

# Increasing Safety for Aboriginal Women

## Key Themes and Resources

May 2011



In 2010 and 2011, the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) increased its focus on safety for Aboriginal\* women in our Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS) program, holding discussions in community groups and a regional gathering in Northwest BC. Many concerns about violence and ideas about increasing safety were raised in these discussions by people in Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services, mainstream services, and coordination committees on sexual and domestic violence.

This tool is one of the outcomes of these discussions. It identifies:

- I. **Key Themes from Community and Regional Discussions**
- II. **Leadership and Services that May Be Able to Help**
- III. **Selected Resources**

*\*Aboriginal as defined by the 1982 Constitution Act of Canada includes First Nations (status or non-status), Inuit and Métis people.*

The **Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC)** is a charitable, non-profit organization that provides services to over 220 funded anti-violence programs across the province. The mandate of EVA BC is to provide support and training, undertake research, develop and distribute resources and tools, educate the public and government bodies on the needs of victims of violence, develop and maintain standards for the provision of service, and foster the development of cross-sector coordination and collaboration.

The EVA BC program **Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS)** works with sexual and domestic violence responders at the local, regional and provincial levels to support the development of a coordinated response to gender-based violence. CCWS aims to increase the safety of women who have experienced violence by supporting these cross-sector groups to build connections, increase coordination and take action together on barriers to safety such as referral problems and service gaps.

EVA BC's work is guided by an awareness and analysis of gender, race, class and other forms of marginalization, with the goal of removing barriers to the safety of all people. We have been working in alliance with Aboriginal women and men for many years to address the absence of accessible and appropriate services throughout BC for Aboriginal women, men and children who experience violence and abuse. We support Aboriginal women and men who are working to create, improve and lead such services. We also support non-Aboriginal anti-violence, and related health, legal and social services to increase the accessibility and cultural appropriateness of their services, and their connections to Aboriginal communities and services. Our work includes a strong commitment to hire Aboriginal people to speak at our conferences, train anti-violence workers and lead or participate in numerous projects.

Our work, in alliance with Aboriginal women, men and communities, has increased the capacity of our organization and member programs to address violence against Aboriginal women in the context of the historical and present impacts of colonization. We are deeply committed to continuing this work.

## **I. Key Themes from Community and Regional Discussions**

The following needs were identified many times to the Community Coordination for Women's Safety program during our focus on increasing safety for Aboriginal women (2010/2011). The needs were identified by Aboriginal leaders, service providers and community members, mainstream service providers, and coordination committees on sexual and domestic violence.

### **A. Information About and Connections With Existing Services and Networks**

- Aboriginal communities on reserve and in urban centres
  - Leaders (may include Elders, hereditary chiefs, elected band chief and council, tribal chief and council, matriarchs, territory title holders and other types of leaders)
  - Aboriginal Services (may include band services, urban services in aboriginal friendship centres and other organizations)
  - Informal networks of family, friends and community members
- Mainstream anti-violence services
- Mainstream responders including health, legal, social, education and other services
- Local and regional coordination committees on sexual and domestic violence

### **B. Enhanced Capacity of Existing Services and Networks**

- Continuous core funding for services
- Services created and delivered in a culturally appropriate way by and for Aboriginal women
- Training for service providers, informal networks about violence against Aboriginal women
- Cultural sensitivity training for non-Aboriginal staff, boards and volunteers
- Supports to address the personal impacts on responders
- Opportunities for collaborative visioning and planning

### **C. Culturally Appropriate, Accessible Information about Violence and Abuse**

- Existing studies and recommendations developed by Aboriginal women and communities
- Historical roots and current context of violence and abuse against Aboriginal women
- Violence and abuse against youth, children, elders and men
- Broad range of violence and abuse against Aboriginal women
  - domestic violence
  - sexual violence by acquaintances and strangers
  - in the workplace
  - by family and community for speaking about and addressing violence
- Domestic Violence
  - warning signs
  - risk factors for serious injury and death
  - range of violence and abuse including spiritual, emotional, sexual, physical and mental
  - impact on children and youth

### **D. Culturally Appropriate, Accessible Tools to Address Violence and Abuse**

- Know warning signs and risks of violence and abuse and increase your own safety
- Stop your use of violence and abuse in relationships
- Help family, friends and community members who are experiencing violence and abuse
- Intervene with family members and friends who are using violence and abuse

## II. Leadership and Services that May Be Able to Help

*We must avoid a pan-Indian [one size fits all] approach. The issues of violence in our communities are diverse and so are our own cultural ways. It will be a long journey to recovery. The East, South, West and North all must develop their own process of healing – as must urban areas and reserve. This must be done if we are to return once more to a people without violence.*

– Sylvia Maracle, Executive Director, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres

One important part of increasing safety for Aboriginal women is improving connections among Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services and mainstream services. To improve these connections, it is important to increase understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal communities and cultural ways, and the diversity of Aboriginal and mainstream services.

### **Aboriginal Communities**

Aboriginal communities include reserve communities, which may be in isolated rural areas or near to urban centres. Aboriginal communities also include places where Aboriginal people have built communities of support and connection in larger, non-Aboriginal urban centres. In some urban centres the community is built around the connection to an Aboriginal Friendship Centre or another urban Aboriginal organization. In addition, there are many Aboriginal people living in isolation from their communities, both in rural and urban centres.

### **Leaders**

One very common theme among Aboriginal communities is the importance of outsiders learning about and following proper, respectful protocol for interactions. Many Aboriginal leaders stress that learning and building relationships includes going **in person** to Aboriginal communities and leaders, sharing food and attending celebrations, and finding other opportunities to connect with and learn from Aboriginal communities. This relationship building will increase trust and provide learnings about leaders, community members and respectful behaviour.

For outsiders reaching out to Aboriginal communities, part of this protocol will include first approaching leaders for permission and guidance. Leaders in Aboriginal communities may include:

- Elders
- Elder's Councils
- hereditary chiefs
- traditional governance organization
- elected band chief and council
- tribal chief and council
- matriarchs
- territory title holders
- many other types of leaders including natural leaders

## Services

Following are some of the types of services and workers that may be available in Aboriginal communities on reserve and in urban centers. Each community is unique and the names and types of services available vary. *The most effective way for mainstream services to find out what is available locally is to connect and build relationships with Aboriginal community members including leaders and service providers.*

- Aboriginal Friendship Centre Staff
- Aboriginal Head Start Programs
- Addictions Counsellors and Programs
- Band Elected Chief and Council
- Band Social Workers and Social Development Offices
- Child Care Programs
- Community Health Nurses
- Elders Groups and Councils
- First Nations Child and Family Services Agencies
- Health Center Staff
- Home Care Nurses and Workers
- Infant Development Programs
- Literacy Programs
- Mental Health Counsellors
- Métis Associations
- Métis Nation Chartered Communities
- Native Courtworkers and Counsellors
- Residential School Healing Programs
- Safe Homes
- Tribal Chief and Council
- Unlocking Aboriginal Justice
- Urban Aboriginal Child and Family Services Agencies
- Youth Centres

## A Guide to Aboriginal Organizations and Services

This bi-annual publication is coordinated by the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. It lists and gives contact information for services across the province and includes provincial umbrella organizations.

Available at [www.gov.bc.ca/arr/services/guide.html](http://www.gov.bc.ca/arr/services/guide.html)

## First Nation Profiles

The First Nation Profiles, developed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, include general information on a First Nation along with more detailed information about its reserve(s), governance, federal funding, geography, registered population statistics and various Census statistics. The site also includes an interactive map.

Available at <http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/fnp>

## Health Canada Programs and Information

This section of the Health Canada website provides information about health programs and funding available for First Nations and Inuit people in Canada.

Available at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/index-eng.php)

## Mainstream Anti-Violence Programs

Visit the website of the Ending Violence Association of BC at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org) to find the following services in your area:

- Community-Based Victim Services
- Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs
- Stopping the Violence Counselling Outreach Programs
- Sexual Assault/Woman Assault Centres

Visit the website of the BC Society of Transition Houses at [www.bcsth.ca](http://www.bcsth.ca) to find the following services in your area:

- Transition Houses
- Safe Home Networks
- Second Stage Housing
- Children Who Witness Abuse Programs

Visit the website of Police Victim Services of BC at [www.policevictimservices.bc.ca](http://www.policevictimservices.bc.ca) to find Police Victim Services programs in your area.

### **Coordination Committees on Sexual and Domestic Violence:**

Since 1989, community organizations and the Ministry of Attorney General (now the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General) have been involved in the development of coordination committees on sexual and domestic violence. These initiatives bring together system- and community-based representatives to enhance collaboration on local responses; to ensure that all services work together as effectively as possible. Today there are coordination initiatives in over 50 communities across BC, many of them in rural and isolated areas.

For a list of current coordination committees, visit EVA BC at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

### **VictimLink BC**

VictimLink BC is a toll-free, confidential telephone service available across BC and Yukon 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence.

Call them at 1-800-563-0808, TTY at 604-875-0885 or visit their website at [www.victimlinkbc.ca](http://www.victimlinkbc.ca)

### III. Selected Resources

#### **Aboriginal Domestic Violence in Canada (2003)**

This comprehensive report by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation maps the complex web of factors that create and sustain the issue of domestic violence in Aboriginal people's lives. It looks at the level of individuals, extended families, community systems and the socio-environmental context. It outlines a comprehensive framework for intervention that addresses root causes and identifies a set of strategies for significantly reducing the horrendous levels of domestic violence and abuse now on-going in many communities.

Available at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/fem-abor\\_e.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/fem-abor_e.pdf)

#### **Aboriginal Women and Family Violence (2008)**

In 2006, the Ipsos-Reid research firm prepared a report entitled "Aboriginal Women and Family Violence" for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (original report is available at [www.nacafv.ca/en/pdf/family\\_violence\\_report.pdf](http://www.nacafv.ca/en/pdf/family_violence_report.pdf)). The research project on which the report is based studied the attitudes and opinions of Aboriginal women, and the professionals who work with them, on the issue of family violence, specifically intimate partner violence against women. This report by the Public Health Agency of Canada is a condensed version of the larger report and focuses on the causes, consequences and suggested solutions to violence against Aboriginal women by their intimate partners.

Available at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/fem-abor\\_e.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/fem-abor_e.pdf)

#### **Ducking Bullets: Women from Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation Work to End Violence (1995)**

This interview with three Community Health Representatives at the Sandy Lake Health Clinic in Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation highlights some key issues for Aboriginal women seeking to end violence against women and children in their communities. The women describe their courageous journey to break the silence and inactivity on violence against women and children in their own community. Their stories cover their own healing from abuse, their work to support other women and youth experiencing violence and the risks to their own safety, wellness and livelihoods from breaking the silence.

Available in: *Listening To The Thunder; Advocates Talk About The Battered Women's Movement*. Ed. Leslie Timmins. Women's Research Centre, Vancouver, BC (1995)

#### **Ending Relationship Abuse Society of BC - Information Bulletins (2006)**

These information bulletins cover a variety of topics about stopping the use of violence in relationships, ranging from tools for people to stop the use of violence in their relationships, to guiding principles for programs working with people who use violence. These materials were originally developed and distributed by the Ending Relationship Abuse Society of BC (ERA). Comprised of individuals dedicated to raising awareness about relationship abuse, ERA's vision was to contribute to stopping violence in relationships through province-wide provision of effective, accessible, ethical services for individuals who have used abuse in relationships. Due to the dissolution of ERA, their valuable resource material is now housed on the EVA BC website to ensure its continued availability to workers in the field.

Available at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

### **Highway of Tears Safety Toolkit**

The Highway of Tears Safety Toolkit has been developed in the memory of the missing and murdered women along Highway #16 known as the “Highway of Tears”. Carrier Sekani Family Services and the Highway of Tears Governing Body created this resource tool kit to assist communities, educational institutions and agencies to facilitate workshops that will increase prevention and safety so that no more women will be added to the Highway of Tears missing and murdered list. The six different modules cover a wide range of issues such as civic participation, dangers of date rape drugs, how to stay safe at work, home on the road and in the air, as well as sexual assault from a police perspective, substance abuse, mental health and abuse of women in Aboriginal communities. Communities and/or agencies can choose the booklet(s) and module(s) that best support their local needs for education, awareness and skill building.

Carrier Sekani Family Services is seeking funding to continue the distribution of the safety toolkit through facilitated community meetings. More information is available at [www.csfs.org](http://www.csfs.org)

### **Kanawayhitowin: Taking Care of Each Others Spirit**

This comprehensive set of resources is an Aboriginal campaign to raise awareness about the signs of woman abuse in Aboriginal communities, so that people who are close to at-risk women or abusive men can provide support. Created in Ontario, the campaign tools, resources and discussions are relevant across the country and internationally. The campaign includes brochures, public service announcements, a training video for community members, and numerous other tools to increase safety for Aboriginal women and communities. This campaign has been recreated by the Ontario Association of Indian Friendship Centres from the Neighbours, Friends and Family Initiative, to reflect a traditional and cultural approach to community healing and wellness. Part of the Kanawayhitowin campaign includes resources and concrete tools for men to address issues of abuse against women and to inspire and engage other men to get involved and stop the abuse (Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin; I Am a Kind Man). This part of the campaign was developed by the Ontario Association of Indian Friendship Centres with the White Ribbon Campaign.

Available at [www.kanawayhitowin.ca/index.php](http://www.kanawayhitowin.ca/index.php)

### **Natural Life-supporting Power**

This equality wheel specific to Native American contexts, provides a model of equality ranging from spiritual reflection to sexual respect. It was created by Sacred Circle - National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women, based on the Equality Wheel of the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project. The tool states that “Equality is a natural life-supporting power that is grounded in spirituality”.

Available at [www.ncdsv.org/images/Native%20wheel%20NO%20SHADING.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/Native%20wheel%20NO%20SHADING.pdf)



### **Researched To Death; BC Aboriginal Women and Violence Final Report (2005)**

Produced by the Pacific Association of First Nations Women, BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre and EVA BC, this report examines ten studies and one book relating to Aboriginal women and violence, to determine the extent to which the numerous recommendations and suggestions have been acted on to ameliorate the impact of violence against Aboriginal women. The wide scope of research, reports and books included in this summary report shows a pattern of Aboriginal women's known violence at the hands of their partners, communities, leadership, justice system, government systems and society as a whole and highlights the lack of effective response to the needs of Aboriginal women, even in light of the number of recommendations that have been repeatedly offered by reports on this subject over a time span of 1990-2005.

Available at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

### **Step by Step: Tools for Developing a Coordinated Response to Violence Against Women (2011)**

This practical resource guide was developed by the Community Coordination for Women's Safety program (CCWS), a program of the Ending Violence Association of BC. CCWS supports communities to address local issues that are impacting women's safety, primarily fragmentation of the local response and the increased risk to women perpetuated by this lack of coordination. People who connect with CCWS want to know what others are doing, how they have overcome challenges and what successes they can share. We wrote this guide to address these questions and to bring to light the many successes of British Columbia's unique violence against women coordination movement. Each section includes practical tools CCWS has developed to help communities work in collaboration.

Available at [www.endingviolence.org/ccws](http://www.endingviolence.org/ccws)

### **Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada A Summary of Amnesty International's Concerns (2004)**

This report documents the violence, discrimination and eventual murders perpetuated against Aboriginal women in Canada and the lack of intervention or recognition of this pattern by the Canadian government and society as a whole. The report found that Canadian and Aboriginal people's history of colonialism and assimilation measures and its compounding affect that it has had on Aboriginal peoples and specifically on Aboriginal women have lead to the current reality of poverty, racism and sexism against Aboriginal people. These are key factors that place Aboriginal women at extreme risk of violation, victimization and death.

Available at <http://www.amnesty.ca/stolensisters/concerns.php>

### **The Start of Something Powerful; Strategizing for Safer Communities for BC Aboriginal Women (2004)**

This report summarizes *Strategizing for Safer Communities for BC Aboriginal Women*, a 2 day forum organized by EVA BC in partnership with the Pacific Association of First Nations Women, and BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre. The forum brought together Aboriginal women concerned with violence against women with provincial health and anti-violence organizations, policy makers and funders to identify and discuss related issues, gaps and barriers to safety and healing from violence for Aboriginal women, and to strategize for solutions. Strategies include services created and delivered in a culturally appropriate way by and for Aboriginal women; the inclusion of Aboriginal men, children and families; the addition of safe houses on and off reserve for Aboriginal women; a need for core funding for programming/services; the necessity to have all these services delivered by Aboriginal women; mandatory cultural sensitivity training for non-Aboriginal staff, boards and volunteers; and education and training about violence and abuse for Aboriginal women.

Available at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

### **Trust Your Instincts: A Guidebook for Women Who Work and Travel Alone (2008)**

This booklet created by the Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC is designed for Aboriginal women and all women to become more aware of their personal safety and protection. It was designed to be kept in a woman's glove box in her vehicle or in her purse. As indicated in the title, all modes of travel have specific safety principles that are encouraged throughout this resource. For example, it is recommended that you have a map and a journal so that you always know your destination and route. The tips in this resource are provided to save lives and empower women. The introduction describes the context of violence against Aboriginal women and girls in northern BC, especially in communities along the highway of tears. It is dedicated to the Aboriginal missing women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the northern British Columbia "Highway of Tears" missing women.

Available at <http://nccabc.pmhclients.com/images/uploads/TrustYourInstinctsfinal.pdf>

### **Violence Against Aboriginal Women: Battering**

This triangle describes a broad range of battering based in unnatural power and control, specific to Native American contexts of violence against women. It includes such behaviours as misinterpreting culture to prove male superiority/female submission. Created by Sacred Circle -National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women, it is based on the Power and Control Wheel of the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project.

Available at [www.ncdsv.org/images/NativebatteringtriangleNOSHADING.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/NativebatteringtriangleNOSHADING.pdf)

### **What Their Stories Tell Us: Research Findings from the Sisters In Spirit Initiative (2010)**

In 2005, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) secured funding for the *Sisters In Spirit* initiative – a five-year research, education and policy initiative supported by Status of Women Canada – to address the root causes, circumstances and trends of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. This report, produced by NWAC, brings together five years of research related to missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada to answer three fundamental questions: What are the circumstances, root causes and trends leading to violence against Aboriginal women in Canada? How many Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or have been found murdered in Canada? And, why has this violence led to such disturbingly high numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada without connection by police or justice authorities?

Available at [www.nwac.ca](http://www.nwac.ca)

### **You Are Not Alone: Violence, Substance Use and Mental Health**

In September 2008, seven women who are natural community leaders in Vancouver's Downtown East Side began meeting weekly to talk about the impact of relationship violence and sexual assault on their lives and the lives of their peers. Over a five-day period, the group worked with award-winning filmmaker, Aerlyn Weissman, to produce two vignettes: one on the importance of talking about safety with friends, the other on community connections and community pride. For broader perspective, the film also features interviews with women who have made community safety a cornerstone of their work. Produced by EVA BC with funding from the Vancouver Foundation and the Canadian Women's Foundation, the film and its companion workbook are intended to generate meaningful discussions among women about safety from violence and about substance use, mental health and survival sex work.

Available at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

### ***\*\*MORE RESOURCES ON INCREASING SAFETY FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN:***

In March 2010, EVA BC partnered with Northwest Community College in Terrace on a regional gathering called ***Sharing, Gathering, Honouring; Increasing Safety for Aboriginal Women Youth and Communities***. The event was very well attended, with over 120 participants, and deeply appreciated. Presenters, mainly Aboriginal women and men from across the Northwest, spoke to participants about diverse ideas and tools for increasing safety for Aboriginal women, youth and communities.

Keep an eye on our website for videos and resources at [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

Currently (March 2011), the Native Women's Association of Canada is compiling a list of resources that contain recommendations about increasing safety for Aboriginal women. It is over 200 pages long at this time.

Keep an eye on their website for updates at [www.nwac.ca](http://www.nwac.ca)