

*"Building the smallest democracies at the heart of society."*  
The United Nations: The International Year of the Family, 1994

Agreement# 40063171

## **INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE: Old Problem, New Approaches**



*by Linda Duffett-Leger, RESOLVE Alberta Steering Committee Member*

**A**s we near the end of Alberta's Family Violence Prevention Month and another year, this seems an appropriate time to reflect on what we know about the impact of interpersonal violence (IPV), and what research opportunities lay ahead. On October 16, one of a series of workshops on Reforming the Family Justice System was held in Alberta in recognition of the need for system-wide improvements in how the justice system approaches the needs of women and families affected by IPV. Evidence suggests that many women exposed to IPV seek help from the criminal justice system in Canada. What do we know about the experiences of IPV survivors within the justice system in Canada?

Our published paper, *Mothers Affected by Domestic Violence: Intersections and Opportunities with the Justice System*, reports the findings of a secondary analysis from two qualitative studies that explore interactions of mothers, exposed to intimate partner violence (IPV), within the justice system. Results suggested that while participants reported some positive interactions within the justice system—such as compassionate interactions with service providers who made them feel supported, validated and empowered—these interactions were not the norm and were often attributed to chance encounters. Overwhelmingly, however, women encountered negative experiences, such as cynical attitudes and ineffectual practices within convoluted bureaucratic criminal justice systems, which left them feeling re-victimized. Participants in both studies described the slow moving, largely disconnected and grossly under-resourced justice system, and the lack of accountability for abusers, leaving women economically responsible for the well-being of their

children.

Findings of these two studies clarify the need for greater efficiencies within the justice system and improved training for service providers in an effort to facilitate women's abilities to access appropriate services for themselves and their families. IPV survivors report a strong need for psychological support. However, court-based systems fall short in that mental health support is often limited and requires specially-trained counselors. Overall, women in these two studies recommended such improvements as an easily accessible network of resources, which would make it easier for them to navigate services, and a mechanism for them to connect with other women with shared experiences, which highlights the importance of social support. In this information era, the Internet plays an increasingly important role in help-seeking and social support. Online support may provide abused women with the anonymity they require to reach out for help, particularly in rural communities. Opportunities exist for researchers to consult with IPV survivors in the development of social network sites and web-based health-education communication technologies to better support their needs.

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## Drag the Red



© *Alison Newall*

*In Winnipeg,  
the stalwart women grieve,  
draw on long, strong roots,  
and cast their nets for a harvest of sorrow.  
Where are our sisters, daughters, mothers?  
Vanished into an indifferent landscape.*

*Once they sang, loved, hoped.  
Now, only silence, a festering absence.*

*Once these women wove a cradle  
for the people from their hair,  
once were the vibrant,  
sacred heart of their land.*

*Now, that gift unrecognized, erased,  
they lift urgent voices:*

*Drag the Red.  
Reclaim the disappeared  
Bring home the broken bodies of our sisters  
so we can make them whole again,  
with love*

## Manitoba Update



by Jane Ursel

**M**anitoba's RESOLVE Research Day, titled *Interpersonal Violence: Old Problems, New Approaches*, attracted 420 registrants, with half the registration from community agencies—their staff, volunteers and program participants. In addition to presentations from 30 researchers and service providers in nine concurrent sessions we had three keynote events. In the morning **Constable Kristy Miller** gave a compelling talk on her journey from domestic assault victim, to survivor, to police officer assisting women caught in the terrible cycle of violence. In the early afternoon **Ann Decter** spoke about the results of the YWCA's critical study of the challenges of sheltering women escaping domestic violence who also struggle with serious mental health and addictions issues.

A sombre note and a call for reflection was provided by the final keynote event, a panel on missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The panelists, **Nahanni Fontaine**, **Bernadette Smith** and **Diane Redsky**, spoke of the long dismissed history of colonialism and racism that has left all of us with a tragic legacy of extreme violence towards Aboriginal women and girls. Bernadette's moving story of her sister **Claudette Osborne**, missing since 2008, inspired the poem by **Alison Newall** featured on Page 2. One month later we were shocked and horrified by the ordeal of **Rinelle Harper**, beaten and assaulted and left for dead in the freezing Assiniboine River. Amazingly, Rinelle survived, and two men accused of her assault have been arrested. The stories of the 1,200 murdered and missing Aboriginal women and girls—along with Rinelle Harper's recent ordeal—demand a new approach to combat such vicious targeting of Aboriginal women and girls. While Canadians debate whether we need a National Roundtable or a National Inquiry, it is clear the assault on Aboriginal women and girls is deeply embedded in our history, our institutions and our psyche.... there is no single solution. Violence against Aboriginal women and girls is a complex social problem based on a deep historical racial divide that calls for responses and reforms at all levels of society. Over the last decade, Aboriginal women and the families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls have organized to guide us in making much needed changes. Voices of families who have lost a daughter/ sister/, mother and the panelists at our Research Day, instruct us that while it may be individuals who commit these atrocities, they are a product of our society and our entire community must be responsible for changing a system which gives rise to this racialized victim-perpetrator dynamic. As we approach December 6, our national memorial day for the victims of the École Polytechnique massacre, we must make the connection between the violence against women of all races, and the particular vulnerability of Aboriginal women and girls. For those of us who are not Aboriginal we must understand that it is our problem not just 'theirs,' so that we can work together to end this national horror. ❧

## Saskatchewan Update: Rural and Northern Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence



by Darlene Juschka

**S**askatchewan's research group determined two locations—one rural and one northern—for follow-up focus group interviews with service providers. Researcher **Wendee Kubik** with **Erin Knuttila**, her student assistant, facilitated the rural focus group, while **Darlene Juschka** with **Kaitlyn Giles**, also a student assistant, facilitated the northern focus group. The focus group method was used as it allows researchers and interviewees to conduct a more complex and nuanced conversation. Participants, rather than directly answering our questions, were positioned to develop a group narrative concerning Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), thereby providing a multi-layered narrative.

The first focus group was held in a rural location in August in a south-east area of Saskatchewan. The town, with a population of less than 2000, is located close to the Manitoba border, and has several First Nation reserves in the area. Conducted over the lunch hour, the group consisted of seven participants who represented a variety of local IPV services.

Participants noted that there are many barriers for women who live in the area, and that there is a great need for more resources. Rural shelters are often at their capacity, while there often is no second-stage housing available. These barriers have a negative impact on women who seek assistance.

Additionally, the cost of rent in the town and nearby area is very high. An issue with transportation (or lack thereof) was a dominant theme that was mentioned several times. Participants noted that violence was normalized, and that many times domestic violence (especially on the reserves) was kept quiet.

A second focus group was held in September in a small town in north-west Saskatchewan (population under 3,000). The town also serves a number of First Nation reserves in the area. Nine participants from a variety of IPV services attended. This northern focus group identified many of the same gaps as the rural group, such as isolation, transportation, normalization,



Kaitlyn Giles

and a lack of second-stage housing and shelters, all of which undercut effective responses to IPV. As one service provider commented, the nearest shelter is four hours away and often full:

*"I have never successfully gotten a women fleeing domestic violence into a safe shelter, because by the time there's a bed available, she's gone."*

Normalization of Intimate Partner Violence was also a subject of discussion. When IPV is a common occurrence it becomes normalized, and therefore unremarkable and unnecessary to remark on:

*"...a couple of weeks ago I was walking out of work...there was a guy beating up this girl and... people are driving back and forth and walking and no one did anything to help her."*

Linked to normalization is the shame that is attached to IPV. Shame silences and blinds leaving victims of violence to endure shame and isolation if they reach out for help:

*"...you have a girl that's 16/18 years old; she's by herself to testify at a sexual assault trial against an offender who's got his father, mother, sister, uncles, cousins."*

Needs mentioned in both locations included more education programs, especially in the schools; a branching out of services; programs for men; and a reduction in wait times for addiction programs. Safety and security and communications issues were prevalent. Service providers also noted that some women feared social services, as they could lose their children. As well, although there was general frustration with the lack of monetary and government support for services in remote areas of Saskatchewan, working together in the focus groups participants could share their frustration and discussed ways they could further communications among their respective organizations to more effectively reduce IPV in their respective communities. ☘

## Alberta Update



by *Nicole Letourneau*

**O**ur RESOLVE Alberta Steering Committee has experienced a lot of changes this month. First, we said goodbye to our longtime RESOLVE colleague, Dr. Leslie Tutty. After more than a decade as RESOLVE Academic Coordinator, followed by three years as a Steering Committee member, Dr. Tutty has finally elected to retire from RESOLVE. We wish her all the best in her retirement. We also lost the YWCAs Cynthia Wild and Christine Hall, as they have moved onto new positions. We are delighted to welcome their YWCA replacement, **Heather Morley**. We are also pleased to welcome our newest Steering Committee member, **Dr. Linda Duffett-Leger**, Assistant Professor of the University of Calgary, Faculty of Nursing. Several of our members plan to submit CARE Grants for work on topics that include assessment of the prevalence of and response to violence in the Jewish Faith community, and response of the justice system to families affected by violence. We were pleased to learn that the Alberta Steering Committee's priority interest in the Jewish Faith community has been adopted by the other provinces as a research priority. In addition to attendance at RESOLVE Research Day on October 5, several Alberta RESOLVE network members also attended the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative Symposium on Accelerating Innovation from October 5–10. Presentations focused on Albertan priorities that include interventions for children in care, and use of assessments of adults' experiences of early childhood adversities (e.g. violence in family of origin) to understand and anticipate intergenerational transmission of family violence and its effects. Many of these topics resonated with the interests of our Alberta Steering Committee and network members and intersect with our funded and anticipated projects.

Our Action Team on Triadic Attachment and Child Health (ATTACH) also received some welcome news, as we received funding from the University of Calgary, Eyes High Post-Doctoral Scholar Program, for a two-year position, valued at more than \$100,000. We are delighted to have successfully appointed **Dr. Martha Hart** to the position. She completed her PhD at Cambridge in 2012, and has worked with the Child Health Intervention and Longitudinal Development (CHILD) Studies Program at University of Calgary, with

a focus on assessment of parent–child relationship quality and attachment. The project also attained ethics approval and will begin recruitment of the first families to undergo the intervention in December. Conducted in close partnership with Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS), ATTACH staff will be housed at offices at CUPS and connect regularly with the CUPS staff to implement the intervention. The ATTACH intervention is designed for families affected by stressors considered toxic to children's development, such as family violence. This intervention is also designed to “add on” to existing parenting programs and address an important gap

RESOLVE Alberta also led a recent application to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Called the *Helping Early Adjustment and Relationships to Thrive* (HEART) project, it is focused on the test of a new program designed for infants and young children at

risk due for neglect or abuse. The project will be conducted in close partnership with the Infant Mental Health Promotion Program, a national advocacy organization. Collaborating Alberta agencies include Bent Arrow in Edmonton, an agency serving Aboriginal families and led by **Cheryl Whiskeyjack**, and

the Louise Dean Centre in Calgary, led by **Holly Charles**, serving pregnant and parenting adolescents. The HEART program was inspired by work of Alberta's Collaborative Mental Health Care Program and further developed by the Infant Mental Health Promotion Program and designed to address and prevent developmental and social–emotional trauma of young children. This program begins with training service providers to understand risks and resiliency factors in infant mental health. Service providers are then trained to use the standardized measures of development, with an emphasis on social-emotional adjustment. From this information, service providers are trained to create Developmental Support Plans, tailored to the identified needs of the individual child and designed to reduce or prevent trauma in early childhood, known to affect neurodevelopment.

In summary, Alberta's RESOLVE continues to make progress in engaging with the community around issues important to Albertans. ☘



*Interpersonal Violence... cont'd from Page 1*

Women are most vulnerable to IPV during pregnancy or the postpartum period, and preschool children are disproportionately over represented in families affected by IPV. Research well documents that exposure to IPV significantly increases children's risks of development of physical and psychological health issues, as well as behavioural problems. Each year in Canada it is estimated that approximately 125,000 new children are exposed to IPV, which results in an annual cost of approximately \$759 million. Although most of these costs are borne by affected families, IPV has a significant impact on overburdened health and social services, as well as the criminal justice system. While it seems clear that there is much to be gained in the prevention of IPV and childhood exposure, solutions may be far less obvious. A review of the literature indicates that interventions that support mothers' safety and sense of empowerment may have long-term benefits for young children and adolescents. Research is needed to explore the experiences of IPV-exposed children within the justice system in order to improve services and to develop interventions that promote children's healthy development. At minimum, we ought to work to avoid secondary trauma from stressful interactions within the justice system for children and their mothers.



Costs of interpersonal violence are significant for those who are affected, which includes the relationship partner and the children involved. Evidence, while limited, suggests a need for community-based research to further explore Interventions that target childhood exposure to IPV. There is an obvious shortage of research and evidence-based interventions focused on best practices that serve IPV-exposed children, and even less is known about interventions for IPV-exposed children from justice-involved families. ☞

*References available upon request.*

## Northern Manitoba Research Network Forum



*by Cheryl Fraehlich*

On November 15, the Northern Manitoba Research Network (NMRN) hosted a forum at the beautiful new University College of the North (UCN) campus in Thompson, Manitoba. This was an exciting event for our northern colleagues who have been working hard to create dialogue about how research can address a range of social issues in Northern Manitoba. The network grew out of two Community Cafés held in Thompson; during these meetings, many issues ,including poverty and homelessness among Aboriginal people, the sexual exploitation of northern youth, and the presence of youth gangs in the north, were identified as needing research attention. NMRN aims to solicit local knowledge through research at the community level, to bring together people from many different backgrounds who want to make positive change, and to help people and communities to conduct effective and ethical research. The network is a diverse group that includes representatives from social service agencies, Aboriginal organizations, local and provincial governments, universities and colleges,

businesses and others.

The forum was organized by **Marleny Bonnycastle** from the University of Manitoba and **Maureen Simpkins** from UCN who, along with other colleagues from these institutions, have been working to promote research in Northern Manitoba by developing collaborative research projects, providing research workshops, working with the UCN Ethics Board, and working with undergraduate and graduate students to strengthen local research capacity. The forum included morning workshops on the creation of an online repository of northern knowledge and research, the OCAP principles of ethical research, and photo voice. The afternoon consisted of an open space for researchers to share experiences and ideas on how different organizations and sectors can start partnering on research. ☞



*University College of the North campus in Thompson, Manitoba.*

## Announcements, Conferences and Events



**November 25 - December 12, 2014 - 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.** November 25—the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women—marks the first day of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, and December 10—International Human Rights Day—is the final day. This 16 days of activism is recognized internationally.

**December 6- National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada.** Established in 1991 by the Parliament of Canada, this day marks the anniversary of the murders in 1989 of 14 young women at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. They died because they were women. This day also represents an opportunity for Canadians to reflect on the phenomenon of violence against women in our society. This is also an opportunity to consider the women and girls for whom violence is a daily reality, and to remember those who have died as a result of gender-based violence.

**December 10 - Human Rights Day.** The United Nations General Assembly chose this day to bring to the attention 'of the peoples of the world' the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.' This day is celebrated by the international community.



**October 22 - 23, 2015 - Research Day 2015: Intimate Partner Violence: Engaging Beyond the Survivor**, in Regina, Saskatchewan. Sponsored by the Prairieaction Foundation, RESOLVE is a triprovincial research network seeking solutions to violence and abuse. Inspired by our healing wheel, conference topics may include physical, mental, spiritual, and/or emotional healing; abuse prevention programs; abuse in communities and families; community-based program implementation and evaluation; institutional healing (human rights conventions, civil/constitutional). For more information refer to [www2.uregina.ca/resolve](http://www2.uregina.ca/resolve), or contact Mary Hampton or Ann Bishop at 306-337-2511 or e-mail [RESOLVE@uregina.ca](mailto:RESOLVE@uregina.ca).

**Klinic's Evolve Program Launches Family Violence Prevention Video** - Klinic would like to announce the launch of their new video entitled *Lets Talk About Family Violence*. In recognition of Family Violence Prevention month, Klinic Community Health Centre's Evolve program has produced a twenty minute video intended to help Manitobans have conversations about intimate partner violence (IPV). Ending family violence means that every Manitoban needs to be able to talk openly with family, friends and coworkers about IPV. Let's Talk about Family Violence helps viewers have a better understanding of and recognize intimate partner violence; know how they can support someone who is experiencing IPV; and help someone affected by IPV connect to resources. What people know about intimate partner violence could change a life; it could even save a life. Klinic hopes that this video will help keep the conversation on family violence going in Manitoba and increase public awareness. You can view and download the video at <http://klinic.mb.ca/VideoLaunch.htm>.

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**Call for Letters of Intent: November 20, 2014 to January 10, 2015**

Prairieaction Foundation is calling for Letters of Intent (LOI) to conduct research that support solutions to violence and abuse. This focus of the Community, Action, Research & Education (CARE) grant program furthers Prairieaction Foundation's goal to support community-based research into solutions to violence and abuse. The Program funds qualifying charitable organizations for research projects that identify potential strategies, models and methods to ultimately eliminate the issues and impact of family violence and abuse.

At Prairieaction Foundation, we believe that results-oriented research can reduce or prevent violence and abuse in our communities by telling us how effective laws and policies, well-designed programs and well resourced community responses can make a difference in the lives of families and in our community.

If your organization or institution is interested in applying for a 2015 CARE Grant, the deadline to submit your Letter of Intent (LOI) is January 10, 2015. For more information, please visit our website **[www.prairieaction.ca](http://www.prairieaction.ca)**.



**RESOLVE Manitoba**

*~ Dr. Jane Urşel ~  
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