Authorities have access to training that assists them to appropriately address the needs of older abused gay, lesbian bisexual and transgendered adults.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Health, Health Authorities*

19. Ensure that the Health Authorities provide training, for all Home and Community staff on the dynamics of violence and abuse of older women.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Health*

20. Increase funding for mental health services, and provide ongoing training for mental health staff on issues of abuse of older adults. Particular attention to be paid to older women's experience of present and past abuse.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Health*

21. Expand the safe home programs for older women across the province.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues*

22. Reinstate and coordinate the Senior Citizen Counsellor program, including training for volunteers.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Ministry of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues*

## **Research and Practice**

23. Federal and provincial ministries, funding agencies and foundations with responsibilities and programs in the areas of health, social services and social sciences give priority to research and development work on:

- Gender aspects of abuse and violence in later life;
- Research, education and policy that will improve the health status of older women, giving special attention to those who are or have been victims of family violence.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Gerontology Research Centre at SFU, BC Network for Aging Research (BCNAR), Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Centres of Excellence for Women's Health*

24. Federal and provincial funding agencies and foundations ensure that projects focusing on abuse of older adults pay specific attention to gender and to violence and abuse of older women.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*BCNAR, BC Ministry of Health,*

*Ministry of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues, Health Canada, Vancouver Foundation, Vancity Foundation, BC Law Foundation*

## Education and Training

25. After family and friends, older women are most likely to seek help from their family physicians. Contact BCMA around continuing education seminars on abuse of older women. Approach BCMA and Ministry of Health to provide appropriate compensation to family physicians for addressing abuse issues of older women clients.

### ***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Jill Hightower, Greta Smith– Coordinators, Older Women's Project*

26. That community agencies provide education for staff to ensure they do not assume heterosexuality and become inclusive.

### ***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Provincial Advisory Committee to Older Women's Project discuss possible strategies*

27. That BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses inform relevant agencies about their resource materials on woman abuse in later life.

### ***Responsibility/Leadership***

*BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses*

28. Improve the cultural competence of staff doing frontline work around abuse of older adults in health, social services and justice related agencies.

### ***Responsibility/Leadership***

*BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors, Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services — possible leaders*

29. Services for older abused immigrant women and associated community education should be developed and delivered if possible through community based immigrant services societies.

### ***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services and other Forum community partners are possible leaders*

30. Public educational material on woman abuse developed for ethnically diverse communities must include information on abuse of older women.

### ***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Funding agencies at provincial, federal and community levels, and community organizations*

31. Community education activities around issues of violence against women should involve older women in outreach and publicity activities. Brochures, posters and other materials must include images and examples of older women.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses (BCYSTH), Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS) and BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs (BCASVACP)*

32. Develop a provincial public education strategy directed to older adults, families, and communities on abuse in later life, including abuse of older women. The strategy must be aimed at seniors themselves particularly those who are isolated due to health, geographic location.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Older Women's Project Provincial Advisory Committee examine strategies*

## **Community Development**

33. The coordinators of the BCYTH Older Women's Project meet with senior staff of Community Response Networks, VAWIR, Community Coordination for Women's Safety, and BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors to:

- Investigate and develop proactive strategies to support the community needs of older abused women,
- Share information on organizational activities and their respective community and professional training activities.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Jill Hightower, Greta Smith— Coordinators, Older Women's Project, Karen Stone—Executive Director, BCYSTH*

34. That the Executive Director of BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, along with the coordinators of the Older Women's Project, meet with the forum community partner, Pacific Association of First Nations' Women Services to discuss strategies to promote the development of services by First Nations' women for older abused elder women within their local communities that respect traditional values and meet the needs of elder women.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Jill Hightower, Greta Smith— Coordinators, Older Women's Project, Karen Stone—Executive Director, BCYSTH*

35. Many older women attend religious services. Encourage leaders of religious organizations and faith communities to become informed about abuse of older women and knowledgeable about community resources.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Older Women's Project Provincial Advisory Committee discuss possible strategies to reach faith leaders*



36. Promote the development at the community level of joint training sessions for members of community response networks, designated agency staff, police and victim service workers, transition house and women's centre staff. Training should include issues of ageism, sexism, abuse of older adults, with attention to older women, safety planning and support services. Such sessions would encourage the development of working relationships and inter-agency collaboration.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Older Women's Project Provincial Advisory Committee discuss first steps*

37. Community agencies and individuals should advocate for the appointment of a legislative position of a senior's advocate to act as independent voice for older adults.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Seniors Network of BC, Council of Senior Citizens Organization*

38. Community agencies consider holding an event or forum in partnership with other agencies on older woman abuse. This will increase the profile of the issue in the community and bring potential community partners together.

***Responsibility/Leadership***

*Jill Hightower and Greta Smith– Coordinators, Older Women's Project promote the idea in newsletters of BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses (BCYSTH), BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors (CEAS), BC Institute Against Family Violence (BCIFV), and BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs (BCASVACP)*

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*Please Note: The names of the Government Ministries referred to in the above Recommendations reflect changes made after this Forum took place.*



# ***Building Bridges for the Prevention of Older Woman Abuse: A Forum for Dialogue***

## ***Report on the Forum***

***May 25, 2005***

The British Columbia/Yukon Society of Transition Houses and the Gerontology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University hosted this forum. Community partners included BC Institute Against Family Violence, BC Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors, Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services and Pacific Association of First Nations Women.

Financial support was provided through The Government of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy, and at the provincial level by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Ministry of Health Services, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and BC Housing. Financial support was also received at the community level from the VanCity Foundation, the Lohn Foundation and the Bruce and Lis Welch Foundation.

The overall objectives of the forum were to develop:

- An interactive educational conference similar to "Weaving the Web: A Conference to Support an Integrated Response to Older Woman Abuse, which was held in Toronto to raise awareness of violence and abuse of older women in their homes
- To increase awareness of older abused women who identify as immigrant and refugee women, women with disabilities, lesbians and bisexual women, poor and under-housed women and other vulnerable groups
- To encourage cooperation and collaboration between sectors and agencies responding to this abuse.
- To highlight the safe home plot project for older abused women

### **Forum Planning**

Discussions on the feasibility of holding an older woman abuse forum began in the summer of 2004. Proposals for funding were developed and submitted to federal and provincial government agencies and foundations. Confirmation of major funding came in the late fall leading to serious but hurried program planning. The advisory committee for the older women's project served as the program planning committee. The Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University was chosen as the preferred venue. It is a purpose built environment "of enquiry and learning" which was expected to encourage respectful and active discussion. Simon Fraser University through the Welch Foundation provided a grant to help cover the cost of the facility.

Dr. Gloria Gutman, Director of the Gerontology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University agreed that the Centre would partner with BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses in hosting the forum.

The forum was scheduled for the evening of Thursday, February 17th and all day Friday, February 18th. It was hoped that this schedule would facilitate the attendance of the federal Minister Responsible for the Crime Prevention Strategy.

Invited speakers for the forum program came from British Columbia, Ontario, the United States and Australia. All the speakers were involved in issues of violence and abuse of older women in later life. A pre-forum meeting was held Thursday afternoon to bring together the invited forum speakers, advisory committee members, project outreach workers, and policy analysts from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

## **Presentations to the Forum**

Honourable Murray Coell, Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, opened the forum Thursday evening. His address was followed by an evening program which highlighted the older women's safe home pilot project. Each of the outreach workers spoke about the satisfactions and challenges of their work. Then, four older abused women shared their life experiences of abuse and their hopes for the future. The evening concluded with a reception, networking and a performance by the Golden Eagles Drummers, an Elder First Nations Women's Drumming Group.

Her Honour, The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia opened the second day of the forum. She was followed by Eleanor King, Executive Director, National Crime Prevention Centre speaking for her Minister about the work of Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy.

The first keynote address was by Dr. Gloria Gutman, President of the International Association of Gerontology and director of the SFU Gerontology Research Centre. Her title was *Older Woman Abuse in the Context of Population Aging: Issues, trends, traps and opportunities*.

Each of the speakers on the panel of four service providers from Australia, Ontario and British Columbia spoke about programs and activities they had been associated with that address violence against older women. The final speaker in the morning was Honourable Wendy McMahon, Minister of State for Women's and Seniors' Services. A highlight of her remarks was her announcement that her Ministry would provide ongoing funding for the safe homes for older women established in the pilot project in BC.

Therese Zinc, M.D., MPH, of the Department of Research at Olmsted Medical Centre in Minnesota was the afternoon keynote speaker. She chose as her title "*The Not So Golden Years*" to discuss research on intimate partner violence in later years.

## **Participant Interaction**

The schedule was intended to provide time for questions and discussion following most of the presentations, and participants took advantage of these opportunities as well as speaking with presenters and one another during the breaks.

Most of the afternoon was devoted to participatory work by the forum. Karen Stone, Executive Director of the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, had organized a process focused on Coordination, Cooperation and Collaboration that was intended to develop recommendations for action. The process began with discussions in four small groups to which delegates had been assigned.

Each of these groups was given one of the following questions:

1. How can we identify and promote appropriate services for older women who identify as first nations women, immigrant women, refugee women, women with disabilities, lesbians and women from other vulnerable groups? What resources would be required to integrate their needs into support and services?
2. Should British Columbia have regional and local coordinating committees to address safety, social, health and legal needs of older women? Should existing committees, such as those focused on violence against women (VAWIR and community coordination for women's safety) or adult abuse (community response networks, CRNs) be encouraged to add this to their mandate? What other strategies could be used to promote the development of responsive and coordinated approach in policy and practice to address the safety, social, health and legal needs of older abused women?
3. What legislation and policies should be developed, re-framed or amended to ensure older abused women receive appropriate support and access to age and gender services?
4. How can we sensitize policy makers and services providers to the nature and extent of violence and abuse of older women, including the issues of power and control underlying family violence?

## **Recommendations from the Forum**

Facilitators and note takers were provided to help each group compile its conclusions and summarize them for the other participants after returning to the main hall. These conclusions and notes from the discussions in the full group are being reviewed by the coordinators and the advisory committee and will be included in the proceedings of the forum.

The main presentations by speakers at the forum are also being edited for inclusion in a printed proceedings volume.

## **Participant Evaluation**

Conference evaluation questionnaires were included in each participant's conference folder, and from the end of the first evening, participants were reminded to complete and return their evaluations before they left. A collection box for them was displayed prominently on the registration table in the lobby where much of the networking at breaks took place.

A total of fifty-seven evaluation forms were collected from participants and presenters. This represented a fairly high response rate given that 124 people registered at the forum, but not all attended.

A copy of the questionnaire with the tabulations of answers is at the end of this report. There was space for comments by each question, which has been replaced with the counts of check box responses.

## **How well did this Forum meet its objectives?**

A 67% majority of the respondents felt that the conference was successful in raising their awareness and knowledge about the types of violence experienced by older women. Many comments referred to

the high quality of the presentations, or said that the forum provided an excellent overview on elder abuse and violence against women. One said that while she was aware of the issue, the forum served as an excellent refresher.

There were several positive comments about the value of hearing the outreach workers talk of their experiences. One person noted that through her daily work with seniors and their problems, “I am aware of this subject”. Another complained that the scope was quite narrow focusing on violence against older women by a partner. There were some suggestions that the forum should have been more inclusive of marginalized women, especially elderly immigrants and refugees.

Those who said that the forum increased their awareness about problems with services to older women were 71% of the respondents. One of them commented that while this was information we already know, it is helpful to have that knowledge validated by studies and focus groups.

Thirty-nine people, 71%, also indicated that the forum increased their awareness of how abuse affects older women differently when they also have issues of poverty, homelessness, race, immigration status, language, sexual orientation, disability, etc. One individual noted that it helped her look at the bigger picture of how they face multiple barriers. Several respondents made the comment that Angela Robertson was amazing. It was suggested that the presentations from the older abused women addressed this issue as well. One comment was that there were so many issues to cover in this area that there was not time to “unpack” all of it. Another commented that the presentations were not able to do justice to this complex issue. And one person said that she has a good awareness of the issues and was looking for “deeper discussion and research”.

Three-quarters of respondents said that the forum helped them as individuals gain a better sense of their own feelings and responses to violence against older women. Individual comments reflected this perception quite strongly, or, as one person said, “I’m more “sympathetic to their unique challenges”. Another commented about this that she realized “how as a society we stereotype older women so unfairly”. Another person expressed thanks for increasing her awareness. One comment was “that the forum increased my awareness of my personal feeling and response to older women”, and added that she could apply this information to cases that she is currently working on.

Only 64% of the respondents felt the forum enhanced their knowledge about responding to incidents of abuse of older women. One comment was that the forum raised the issues, but did not provide all the solutions. Someone said, “I learned how older women are reluctant to disclose abuse by family and caregivers.” Another respondent said she already had a good response network.

A couple of comments suggested that the forum did not address the abuse of older women by their adult children. Another respondent stated she was well aware of responding to older women and that “change will be slow unless we expose the present paradigm”.

## **Overall Evaluation**

Overall, two-thirds of the respondents felt that the forum was successful in promoting dialogue and networking. A common theme in the comments was that it would have been better to have more time, but that the forum maximized the value of the time that was available. Many individuals commented on the excellent opportunity to network and share ideas. It was also suggested that the forum needed to be more inclusive with representation from other vulnerable groups.

Thirty-eight of the respondents felt that the breakout sessions were effective in generating discussion and recommendations to share with the whole group. While the questions were thought to be good and the breakout sessions effective, there was a sense that the time for the sessions was limited. One comment was, “questions led to other discussion and could have gone on for a long time”.

Fifty-one of the respondents thought that the Wosk Centre was an excellent facility for the forum. The circle configuration was said to a wonderful arrangement for plenary and group discussion and most respondents really liked the chairs. Comments included beautiful, comfortable facility with very friendly accommodating staff. For a couple of the respondents, there were some problems with the podium microphone which seemed to have a delayed echo.

The question, were you satisfied with the conclusions and recommendations of the forum? was not answered by 19, a third of those who returned questionnaires. Of those who answered, 76% checked ‘yes’, and 21% were somewhat satisfied. Comments on this question suggested that the conclusions and recommendations would need some fine-tuning, and there was not enough time for in depth analysis of the discussions. One person suggested that there were some conclusions and recommendations missed, in particular, the “need for an attitude shift about seniors in general. How do we begin to view seniors as a resource rather than a burden?”

## **Evaluation of Presentations**

Participants were asked for responses on a five-point scale to a series of questions about the presentations. The means (average scores) shown in the appended data were all in between the highest and the second highest of the five answer categories. The highest was 4.67 and the lowest 4.22. Angela Robertson was the subject of particularly positive comments, with words like “outstanding”, “fabulous” and “amazing”. The questionnaire asked only about the two keynotes and one of the panels, but many of the respondents commented with praise for the Lieutenant Governor’s address. One said, “seniors should plan to use Iona as a ‘poster girl’ for all sorts of issues”.

## **Additional Comments and Suggestions**

There were many complementary and thoughtful comments in the evaluations about the forum. Overall, it was seen as “excellent”, “interesting”, and “a marvelous conference in all aspects”. One person suggested that we do it again in a year or two to maintain the momentum, and others said things like “This was great. I’m looking forward to the next step”. Another respondent said, “I’m glad you involved the government and political representatives in order that they address issues and hear what these are, directly from women”. Again, we were told that more time was needed in order to formulate plans to take back to worksites. The need for more education and communication with older First Nations women and older lesbian women were suggested.

Disappointment was expressed about the lack of law enforcement personnel attending the forum. As is noted below, an unfortunate conflict made it impossible for some interested police to attend. There was some comment about the numbers of politicians involved, like “possibly necessary but my least favorite part”. One respondent expressed her fear “that the issue of older woman abuse will become the ‘flavour of the month’”. Many respondents asked for follow-up material from the forum.

## **Forum Participants**

One hundred and twenty-four individuals were registered for the forum. Many of the participants came from women's services, including transition houses, women centres, and other community services. There were a considerable number of service providers in the area of elder abuse, other seniors' and advocacy groups including the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations, immigrant-serving agencies, and several neighborhood houses were represented.

At the provincial government level, the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services was very well represented at the forum as were BC Housing, the Victim Services Division of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and the Ministry of Health Services. There were representatives from Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, a number of hospitals and health services, the office of the Assisted Living Registrar, and the Public Guardian and Trustee of British Columbia. One Supreme Court Judge attended the forum.

Information about the forum was circulated to the relevant departments at the University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University. The only academic attendees came from the Gerontology Research Center at Simon Fraser University and Elder Law Studies at UBC.

Police attendance was limited. While a representative from the Vancouver police domestic violence unit attended, the forum was unfortunately held during a two-week police-training course on threat assessment. One person attended from the RCMP's E Division Victim Services. While information was sent to the public policy division of the Ministry of the Solicitor General and to Crown Counsel offices in Victoria and Vancouver, no one attended the forum from this Ministry.

At the federal level, there were delegates from the Crime Prevention Strategy, Status of Women Canada, Human Resource and Skills Development Canada. No one attended from Health Canada, or the National Clearing House.

## **Conclusion**

The forum was successful in bringing together service providers in the area of violence against women, elder abuse, seniors' services, provincial cabinet ministers, and policy and program analysts from some provincial government agencies. At the federal level, the Executive Director of the National Crime Prevention Strategy attended the forum, but otherwise, there was minimal attendance from relevant federal agencies.

In retrospect, we would have benefited from two full days. However, this was not feasible within the budget limitation imposed by fundraising. Holding the last day of a conference or meeting on a Friday also tends to be problematic as participants start leaving for home in the early afternoon. We had hoped Minister Ann Maclellan could attend as Fridays are days that federal politicians generally are available for this sort of event.

Overall, the forum objectives were met and, through the further review of the small group session and associated recommendations, an agenda will be developed to move the issue forward. The forum proceedings will be distributed to all those who attended the forum and to relevant federal and provincial government agencies





## ***Participant Evaluation***

### **HOW WELL DID THIS FORUM MEET ITS OBJECTIVES?**

Did the conference raise your awareness and knowledge about the types of violence experienced by older women?

- |                                   |    |           |   |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | 37 | No answer | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No       | 7  |           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | 11 |           |   |

Did it raise your awareness about problems with services to older abused women?

- |                                   |    |           |   |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | 39 | No answer | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No       | 4  |           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | 12 |           |   |

Did it increase your awareness of how abuse affects older women differently when they also have issues of poverty, homelessness, race, immigration status, language, sexual orientation, disability, etc.?

- |                                   |    |           |   |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | 39 | No answer | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No       | 8  |           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | 8  |           |   |

Did it help you, as a participant, to gain a better sense of your own feelings and responses to violence against older women?

- |                                   |    |           |   |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | 40 | No answer | 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No       | 1  |           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | 12 |           |   |

Did it enhance your knowledge about responding to incidents of abuse of older women?

- |                                   |    |           |   |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | 35 | No answer | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No       | 6  |           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | 14 |           |   |

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

Was the structure of the conference successful in promoting dialogue and networking?

- |                                   |    |           |   |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | 37 | No answer | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No       | 3  |           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | 15 |           |   |

Was your breakout session effective in generating discussion and recommendations to share with the whole group?

- |                                   |    |           |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----------|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | 38 | No answer | 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No       | 2  |           |    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat | 6  |           |    |

Please tell us what you think of the Wosk Centre as the facility for this forum?

- Good 51 No answer 3
- Poor 0
- Acceptable 3

Were you satisfied with the conclusions and recommendations of the forum?

- Yes 29 No answer 19
- No 1
- Somewhat 8

Are there any conclusions or recommendations that you feel were overlooked?

- Yes 9 No answer 28
- No 16
- Somewhat 4

## EVALUATION OF PRESENTATIONS

scoring    Very Good    Good    OK    Fair    Poor  
                 5            4        3        2        1

the figures are mean scores, numbers of responses

Older Woman Abuse in the Context of Population Aging – Dr. Gloria Gutman

- 1. Knowledge of the presenter 4.76 52
- 2. Communication skills of presenter 4.65 52
- 3. Value of this presentation for my work 4.27 51

Panel on “Violence Against Older Women – Programs and Actions” - Jill Duncan (*Australia*),  
Judith Alcalde (*ONPEA, Ontario*), Angela Robertson (*Toronto*), Suzi Kram (*BC*)

- 1. Knowledge of the presenters 4.55 52
- 2. Value of this presentation to my work 4.22 52

The Not So Golden Years – Dr. Therese Zink

- 1. Knowledge of the presenter 4.67 52
- 2. Communication skills of presenter 4.56 52
- 3. Value of this presentation for my work 4.08 52

## OTHER COMMENTS?

We appreciate your feedback. **Thanks!** – *Jill Hightower, Greta Smith*