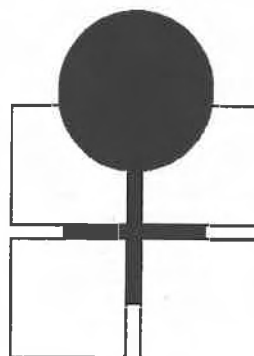


**Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action Centre**



**FREDA**

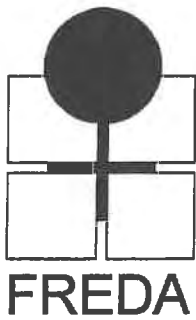
**THE NORTH ISLAND NETWORK TO RESIST AND  
HEAL FROM VIOLENCE**

by

**Helen Dempster**

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## **Feminist Research, Education, Development & Action Centre**

The Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action (FREDA) Centre is one of five violence research centres funded by Health Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Since its inception in 1992, the FREDA Centre has worked with over seventeen different groups in British Columbia on various aspects of violence against women and children. The Centre has also published a report dealing with violence against women in the Yukon.

FREDA is a collaboration of community groups, and feminist academics from Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia. The Centre's mandate is to undertake and promote action-based research on violence against women and children. As well, the FREDA Centre works with community groups to forward recommendations for action to relevant policy makers and mandated agencies.

For more information, or to order other publications, please contact the FREDA Centre at the following address:

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Coordinating this project and facilitating the series of workshops was an incredibly moving and valuable experience for me. I met some wonderfully strong women who inspired me with their vision, compassion and determination. The connection among us was our resistance to violence and our ongoing need to heal from its effects.

The differences among us were that some of us were poor, some middle class, some were First Nations women, some non-native, some of us were lesbian and some heterosexual, some had children, and others did not. We had different educational backgrounds. Some were dealing with current abuse while others were healing from former abuse, and still others said they had never experienced abuse in an intimate relationship.

I was reminded of Audre Lorde's words "survival is not an academic skill...It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths." (p112, Sister Outsider)

We acknowledge and named our differences as we did our work and they became our strength as we persistently focused on our common commitment to improve the lives of battered women and their children in our communities. I thank all the women who participated in the workshops for your courage and trust. I learned so much from being with you.

I also thank the women who were the community contacts and organizers of the workshops. Some of you met with resistance in setting up the workshops and disappointment when only a few women attended. I am inspired by your passion and perseverance.

A special note of thanks to Tanya Rainey for assisting in Port Alberni as well as in your community of the Comox Valley, to Catherine Phillips for your outreach in Gold River as well as in your work community of Campbell River and to the women of Laichwiltach Family Services, Tracy Clark, Pat Nicolaye and Irene Wydenes for your wonderful support and promotion of the workshops in Gold River and Campbell River as well as your participation in our evaluation process.

Thank you to FREDA for seeking federal dollars for projects like ours. And thank you to Karlene Faith for having the confidence and trust in me to coordinate this project. Thank you for realizing the importance of hearing the voices of women from isolated, rural communities and for reminding me of the power in forming a community of women who will work towards their common vision of a world where women and children are not only safe but thrive and prosper.

Helen Dempster, Courtenay, B.C.

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## **BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT**

On June 17, 1994, a group of sixteen women and one man from seven different communities in the North region of Vancouver Island (including Powell River) met together to do action research on the issue of violence against women in relationships.

Members of the group included women recently out of abusive relationships, women who said they had never experienced abuse in a relationship and women working in community agencies where their clients were dealing with violence and abuse.

Karlene Faith and Lorraine Stick from FREDA (Feminist Research Education Development & Action) led the group in identifying their community needs, existing services, and existing resources which were not being used. The group answered these questions keeping the basic goals in mind of protection, prevention and re-education.

The group found doing this exercise so valuable that they wanted to take the process back to their home communities and involve interested community members there.

The group felt the results of their work needed to go somewhere; they wanted some follow-up that would result in action to bring about changes for battered women and their children.

The group also wanted to keep in touch with each other, to continue sharing ideas and to support each other in doing the community development work that needs to be done.

The group decided to submit a proposal to FREDA so that this critical work could happen. A member of the group was asked to write the proposal and coordinate initial networking. This coordinator would then coordinate the project should the proposal be successful.

The proposal was successful and a series of community workshops took place in Cumberland, Comox Valley, Denman Island, Port Alberni, Gold River, Campbell River and the Westcoast.

The following report documents the results of the project & the work of the North Island Network to Resist & Heal from Violence to date.

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## **GOALS OF THE PROJECT**

- To work with communities in the North Island and the Westcoast of Vancouver Island.
- To assist those communities to clarify their needs regarding the safety and protection of battered women and their children.
- To assist the communities to address their needs regarding the prevention of violence and the re-education of community members towards non-violence.
- To assist communities in identifying existing services.
- To assist communities in identifying untapped resources.
- To generate community action to bring about the social and political changes necessary to end violence against women and children.
- To build a North Island Network of women concerned with the issue of violence against women and children.

## **WHO THE REPORT IS FOR**

This report documents the needs, concerns, opinions and ideas of the women who attended workshops in seven communities in the North Island and Westcoast of Vancouver Island during the summer of 1994.

The report is written for FREDA and funded through Health and Welfare Canada, Family Violence Initiative, and the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council. (SSHRC)

This report is also written for the communities where workshops were held. I hope it will be a useful tool for them in taking action to make their communities safer places for women and children.

As much as possible, I have used the exact words of women who came to the workshops. It was their input that made this project useful and vital.

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## **RATIONALE FOR THE PROJECT**

Violence against women is a serious social political issue. The severity, frequency and effects are well documented in recent federal, provincial and other surveys and reports.

The 1993 Statistics Canada, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SURVEY, states that " In B.C., 59% of women over the age of 16 have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence. This is the highest rate among all provinces in Canada." And again in the same survey, " In their lifetimes, approximately one in two B.C. women is a victim of sexual assault, one in three of wife assault, and one in five of other types of physical assault."

Due to the prevalence of violence against women in B.C., we wanted to know how women in our local, rural communities were coping with the violence in their lives.

We needed to better understand the problem of violence against women in our rural communities and learn more about women's experience of it. We wanted to document women's experience to present to government and our communities. We wanted to use the documentation as a tool to bring about changes and action in our communities.

We knew there was a problem of violence against women in our communities. We believed the process of action research would help us clarify the actions we could take to deal more effectively with this problem.

We also knew the needs of battered women in our rural communities were not being met. Research could document women's needs and provide insights into the programs and services that would be most useful and appropriate.

No research had been done on the particular needs of battered women and their children in our Island, rural communities.

We hoped to identify how to make better use of our existing resources and how to work out local solutions to particular local problems. And, if we identified common needs, we could also identify common strategies for change.

As we shared knowledge about our communities at the June 17th meeting, it became clear that individual communities needed to be involved in their own action research process. We believed that the research findings would guide us in developing and implementing action plans for our communities that would make our neighborhoods and regions much safer for women and children.

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## **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

The method of research chosen for this project was participatory action research. We chose action research for many reasons, the most important being our experience of this process at our original meeting of June 17, 1994. The energy and motivation we felt then convinced us that action research was the method we wanted to use in our home communities.

At that original workshop, Karlene Faith and Lorraine Stick modeled the implementation of the action research method. We adopted a similar framework and format when facilitating the seven workshops in this project.

The expertise that Karlene and Lorraine provided mixed with the 'locally owned' experience based expertise of community activists proved to be a dynamic combination. We hoped that with their support and our community backgrounds, we would achieve the results we wanted.

We also chose action research because the process directly involves community members who have a stake in the issue of violence against women and children.

The process was suitable because it is flexible enough that we could tailor the research to relate to the needs and circumstances of seven different communities. Also the research could be done in a relatively short period of time, in a relatively inexpensive way.

Another benefit of action research is that the process empowers participants to take responsibility for follow up action in their home communities.

We believed that by adhering to and using the principles of action research, outlined below, we would have a successful project, i.e. a useful documentation of women's experience of violence that would lead to the development of strategies for change in our communities.

The scope of the action research was limited to those who participated. Advertising for workshops was general and community wide, involving local newspapers, radio stations, cable television channels, posters and word-of-mouth.

The organizers in Campbell River and the Westcoast decided to advertise their workshops for women only. They did this out of their experience with previous meetings in their communities where men were welcomed but where their participation silenced the women present.



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## **ACTION RESEARCH**

### **Definition:**

"Action Research is the systematic collection and analysis of information on a particular topic for the purpose of informing political action and social change." <sup>1</sup>

### **Principles:**

- Action research includes women's perspectives by documenting and validating what women say.
- Action research recognizes that women's experience is relevant.
- The focus is on obtaining a description of how a problem or situation is experienced by the women who live it.
- Research informs analysis and analysis informs action.
- Participants in the research increase their understanding of the issue through their very participation.
- The process lends itself to potential involvement in the work of social change by the participants.
- In reporting the results of the research care is taken to report participants' accounts accurately.
- Action research recognizes that women who are working to bring about change or to deliver a service often share the interests and problems of the women they work with and for. They have knowledge that is valuable in carrying out research on women's issues.
- Participants in action research are involved in the process from beginning to end.
- In action research the contribution of each participant is equally valued, thus minimizing power and status issues.
- Action research uses a researcher's interests and knowledge rather than denying they exist.
- The researcher interacts in the community she is studying and with the people who are part of the community.

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<sup>1</sup> Barnsley et al, pg.1, Action Research Kit, Women's Research Centre, Vancouver

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## **THE CUMBERLAND WORKSHOP**

August 3, 1994, 7 pm-10 pm, Cumberland Cultural Centre

### **Summary**

Ten women attended the workshop. Four of the women currently live in Cumberland. The other participants had connections with Cumberland, either because they had previously lived there or had friends or family in Cumberland. The new Executive Director of the Comox Valley Transition Society attended to observe, and the new Wife Assault Coordinator from Transition Society attended to gain a better understanding of the needs of Cumberland women in abusive relationships.

The group brainstormed problems and solutions in relation to violence against women and children in Cumberland, and the following five issues emerged with strategies to address these issues. A core group of four Cumberland women agreed to meet again to organize the implementation of the strategies for change.

### **ISSUE #1**

"We hide behind the youth issue as if they are the big problem."

### **NEEDS:**

- We need to see the correlation between youth who are violent and violence in their homes.
- We need to find models and mentors for our children.
- Teachers and medical staff need to be informed and promote non-violence.

### **EXISTING SERVICES:**

- We have a teen centre.
- There used to be a curfew for youth because of street crimes, break-ins and vandalism. The curfew did reduce youth crime and so was lifted.
- There is a group for children who have witnessed abuse in their homes held at the Cumberland Junior High School. They meet weekly with the school counselor and the Transition Society children's counselor.
- There is a group of "Caring Kids" at the elementary school.
- There is a Mums & Tots group.
- There is a day-care at the Child Development Centre.

---

## **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Invite Kel Kelly, Wedledi Speck and David Stapely to speak about youth.
- Start prevention and re-education with children by spreading information through existing groups such as Mums & Tots, day-care, schools, teen centre.
- Get posters and show videos to existing groups involved with children.
- Get a plainclothes police officer to visit schools.
- Give parents information about monitoring the videos their children watch. Organize a group of parents to do this together.

## **ISSUE #2**

"Drinking is acceptable, abuse of alcohol is the issue."

"Women who are in abusive relationships and have drug and alcohol issues may not be able to stay at the Transition House."

## **NEEDS:**

- We need to address the community tolerance of alcohol.
- Women need a safe place to go when they have been drinking.

## **EXISTING SERVICES:**

- There is an A.A. group in Cumberland.
- Sometimes neighbors shelter women and children, or sometimes just the children when there is abuse of alcohol and violence.

## **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Find out if Cumberland can have a women's A.A. group.
- Find other resources for women who have alcohol problems and who are in abusive relationships.

---

### **ISSUE #3**

"I can't come to a meeting on violence against women and children or people will think my husband is beating me."

#### **NEEDS:**

- We need to meet women's confidentiality needs.
- We need to make violence against women and children a public issue so that people can openly talk about it and not be stigmatized.

#### **EXISTING SERVICES:**

- Free clothing store and the Teen Centre for the meeting place.

#### **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Ask Cumberland Town Council to form a committee to look at the social service needs of our community, including the issue of violence against women and children.
- Offer courses for women like quilting, art classes discussion groups on specific topics to make it safe for women to meet together.
- Organize events for women, such as pot lucks, speakers, videos.

### **ISSUE #4**

"Women need more camaraderie, more opportunity to get together to connect with each other, to share information and resources."

#### **NEEDS:**

- We need a place for women to meet.

#### **EXISTING SERVICES:**

- The Teen Centre is a good meeting place.

#### **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Start a women's drop-in and resource centre, a safe place for women to get together, in an accessible place, one afternoon a week would be a good beginning.
- Start a women's support group - not sure how much structure is needed.

- 
- Ask the Comox Valley Women's Centre to come to Cumberland once a week to help with starting a drop-in centre and support group for Cumberland.
  - Get money for space rental for women's drop-in centre.

## **ISSUE #5**

"We don't know what services are available."

"Women in Cumberland don't know the Transition Society will send a cab 24 hours a day to pick women and children up."

"What does Family Life offer? Courses in Cumberland?"

"If we take a bus to Courtenay we have to plan on being gone for most of the day."

## **NEEDS:**

- We need information in Cumberland about services.
- We need neon signs and street signs promoting non-violence.

## **EXISTING SERVICES:**

- There is a bus service.
- People use the Crisis Line.
- There is a storefront police station on the main street. Volunteers sometimes work there. Not sure when it's open.

## **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Put poster and pamphlets about services in free clothing store and in all public places.
- Put Transition Society phone number in all women's washrooms.
- Get an ongoing ad in local newspapers about Transition Society's services.

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## **THE COMOX VALLEY WORKSHOP**

Thursday, August 18, 1994, 7 pm-10 pm, Filberg Centre

### **Summary**

Seven women attended the Comox Valley workshop. They focused on re-education and brainstormed issues and solutions to this topic.

The group identified that re-education needs to happen at three different levels, individual, institutional and cultural.

The issues of SILENCE, CHILDREN, PROFILE OF SERVICES, and COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND OWNERSHIP OF THE ISSUE emerged as key issues to be addressed. A committee of three women has met since the workshop to implement the strategy of declaring Comox a violence-free zone. The committee is approaching Comox Town Council on October 19 for support in this matter. The committee is also planning a one-day event with display and speakers on December 7 in Comox. They are currently seeking support from Comox Valley agencies for this event.

### **ISSUE # 1**

"We all have to speak up about the truth of male violence."

"Women need to be taken seriously and the reality of women and children's lives needs to be taken seriously."

"If you go to a meeting on violence against women, you must be battered or worse, you're a feminist."

### **NEEDS:**

- We need a media watch where we respond to letters to confront misconceptions and tell the truth about male violence in our society. A letter in the Times Colonist said "men are abused too". This is true but is also a red herring to take the focus and energy away from violence against women and children.
- We need a regular newspaper column on issues affecting women. In this way women can be proactive about their experiences and truths and the myths can be debunked. This is also a safe way for women to tell their stories.
- We need radical, outspoken women in our community. Younger women need to hear from more mature women. The courage of outspoken women inspires us all. However, when we do speak out we are often told we are over-reacting or are un-feminine or worse. We need to get together to support each other so we are able to speak out.

- 
- We need more groups for women only, as we are often silenced when men are present.
  - We need to match young women and older women to pass on values and wisdom of life experience.
  - Women survivors need someone to talk to who is not family or a friend.
  - Women need places to go in the evening to socialize (i.e. not a bar).

#### **EXISTING SERVICES:**

- Foster Grannies at Family Life provides mentoring of mature women with families.
- The model used at Laichwiltach Family Services in Campbell River is a good one for mentoring young women with older women.

#### **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Two women at the workshop gave their phone numbers to a young woman there who said she wanted someone to talk to.

#### **ISSUE # 2**

"Schools reflect society. The silence about violence in our community is reflected in the violence in schools which is often hushed up and dealt with within the school system."

"Reporting of child abuse by some professionals is not happening unless there is substantial evidence of abuse. The law requires mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse. Some counsellors, lawyers, teachers etc. think that they do not have to report child abuse."

"Teenagers with low self esteem are vulnerable to abusive dating relationships."

#### **NEEDS:**

- We need to re-educate children in schools about violence and sexism.
- Parents need to support and advocate for children in school when children tell them of sexist or abusive happenings at school.
- We need information and teaching on non-violence and gender stereo-typing in all our parenting classes.
- We need men to challenge other men on their sexism and abuse. Men need to be healthy role models for boys and young men.

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**EXISTING SERVICES:**

- There are some good school counsellors working with children.
- There are some conflict resolutions programs in some schools. We did not know where they are.

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- A group member will circulate the law on child abuse to professionals in the community and will get it published in the local newspaper.
- Another group member will bring up child abuse mandatory reporting with Early Childhood Education class.

**ISSUE # 3**

"The support for women in the Valley is split up. There are so many half time positions."

"Trying to figure out who does what is hard."

**NEEDS:**

- We need INFO WOMEN, a list of resources available for women.
- We need the general community resource list done by the Crisis Centre available free, and distributed widely. We need a public campaign to get information on services out there.

**EXISTING SERVICES:**

- The community resource list is good and is updated annually.
- The Crisis Centre is a good source of information.

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Get resource list done by Crisis Centre sponsored by some business or service club.
- Identify ways to spread the word on services to women.



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## **ISSUE # 4**

"The low turnout at this workshop is a real disappointment. Where is the commitment from the community at large?"

"For the first time ever a doctor asked me about my relationship. That's never happened before."

"Some of the posters for this event were torn down. What is that about?"

### **NEEDS:**

- We need to identify the obstacles to attending this and other workshops on violence against women and children.
- We need to get individual people, service clubs, doctors, churches, businesses, to get involved.
- We need someone with money to sponsor the issue of prevention of violence against women and children in our community.
- We need service clubs and churches to raise awareness on issue within their own organizations.
- Businesses need to be involved and donate to prevention activities.
- We need our Town Councils to be involved in issue.

### **EXISTING SERVICES:**

- We have some public transit in the Comox Valley.
- We have a women's centre.
- We have many service clubs, churches and small businesses as well as a couple of large businesses.

### **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Next time we sponsor a workshop, we will send letters to doctors and agencies inviting their participation.
- We will ask service clubs who have buses if we can use them for transportation to meetings etc. for those people who need transportation.
- A committee of three women formed to get the municipal councils to declare our communities violence-free zones. Making such a declaration is a political statement which creates a context of safety even if safety is not real yet.

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## **THE DENMAN ISLAND WORKSHOP**

Sunday, August 21, 1994, 7 pm-10 pm, Private home

### **Summary**

This workshop was requested by the Denman Island Women's Outreach Society to assist them in identifying the needs in developing an Emergency Response Team to violence against women and children. DIWOS has invited some men to be their allies in responding to crisis situations when the police are not available. There is no police station on Denman. Police will respond if there is evidence of a serious assault. Their response time may be very long. When the ferry has shut down for the night (10.30 pm ) police intervention requires a helicopter or boat.

Three women and five men participated in the workshop. There was a debriefing from a previous intervention that this group did. Through this debriefing many issues arose that led to the development of a needs list for this group.

### **NEEDS:**

- To develop a cohesive team from the group.
- To develop a team philosophy and goals.
- To develop clarity on the roles and parameters of members of the Response Team.
- To learn to assess the safety and risk factors involved i.e.. when not to respond and call the police.
- To learn how to debrief after an intervention.
- To address the issue of how much follow-up support to offer after an intervention i.e.. will you return to the house with a woman to get her belongings?
- To learn more about the dynamics of wife assault to debunk the myth of mutual battering.
- To develop protocols for response to a violent incident.
- To address the issue of confidentiality when the woman or man may know a member of the Response Team.
- To understand that the women on the Team may have different fears, feelings and judgments about a situation than the men on the Team, due to their different life experience.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:**

- That accountability of men in the Emergency Response Team be to the women on the team and through them to the women and children who are victims of violence and abuse.
- That the men on the ERT make a commitment to become more knowledgeable about the dynamics of wife assault and to understand violence against women as one of the ways that women are oppressed and men are privileged in our society.
- That the men on the ERT trust the judgment of the women on the team, even when the men do not agree with the action proposed by the women.
- That the ERT debrief as a team after each intervention and decide during the debriefing whether to do another intervention or not.
- That each individual member of the ERT pick a "buddy" on the team to individually with after an intervention.
- That the women on the ERT develop philosophy and goal statements and then present them to the men.
- That only those men who will support the philosophy and goal statements be members of the ERT.
- That the ERT socialize and have fun with each other as well as working together.
- That the members of the ERT agree to check status and power issues of the team during debriefing sessions.
- That the telephone be used more in initial assessment.
- That safety for everyone be the bottom line.

## **STRATEGIES:**

- The group is continuing to meet to address the above issues.
- They have a 24 hour number on Denman Island and are likely to be doing another intervention soon.

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## **THE PORT ALBERNI WORKSHOP**

Wednesday, August 24, 1994, 1 pm-4 pm, Mental Health Building

### **Summary**

Thirteen people attended the Port Alberni workshop. Five were from the Women's Resource Society, two from Social Services, one from the Family Health Centre, one was a regular citizen of Port Alberni and one was a visitor from Victoria. Three participants were from Ucluelet, two from the Transition House there and one from the Women's Centre.

Early on in the workshop it was pointed out that Port Alberni has an active, sub-committee of Child & Youth Committee that focuses on Family Violence. In the spring of 1994, a Family Violence Research Project was funded by Social Services and compiled by Nadine Kainz. The report includes ten recommendations for the agencies and community of Port Alberni. We focused on two of the recommendations during the workshop and identified strategies to implement them.

### **RECOMMENDATION #1**

" The Family Violence Sub-Committee should look at ways to broaden the representation of its members. Visible minority women, First Nations agencies and survivors of abuse should all be invited and encouraged to attend sub-committee meetings."

### **STRATEGIES:**

- Involve people from different cultures in our work i.e. work on pamphlet together rather than creating a pamphlet and having it translated after.
- Get the video on violence against women in Punjabi on local cable T.V.
- Make sure that sensitive interventions are made by agencies, authority figures, police, court players etc. Sensitive interventions are particularly important when the victim has a disability or is from a minority group. Word spreads in minority groups and cultures about sensitivity or discrimination of authority figures.
- To monitor the effectiveness of everyone's interventions, each agency could have an anonymous monitoring form which would identify any difficulties that a client had experienced with any agency. This could be done in a caring and respectful manner and would be useful to all to improve service and identify gaps. This system empowers users of services and builds in accountability. It also challenges everyone on the level of interagency trust.

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## **RECOMMENDATION #2**

" More outreach work is needed in the community, both informing citizens of available services and raising the awareness of the issue of violence against women and children."

### **STRATEGIES:**

- It was noted that as non-profits grow and take on more direct service to clients, there is less time to do public education and the profile of their agencies in the community may slip. Non-profits need to work out a way within their agency to maintain their grassroots public profile.
- It was also noted that we are less challenging when we have something to lose. When community groups receive core funding they may be more apt to speak up less as advocates and activists for change as this often involves challenging the funders of programs. Therefore, non-profits need to be mindful of their grassroots origins and advocate for their clients.
- Put the service directory of family violence services in each household. This strategy needs to be given more thought as some people considered this to be a waste of resources.
- Use neighborhoods to assess their own needs and meet these needs regarding the safety of women and children, i.e. a program such as Neighborhood Watch.
- To promote community ownership of the issue, start a campaign such as "The Responsibility Is Yours" or "It's Everybody's Business". Counteract the attitude that wife assault is a private family matter.
- Since a picture is worth a thousand words, get a T.V. commercial to counteract "it doesn't happen in Port Alberni"
- Get strong survivors to speak out to groups and in the media. This will give strength to other women victims and will also challenge the myths in the community.
- Get positive messages about women out in the media, in K-Mart, Zellers etc.
- Develop a Speaker's Bureau to talk to community groups, service clubs, churches, daycares etc. (Victoria Transition House has a great speakers bureau binder available for \$25.)
- Develop a "kids who witness abuse" package for schools.
- Get more services for men who are abusive and encourage men to challenge men on their abusive behavior.

- 
- A committee will work to sponsor Headlines Theatre to do a play in schools.
  - A need was identified to get the reality of rural life made known to provincial and federal governments. It is often assumed that communities have 911 emergency numbers when in fact many rural communities still have party lines.
  - The last need expressed was to raise more pro-feminist sons and the strategy mentioned was to treat children as if they were gender-free.

### **UCLUELET CONCERNS**

- Accessibility to services is hard due to transportation difficulties, plane and boat schedules, and the half hour car distance between Tofino and Ucluelet.
- Accessibility is also hard because of political and cultural issues such as on/off reserve issues.
- A women's needs assessment of the area is needed now to address the differences of women and children's safety on the West Coast.

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## **THE CAMPBELL RIVER WORKSHOP**

September 15, 1994, 9:30 am -1:30 pm, Campbell River Discovery Inn

### **Summary**

Eleven women attended the workshop. Seven were First Nations women and three were non-native women. In the check-in round, the women listed their expectations for the workshop, sharing very openly about the abuse they had experienced in their lives. From the list of expectations the group decided to focus on two main issues; the effects of abuse on children, and the "crazymaking" control issues in a psychologically abusive relationship.

The organizers of the workshop noted that posters advertising the event had been taken down in eighteen out of twenty-three locations that were checked.

It is also to be noted that a planning meeting was held with agencies in Campbell River prior to the workshop. At this planning meeting, I was able to reassure agencies that the workshop was not intended to duplicate or impede any of the excellent outreach and coordination done by agencies in this community. Rather, the workshop would enhance their work. The decision to have the workshop be for women only was made at this planning meeting. Agencies provided a list of community services for use at the workshop.

### **ISSUE # 1: CONCERNS ABOUT CHILDREN**

" We want children to know that men shouldn't beat up on women."

" Shame stops children from talking among themselves."

" Children sometimes take their fathers' side, it's part of their survival."

" They act out the behaviors they've seen, they pick on someone smaller and bully them."

" Sometimes the mother who has been abused has to leave her children behind when she flees."

" The "back to basics" movement in schools may mean that less time will be devoted to holistic education."

" Children don't want to be hurt."

" Children may feel sorry for a parent and protect them."

" They get the message: it's alright to hit."

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" There are six arcades in Campbell River where a lot of children and youth hang out. It costs a lot of money to spend time there and the messages on the video games are often sexist, racist and violent."

" Many children come home to an empty house after school. Some watch inappropriate T.V. shows."

" Children may act out sexual abuse they have witnessed."

" If a mother has her own sexual abuse issues, she may over-protect her child and not trust anyone to look after the child. Then the mother gets no time-out. She stays isolated and fearful."

" There's an attitude that any father is better than no father."

" Sometimes the denial is so strong that nothing works."

" Many apartments in Campbell River won't take single women or single mothers on income assistance."

" Sometimes women have to pay for the supervision when the father has supervised access to the children. Also, sometimes the mother doesn't know the supervisor and is scared for her kids."

" There is no support for women on Cortez Island."

" Kakawis Treatment Centre for First Nations families only does intakes for single mothers once a year. This is not enough."

#### **NEEDS:**

- We need to address the whole issue of custody, access and supervised visitation of children.
- We need a safe place for children to be transferred from one parent to another.
- We need more informed supervisors. The parent who had the supervised order should pay.
- Children need to talk about how they feel.
- We need information in the schools for children about family abuse.
- We need to start early with information for children.
- We need dating violence information in the schools.
- We need more programs and supports for mothers .



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- We need services where women can bring their children and they are welcome.
  - Women need money to look after their children; many single mothers are poor - standard of living substantially decreases after separation or divorce.
  - We need a transition house for First Nations women in the North Island to lessen the barriers preventing First Nations women from seeking help.
  - We need second stage housing in the North Island for women who need more support than a transition house stay can offer. Also, second stage housing is needed to prevent a woman from returning to an abusive relationship because she can't find decent, safe, affordable housing for herself and her children.
  - We need a big public campaign to state positive values about women and children.

**EXISTING SERVICES:** (for Children and Mothers)

- Family Services, Transition House, Sexual Assault Centre, Mental Health, Laichwiltach Family Services, Upper Island Youth Services, Big Sisters & Brothers
- T.V. commercial on Channel 2 with positive role models and native focus
- after school programs from 2:30-5:00 pm
- parent-youth mediation - 2nd & Dogwood - free
- independent living program for kids who can't live at home
- alcohol & drug counsellor
- Quadra has RCMP and Transition House pays for water taxi
- Legal Aid - low income
- Legal advocacy: available to everyone, will walk through court system and to lawyers offices
- two Native court workers at Ehattesaht Band Office

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## **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Develop a peer counseling support network for children 12 years and younger in the schools.
- Develop more supports for single mothers. When women deal with their own feelings, anger etc. their child is calmer. Supporting mothers is supporting children.
- Agencies could pool their resources to set up and monitor child-care for women attending programs, court, counseling etc.
- Start a "no-hit rule" campaign.
- Write letters of support for First Nations transition house.
- Have access orders specify access initially, then if there are no problems, change the order to reasonable and generous access.
- Advocate for children's rights. Find out what is happening in other communities that have child advocacy programs.
- Invite youth to make posters to counteract the slogan "Sticks & Stones Will Break My Bones but Names Will Never Hurt Me." Name calling and put-downs do hurt.

## **ISSUE # 2 EMOTIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE**

" Being called names hurts worse than physical abuse."

" With emotional abuse, he doesn't give her any money; he isolates her from her friends; he doesn't say where he is going, but demands to know where she is; he moves the family often; he keeps her dependent, always answering to him; he is jealous all the time."

## **NEEDS:**

- Women need someone to talk to about the emotional abuse in their lives.
- Women need a place to go in the night when she can't stand the loneliness or his constant talking at her.
- Women need to hear positive messages about themselves.

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**EXISTING SERVICES: (for Emotional Support Of Women)**

- Ann Elmore Transition House,
- Sexual Assault Centre,
- Women's Centre,
- Laichwiltach Family Services,
- Family Services

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Find out if there are services at the hospital besides being admitted to the psych ward.
- Spread the word about the existing services and what they offer.

**ISSUE # 3**

" Two women that I worked with are now dead. I have such grief and hurt."

**NEEDS:**

- We need to be there for each other when we do this work.
- We need opportunities to be together and talk about the effects of this work on us and our personal lives.
- We need to remember our limitations as workers and support people. We can only be there and be trustworthy.

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Find ways for workers to get together to focus on the grief, sadness, anger, etc. that they feel when doing support and advocacy work with women.

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## **THE POWELL RIVER WORKSHOP**

### **Summary**

A workshop was planned for Powell River September 10/94, but it didn't happen for three reasons. Firstly the two women who were the community contacts both work in Powell River's Transition House. The summer proved to be a very busy one for them at Grace House. I mention this because I believe their experience this summer is indicative of most workers in the field of violence against women. Service delivery always takes first place over any public education or professional development. I thank these women, Carol and Deborah, for their efforts. If the timeline of this project had been longer, I am sure Powell River would have had a workshop.

The second reason the workshop did not happen was due to a conflicting workshop September 10 in Powell River on women, employment and literacy.

The third reason is that in looking at the history of the women's movement in Powell River, I was given a copy of an excellent report "Voices of the Women", written in January 1993 by Patricia Barter, funded by the Ministry of Women's Equality and sponsored jointly by the Powell River Community Services Association and the Powell River Employment Programs Society. The report is sub-titled the "Powell River Women's Needs Research Project". Much of the information I wanted to get from women in Powell River is already summarized in this report. The report is available from the Ministry of Women's Equality, 756 Fort St, Victoria, BC, V8V 1X4. Chapter 9 summarizes women's experience of abuse, while pages 23-37 outline the results of the needs assessment for women. Pages 124-131 detail the research findings. The most pressing need for women in Powell River that has not been met since the report was written appears to be the need for a Women's Centre. The women's community has sought funding unsuccessfully for several years. The research is there. Powell River needs a funded Women's Centre.

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## **THE GOLD RIVER WORKSHOP**

September 12, 1994, 11 am-4 pm, Mowachaht Reserve

### **Summary**

Ten women attended, three of them from agencies in Campbell River, invited by the facilitator. The majority of the other women there were Band staff, who are First Nations and non-native.

The Reserve is located across the highway from the Pulp Mill on a very small piece of land. The Band has been promised relocation to one of their traditional sites but it may take up to two years for the relocation to happen.

There was a strong feeling with the group that relocation of the Reserve is an opportunity for a new beginning, a fresh start. There was also a concern that people needed to make some changes between now and relocation or abuse and dysfunction will move with them.

"We have between now and relocation to get it together."

On the wall in the room where we held the workshop was a poster with the Declaration of Nuu-chah-nulth Women. I attach a copy with this report (see Appendix C). It is truly an inspiring document.

### **ISSUE # 1**

" There is no one to talk to on reserve."

" You can't turn to your own family."

" People live with violence - don't know how to stop it."

" This is the first time women have been together without men."

" We put on a strong face but we think of killing ourselves."

" Some older women say "What's the big deal, I survived it."

" There is no privacy on the reserve. We are over-crowded."

" I go to Campbell River for counseling."

" It's easier to go to a treatment centre than a transition house. There is more support for being sober than for being violence-free."

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**NEEDS:**

- Women need the choice of talking to safe people on the Reserve or of accessing counsellors in Gold River or Campbell River.
- Women and men need help with transportation, child care and money to access services off the Reserve.
- Women and men need support and advocacy that is culturally sensitive to First Nations people.
- Women and men need a spiritual counselor or elder.
- Women need women elders.
- We need a counselor on the Reserve at least one day a week.

**EXISTING SERVICES:**

- There was a counseling centre in Gold River that was free. Shirley Sabo and Peter Kinskoffer were the counsellors. The group didn't know if it was still open. A.A. and Alanon use the space.
- USMA from the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council do child protection.
- Bingo is often a time-out for women.
- Most members of the Band are dry except for the young people.
- These services are in Campbell River:
  - Ann Elmore Transition House
  - Sexual Assault Centre
  - Women's Centre
  - Laichwiltach Family Services
  - Family Services
  - Victim's Assistance Program
  - Native Support Workers
- The RCMP are in Gold River. There is one female officer.

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## **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Present information and education workshops on abuse and related issues to women and men at the same time but in separate places. Have a parallel program for children too.
- Catherine Phillips will ask service providers in Campbell River to present workshops on the Reserve on a rotating monthly basis - outreach in a systematic way.
- Develop peer counseling and facilitator training on the Reserve, so that a core group of women are able to teach and mentor other women on the Reserve.
- Catherine Phillips will ask agencies in Campbell River to send notices of workshops and courses to Gold River Reserve and invite them to participate.
- Use some Band money that is ear-marked for drug & alcohol and social development, to send people from Reserve out for training and networking.
- Purchase resources on abuse, violence etc. for the Band and access free materials and subscriptions for the Band.
- Laichwiltach could do a support group on Reserve. This would be facilitated by a First Nations staff.
- Keep persevering and don't give up trying - plant seeds, invite one by one.
- A First Nation counselor could do home visits.
- Have information available at Bingo.
- Catherine will send stickers with information phone numbers to Band Office for distribution on Reserve.
- Pauline McGrimman is trying to get a native transition house for the North Island. Until then, she is trying to develop some native safe homes in the region. The group supported this initiative.

## **ISSUE # 2**

" We're mostly all Band staff here. How do we get people from the Reserve to attend?"

" Women are scared of workshops. They know they will have to deal with their emotions."

" It takes a long time to develop trust between counselor and client."

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"I'm afraid half the families will go to jail for sexual abuse if they talk about it."

"Even though mostly dry, still the issues are underneath."

**NEEDS:**

- We need court support, someone to walk through the process with survivors and their family members.
- We need to make workshops less threatening.

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Use the word "circles" instead of workshops and meetings as much as possible.
- Run parallel groups for kids.
- Women attend workshops away from the community.
- Offer craft-making groups for women. This is less threatening and have information there.

**ISSUE # 3**

"No one intervened when a woman was beaten. Some thought 'it's none of my business.' Others didn't know what to do."

"If you intervene, you get the wrath of the extended family."

"People blame the person shining the light."

"Some women go to the Band Office for help. The staff in the Office work Mondays to Fridays, if a crisis happens after those hours, there's no one."

"At 2 am, there's no one to turn to."

"There is no safe place on the Reserve or in Gold River. Sometimes a Band worker will take a woman into her home but everyone knows she is there."

"Sometimes we can't report sexual abuse because we'd be turning in a family member to the police and we don't trust the courts."



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**NEEDS:**

- We need to know about available services.
- We need education on abuse and services available for our Band staff.
- We need to build up the self-esteem of everyone.

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- The strategies for these needs are the same as those for issue # 1.

**ISSUE # 4**

"Men don't understand the seriousness and effects of abuse."

"Men are threatened when women take their own power."

"The elders are all men."

**NEEDS:**

- We need counseling and support for the men.
- We need someone to make home visits and invite the men and women to participate in programs.

**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Stan Nelson of Laichwiltach will soon be starting a group for men who are abusive. It's a volunteer group in Campbell River. Men should be encouraged and invited to attend.
- Ask Laichwiltach if they can provide some outreach to men on the Reserve.
- Ask Wedlidi Speck if he can offer support to the men.

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## **THE WESTCOAST WORKSHOP**

September 17, 1994, 10 am-3 pm, Weighwest Resort, Tofino

### **Summary**

Fourteen women attended, most of them from agencies in Tofino and Ucluelet. The Westcoast area encompasses five First Nations Bands from the Nuuchahnulth Nation and the two communities of Tofino and Ucluelet. The reserves are accessible only by water or air and Tofino and Ucluelet are a half hour drive apart. In 1990 women gathered to discuss the need for local services for women. Prior to this time, services were only available in Port Alberni, 80 miles away. Since 1990, many services have opened for women. The women at this workshop said the services are not enough and they are not accessible to the majority of women on the Westcoast. A directory of current services for women needs updating so the group took this opportunity to start developing a list which could then be added to and amended. The Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council provides services to Bands on their reserves. No First Nations women attended this workshop. The conclusion at the end of the workshop was that the group needed more time to develop implementation plans for their strategies. The group agreed to meet again after receiving the summary of their workshop and each woman is to bring another woman. That's how change happens, one-by-one.

### **ISSUE # 1**

#### **ACCESSIBILITY TO SERVICES**

##### **NEEDS:**

- We need transportation links between communities.
- We need to advertise our services more - give them a higher profile.
- We need to address the on/off reserve issues, some of which are economic, i.e.. the transition house is supposed to bill the Band when a woman from that Band uses their services. But the Transition House does not bill in order to protect the confidentiality of the woman.
- We need to address the whole area of federal/provincial relations.
- We need a financial aid worker from Social Services more than once a week, because sometimes women return to the abusive relationship on their reserve because they need money.
- We need to pull in the community and increase ownership of the issue of abuse.
- We need support groups for battered women and sexual abuse survivors.

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- We need residential settings for women to unlearn being abused and heal.
  - We need a 24 hour free and confidential crisis line.
  - We need better phone links between our communities. Many people use radio phones and there is no privacy.
  - We need to support the women who move here to flee from abuse elsewhere.
  - This type of workshop does not attract the "average" woman. We need to find ways to invite her participation.
  - We need to advertise services in a way that does not depend on women's literacy skills.
  - We need to find money to send someone with information and education to the reserves. (about \$10,000/yr.)
  - We need to address the denial of abuse being a problem in our communities.

#### **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- Develop a mentoring system for women similar to A.A. sponsorship model. Use volunteers and reach out to new women in the community.
- Brainstorm ways to develop a bond of trust between First Nations and non-native women.
- Attend Tribal Council meetings in Port Alberni to develop stronger links.
- Advertise services and print woman-positive messages in high school yearbook.
- Use street theatre to teach about abuse.
- Coordinate the travel of service providers to reserves.
- Have one woman go to the reserves regularly to tell about available services.
- Make use of women with boats to get women and children to safety.
- Develop an informal network like the underground railway.
- Use the grapevine to identify abusers.
- Do community education on the traits of abusers to help women identify them.

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- Teach intervention skills while keeping safety of everyone as the bottom line.
  - Be more active in schools, share resources, teach herstory and gender issues.
  - Give young women in high school the opportunity to actively participate and say what they need.
  - Start a "Clothesline Project" on the Westcoast. (see appendix D for information on Clothesline Project)
  - Use events such as "Take Back the Night" as focal points for women to meet and socialize.
  - Find out if the Klee Wyck Centre can be opened for child care.
  - Develop a package of information for schools on issue of abuse.
  - Ask for a table at the Co-Op store with information.
  - Find out if Christina's Restaurant will take posters and pamphlets.
  - Make sure information numbers are in laundromats and in women's washrooms.
  - Organize a Women's Festival to bring the community of women together.
  - Always have food at events and meetings as women may have traveled a long distance to get there.
  - Organize pot-luck dinners. The women's Centre has one planned for October 22.
  - Organize women's lunches and dinners with speakers.

## **ISSUE # 2**

### **INCLUSION OF ALL WOMEN IN OUR SERVICES AND AGENCIES**

#### **NEEDS:**

- We need to be welcoming to First Nations Women.
- We need to be welcoming to lesbians.
- We need a women's A.A.

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- We need more available daycare.
  - We need to pay attention to the way we advertise our services and events.
  - We need a supportive recovery house for women. Tillicum House in Nanaimo is the closest.
  - We need to check on and improve the comfort level of lesbians with the use of our services.
  - We need to address the issue of the woman offender in a lesbian relationship.
  - We need day programs for women dealing with addictions.
  - We need more legal services.

#### **STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE:**

- The Transition House asks a woman resident the name of her abuser. They keep a contact/no contact list at the House to avoid admitting a woman offender. They will continue to do this.
- Provide workshops for service staff on First Nations culture, traditions and values.
- Check literature of services for gender specific language. If abuse is always referred to as male violence, include some piece stating that victims of lesbian abuse are welcome.
- Hang posters in offices that include the word lesbian.
- Find out if Maiya House in Nanaimo is shutting down or changing their mandate. Is women's treatment being moved to Shaughnessey Hospital?

#### **EXISTING SERVICES ON THE WESTCOAST:**

(Includes Tofino & Ucluelet & 5 reserve communities)

- \* Transition House for whole Westcoast in Ucluelet
- \* Women's Centre for whole Westcoast in Ucluelet need a Tofino office
- \* Children Who Witness Abuse Program both towns 17 hrs/wk office in Tofino
- \* Stopping the Violence Counselor both towns 17 hrs/wk office in Tofino

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- \* Native Families in Crisis Program runs out of Transition House & Women's Centre travels 30 hrs/wk
  - \* VAP (Victims Assistance Program) counselor for women who have been sexually abused or battered RCMP based both towns 1 day/wk
  - \* Hospital in Tofino
  - \* one woman doctor on Westcoast
  - \* RCMP Offices Tofino, Ucluelet & Ahousaht
  - \* Court & Probation alternates between Ucluelet & Tofino every other month 2 days/wk
  - \* Supreme Court in Port Alberni 10 months waiting list for trials
  - \* Treatment Program for Assaultive Men in Port Alberni 7 months waiting list for all assaultive men, not just violence against women & children
  - \* Community Works Program for Offenders both towns worker works out of her home
  - \* Second Step conflict resolution course in elementary schools
  - \* Nobody's Perfect Parenting course off reserve
  - \* Home Support office in Ucluelet service in both towns
  - \* Community Youth Worker new service off reserve
  - \* High School Counselor concern that this position is not filled yet
  - \* Healthy Babies Program drop in for young mothers at risk
  - \* Peer Counseling at the High School
  - \* Mental Health Worker full time women, men, children, groups & individual, both towns
  - \* Alcohol & Drug women & men, 2 days in each town
  - \* Financial Assistance Worker 1 day / week in Ucluelet
  - \* Rehabilitation Worker
  - \* Career Action Centre Ucluelet
  - \* North Island College courses Friends of NIC Advisory Board

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- \* Recreation Commission continuing education classes
  - \* Friends of Clayoquot nonviolence classes
  - \* Wilderness for Women empowerment through outdoor experiences
  - \* Alanon Ucluelet
  - \* A.C.O.A. Tofino
  - \* A.A. both towns no women's A.A.
  - \* N.A. Ucluelet
  - \* Crisis Line in Port Alberni 9 am 5 pm Monday to Friday full weekend coverage free from Ucluelet pay from Tofino (call collect?)
  - \* Library; Churches; newspaper
  - \* Chamber of Commerce
  - \* smallness of each community can be a resource

**Services Provided to 5 Bands by Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council:**

- \* addiction workers in Ahousaht
- \* Healthy Babies Program worker on reserve
- \* Infant Development Worker travels to Bands
- \* counselor(not addictions) 3 days/wk
- \* counselor for children who have been sexually abused 32 hours/week
- \* court trying to get into Ahousaht
- \* Ahousaht Women's Initiative
- \* Hot Springs Men's Group
- \* Residential Schools Peer Support Group in Tofino men & women meets once a week
- \* Kakawis Treatment Centre annual intake in July for single mothers
- \* There are some safe homes on reserves natural safe places
- \* Band Managers are allies

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## **EVALUATION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS MEETING**

Seventeen women met October 23, 1994 to evaluate the project. Seven were original members of the North Island Network to Resist and Heal from Violence and eight were new members who had participated in their community workshops. Also present were Karlene Faith of FREDa and Tanis Dagert, new coordinator of FREDa projects. We met in Courtenay from 12:30 till 4:30 pm and included a lunch.

Evaluators had come from Port Alberni, Campbell River, Powell River, Comox Valley, Cumberland and Denman Island. Gold River was unable to send anyone as they were involved in a Pursuit of Excellence workshop on the Reserve that day. The Westcoast women did not attend the evaluation meeting as they had scheduled a planning meeting for a Westcoast Women's Festival, a strategy identified at their community workshop.

After a brief report from the project coordinator on the status of the project, evaluators addressed the following questions in relation to their experience of the research workshops in their communities.

### **EVALUATION QUESTIONS:**

- \* Did we reach our goals of research, action and change?
- \* How did the organizers of and participants in the work shops feel about their experience?
- \* What did we accomplish? What were the limitations of our work?
- \* What did we learn and how is that useful?
- \* Were there side effects, surprises, that we did not expect? Were they good or bad?
- \* Were there patterns of response, similarities and differences?
- \* What conclusions can we draw and what follow up or recommendations can we make as a result of this research?
- \* Who benefits from these results?
- \* How do we use this report as a tool to effect change in our communities? with government?
- \* Who can effect this change and who is likely to resist the kind of change we desire?
- \* What if any new questions emerged as a result of the findings?



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## **OTHER EVALUATION METHODS**

In addition to the evaluation meeting, a draft report of the project was circulated to members of the North Island Network and individual community workshop summaries were given to participants, inviting input and feedback. Some was received.

## **DESCRIPTION OF MEETING AND METHOD**

From the evaluation meeting, it was clear that we had followed the principles of Action Research and that the Action Research process was useful and successful in our communities.

The evaluation process was collaborative. The consensus of participants was that they had a much clearer picture of the reality of life for women and children experiencing violence in their communities. Participants also said they had a much clearer vision of the changes and actions needed to make their communities safer for women and children.

Participants said they felt energized and empowered by this interactive process and would continue working towards implementation of strategies identified at their workshops.

They said the evaluation process resulted in increased reflection about their communities.

The evaluation meeting itself was important because women wanted to reconnect with each other and find out firsthand the results of other community workshops. The meeting also provided closure on the work done so far and clarity about the direction of the project in the future.

The women at the meeting who had organized workshops had a great need to debrief from their experiences. Many were still shocked, angry, confused or disheartened by the resistance and lack of support from community agencies. They understood how battered women face many barriers to attending meetings, and how the average citizen may need some coaxing to become involved in the process of social change. They understood how over-worked front-line workers are, so did not expect great attendance from agency personnel. However, they did not understand what they called resistance from other community workers who serve women, children and families. Some follow-up is necessary to identify why this opposition was there and what can be done about it.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **NETWORK BUILDING:**

- Workers and community activists in the field of violence against women are isolated. They cope with their own feelings of grief, anger and powerlessness as best they can. They need to meet with others doing similar work.
- Funders must provide adequate levels of funding that allow for regular networking of workers and activists in this field.

### **OWNERSHIP OF ISSUE:**

- Action research must be supported by community agencies and organizations as an effective way to develop and evaluate programs for battered women and their children.
- Community agencies and organizations must be open to change and willing to the broadening of input and participation from the community.
- Agencies must encourage rather than resist community activism on this issue.

### **ADVOCACY:**

- Advocates for change need to acknowledge the likelihood of opposition to challenging the status quo and prepare themselves for this eventuality.
- Organizations need to involve battered women in advocacy work to educate decision makers about the realities of women's lives and to more effectively lobby for change.

### **CHILDCARE:**

- Programs and funders must acknowledge women's responsibility for children and accommodate women's child care needs when planning service delivery.

### **TRANSPORTATION:**

- Programs and funders must consider women's transportation needs when planning service delivery.

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## **ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES:**

- Battered women are isolated by the very fact of being in an abusive relationship. Regular means of advertising services may not reach battered women.
- Programs must make information about their services readily available to women in remote, isolated parts of their region.
- Program personnel during the workshops said they were not aware of all of the existing services listed, even though they made considerable effort to keep up on changes and new services.
- Programs must also be diligent in advertising their services with other community organizations.

## **FUNDING:**

- Funders must provide adequate, long-term, stable funding to service delivery agencies. The provision of adequate funding includes consideration of child care, transportation, outreach to women in remote areas, education of other professionals in the community, publicizing services and network building.

## **FUNDING AND THE NEED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:**

- The eight communities need follow-up work to continue the Action Research process. It is unlikely that communities will be able to implement strategies without further coordination and resources.
- Many other communities in the North and West of Vancouver Island have indicated that they want to do an Action Research Project to enable them to look at how they are dealing with violence against women in their communities.
- We need resources to explore ways to deal with community resistance about the issue.
- Our communities need resources to develop ways of working together that are inclusive of battered women, respectful of divergent points of view and safe for all participants.

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## **WHAT DID WE LEARN?**

- To have small expectations, start slowly and don't "hit people over the head" with the issue or they get defensive.
- To always do workshops for women only on this issue "when a man is there we don't talk".
- To make an intentional decision to invite men when appropriate.
- To expect resistance to any meeting where the topic is violence against women and children.
- To be prepared to offer support for women who are emotionally vulnerable who may come to workshops.
- To not assume that women-serving agencies will be allies in the community development process.
- To invite men's groups to put up posters in situations where we expect a backlash from men in a community.
- That we need to remember our inspiration comes from our connection with each other; just as battered women need to talk about their experience of abuse before they can break free of it, community activists need to talk about our isolation as front-line workers in order to break free of our isolation and sustain ourselves.
- That the resistance to change we experienced is the same resistance battered women experience when trying to break free from violence; when we confront the status quo, we are ignored, labeled, trivialized and intimidated.
- That women who resisted our work also suffer from isolation and are subject to all the forms of opposition that we experienced.
- That doing this work is taxing because of the defensiveness and scrutiny experienced; we need to stay grounded in our common bond of why we do this work; our passion and commitment to end violence against women and children.
- That it is particularly hard in a small community to be seen to be raising issues that challenge the status quo, as we meet our neighbors on a daily basis.
- That attendance at summer meetings is low.
- That creating a safe forum for women to speak leads to a natural group sharing and the creation of solutions.

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## **WHY WERE WE SUCCESSFUL?**

- Because of the high credibility of women organizers in our own communities.
- Because of the skills, courage and abilities of women participants in the project.
- We had the flexibility to deal with situations as they arose.
- Our vision was energizing in the face of resistance.
- Because working as a team reduced our isolation and gave us energy to continue.
- Because we took care of practical details well; comfortable, safe space, refreshments, child care and transportation subsidies etc.
- Because we valued the perspective of everyone involved.

## **WHAT HINDERED OUR SUCCESS?**

- We were not prepared for resistance and opposition to the project.
- A lack of time hindered our ability to coordinate effective responses to resistance
- Some women organizers were alone in their communities in planning workshops; they were not supported by their boss or co-workers or peers.
- The reality and threat of men's violence made this work difficult.
- We were not prepared for the extent of the backlash nor its effects on us when we began this work.

## **WHAT ACTIONS WERE GENERATED AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT?**

### **CUMBERLAND:**

- Contact has been made with volunteers who staff the Cumberland RCMP office; volunteers said the police are very busy with "domestics" in Cumberland.
- There are now two groups for children who have witnessed abuse in their homes in the Cumberland schools; one in the elementary and one in the junior high.

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- The core group of women have yet to meet but they keep in touch with each other over the phone.
  - One member of the group has met with the owner of the freestore/swapshop; the owner is looking for a new space for the store and is willing to have a bulletin board for women in her store and to have her store be a meeting place for women if the right space can be found.
  - Friday afternoon is the time that a lot of women use the freestore; it would be a natural place and time for women's activities to develop.

#### **COMOX VALLEY:**

- The group from Comox asked their Town Council to declare Comox a violence-free zone during the week of December 6th; Council is supporting this; the Mayor is opening the week at the Dec 6th Vigil.
- Also during the week of December 6th, they are organizing displays of women's services for three days in the Comox mall.
- The group has set up a two-day self-defense course for women.
- One member is looking into funding from Van City Savings and the Vancouver Foundation for future activities.

#### **GOLD RIVER:**

- The people from the Gold River Reserve were busy doing the Pursuit of Excellence workshop.
- Campbell River contacts reported that they had not out reached to Gold River the way they were hoping to due to a lack of time so far.
- Campbell River contacts will invite Gold River youth to a dance in Campbell River in December. The Campbell River group have agreed to meet soon to plan their outreach to Gold River.

#### **WESTCOAST:**

- Had a planning meeting for Westcoast Women's Festival to be held in the summer of 1995.

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**CAMPBELL RIVER:**

- Many participants in the workshop participated in the evaluation; lots of energy and enthusiasm to continue community work.
- Letters of support have been written for a native transition house for the North Island.
- Several agencies are planning a coordinated drop-in daycare so that women can leave their children when they have appointments; the groups are coordinating and applying for a grant.
- The group will meet again to look at other strategies identified in the workshop.

**DENMAN ISLAND:**

- The Women's Outreach Society has decided not to develop an Emergency Response Team to wife assault.
- After the workshop, they were clear they did not have enough community support and they were not being heard by the men on the potential team.
- They will be insisting that police respond to all violence, not just when weapons are involved which is their current practice.
- They are joining a new crisis intervention team sponsored by the Home Support Society; they will receive training and be linked with a similar team on Hornby Island.
- They will be showing a film on violence against women and related issues monthly as part of an awareness campaign.

**PORT ALBERNI:**

- The Family Violence sub-committee has met again and are waiting for funding to hire a coordinator to coordinate the agencies around the issue of violence against women and to facilitate the implementation of strategies already identified.

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## **WHAT THEMES WERE COMMON IN THE SEVEN COMMUNITIES?**

### **SERVICES:**

- Rural communities feel they are under-serviced and unevenly-serviced; some services are fragmented and some are hard to access because people are confused about who is doing what.

### **ACCESSIBILITY:**

- Services are hard to access due to poor transportation, lack of child care and fears around confidentiality.

### **VISIBILITY:**

- All communities want a higher profile for their existing services with the public and with service providers who often do not know what services other agencies are offering.

### **ATTITUDES:**

- Most communities want to shift community attitudes towards women and children; they want an alternative to media messages that degrade women and children and that only offer stereotypes of women; they wanted a public education campaign that would promote positive attitudes to women and children.

### **PUBLIC EDUCATION:**

- Communities wanted public education campaigns on the issue of violence against women and children; they cautioned that a successful campaign might overburden services already working to capacity; however, they felt an urgent need to keep the issue in the public agenda.

### **OPPOSITION:**

- In each of the communities there was some resistance to the workshops; attendance at the workshops was lower than expected though well-advertised.
- In Campbell River most of the posters were taken down and some agencies were suspicious of the project and did not promote it with their clients.
- In the Comox Valley, some agencies appeared to be watching the research process, maintaining an arms length, and not encouraging their clients to become involved.
- In Cumberland, we heard that there are good women interested in the issue but they "don't like to act", or "get political".



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- In Port Alberni, some agencies appeared to "own" the issue to the exclusion of a broader base of community and women's input.
  - On the Westcoast, participants were concerned that no First Nations women attended. They felt this was not opposition but rather demonstrated the need to build bridges between native and non-native women.
  - In Gold River, the presence of men outside the meeting room resulted in the group moving to a new room; the visibility of men outside their homes, on decks and balconies etc, resulted in women choosing not to face this intimidation and stay home rather than attend the workshop.
  - On Denman Island, the women did not feel heard by the men on the Emergency Response Team nor supported by their community. After the one intervention that they did, there was gossip in the community about how they had "split up a family". Women described an "outlaw streak" in the community whereby police are not called and the old boy's network interprets what needs to be done in various situations.

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## **WRITER'S FINAL THOUGHTS**

My role as coordinator of this project was one of animator. I felt that I lit some sparks which caught flame and are being fanned by a passionate group of women on Vancouver Island.

It is clear to me that a seemingly small project such as this one is exactly what we need in our struggle to end violence against women. Confronting and challenging individuals and systems at the local level keeps the issue in the public agenda, involves broad participation and invites communities to take responsibility for building neighborhoods that are not only safe places for women and children but places where all vulnerable people can thrive.

Our legitimacy came from the inclusion of the voices of all the women who participated. Many of those women are not used to being heard, or used to being taken seriously. Their input, experience and solutions are exactly what we need to hear to bring about the social and political changes which are necessary to keep women and children safe.

Women, who are often the objects of research, in this collaborative process became empowered to work on solutions to their own and others' problems. It seems to me that we sometimes forget the collective power and energy available to us all when we are willing and open to listen and share.

I have used the word resistance many times in this report. It is an active word meaning opposition to or non-compliance with. The women of the North Island Network are resisting male violence by confronting it in all its names; patriarchy, privilege, homophobia, sexism, racism, and every other kind of "ism" in our society. Resistance is an effective place to come from when dealing with a powerful force, such as male violence, and when wishing to be pro-active and transformational in response. Resistance under such circumstances is conscious and intentional.

I have also used the word resistance when describing the opposition and lack of community support felt by organizers of community workshops. I feel it is critical to pursue this issue as we can only speculate why the resistance is there and if it is intentional or unconscious. There is some pressure to ignore the response and keep on working towards our goals. I feel that we need to focus some energy on dealing with community agency resistance to the work of a new grassroots group. Social change happens through building allies and making links. We need to understand how new grassroots groups and community agencies can work together and keep focused on our common long-range vision. This understanding is a crucial element in confronting the ways our communities do not serve women.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **CONTACT LIST FOR COMMUNITIES**

<b>Cumberland:</b>	Diana Paige Box 447 Cumberland, B.C. V0R 1S0
<b>Comox Valley:</b>	Tanya Rainey RR 1, Site 186, C5 Comox, B.C. V9N 5N1
<b>Denman Island:</b>	Miriam Leigh 1912 Lacon Road Denman Island V0R 2T0
<b>Port Alberni:</b>	Patty Surette Women's Resource Centre 3048 5th Street Port Alberni, B.C., V9Y 7L5
<b>Gold River:</b>	Lenora Murphy Mowachaht Band Box 272 Gold River, B.C. V0P 1G0
<b>Campbell River:</b>	Catherine Phillips 1660 Robb Road Comox, B.C.
<b>Westcoast:</b>	Tina Schoen Women's Resource Centre Box 868 Ucluelet, B.C. V0R 3A0

## **APPENDIX B**

### **NORTH ISLAND NETWORK TO RESIST AND HEAL FROM VIOLENCE**

Joyce Berto	8, 635 Pidcock Ave Courtenay, V9N 3E4	334-1708
Helen Dempster	201,2767 Muir Rd Courtenay, V9N 8S6	338-5898
Karlene Faith	SFU, Burnaby V5A 1S6	291-3018
Linda Green	8, 126 Back RdV9N 3W6	334-8623
Janis MacNaughton	208, 1040 Shopper's Row Campbell River V9W 2C6	287-9521
Hans Meyer	Box 323, Merville V0R2M0	337-5812
Lenora Murphy	Box 272, Gold River Mowachaht Band V0P 1G0	283-2532
Diana Paige	Box 447, Cumberland V0R 1S0	336-8893
Catherine Phillips	1660 Robb Ave, Comox	339-9116
Kelley Pozzolo	Box 615, Cumberland V0R 1S0	336-8442
Tanya Rainey	RR1 Site 186 C5 Comox V9N 5N1	339-4671
Deborah Rohatensky	Box 153, Powell River V8A 4Z6	485-4554
Mary Seeley	271 Rodello St Comox V9N 4Z8	339-2394
Lorraine Stick	Box 2703, Whitehorse Yukon, Y1A 2C6	667-3002
Carol Stokes	Box 153 Powell River	485-4554
Patty Surette	3048 5th Ave Port Alberni V9Y 7L5	724-4445
Joan Vander Holt	Box 3699 Courtenay	338-1247

Barbara Velthuis

4974 Anrian Rd  
Courtenay V9N 6T8

338-5987

Pam Wonnacott

208,1040 Shopper's Row  
Campbell River V9W 6K7

287-9521



# Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council

AHOUSHT  
DITIDAH  
EHATTESAHT  
HESQUIAT  
KYUQUOT

MOWACHAHT  
NUCHATLAHT  
OHIAHT  
OPETCHESAHT

SHESAHT  
TLA-O-QUIAHT  
TOQUAHT  
UCHUCKLESHT  
UCLUELET



"The Strength Of The Indian Nation Is In Their Women,  
No Nation Is A Nation Unless There Are Women To Bear The Children Of The Future."

## DECLARATION OF NUU-CHAH-NULTH WOMEN

Nuu-chah-nulth Women, givers of life, are Mothers, Daughters, Grandmothers, Granddaughters, Aunts, Nieces, Sisters, Teachers, and Friends.

We treasure the values and traditions we have been taught; they have sustained us during the many changes throughout our history;

We take pride in our culture, heritage and traditions, and we honour and respect our Elders and their teachers;

We are responsible for the health and safety of our children and our families, and we seek to ensure that our children will always be protected;

We believe in the strength of our family ties, and assert our right to always retain the love of our immediate and extended families;

We have the right to be respected in spirit, mind, and body and to live free from sexual, physical, verbal and emotional abuse;

We have the right to love and be loved, care and be cared for, protect and be protected;

We have the right to be heard and to be treated as partners in our relationships with family and friends;

We have the right to be individuals, to make our own choices and to pursue our personal goals;

We will respect ourselves, and we will be respected;

We will teach our children by example, and we will ensure that the well-being of future generations of Nuuchahnulth is not jeopardized in any way;

We recognize changes in our society, and we will call upon our strengths to live with those changes in a manner consistent with our traditions and values;

We will maintain integrity and pride in being Nuuchahnulth Women.

"Honouring and Respecting Our Women"  
1989 Nuuchahnulth Annual Assembly

# The Clothesline Project

APPENDIX D

*Bearing Witness to Violence  
against Women*

*by Rachel Carey-Harper  
and Honora Goldstein*

**A**s an artist and peace activist, my work is grounded in a conviction that the divine exists in everyone and everything, creating an unbreakable connection that joins each of us to each other, the earth, and the universe. We are woven together in an eternal web of unconditional love, and that web is sacred space.

By being mindful of the connection to each other, the universe, and our connection with the divine, we can transcend time and space and transform the mundane into the sacred. In the silence, the music of the universe can be heard and when we are truly present, the sacredness of any space is profoundly experienced as part of the infinite web of life.

Physical violence and the violence of oppression and injustice shred the harmony of sacred space. The Clothesline Project works to reverse and transform the spiritually harmful effects of this violence on a global scale, an example of political action as sacred space. By proclaiming the joy of healing and the agony of pain, the Project cuts through some of the alienating aspects of this culture, transforming the places where it is displayed into sacred space.

The Clothesline Project provides an opportunity for women to bear witness to their personal experience of violence, and to celebrate their transformation from victim to survivor in a powerful statement of solidarity. Together, women share and sometimes purge these horrendous experiences. Across the nation, we join together as a group, clothesline to symbolic clothesline, connecting with the deeper aspects of our true selves. The sacredness is implicit as mindfulness is evoked. Space for tears and space for laughter, so necessary for healing, are present at every Clothesline display.

The spirits of the shirts were sewn into them by

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*The Clothesline Project  
provides an opportunity for  
women to bear witness to their  
personal experience of violence,  
and to celebrate their transfor-  
mation from victim to survivor  
in a powerful statement  
of solidarity.*

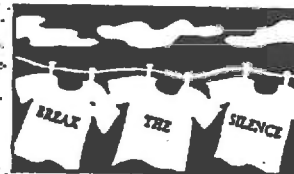
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the courageous women who made them. The sacred space expands outward and extends beyond a single Clothesline display as we send shirts to other locations to become part of other projects. As these pieces of the Clothesline pass from our caring, loving hands to theirs, they journey with our vision that we can break the silence so completely that the roar of our pain will forever still the forces that do violence to our minds, bodies, hearts, and souls.

Together we can stop this violence, together we are making a tangible difference, together we will change the world, and together we will consciously dwell in safe and sacred space.

— Rachel Carey-Harper

## *The Clothesline Project National Network*



**T**he purpose of the Clothesline Project is to document and bear witness to the violence that has been done to the victims and survivors of the war against women. The Project educates people about the magnitude of the impact that this experience of violence has on women's and children's lives, and our goal is to educate people about this violence by breaking through the barrier that exists between simply hearing the facts and having that issue touch your heart. The Project also speeds the healing process for the survivors of violence against women and serves to connect women across the United States and throughout the world.

We invite women to send shirts with personalized messages to be hung on the Clothesline, preferably with the following color codes:

- white for women who have died of violence,
- yellow or beige for women who have been battered or assaulted,
- red, pink, or orange for women who have been raped or sexually assaulted,

(Continued on next page)

*(Continued from previous page)*

- blue or green for women who are survivors of incest or child sexual abuse, and
- purple or lavender for women who have been attacked because of their sexual orientation.

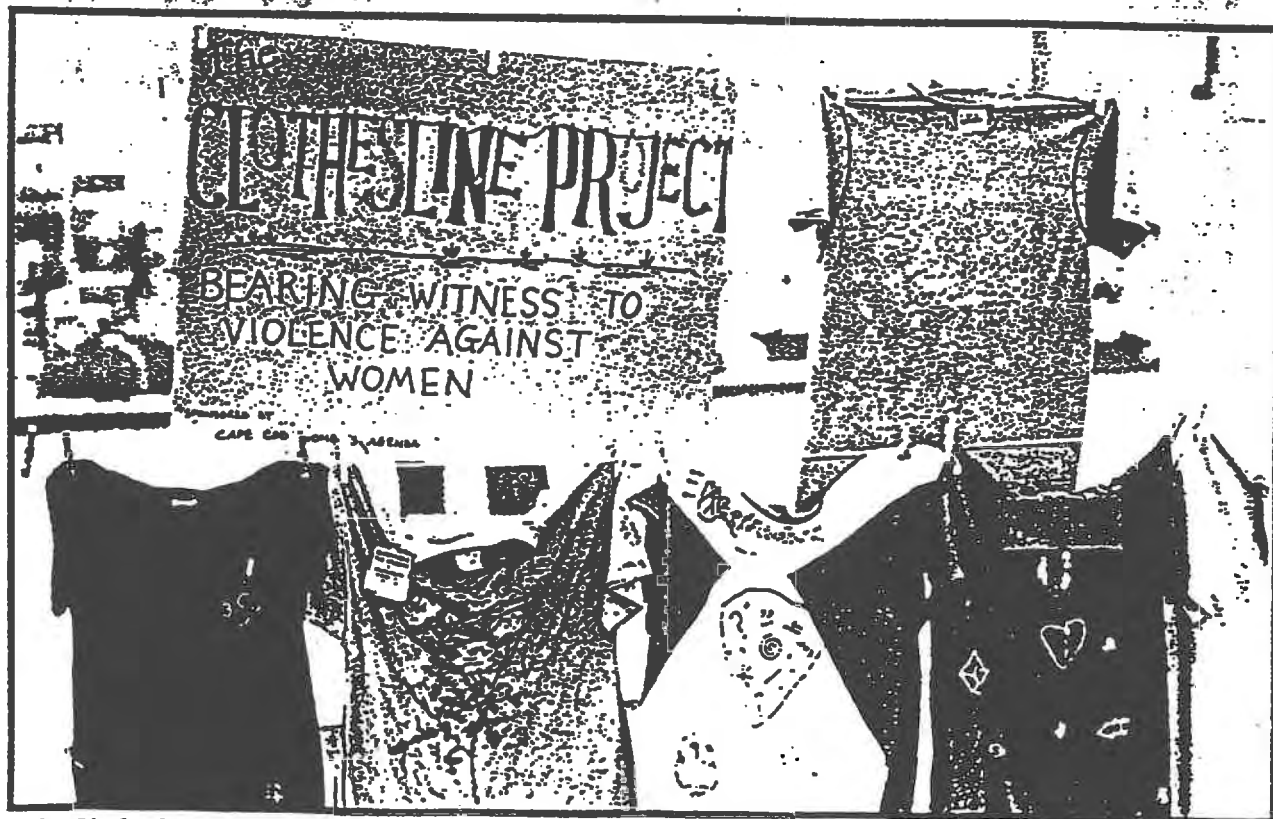
The Project is a frame on which we are weaving a tapestry of connections. Each strand, each shirt, each woman is of equal importance in its creation. As we build our personal power by making connections with others, we make changes in society that we would not have been able to make alone.

Violence against women affects every female, regardless of her sexual orientation, race, age, class, or abilities. Through this work we are crossing these boundaries and working together; we push beyond the boundary of victim to survivor and thriver. We extend the boundaries of healing, to wholeness and more. There will be a time when our arms will be so wide that they will encircle and embrace the entire world. In this manner, we transform the places where the Clothesline is displayed into sacred space.

A profound change occurs as the Clothesline Project begins to fill the space at a display. One line of shirts is tied from post to post, then the next, and the next until

the sometimes-urban, sometimes-academic place is filled with the joy of healing and the agony of pain. By breaking the silence, sharing the pain, and developing a sense of trust in one another, we cut through some of the alienating aspects of this culture. Through this work, we come together and are empowered by the loving and nurturing groups we form. This support enables us to work through the alienation and devastation caused by our personal experiences of violence and the effects of internalized and overt oppression. ∞

The Clothesline Project can be reached at: P.O. Box 727, East Dennis MA 02641; telephone (508) 385-7004. The Project now has over one hundred and fifty branches throughout the United States, Europe, and Africa. The Project celebrated its three-year anniversary in October, 1993, in Hyannis, MA. The first National Clothesline Project display will be held in late 1994 in Washington, DC, connecting all the local projects in the United States. The Clothesline Project is also preparing a book that will document in photographs, interviews, and personal stories of violence and healing the lives of women whose shirts are displayed on the Clothesline. If you would like to be part of this project, contact: Marty Downs, 8 Forest Glen Road, Hyannis MA 02601; telephone (508) 775-0742.



*The Clothesline Project on display.*



One day you may come upon a line of colored shirts strung between some trees, blowing gently in the wind. In the quiet, you will hear the rustling of the shirts and the murmur of shocked voices; and in the background, a gong, whistle, or bell will be sounding to signify that:

- *Every ten seconds a woman is battered in the United States.*
- *Every three minutes a rape is reported.*
- *Every fifteen minutes a woman is killed by a man who supposedly loves her.*

Statistics like these are painful, sorrowful reminders of the violence that women face every moment of their lives; in highlighting them, the Clothesline serves as a political statement, a message to the community, and a vehicle for awareness and education. Its messages about violence and hope are interconnected through space and time by this symbolic line.

Women will be silent, ashamed, and isolated no longer. The pain that these shirts illustrate is unbearable, and it is felt by all who see the Clothesline. No one can leave without having been made aware of the enormity of the continued war against women.

Yet, amidst all this devastation, there is also hope and healing. When I am standing in the midst of the Project space, I know that someday we will stop the war against women; I feel that I am in a sacred space, one that allows women to speak out about horrific events that have changed their lives forever. The Clothesline Project helps survivors to heal, and when we begin to heal, we can begin to become whole. ∞

— *Honora Goldstein*

*Rachel Carey-Harper works for positive social change grounded in her Quaker faith and practice. A cofounder of the Clothesline Project, a national organization whose purpose is to educate society about violence against women and to connect women with healing, hope, and love, she has recently taken a leave of absence. A scenic/mural artist, the idea for the Project came to her as a way to raise people's awareness about the epidemic of violence against women with a large visual statement. (Photo by E. Harper.)*



*Honora Goldstein, a cofounder of the Clothesline Project, has, for many years, been committed to feminist causes, especially to those that address issues of violence against women. In 1988, she became a volunteer rape crisis counselor at Independence House, Cape Cod's battered women and rape crisis agency, where she experiences intimately how the Project can help women to speak their rage and begin to heal.*



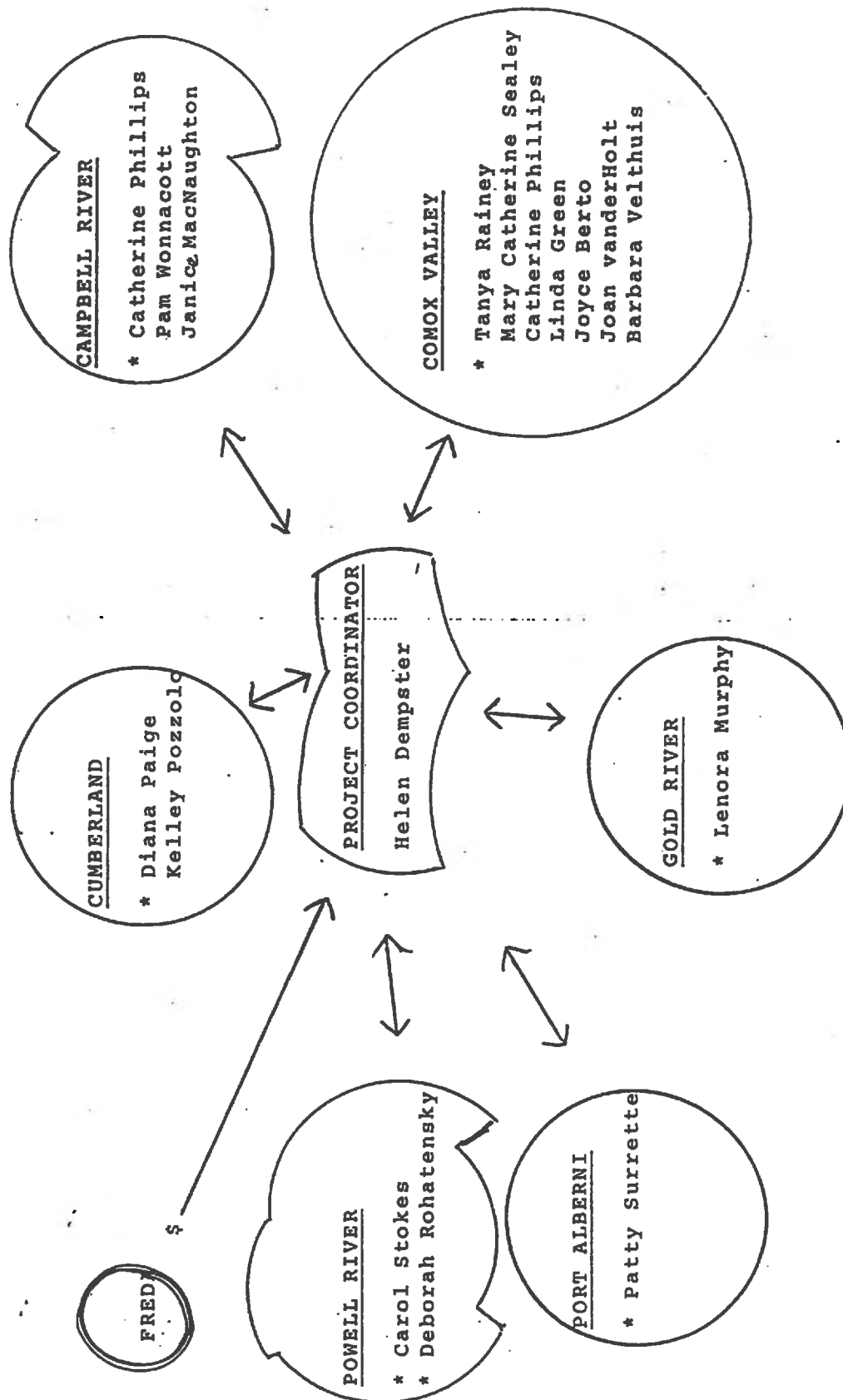
RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONTACT PEOPLE

- 1) Arrange date, time, place.
- 2) Advertise event thru poster distribution, cable t.v., radio, word of mouth, newspapers, etc.
- 3) Arrange for refreshments.
- 4) Log hours and expenses and submit to Helen as soon as possible after event.
- 5) Attend evaluation and follow-up meeting in September.
- 6) Attend community workshop, assist with facilitation, introductions, work with Helen etc.
- 7) Give Helen input, (call collect).
- 8) Arrange set up and clean up of facility - need flipchart stand.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROJECT COORDINATOR

- 1) Support and assist community contact people.
- 2) Deliver six community workshops.
- 3) Provide contact people with press release, poster, agenda for workshop.
- 4) Provide flip chart paper, markers, etc.
- 5) Communicate with contact people to jointly plan workshop.
- 6) Write final report on project.
- 7) Call evaluation and follow-up meeting in September.
- 8) Authorize and submit all expenses to administrator Jo Hinchliffeat, UBC
- 9) Report to Karlene Faith and Lorraine Stick throughout project.
- 10) Update community people throughout project.

WORKING MODEL

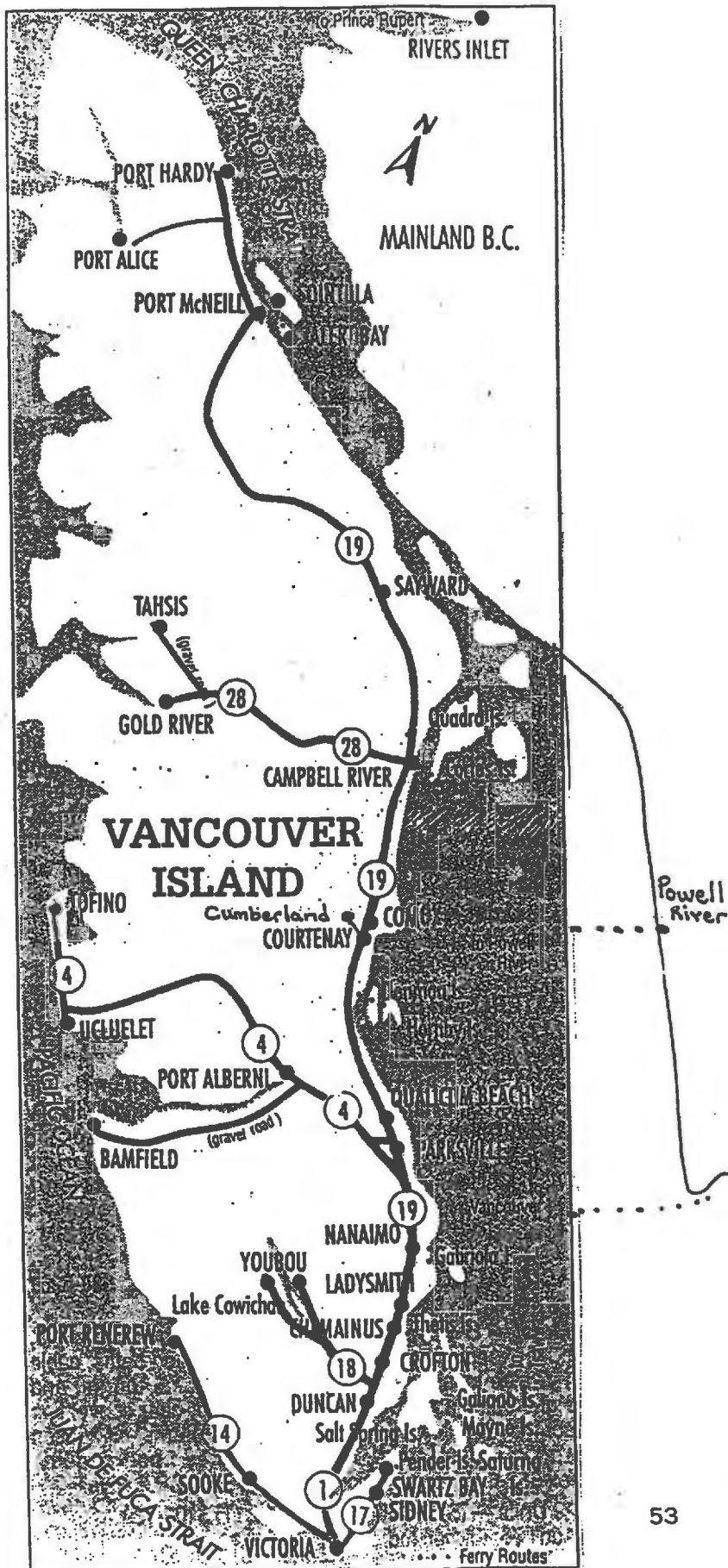


\* Contact person

# APPENDIX F

## POPULATION

Campbell River Region	35,000
Comox Valley	54,000
Comox Town	10,500
Cumberland	2,400
Denman Island	2,000
Gold River	2,500
Gold River Reserve	200
Powell River	11,000
Westcoast	6,000





## **APPENDIX G**

### **REFERENCES**

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