

A Shared Concern

Newsletter of the B.C. Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors
Volume 13, No. 1 Winter 2005

EMPOWERING IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Written by **Shelley Rivkin**

Background and Purpose of the Project

The project is conducting research in seven B.C. communities on service delivery factors that empower and disempower immigrant women who are victims of violence in their intimate relationships.

This project, *Empowering Immigrant Women who are Victims of Violence in Intimate Relationships*, will be undertaken by a partnership among the Justice Institute of B.C. and the Vancouver/Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services, MOSAIC and the Prince George Elizabeth Fry Society. Dr. Mary Russell of the University of B.C. School of Social Work has agreed to provide consultancy services and Linda Light will be the principal researcher.



Shelley Rivkin

Empowerment and Safety Issues

This research project will explore empowerment and safety issues for immigrant women who are victims of violence in their intimate relationships. It will build on the findings of research undertaken in 2000/01 by Dr. Mary Russell of the UBC School of Social Work, on empowerment of women victims of violence who used the justice system. This research did not focus specifically on immigrant women. Although a number of service providers and victims of violence interviewed in the first study were immigrant women, numbers were insufficient to draw separate conclusions about this group. A

further limitation of the first study was that it focused on women who chose to use the criminal justice system. This second study will focus entirely on immigrant women and on women who choose to use the justice system and those who do not.

Justice, Health, & Social Services

Based on the literature and previous research findings that women's empowerment is a very significant factor in women's safety and a particularly pressing issue for immigrant women, this study will look at what immigrant women find empowering and disempowering in their use of the justice system, health care and other social service systems and what might be done to more effectively empower immigrant women who are victims of violence.

The project will build on:

- The knowledge and experience of community-based partner agencies whose work with immigrant women victims of violence is well respected province-wide;
- The knowledge and experience of other immigrant-serving community agencies who will participate in the research in various B.C. communities;
- The methodology and findings of the 2000/01 research completed by Dr. Russell.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

“There is nothing in the world that remains unchanged.” (Ovid)

Whether or not this is a forecast of things to come in 2005, it is indeed a reminder.

Although this is no change, we may expect BC CEAS to have another busy year following the success of our 2004 Conference. We have made some new connections and have good recommendations to present and develop.

It is possible that the coming Provincial Election will mean more changes; we already welcome the **Honourable Wendy McMahon**, Minister of State for Women’s and Seniors’ Services and the **Honourable Shirley Bond**, Minister of Health Services and Deputy Premier.



Whatever is new, BC CEAS will continue with diligence in its work to eliminate the abuse of seniors.

We also welcome our new members and those we met for the first time at the Conference. We ask that you keep in touch with your comments and suggestions, by visiting our website and contacting us by phone or e-mail.

“What delights us in the Spring is more a sensation than an appearance, more a hope than any visible reality. There is something in the softness of the air, in the lengthening of the days, in the very sounds and odours of the sweet time that caresses us and consoles us after the rigorous weeks of Winter.” (Hamerton)

As usual, we anticipate Spring!

Joyce Schmalz,
President, BC CEAS



A Shared Concern

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Your comments and enquiries are welcome. While BC CEAS welcomes contributions to the newsletter, the views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of the Board of Directors or the staff of the Society.

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Next deadline for submissions: April 30/ 2005

NEW MEMBERS OF BC CEAS *December onwards*

Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company
Christine McGovern, Mgr. . . .Victoria

Five Rivers Management
Services SocietySurrey

Kathy DoerksenAbbotsford

Mennonite Central
CommitteeAbbotsford

Seniors Well Aware
ProgramWhite Rock

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

We are now in the second month of the year. I will be retiring this year, which seems odd to think about, but it is time. I will be leaving at the end of March and will volunteer for BC CEAS and do other things! We will be interviewing for a new Executive Director during February; I wish the person that we choose "the very best". I have been here since November 1996.

Victim Services Workshops: In November, we did three training workshops, in Nanaimo, Vancouver and Abbotsford; and during February we will be giving three more: in Prince George, Kelowna and Cranbrook. Pearl McKenzie is the main workshop person with Joyce Schmalz and myself doing the Lucy Bloggs skit that we gave at our conference in October. The Victim Services people in each place take an active part in the workshop, asking questions, saying what they might do for Lucy, etc. Each workshop takes on its own shape depending upon the participants. Every one has been interesting, and we have been impressed by community participation.

The Community and the Justice System Working Together as Partners: We will be ending this project at the end of February and will have been working on the project for a year. At the moment Pearl McKenzie, the project Coordinator, is writing her report and will be commenting on the project in the next issue of **A Shared Concern**. It has been an ambitious project in which we have been looking into how policy guidelines and relationships with the police, designated agencies and people in communities are working to prevent and address crimes of abuse against seniors. We have been looking at what is working, and what is not working, and are coming up with recommendations for protocol/guidelines, suggestions for designated agencies and community education and suggestions for police training.

The project advisory committee consists of **Fariba Aghdassi** from BC CEAS; **Penny Bain**, Executive Director of the B.C. Institute Against Family Violence;

Marcia Carr, who is Geriatric Clinical Coordinator of the Simon Fraser Health Authority; **Diana Ellis**, the Evaluator for the Project; **Dr. Robert Gordon**, School of Criminology at the Simon Fraser University; **Alison Leaney** of the Adult Guardianship Implementation Project and the CRN Foundation; **Pearl McKenzie**, the Coordinator for the Project; **Shelley Rivkin**, Centre for Leadership, from the Justice Institute of B.C.; **Staff Sergeant Keith Robinson**, R.C.M.P.; **Andrea Rolls** of Victim Services Division; **Charmaine Spencer** from the Gerontology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University; **Bill Summersgill**, the Vice-President of BC CEAS; **Inspector Mike Trump**, Police Academy, Justice Institute of B.C.; and myself, **Carol Ward-Hall**, Executive Director, B.C. CEAS.



B.C. Health Files: We have been asked to write up five health files for the Ministry of Health Services on abuse issues. Charmaine Spencer is doing them for us. They are: Preventing Abuse and Neglect in Later Life; Understanding Gender Differences; Understanding Health Effects; Information for Family Caregivers; and Understanding Financial Abuse. When completed they will be hosted on the Ministry website.

The Notary Foundation: We received a small grant to write up an informational booklet for Notaries on legal issues for seniors and ways to best work with seniors. This booklet should be finished by the end of March and will be mailed out to all the Notaries in the province. We are presently putting together a larger proposal for the Notary Foundation to work with notaries and senior advocates around the province, using our Legal Issues for Seniors Training Manual and the new booklet we are presently writing up. It is a two year proposal, designed to give eight training workshops each year to notaries.

Proposals: We are busy doing up six proposals by the end of March. I hope that all, or some of them, will be successful; thereby giving the new Executive Director time to get used to the job before having to

Empowering Immigrant and Refugee Women (cont'd from p. 1)

Service Delivery Factors

The overall goal is to increase our understanding of what service delivery factors empower and disempower immigrant women who are victims of violence. Specifically, the objectives are designed to answer the following questions:

- What do immigrant women who have experienced violence and chosen to pursue criminal justice remedies or to use the health care or social service systems consider empowering or disempowering experiences?
- How do these empowering or disempowering experiences impact on their decisions to use or stop using these systems?
- In what ways do these systems have to change to better serve/encourage immigrant women?
- In what ways are these empowerment factors similar to, or different from, those identified by mainstream women?



JUSTICE INSTITUTE
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

If you are working with a woman who has experienced violence in the past three years and has sought help, or are a service provider who works with immigrant and refugee women who have experienced violence, and you would like to participate in the study, please contact Caroline White at carolinw@interchange.ubc.ca

These questions will be answered by conducting research in a minimum of seven B.C. communities to explore what system-based and community-based service provider practices empower or disempower immigrant women who are victims of violence; and how these practices could be made more empowering. The research will look at immigrant women's experience with a range of systems, including the justice, health care, and social service systems from the perspectives of the women themselves and the service providers.

To increase the ability of this study to obtain the views of women who experience significant barriers, we have hired research assistants to conduct interviews in Punjabi, Hindi, Cantonese, Mandarin and Spanish as well as English.

We are very pleased to acknowledge our three funders: Canadian Heritage, Vancouver Foundation and Victim Services Division, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. Each of the partner agencies is also contributing up to \$5000 in kind funds.

From the Executive Director's Desk (cont'd from p. 3)

write proposals. It is getting harder and harder to get a proposal accepted as the number of agencies and organizations sending applications in keep increasing and there is a much larger group to choose from. It is a sign of the times, but the reality of it is difficult for social agencies.

Provincial government grants: On November 17th, Bill Summersgill, our Vice-President, went over to Victoria to speak to the Liberal Seniors Caucus Committee. His report on this meeting is in the newsletter. We are waiting to hear if we will

receive any funds from the provincial government. We used to receive \$30,000 each year from the Ministry for Seniors until 2001, when the Ministry was closed down.

Wishing BC CEAS well: It is with love and gratitude that I will leave BC CEAS next month. It has been nine years of hard work, but always worthwhile.

To Everyone, I say 'goodbye'.

Carol Ward-Hall,
Executive Director, BC CEAS



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REQUIRED

- The position requires at least 5 years experience in a similar non-profit position.
- A good understanding of violence and abuse prevention issues is required, with a thorough knowledge of non-profit administration, fundraising and community development skills.
- Knowledge of provincial and federal funding mechanisms and programs is also required.
- The current position is 3 days a week.
- A detailed job description is available on request.
- The names of 3 references will be required.

Please send a resume by February 28, 2005 to:

**B.C. CEAS
304 – 5050 Kingsway,
Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4C2,
or e-mail: ceas@telus.net.**

Order Form

“LEGAL ISSUES FOR SENIORS – A TRAINING MANUAL” An Education Manual for Everyone Who Works With Seniors

By **Patricia A. McDonald, LLB** and **Kathy Doerksen**

Published by: **The B.C. Coalition to Eliminate Abuse of Seniors**

With funding provided by the **Law Foundation of B.C.** and the **Notary Foundation of B.C.**

Everyone who works with seniors needs this manual, including:

- Caregivers, homemakers, volunteers, senior peer counsellors, senior citizen counsellors, seniors, and trainers (facilitators)
- Public and private agencies who provide services to seniors
- Victim Services, police, lawyers, and notaries
- Seniors’ clubs and societies
- Seniors who help other seniors

Price: \$75.00 (includes GST and PST) Shipping and handling charges \$25.00

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A RALLYING CRY FOR PENSION REFORM IN CANADA

Written by **Jan Westlund** of WE*ACT, *Women Elders in Action*

It's no secret that many older women who live alone live in poverty. In reality, some survive on about 2/3 of what is considered to be the pre-tax low income cut off (LICO is a flexible figure that floats dependent on the size of community and family configuration in which one lives).

However, the big questions remain: how and why does this sorry state occur?

Systemic Poverty and Women

Traditionally, women have accepted that their poverty results from life choices made as individuals. But according to Alice West, co-Chair of Women Elders in Action (WE*ACT), societal and cultural expectations that women provide caregiving for everyone else has been at the heart of the problem. That and systemic adverse effects discrimination, formally understood to be "a supposedly neutral policy or practice that may be fair for many groups in society but has a negative effect on one particular group." Close examination of Canada's current public pension system offers several examples of this type of unexamined discrimination woven into programs.



Jan Westlund

Need for Pension Reform

As West, Joanne Blake, Elsie Dean, Gerry Kilgannon and myself, WE*ACT's working committee on pension reform explored further, we uncovered some key reasons that elderly women (those widowed, divorced or separated especially) slide into poverty – even if they entered their retirement years with expectations of greater solvency.

For a widow, part of the problem is the percentage of her husband's workplace or Canada Pension Plan (CPP) income she's entitled to continue receiving at his death. The Joint and Last Survivor rate is set at 60% in all provinces except Manitoba, where it is 66 2/3 %. This is much better than it used to be, as it was previously only 50%.

However, there has been considerable speculation that the actual amount needed to ensure that a widow maintains a similar standard of living as when her spouse was alive, is actually closer to 70%. This shortfall cascades over time, exacerbated by the fact that many workplace pensions are not indexed to cover inflation, forcing widows into poverty and making it virtually impossible for them to ever rise out again.

Lack of Workplace Pensions for Women

Sixty percent of working women don't have access to their own occupational pension plans. Their modest Canada Pension Plans, based on their work history, is all they have to augment the very basic Old Age Pension. For a separated or divorced woman, part of the problem is that she may have not known enough to apply for credit splitting of her spouse's Canada Pension Plan, where it was more lucrative than her own. In most instances, a husband's CPP is considerably larger than his ex-wife's, as women earn much less on average than men. Women also work in more part time jobs

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A Rallying Cry for Pension Reform in Canada (cont'd from p. 6)

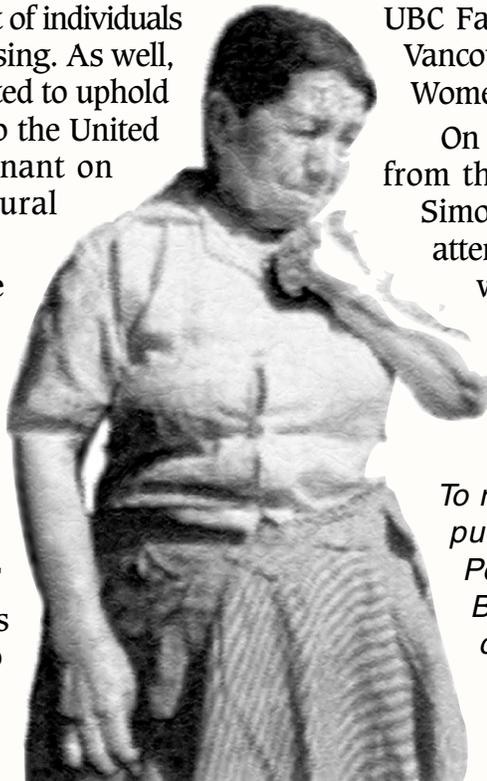


and have fewer pensionable years over-all to free up time for their unremunerated child bearing/rearing and caregiving contributions.

The “Decade Clause” for Immigrants

For an immigrant woman, severe poverty stems from the fact that she qualifies for a portion of OAP and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) only after being here for ten years. Each additional decade she lives as a permanent resident, she receives 25% of the OAP. This is in direct contravention of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that includes a right of individuals to adequate income and housing. As well, Canada has formally committed to uphold social rights by signing on to the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976).

The problem women face with inadequate retirement income is not simply historic. Given today's economic and political climate, there is no guarantee that this generation of adult women working inside or outside the home will be much better off than their mothers. As citizens are expected more and more to care for themselves, women are at a distinct disadvantage; as recent research shows that



they continue to shortchange their own financial situations by taking responsibility for young children, for people with disabilities and for the growing numbers of elderly unable to qualify for diminishing government programs.

Recommendations for Pension Reform

After careful consideration, WE*ACT's working group came up with twenty-three recommendations to improve the lot of women in their senior years. Of course, the vast majority of these improvements will make men more comfortable in their old age, too.

These recommendations include a request for an increase in OAP and GIS to meet pre-tax LICO; the elimination of taxes for those below the poverty line; full OAP to all permanent residents of Canada who are 65 years or older; and a conversion of Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) and Registered Pension Plan (RPP) deductions to credits under federal tax law.

The last is arguably the most controversial of all the WE*ACT's recommendations and is also one of the most important. Anyone interested in hearing a full justification for this recommendation is invited to hear Professor Claire Young, Associate Dean, UBC Faculty of Law speak at 7 pm at the Vancouver Public Library for International Women's Day,

On Tuesday, March 8, Charmaine Spencer from the Gerontology Research Centre of Simon Fraser University will also be in attendance to provide statistics on senior women's current financial status. At the same time, Women Elders in Action will detail their recommendations for pension reform. Admission is free.

*To request a copy of WE*ACT's recently published paper on pension reform: Pensions in Canada: Policy Reform Because Women Matter, call Jan Westlund at: (604) 684-8171 (local 228) or contact her at: jwestlund@411seniors.bc.ca*

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY: PROGRAM UPDATE

by Nasser Amiri

Dr. Nasser Amiri continues to serve as the legal information counsellor for BC CEAS regarding the Legal Information and Advocacy Program.—Ed

BC CEAS receives calls from people with many needs, chief among them issues of financial abuse and housing.

We continue to see clients in our Senior Legal Clinics at Edmonds Community Centre in Burnaby, and at Renfrew Park Community Centre in Vancouver. These clinics make it much easier for seniors to reach us in person as we take our services closer to their homes.

We also continue with Public Legal Education. We ran several workshops and made presentations on seniors' rights, on seniors and violence, on criminal behavior towards seniors with disabilities, on power of attorney, representation agreements, wills, and on public awareness of seniors abuse and ways to prevent it. Amongst these presentations were ones made at the People's Law School, at the Provincial Settlement Workers' Training Conference through the Legal Services Society, and to the staff

of Vancouver and Lower Mainland's Multicultural Family Support Services Society.

We attended planning and advisory committee meetings and forums at the Legal Services Society, the 411 Seniors Centre, the New Westminster Public Library, the conference of the B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association, and at Community Mobilization.

We attended professional development and training conferences provided by the Law Foundation and Legal Services Society to enhance our knowledge and skills in providing legal information.

We have adapted to the new reporting techniques/requirements of our funder, the Law Foundation.

In addition to legal information and suggestions, we represented several clients experiencing legal problems.

In one case, we fought bureaucratic red tape with a major corporation for the benefit of our client, who had tried many times to get her money back. She had telephoned but got the telephone tree (press 1, press 5, press 9 etc). When she did connect with a human being, she was told a different story each time. One person told her that she was not entitled to a refund. We intervened on her behalf and she obtained the full refund that she had been requesting.



Dr. Nasser Amiri



Multicultural (MAC) Committee of BC CEAS

THE  **LAW**
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SUCCESSFUL EVENT DRAWS SENIORS FROM ACROSS BC

Written by **Leila Jensen**

Seniors Summit II is now history. What a great conference it was! 340 delegates from across B.C. met over the weekend of November 6 and 7, 2004, to share knowledge and strategies for “Building the World We Want”.

A total of 29 workshops and presentations engaged participants in discussion and activities around a wide range of topics including money management, seniors and fraud, the continuum of care, transportation issues, mental fitness, seniors and stereotyping – the list goes on! As one delegate summed it up: “So many interesting things to choose from, and not enough time”.

The keynote speech delivered by John Kennedy was a highlight of the conference. John reminded us of the important role that seniors play in our society, and that what they say and do does make a difference to all our lives.

The trade fair featured exhibits by companies and organizations providing products and services for older adults, and was very well attended during breaks between workshop sessions.

Breaks of course meant food. The banquet kitchen staff at the Vancouver Metrotown Hilton outdid themselves in providing tempting meals and snacks throughout the Summit. The Gala Dinner on Saturday evening featured good food, interesting and varied company, and noteworthy entertainment.

Is Anyone Listening?

“Is anybody listening to us?” was a question heard many times during the Summit. MPs **Peter Siksay** (Burnaby North) and **Peter Julian** (Burnaby – New Westminster) joined **Ida Chong**, provincial

Minister for Women’s and Seniors’ Services, in opening the Summit. **Tony Ianno**, federal Minister for Families and Caregivers, stopped by on Sunday afternoon to address the final plenary and answer questions. The recommendations arising from the Summit will be made available to these and other government representatives.

Recommendations for Future Action

The recommendations for future action, one of the most important products of the Summit, were discussed at an initial follow-up meeting on November 25. A copy of the recommendations was sent out to all delegates. Future work will include production and distribution of a final report on the Summit, and ongoing follow-up work to prioritize and carry the recommendations forward.

The other important products we carry with us: the friendships renewed or begun, the knowledge gained, the memories of laughing with presenter **Allan O’Meara**; and most

importantly, the energy, enthusiasm and connections for “Building the World We Want”.



VISIT US ONLINE

Our email address is:
ceas@telus.net

Our website is:
www.bcceas.ca

SURJIT LALLI'S PRESENTATION TO THE SENIORS SUMMIT

Presented by **Surjit Lalli** on November 6, 2004

Good evening, Bon Soar, Sat Sri Akal, Namaste Mun-On, and Adab – urz.

My sincerest thanks go to BC CEAS's Organizing Committee for providing me with the opportunity to speak to Seniors Summit II. I feel honored to address this distinguished audience.

First, let me tell you that I am a simple person. And English is my third language. Please forgive me if I make mistakes.

How to build a better world? It is a question we have all asked ourselves. What I want to share with you today are a few things that I have learned from my own life's experiences: from raising my family, from working outside of the home, and from my volunteer work.

Who Wins the Fight?

I will start with a story of a wise man. Let us call him Babaji. Babaji was teaching his grandchildren about life.

He told them:

"A fight is going on inside me. It is a terrible fight. It is between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, envy, greed, pride, resentment and ego. The other wolf represents love, joy, hope, kindness, friendship and compassion. Children, this same fight is going on inside each of you."

One child, after thinking for a minute, asked, "Babaji, who wins the fight?"

Babaji replied: "The one you feed the most."

Each of us makes a choice about which wolf to feed. When we feed the positive side, we express empathy, tolerance and compassion for our fellow beings. With these attitudes, we make a difference in our world.

Canadian Freedoms

We are fortunate that we live in one of the best countries in the world. Canada is a secular, democratic society.

Here, we can expect justice, freedom of expression, and freedom of worship. It is a place where everyone wants to come and live. Canada's multiculturalism was



Surjit Lalli

guided by leaders like Mr. Trudeau, a leader who had a positive vision of different cultures living in harmony.

Religious Fanaticism

The strife in the world is partly due to some people's religious fanaticism. When people are fanatic, they are feeding their negative side. No religion says be violent. Every religion says make peace with your neighbor.

To achieve peace we must understand that:

- What I want for myself, I must also want for you.
- What I want from you, I must also be willing to give to you.

Let us start from within, and from our family – establish an atmosphere of love, trust, and mutual respect. Remember that our children are our mirrors. Our children treat others in the way they are treated. Children will flourish when there is laughter and joy around them. Play with them. Share jokes. Tell them stories. Our positive attitude will guide them to become socially responsible and compassionate.

Next, strengthen the relationships with our neighbors by learning about their cultures and sharing our own culture's ways. We may all have different festivals, different traditions, different ways of dressing, different ways of showing friendship, and different ways of showing respect.

But we all have these in common: our need for love, our need for compassion, our need for respect, our need for freedom, our need for opportunity, and our need for prosperity.

My dear friends, we seniors also have a role to play beyond our families and our neighborhoods. With our collective wisdom, we can also influence governments to go in positive directions.

My grandfather once told me, that it is written in scriptures: "A person is what his deepest desire is".

My friends, let us desire the positive. Let us feed the positive in ourselves and nurture the good in others. Let us appreciate our diversity and share our prosperity.

PRESENTATION TO THE CAUCUS COMMITTEE ON SENIORS

by **Bill Summersgill**

At their invitation, Bill met with the Liberal Seniors Caucus Committee on November 17th, 2004 at the Legislative Buildings in Victoria. He was allotted an hour in which to provide an overview of BC CEAS and make recommendations for seniors initiatives that, in his view, deserved possible future governmental funding. Attending were M.L.A.s **Gordon Hogg, Val Anderson, Randy Hawes, John Nuraney and Blair Suffredine**, along with two of the Caucus staff members. Bill had also earlier made a written submission to the Government's Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, which echoed the request made to the Caucus Committee for future core funding for BC CEAS. There will be a report issued by both Committees early in 2005. The gist of Bill's presentation to the Caucus Committee, which was received with apparent interest and which generated a number of questions, follows:



Bill Summersgill

Part One

BC CEAS is a senior focused group that believes every senior has the right to information, services and support to make informed decisions. The mandate of BC CEAS is to ensure that all seniors have a voice on issues affecting their welfare by:

- promoting and encouraging the development of local services and advocacy to support and assist seniors who have been abused;
- promoting the development and dissemination of materials and programs to educate the public about abuse of seniors;
- assisting in the creation of a network for sharing information, identifying issues and coordinating activities on behalf of seniors;
- promoting research about abuse of seniors; and

- promoting the rights and interests of seniors who are being abused by advocating on their behalf with government and other organizations.

Part Two

Request for Funding of BC CEAS

That the type of service BC CEAS provides is necessary and beneficial to the seniors of the Province goes without saying. And that BC CEAS does indeed complement and act as liaison for government services in B.C. communities is also readily evident. BC CEAS endeavors to take a proactive approach to seniors abuse issues and generally stays away from the 'politics' of seniors' issues.

However, there is a major problem that became obvious to me when I was named to the Board and became the organization's Vice-President three years ago, after my retirement from 22 years employment with the B.C. Government. That is the need for, and lack of, sustainable governmental core funding for the organization. Until about four years ago, the B.C. Government provided yearly funds to BC CEAS through the Office of Seniors; the bulk of which, I understand went to core funding of the organization (it amounted to about \$30,000 per year). Unfortunately, this government funding no longer exists, so all of this means that an inordinate amount of the organization's energy and focus has necessarily been shifted from day-to-day operations to the more difficult and unsure process of writing up proposals for grants and coming up with other viable fundraising mechanisms. This constant struggle to keep the organization alive, vibrant and relevant has taken a deleterious toll on both the organization itself and the people working for it.

Since BC CEAS, together with its developing partnerships with other community support

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Presentation to the Caucus Committee to Seniors (cont'd from p. 11)

organizations, provides an extremely beneficial service to the Government and to the elder people of the Province, it would seem both logical and fair that governmental funding of at least enough funds to cover the core services of the organization should be approved in the coming years.

Seniors' Counsellor Program

The Seniors' Counsellor Program was introduced by the then Minister of Social Services, Grace McCarthy, in the late 1970s. It consisted of about 150 trained seniors, spread throughout the province, who provided one-on-one counseling and referral service to seniors who were experiencing problems with some type of governmental program. These counsellors were accountable, were appointed by government, were covered with liability insurance and were managed by a small staff in Victoria. I was told that the total budget for the program was about \$225,000 a year. The responsibility for the program eventually changed to the Ministry of Health, where it continued until it was cancelled in 2000 or 2001. The Seniors Counsellors received limited expenses to cover travel (up to \$150 per month); all received regular training and they got together for a training conference a least once yearly. My understanding is that the program was a great benefit to the seniors in the province and it was designed so that each community had a counsellor who could act on behalf of local seniors who were experiencing problems with government services.

I am aware that the recently introduced Community Response Network program is in some way attempting to provide services to all adults in the communities around the province; but, so far as the CRN program is concerned, it is still in its initial formulation – in other words – work is still underway. Seniors Counsellors could perhaps fit into this structure if a decision were to be made by government to reintroduce this program.

BC CEAS would be a logical training mechanism for this program as it was in the past.

Seniors Advocate or Ombudsman

Is it not time to consider establishing a seniors advocate or Ombudsman?

The large number of senior citizens in the Province, will only increase; as the largest single group of the population, the 'baby-boomers', start to hit 65 and retirement in the not too distant future. Because of the added numbers from the 'boomers', seniors can be expected to utilize more of the health care and institutional services of government than ever before. Is it not then in the government's best interest to establish a separate Office for Seniors similar to the Children's Advocate or the Ombudsman's Office to address the specific concerns of the seniors population of the Province?



The Honourable Gordon Hogg

The present Ombudsman office has experienced a reduction in staffing in the past few years and therefore cannot be expected to pick up the extra complaint load that will be generated strictly by the growing seniors population, nor do they have the requisite knowledge and experience in seniors' issues to effectively do so.

From a political point of view, it is generally conceded that the 'baby-boomer' generation is the first generation who have been used to receiving all and sundry government services during their life times and who are also is the generation that has most effectively used 'protest' to make their views heard and to make governments sit up and take notice of their concerns.

So both from a practical and a political point of view, is it not in everyone's best interests to have a separate Seniors Advocate or Ombudsman to address the specific concerns of the senior population of the Province? Here again, BC CEAS would be a logical resource for training and providing assistance in the operation of such an office.

MEMBER NEWS: THE “WOMEN OF COURAGE” GROUP

by **Dianne de Champlain**, Outreach Worker, Victoria Women’s Transition House, and Victoria CRN Co-ordinator

Since 1999, Victoria Women’s Transition House has offered a weekly support and education group for women age 50+, who have experienced abuse by a partner, or by their children. Twelve to fifteen women attend the ten-week sessions. The women learn from one another, and find friendship and support. They find it helpful to meet with others who are in the same stage of life and who share similar issues. Some women are living in the abusive situation, while others have left and are working through some of the issues.

Publicizing the Group

We continue to have new women join us. The group is publicized in various ways: posters, word of mouth, public displays, mailouts to professionals; announcements at professional meetings and CRNs; and the facilitators attend seniors’ activities and open houses.

We have found that addressing the abuse can be a long process, with many setbacks, and we encourage women to stay in the group as long as they feel they need to. Most women stay in the group for 1 to 3 years. Some revisit the group when they are struggling with new issues and need support. Those who have been in longer often have developed significant insights and can add depth to a discussion. Continuing members often are role models for new members. They may be more comfortable articulating their experiences, or they may have developed insights into their situation, or the actions they have taken may serve as inspiration to newer members.

The Burden of Guilt and Worry

Themes often emerge. Many women have found the legal process to be a lengthy and slow process, and financially and emotionally draining. This year several in the group have struggled with adult children – abusive sons and daughters being unsupportive of their mother leaving; adult children who have mental health concerns. Having a safe and supportive group to share experiences and concerns can alleviate a heavy burden of guilt, anger, and worry.



Stress Management and Health

Each session includes time for sharing and support. This year we began the session by sharing something the woman feels grateful for. After many years of living with the stress of abuse, women often develop health issues. At each session we practice stress management – guided meditation, listening to a piece of music, acupressure, breathing exercises – and encourage the women to build 5 minute intervals of relaxation into their day.

Education Sessions

The women are avid learners and education sessions are developed from the needs the women express. Recent topics included decision-making, aging, stress management, setting boundaries, grieving loss, learning to say no, self-care, assertiveness, dealing with grown children, and living with financial limitations.

The women often express how important the support and education has been:

“I don’t know where I’d be without this group – it’s been a godsend.”

“This group has been so helpful and has made such a difference in my life. I can share what I learned with my daughters and friends.”

A Social Group

This year, we have added a new group – a social group, which meets weekly. The intent is to offer a place for women to share in joyful activity and play. We have had many laughs carving pumpkins, playing games, singing, watching movies, having acupressure, foot care, drawing, making collages, modeling with clay, writing journals, going for tea, touring gardens. It is a time to replenish energy and remember what it feels like to just have fun! One woman spent her first Christmas on her own, and broke the tradition of spending hours decorating a tree perfectly – instead, she pinned the Christmas tree she had painted in the social group on the wall and found it a delightful change!

The women have named the group very appropriately: “Women of Courage.”

EXTENSIVE FUNDING CUT LEADS TO *REDUCED* AND RESTRUCTURED BC INSTITUTE AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE

Media Release

“Despite a recent announcement of new B.C. Government funding to address the social and health consequences of family violence, the BC Institute Against Family Violence will undergo significant restructuring beginning June 1, 2005,” says Frances Grunberg, Chair of the BCIFV Board of Directors.

“In the wake of recent news of an anticipated 50% cut to our grant from our major funder, the Provincial Health Services Authority, the Board has adopted, in principle, a reduced operating budget and plan for services,” says Grunberg.

The Institute’s current full-time staff of four will be laid off effective May 31, 2005 and replaced with two new part-time staff. As a result, the research and knowledge transfer services, particularly in relation to risk assessment and safety planning that have formed the core of the Institute’s mandate since it was founded in 1989, will be drastically cut back.

“The restructuring will mean reduced capacity to: respond to information requests, manage research projects for other organizations, collaborate with community partners on new education and research proposals, publish our tri-annual newsletter *Aware*, update the website, and serve on community advisory committees,” says Grunberg.

On January 26, 2005 the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services announced a \$12.5 million increase in funding for services for women who experience violence in their relationships and the Ministry of Health Services announced a \$10

million increase in funding to improve risk assessment and safety in B.C. health care services.

“The Institute’s new focus will be on collaborating with the Provincial and Regional Health Authorities to address their priorities regarding their family violence strategies,” says Grunberg.

“Given the Institute’s outstanding track record-for which we have to thank the many talented, committed, and hard-working board and staff members who have come before us, we will focus energy during this hiatus to generate new sources of funds that will allow the Institute to continue this essential work for the community,” says Grunberg.

A summary of the Institute’s lengthy list of accomplishments in researching the causes and consequences of family violence during its first 15 years of existence can be found

*in the Spring 2004 issue of **Aware**, at:*

www.bcifv.org/resources/newsletter/2004/index.shtml

<http://www.bcifv.org/resources/newsletter/2004/index.shtml>

For more information or comment, please call:

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BUILDING BRIDGES FOR THE PREVENTION OF OLDER WOMAN ABUSE

A FORUM FOR DIALOGUE • FEBRUARY 17 -18, 2005

by **Jill Hightower**

Background

BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses published a report on abuse and violence in the lives of older women in British Columbia and the Yukon in 2001. Based on the recommendations of this report, and with funding from National Crime Prevention and others, two projects were initiated. The first project involves testing a model of emergency housing for older abused women, which is in its third and final year. The second project involves the development of educational materials, including a video and training curriculum, for transition house workers and other front line service providers on working with older abused women.

As the pilot testing of the model of emergency shelter progressed, it became increasingly clear that there was a need to improve public and professional understanding of older woman abuse at community, regional and national levels, and to encourage age and gender sensitive service delivery.

As a follow up to the research and program development, the Gerontology Research Center at Simon Fraser University is partnering

with the BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses in hosting a forum and dialogue on issues of violence and abuse in the lives of older women. The event is being held **February 17 and 18, 2005 at the Wosk Center for Dialogue**. The forum will promote improving coordination, cooperation, and collaboration, between health, justice and social agencies, in addressing issues of violence and abuse in the lives of older women.

Keynote speakers include: Dr. Gloria Gutman, Director of the Gerontology Research Center, Vancouver; and Dr. Therese Zink, from the Olmsted Medical Center, Ohio. Other presenters come from Australia, Ontario and British Columbia. The forum proceedings will be available late summer.

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SAFE HOMES FOR OLDER WOMEN

A THREE YEAR PILOT PROJECT

by Jill Hightower and Greta Smith

"Knowing there's a safe place you can meet with older abused women and share what's been going on in your life and receiving and getting positive support from those women has helped me realize I'm not going crazy".

Brandl, Herbert, Rozwadowski, Spangler, 2003, (p.1495)

Research undertaken by the BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses, published in 2001, identified the unique service needs of older women victims of violence and abuse within their families. The report found that older women are less likely to report violence and abuse to the authorities, less likely to share their experience with friends and relatives and less likely to seek help from the appropriate agencies. Many of the respondents reported lifelong violence and abuse. Some respondents commented they thought that transition houses were only for younger women and children. Research findings on the plight of older women were underscored by Statistics Canada data, which confirms that older women are more likely than older men to be victims of violence and abuse within a family setting with more than one third of assaults perpetrated by a spouse and about one third by an adult child.

Safe Home Sites

Sites for testing this model of emergency safety refuge and support that meet the specific needs of older women are located in Penticton, Creston, Victoria and Whitehorse. Emergency shelter is provided in private homes with specialized support services provided through an existing transition house in the community. A critical element for the success of this project has been building a

relationship between the transition house and the safe home to provide a relevant continuum of safety, support and refuge services for older women. The specially trained outreach worker, as a transition house staff member, and the primary service provider make this relationship operational.

Training Outreach Workers

Outreach workers received additional training on issues of aging, health and the barriers faced by older women in abusive relationships. Their role, in addition to supporting older women, involves providing information and education to the community on the issues of older women abuse. The experience of the outreach workers in recruiting, interviewing, and screening potential volunteer home owners, and in interacting with health and social service agencies, has resulted in the development of some solid core principles to guide their work with older women. The outreach workers have learned that to develop a trusting relationship

with an older woman, they need to spend a considerable amount of time in one-to-one interaction. Only when this has happened is it possible for the woman to carefully examine options related to her abusive situation.

Isolation and Health Barriers

Internalized generational values, decades of ingrained abuse, geographic isolation, health issues and other barriers compound to make the question of disclosure about their abuse, one of fear and mistrust. Seeking help and refuge is a very bold step for older women. While some women have been in abusive situations for a long time, for others it is a new phenomenon. However, all these women are used to hiding their pain from other people.



Jill Hightower

Safe Homes for Older Women (cont'd from p. 16)

In the third year of the program, these outreach workers are overwhelmed by the demand for their services. As the program became known and word-of-mouth endorsements spread, meeting demands for direct services has become much more than a one-woman job in these communities.

Additional Services

The immediate goal of the pilot project was to address the primary need for safety, shelter and support of older women coping with abuse and violence within their families. This task is being addressed through piloting an innovative model of safe homes emergency shelter coordinated through local transition houses. Additional services that have developed within the project include counselling, support and advocacy. Support groups for older women have been developed at all the sites. Victoria already had a well-established active program before the start of this project. As we move toward the end of the third year, the original concept of safe homes continues to move forward with some additional community-based elements.

Safe homes have been recruited and are being utilized by older women at all locations. What we have learned is that for some older women, staying in a safe home is preferable to the communal living environment of a transition house. However, for others, the transition house is a more comfortable and suitable environment.

The Slow Building of Trust

As the project progressed, outreach workers have learned that an older woman may require a significant amount of time to talk about her situation. Trust building becomes an extremely important factor. While it was understood that older women require more time to make decisions, it was only through the actual experience that the outreach workers and the project coordinators now have a clear understanding of the time and personal

commitment that is involved. Well into the project, we were able to raise additional funds to support increased outreach worker hours.

The enthusiasm, commitment and knowledge of each of the outreach workers has contributed immeasurably to the success of the project. Each worker brings a sense of creativity about how to do the work that is a valuable addition to the core project plan. In the same respect, without the solid support of the transition houses involved, this project would not have progressed so well. The in kind donations of each of the site hosts has been immeasurable.

Sustaining the Momentum

Toward the end of the third and final year of the project, we are actively working on sustainability. We are writing a document on "How to Establish a Safe Home Network for Older Women". Based on our experience and the experiences of the outreach workers, it will set out in detail the process of developing safe homes and outreach services for older women. We will include

the difficulties and successes we encountered in this project, and attempt to give others the benefit of our hindsight. Evaluation of the project is ongoing and a final evaluation report will be available at the end of the project.

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Greta Smith

Internet Fraud (cont'd from p. 20)

increases, they dump their holdings, making a profit and driving the price of the stock down, causing a loss to the consumer.

- **“Cyber-smear”** - Con artists use the Internet to spread negative rumours about a company to drive the price of a stock down. They then purchase shares.
- **Misrepresentation** - Goods advertised on the Internet may not be what they seem. Consumers have complained about items purchased but never delivered and misrepresentation of items purchased.
- **Traditional Schemes** - Work-at-home offers, pyramid schemes and travel scams adapt well to the Internet. Pop-up ads are frequently used to tell consumers they have won a prize.

“Red Flag” Phrases on the Internet:

- This new Internet company has already earned investors a 25% return in just under one day!
- Have you heard about the possible merger between Company A and Company B? I'd invest now because the stock will soar!
- Company C has been using underage workers to produce its product. Avoid this company!
- Earn thousands weekly in your home!
- Click here to claim your free prize!
- I am asking for your help to get my family's money out of Nigeria.

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Did I initiate contact with this company or did I respond to an e-mail or pop-up ad?
- Is there any documentation to back up the claims being made?

- Have I thoroughly researched the company and know where its headquarters are?
- Do I believe everything I read on a web page or bulletin board?
- Am I being asked to provide personal information (e.g., banking information)? If so, did I initiate contact? Is the site secure?

Prevention Tips:

- Do business with companies you know and trust.
 - Know where the businesses are physically located.

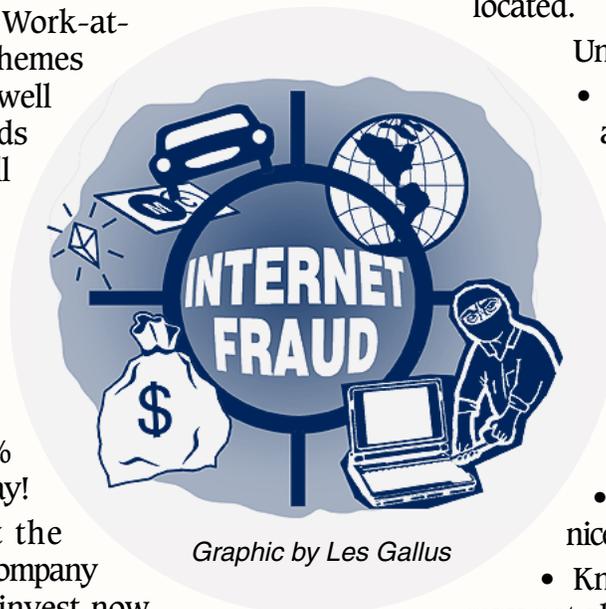
Understand any offer being made.

- Ask for additional information and then check it out.
 - Check out the company's track record, especially with investments.
 - Be cautious when it comes to providing your financial or other personal information.
 - Take your time to decide.
 - Don't judge reliability by how nice or flashy a website may seem.
 - Know that people in cyberspace may not always be what they seem.

- Know that unsolicited e-mail violates computer etiquette and is often used by con artists.

If you receive unsolicited e-mail that asks you to respond if you want to be taken off the mailing list, do not respond. This verifies to the sender that your address is active and you will continue to receive e-mail from this company.

- Don't download programs to see pictures, hear music or get other features from unfamiliar websites.
- Avoid responding to pop-up ads or unsolicited e-mails, no matter how tempting the offer.



Graphic by Les Gallus

CONSUMER FRAUD: RECOGNIZE IT – REPORT IT– STOP IT

Submitted by Mary Martin Sharma, Program / Volunteer Co-ordinator

By attending BC CEAS Consumer Fraud Prevention Programs (Scotiabank - 'ABCs of Fraud', BC CEAS 'Money Matters for Seniors' and B.C. Securities Commission 'Protect Your Money') seniors continue to learn how to be assertive and protect themselves from consumer frauds and scams.

In their presentations, the trained Senior Volunteer Speakers keep seniors up-to-date about these crimes, which are increasingly sophisticated and difficult to recognise.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Volunteer Speakers for their dedication and expertise in presenting these programs.



Mary Martin Sharma

I would also like to invite other interested seniors to train as volunteer speakers.

If you enjoy public speaking, are a team player, have a good sense of humour and free time, this is for you!

Fluency in a language as well as English is an asset but is not essential.

For more information about upcoming training please contact:

Mary Martin Sharma,

Program / Volunteer

Co-ordinator

BC CEAS, Tel: (604) 437-1940

GIFT BC CEAS ON YOUR BIRTHDAY

Several members send in donations to BC CEAS that total their number of years of life, realizing that as a non-profit organization, we are always in need of funding for our advocacy and operations.



BC CEAS is a charitable organization and your donations are tax deductible. So far, the birthday fund has raised \$1,295.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS TO THE BIRTHDAY FUND

Arlene Brown

Carol Ward-Hall

Rae Dixon

Henry Hightower

Jill Hightower

Mark Perry

THE SCOTIABANK FRAUD AWARENESS PROGRAM: INTERNET FRAUD

Submitted by Scotiabank

Why Con Artists Like the Internet

Con artists use websites and e-mail to approach potential victims. Criminals like the Internet for several reasons:

- **No borders exist** - Consumers can receive information about an offer from all over the world. The only requirement is that they have access to the Internet.
- **They're difficult to catch** - Internet companies often offer free access to consumers for a trial period. Con artists use these periods to set up a web page, get money from consumers and then shut down when the period expires.
- **It's quick and easy** - The Internet allows a con artist to send e-mails to thousands of people in less than an hour or to post a bulletin-board message, which may be read by tens of thousands of people.
- **It's less costly** - With the Internet and e-mail, a swindler doesn't have to have samples of materials, only pictures of the materials posted on the website. Confirmations and other written materials can be sent via e-mail, reducing telephone and mail costs.



- **It's difficult to prosecute** - A website or e-mail can originate in any country around the world. Because of the global nature of the Internet, a fraud artist in one country is less likely to be detected, caught and prosecuted. Jurisdictional differences also make it more difficult to prosecute Internet fraud artists.

- **It's easy to use** - Creating a website or making a website look legitimate is easy to do for those who know how. Chat rooms are an easy way for people to find potential victims as many chat room

visitors freely provide information about themselves. **Pop-up ads** on sites or **fake e-mail offers** can direct unsuspecting consumers to sites they do not want to visit.

Strategies Con Artists Use on the Internet

- **Outlandish Claims** - Used often in investment schemes. Ads have claimed to "double investors' money in 3 months."
- **"Pump and Dump"** - Con artists who don't identify themselves as stockholders use the Web, chat rooms and bulletin boards to spread positive rumours about a stock. When the stock price

Cont'd on page 18



BC CEAS wishes to thank Scotiabank for their continued funding of *A Shared Concern* in 2005.

Scotiabank Fraud Awareness Program: ABCs of Fraud

To book presentations to senior groups, call BC CEAS at (604) 437-1940
"Make seniors a tough target to fraud"