

Making Family Violence Law Information Available to People in Rural Areas

An Inventory of promising Practices

Prepared for the Department of Justice Canada



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The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research was established in 1992. The Centre conducts action-oriented research and public education relating to family violence and violence against women. The Centre is affiliated with the University of New Brunswick and actively builds and sustains partnerships among academics, policy makers, community workers, and community organizations. The Centre supports the work of many research teams, which are conducting collaborative studies into a wide range of family violence issues in the search for determinants and solutions. Ultimately, the goal of the Centre is to identify underlying root causes of family violence with a view to ending violence and supporting the victims and survivors of family violence. The Centre is a founding member of the Canadian Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence established in 1997.

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Executive Summary

In February 2002, the Department of Justice Canada contracted with the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, hereafter referred to as the Research Centre, to develop an inventory of strategies and methods used by public legal education and information (PLEI) organizations and others in sharing family violence law information with people living in rural areas. The inventory categorizes the various methods and makes recommendations regarding most promising practices. Ultimately this inventory is intended to serve as a blueprint for agencies that deliver family violence information in rural areas.

The inventory presents an overview of the kinds of products and services that PLEI organizations and others consider relevant for persons living with family violence. Public legal education and information organizations (PLEI groups), family violence prevention agencies and victim services groups in most provinces and territories have developed specific products on family violence. These include, for example, abuse handbooks for women, children and the elderly, information about victim services, and numerous publications about criminal and family law matters for women leaving violent relationships. Many of these organizations have web sites where service providers and individuals can peruse these publications on-line or order hard copies.

There is a clear recognition that the information required by persons living with or leaving a violent relationship must cover a broad range of issues. Law information is most often accompanied by general information on how to recognize signs of abuse, where to seek shelter and the services available. The inventory also outlines the formats these products take ranging from pamphlets to radio messages and Internet sites.

However, the primary focus of the inventory is on the strategies developed to ensure the various forms of relevant materials are accessible to rural women, seniors and others experiencing family violence. This information has not been readily shared. This is not due to any code of secrecy. Rather, it relates to the inherent difficulties in chronicling and sharing process information. This inventory attempts to address this gap by reviewing the actual methods and mechanisms for delivering or successfully disseminating information, in this case to people experiencing abuse in rural areas.

Objectives:

- ❑ To review the ways in which PLEI materials have been adapted to make them more relevant for rural families generally, and abused rural women in particular.
- ❑ To document distribution formats, methods and processes that have been used to promote access to law information in rural areas. This would include looking at the indicators of success used by PLEI agencies to determine that their materials are reaching the intended target audience in rural areas. Information on the success of the dissemination technique would be based on existing evaluations, usage statistics, qualitative statements, and so on.

- To propose actions relating to best methods and to offer suggestions for improving the relevancy and distribution of PLEI materials for victims of abuse in rural areas.

The inventory will be a valuable asset for sole purpose PLEI organizations as well as for the various intermediaries who attempt to support and help victims of family violence living in rural areas. Successful and innovative delivery mechanisms are documented with a view to encouraging duplication of these practices, where appropriate. Such an inventory will assist PLEI groups to create funding proposals to pilot related initiatives in their own jurisdictions in the future.

Participation by PLEI practitioners and others delivering family violence prevention services was excellent. Although returns from the mail-back questionnaire were moderate (30 out of 100), those who did respond shared a variety of innovative practices and strategies for reaching rural audiences across Canada. Participants unanimously agreed that there are significant barriers to law information access for people living in rural areas and that concerted efforts must be made to overcome some of the unique obstacles that impede access, particularly in the area of family violence. The primary barriers identified included physical isolation, lack of available transportation, poverty, low levels of literacy and numeracy, unfamiliarity with the legal system, the complexity and inefficiency of the social services system in rural areas, and social and cultural values often based in conventional religious beliefs which keep family problems in the private realm.

During the interviews, participants had the opportunity to discuss the details of the development of particular family violence products, services or projects. They were also asked to elaborate on the strategies used to reach rural audiences and to indicate how they gauged the success of their initiatives. Given the time constraints in preparing this inventory, we were not able to contact all PLEI groups and family violence prevention organizations in Canada. As a result, the inventory is by no means intended to be exhaustive.

Nevertheless, a wealth of promising and best practices emerged for sharing family violence law information in rural areas. These range from a special page in the telephone directory, to coordination of agency responses, to a poster project, a lipstick campaign, train the trainer and information sessions.

Those who participated in this inventory emphasized the importance of reaching out and networking with rural agencies, women's groups, service providers and local "movers and shakers". This is critical for the successful development and delivery of family violence materials and prevention programs in rural areas.

The following key learnings were found to underlie the various methods and strategies for getting family violence information to rural audiences, particularly those dealing with family violence. The list is not exhaustive, however, it offers valuable insights into what the participants and researchers have learned about dissemination of family violence law information and how best to touch the lives of people in rural areas.

- Establish rural partnerships
- Promote direct access to family violence information
- Promote sustainability of family violence initiatives
- Be sensitive to the rural context – social and cultural factors
- Know and address the barriers confronting rural people in your area
- Connect family violence information with related issues
- Consider the appropriateness of the vehicles used to share information
- Consider adapting the information for a rural audience
- Coordinate services as a “best practice” for disseminating information
- Develop indicators of success
- Share best practices whenever possible

Section 1 - Background and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

In February 2002, the Department of Justice Canada contracted with the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, hereafter referred to as the Research Centre, to develop an inventory of strategies and methods used by public legal education and information (PLEI) organizations and others in sharing family violence law information with people living in rural areas. The Research Centre is able to contribute to this initiative, not only by surveying and analyzing the responses of PLEI organizations across Canada, but by sharing findings from affiliated research teams working in the area of family violence in a rural context.

This inventory attempts to categorize the various delivery methods and makes recommendations regarding some of the most promising practices. Ultimately the inventory intends to serve as a blueprint for any agency that wishes to enhance its delivery of family violence information in rural areas.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the inventory include:

- **To present an overview of products and services that PLEI organizations and others consider relevant for persons living with family violence.**

Public legal education and information organizations (PLEI groups), family violence prevention agencies and victim services groups in most provinces and territories have developed specific products on family violence. These include, for example, abuse handbooks for women, children and the elderly, information about victim services, and numerous publications about criminal and family law matters for women leaving violent relationships. Many of these organizations have web sites where service providers and individuals can peruse these publications on-line or order hard copies.

Those who participated in this review emphasized that the information required by persons living with, or leaving, a violent relationship must be multifaceted and cover a broad range of concerns. People do not compartmentalize their lives. For this reason, PLEI organizations tend to offer law information accompanied by general information on how to recognize signs of abuse, where to seek shelter and the services available. Similarly, various intermediaries who are concerned with family violence in relation to health effects or crisis services, see the necessity of providing law information as well. In either case, the agencies recognize the challenge of making appropriate information accessible to women and other victims of violence living in rural areas.

- **To identify the formats and adaptations that have been developed to share family violence law information in rural areas.**

The relationship between substance (content of the product) and form (format of the message) is itself worthy of study. Often the form in which the content is presented becomes an important vehicle for addressing barriers that impede access for hard to reach target audiences. At other times, messages and information that are relevant to urban audiences must be revised if they are to speak to rural people. For example, a booklet used in an urban setting may need to be rewritten as a flyer that contains a rural focus with local contact numbers then introduced into appropriate rural networks. Although the primary focus of the inventory is on ‘how’ these various forms and contents are made accessible to rural women, seniors and others experiencing family violence, sometimes the success of delivery strategies is closely connected to attention paid to content and form.

- **To profile the lessons learned in implementing strategies and mechanisms to deliver and successfully disseminate information about family violence in rural areas.**

Although we tend to know about the family violence products available across jurisdictions, we have not tended to share information about successes in disseminating those products. This is not due to any adherence to secrecy, rather it relates to the inherent difficulties in chronicling and sharing “process information”. While information is not a panacea, participants in this review felt that improving access to law information to victims of family violence can contribute to their decision-making and possibly to solutions. PLEI organizations and others delivering family violence information use a wide variety of creative strategies to deliver information in rural areas. The most effective formats for information delivery are those that the community can implement by itself or incorporate into existing networks, structures or programs.

- **To explore indicators of success.**

Finally, the inventory explores the ways in which PLEI organizations come to know that they are reaching the intended audience. Very few programs and products are formally evaluated, so a variety of techniques are used.

1.3 Methodology

Given the short timeline for completing this inventory, the project used a qualitative approach based on questionnaires, interviews and individual consultations. The following data collection tools and research methods were used:

- **Fax or Email-back Questionnaires**

A questionnaire and covering letter were developed and piloted (See Appendix A). The questionnaire was intended to elicit information about the types and formats of relevant information provided to people dealing with family violence. It offered a checklist of possible materials developed, and strategies used by the organization to deliver family violence related information in rural areas. It also provided an opportunity to identify strategies not on the checklist. Finally the questionnaire asked about the indicators of

success. The questionnaire was sent out electronically to the membership of the Public Legal Education Association of Canada (PLEAC). PLEAC is the national umbrella organization that represents the provincial and territorial sole purpose public legal education groups as well as many other organizations offering law related information to the public as part of their mandate. The questionnaire was forwarded to the “PLEAC List Serve” by the President of PLEAC who encouraged participation in the project. Similarly, the Executive Director of Public Legal Education Network of Alberta (PLENA) forwarded the letter and questionnaire electronically to its membership across Alberta. To broaden the scope, the questionnaire was also sent to a variety of family violence prevention organizations across Canada including several Coalition of Transition House groups, provincial family violence support groups and national agencies such as Education Wife Assault. Participants returned the questionnaires to the Research Centre via fax or email. Approximately 100 questionnaires were distributed across Canada and 30 organizations completed and returned the questionnaire.

- **Interviews**

An analysis of the questionnaires revealed a wide variety of formats and strategies for reaching people living in rural areas. To collect more detailed information on the programs and strategies outlined in the questionnaire, an interviewer then contacted 30 of the organizations and groups, preparing extensive notes on each interview. The response was enthusiastic and supportive of the goals of the project.

- **Consultations and Research Review**

A number of key service agencies and other stakeholders were consulted for their insights. As well, this inventory benefits from rural family violence research findings from the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, a consultant’s report¹ to Justice Canada in relation to their family violence law information needs assessments and a literature review in the area of family violence in rural areas.

¹ Justice Canada, *From Isolation to Integration: Public Legal Education and Information Needs in Response to Family Violence in Rural Areas of Canada*, August 2001.

Section 2 - Why Focus on Reaching Rural Communities?

Despite the dramatic shift in migration into urban areas, especially over the past twenty-five years, Canada continues to have significant populations living in rural communities. Yet dwindling services and resources mean that people in farm and rural communities often feel forgotten or overlooked when it comes to accessing information. Clearly PLEI organizations in all provinces and territories face the challenge of responding to the information needs and barriers of their rural constituents.

Disseminating law information is always a challenge. Finding ways of getting relevant information into the hands of hard to reach target audiences means addressing both the content of the information and its effective distribution. When dealing with a sensitive subject such as family violence, PLEI practitioners must carefully select the methods and mechanisms they employ to share information in ways that do not put victims at risk.

So, what exactly is a rural community? There are many definitions of what constitutes a “rural” community. The Census defines rural areas as small towns, villages and other places with populations of less than 1,000.² By this rather conservative definition, Prince Edward Island (55%) and the Northern Territories have the highest percentage of their population living in rural areas. New Brunswick also is predominantly rural with 51% of the population living in rural areas followed closely by Newfoundland at 43%. Census data reveal that 22% of the population of Quebec and 17% of Ontarians live in rural areas. The rural population of Manitoba is 28%, Saskatchewan is 37% and British Columbia is 18%.

Although the definition above has been used by a number of the family violence research studies and reports (i.e., Biesenthal and Sproule 2000; Brookbank 1995; ORWAS Community Reports 1998), quantitative definitions of “rural” do not necessarily exclude common sense descriptive terms or self-identification. Most people tend to intuitively “refer to the countryside or small towns as opposed to cities.”³ Clearly, a strict demographic and quantitative definition is not required to define “rural”.⁴

Rural communities often share cultural, social and physical characteristics that distinguish them from urban environments. For example, some rural farming areas have common cultural backgrounds, traditions and fairly homogeneous populations. However, rural areas also reflect considerable diversity. Farming is only one activity that happens in rural areas and farmers are only one kind of rural resident. Other economic pursuits associated with rural communities include fishing, agro-food production, logging and forestry, and even unemployment. There is really “no typical rural setting in Canada. It can be a farm, a northern single-resource community... A rural woman in Canada may be English or French with an agricultural ancestry, a native woman who lives on an isolated reserve, or an immigrant woman whose husband is working in a mining town, or a woman who lives in a dying logging community, small coastal

² Statistics Canada, *1996 Census Dictionary*, Catalogue 92-351-XPE.

³ Jiwani 1998, p. 36.

⁴ Jiwani 1998, p. 36.

fishing village. Consequently, the experience of a farm woman in southern Ontario is very different from an immigrant Mexican Mennonite in southern Manitoba or a transient summer worker in the Yukon.”⁵

“We consider “rural” as a diversity perspective that we must consider in the development of any new project or material. Where we lack expertise or knowledge, advisory and review committees for projects include rural representatives.”

Paula Wansbrough, Ontario Women’s Justice Network

There are many hard to reach audiences living in Canada. They include, for example, low-income earners, single parents, Aboriginal people, immigrants and refugees, people struggling with

literacy issues, and abused women generally - to mention just a few. Some of these people live in urban centres or in culturally defined communities. However, some also live in rural, farm and remote areas. For this reason, the strategies we develop to reach rural people must involve an understanding of, and sensitivity to, the various cultural and social dimensions of particular audiences. Clearly there is no one answer to reaching people in rural areas.

This inventory focuses predominantly on the techniques and strategies for disseminating information, and less on cultural adaptations. However, it should prove extremely useful as a vehicle for sharing process information that is usually not apparent when practitioners look at one another’s publication lists. The inventory offers a wealth of examples of successful strategies. Although a particular initiative or project may have been designed for a specific community, many of the “learnings” and “best practices” are generic in nature. These learnings are highly transferable, while the actual projects may themselves be replicable with some modifications, to a variety of rural populations.

2.1.1 Challenges in Reaching Rural Audiences - Addressing the Barriers

People living in rural areas obviously face obstacles in obtaining law and family violence information because of geographic distances and isolation. In addition, rural communities have higher poverty rates and unemployment and seasonal employment tends to be higher. Rural communities generally have fewer resources and services available including access to health care, education, counselling, affordable housing and other social services. Public transportation and licensed childcare may be inadequate or non-existent. Finally, traditional norms around marriage and the family are more prevalent in rural communities, as are patriarchal attitudes that may foster more rigid sex-role stereotyping (Gagne 1992; Hornosty and Doherty 2001; Jiwani 1998; Websdale 1998). All of these factors correlate to some extent with higher levels of family violence. Although McLeod’s (1980) groundbreaking study for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women found that the incidence of family violence in rural areas is similar to urban areas, others feel that it may be underreported or easier to hide in rural communities (Chalmers and Smith 1988; Martz and Sarauer 2000).

⁵ Wendy Milne, *Violence Against Women in Rural Settings* (unpublished report prepared for Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women August 1992), p. 2. as quoted in Justice Canada, *From Isolation to Integration: Public Legal Education and Information Needs in Response to Family Violence in Rural Areas of Canada*, August 2001.

Taken together, such barriers make it more difficult not only to access information but also to act on one's rights or obtain services or assistance. PLEI organizations and family violence prevention services that wish to adapt family violence information and products for a rural audience, and/or find ways of reaching that audience, must be familiar with the rural context of their province or territory. Since most PLEI organizations and many provincial services are located in urban areas, responding to rural residents means getting to know their rural communities. This involves researching and understanding the barriers that inhibit access to information in general and to family violence information in particular.

Those who participated in this inventory emphasized the importance of reaching out and networking with rural agencies, women's groups, service providers and local "movers and shakers". This is critical for the successful development and delivery of family violence materials and prevention programs in rural areas.

Although barriers that prevent people from accessing information can vary from region to region, and province to province, existing research and needs assessments⁶ conducted for Justice Canada suggest that PLEI practitioners must be aware of and address a variety of obstacles in order to share family violence information in rural areas. Participants in this project, and documentation from a literature review⁷ relating to PLEI practices and family violence in rural areas, identified the following barriers⁸ to access to information in rural areas. Some solutions for addressing these barriers are presented on page 38.

Physical, Geographical and Social Isolation – Many rural communities are isolated. Distances pose challenges in organizing events, finding places to display family violence materials and getting them into the hands of victims.

Access to public transportation is especially difficult in rural areas. Getting information into the hands of people living in isolation is a significant barrier. Such geographic isolation is further exacerbated if the abuser also isolates the victim socially from family and friends.

“Virtually all of Nunavut's population is rural in nature and the communities outside of Iqaluit are quite isolated. The problem with written material is that we have discovered that it is not that helpful. We have both literacy and cultural factors that must be addressed.”

Bonnie Tulloch, Nunavut Legal Aid

Poverty – Poverty impacts on access to information in many ways. People experiencing abuse may not know about social services or how to access the legal system. They may not be able to afford to hire a lawyer and they may feel helpless. They may not even be able to afford long distance calls or make trips to town to talk to service providers. They may feel that if they leave they will be doomed to a life on welfare which may be more threatening than the periodic abuse experienced in the home.

⁶ Alderson-Gill & Associates Consulting Inc., *PLEI Family Violence Materials: Needs Assessment Report, Synthesis of Findings* (Ottawa: Department of Justice, March 2000), p.1.

⁷ Justice Canada, *From Isolation to Integration: Public Legal Education and Information Needs in Response to Family Violence in Rural Areas of Canada*, August 2001

⁸ These barriers are clearly not determinants of family violence and should not be seen as generalizations that people in these categories are more prone to violence. They can, however, create formidable challenges for abused rural people seeking information and assistance.

Low Education/Literacy Levels – Since information is often packaged in written formats, low literacy levels create significant barriers for persons trying to find out about their options when they are living with family violence. In fact, 45% of Canadians over the age of 16 years do not meet minimum desirable standards for literacy (Statistics Canada 1998). Since victims living in rural areas are less likely to have access to service providers who can interpret and present information to them, they may be more reliant on reading pamphlets and materials available in a doctor’s office or some private space. If the information is not in plain language and easy to understand, the pamphlets may be of little help.

Stigma - Traditional religious or family-oriented values are often strong in rural areas. While providing positive community support to many people, for victims of abuse these same value systems can significantly deter them from seeking information about options for dealing with an abusive situation. Rural folk often feel that everyone knows everyone else’s business so it is important to guard their “secret” from the gossip mill. Research on abuse in rural communities found that women are often blamed for triggering the abuse and that the community tends to minimize and normalize abusive behaviours (Hornosty and Doherty 2001).

Limited Resources in Rural Areas – Health and social services are usually minimal in rural areas. Many abuse awareness programs attempt to get information into the hands of the helping professionals who might come into contact with victims of family violence. In areas where such service providers are non-existent, accurate information must come from other sources such as radio programming. Even in rural areas that have local service providers, many are ill equipped to address their clients’ family violence law information needs.

Cultural Values – Traditional shared values often characterize rural or remote communities. Traditional values sometimes reflect strong gender role stereotyping that can minimize abuse or blame women for disharmony in the family (Gagne, 1992). For example, farm communities may have a fierce sense of autonomy and independence that places the family in the private domain. This can inhibit friends and families from offering assistance when they suspect that a family member is being abused in the home. Other cultural factors that need to be considered in reaching isolated people include language, belief systems, oral traditions of communications, and religious beliefs.

Section 3 - Promising Practices in Sharing Family Violence Law Information in Rural Areas

Over 100 PLEI organizations and family violence prevention services across Canada received a questionnaire asking about their strategies for sharing family violence information in rural areas. Approximately 30 organizations responded and most of these organizations later participated in an in-depth interview. During the interviews, participants had the opportunity to discuss the details of the development of particular family violence products, services or projects. They were also asked to elaborate on the strategies used to reach rural audiences and to indicate how they gauged the success of their initiatives. Given the time constraints in preparing this inventory, we were not able to contact all PLEI groups and family violence prevention organizations in Canada. As a result, the inventory is by no means intended to be exhaustive.

The participating agencies shared an amazing array of projects and practices for disseminating family violence information in rural areas. Some had several examples of projects or distribution strategies that were designed to reach rural audiences. Other undertook projects that were not targeted at rural audiences, but that had been effective in reaching rural folk. When asked what initiative had been most successful, we often heard about an initiative that had been funded and implemented several years earlier. Because the initiative was funded as a project with a fixed life span, it had ended. Many organizations indicated that they would have liked to continue certain initiatives, however, the activity was not covered within their core funding. Moreover, project funders typically will not duplicate an initiative that they have already funded. Thus, the biggest challenge of developing promising practices often turns out to be the lack of sustainability that is associated with “one-of” or “one-time initiatives”.

In light of this, the report includes past and current strategies. We encouraged organizations to highlight any project, even ones implemented in the past, which demonstrated a successful method for sharing family violence law information in rural areas. Some of the projects profiled are in the early implementation phases. For the most part, they reflect the process of reaching rural audiences. Given that some projects were similar, we have not included every example shared with us. Nor have we tried to compile a list of each organization’s family violence law information products which are plentiful. Occasionally the inventory profiles a particular product to show how it was adapted or disseminated in an effective and appropriate manner for a rural audience.

The remainder of this chapter presents a variety of initiatives across Canada. Using a chart, we present the project, identify the organization that played the lead role (followed by the partners and funders if known) and share the promising indicators of success. Such indicators are not always well developed. They sometimes reflect qualitative responses by particular users. Finally, an overview of the ways the project reached rural victims of abuse is included. Chapter 4 will provide a more exhaustive discussion of some of the “learnings” in adapting content or form and developing effective strategies.

Promising Practices - Addressing Safety and Privacy Concerns

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role ⁹ , Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Lipstick Campaign</i></p> <p>This initiative is being developed and modeled after similar projects in the East.</p> <p>An abused woman who brings home pamphlets about family violence may put her safety at risk if the abuser finds them. The lipstick campaign will involve hiding a roll of paper inside an empty lipstick tube where an abusive spouse is unlikely to look. This should help an abused woman to feel that she has safer access to help line numbers and advice about leaving abusive situations.</p>	<p>Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan</p> <p>Partnership with Justice Canada and a supplier of empty lipstick tubes.</p>	<p>Will consult with distributing groups at front end to determine how we can measure success.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- The information inside the lipstick would include practical tips on how to protect children, help line numbers, and safety tips.
- The lipsticks would be distributed to women directly by transition houses, women’s centres and doctors and emergency room staff.
- Rural women have fewer places to get information but they do need to use hospitals and doctors so family violence information shared in this format will ensure widespread direct and safe access.

⁹ The lead role is always the first organization(s) set out.

Promising Practices - Partnering with Rural Communities and Local Service Providers

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>“The Aware and Supportive Communities Project”</i></p> <p>This is an initiative to coordinate supportive services for survivors of sexual assault throughout New Brunswick. Although the Sexual Assault Centre offers considerable information on sexual violence, family violence, dating violence, as well as support systems and other resources for survivors of sexual assault, staff noticed a “big gap” in reaching rural areas with such information, support and services. It started a province-wide initiative to coordinate support services for survivors including those living in rural areas. It also works to increase awareness of sexual violence and dating violence.</p>	<p>The Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre</p> <p>Partners/Sponsors included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cloverleaf Foundation • Canadian Women's Foundation • Canadian Rural Partnerships • The Fredericton Community Foundation • Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation 	<p>The response and feedback from the community participants has been extremely positive which suggests this is a good way to reach rural people.</p> <p>The Centre keeps a map of the province on the wall and puts dots on all of the communities they have reached. It is quite clear what rural areas are overlooked and where they should turn their attention next.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Identified key people in rural communities - service clubs, women’s groups, etc.
- Approached local community leaders to identify others who might become stakeholders in the project.
- Set up rural advisory committees in rural areas.
- Centre staff facilitated the meetings to help the groups identify issues important for their community.
- Each committee developed their own unique approach to the issues. At this point the local group takes full ownership.
- Left behind a communication network for support, resources, materials, etc.
- Facilitator targets another rural area and starts again.
- Word of mouth is important in rural areas. People from one area tell others of the benefits and the Centre gets requests to come and work with other rural communities.

Promising Practices – Partnering with Provincial Service Providers

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead role, partners and funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Provincial Caring Partnerships (PCPC)</i></p> <p>This is a province-wide public awareness of family violence initiative that involves a provincial committee of about 20 provincial organizations, community groups, and some government representatives, who act as a catalyst for promoting grassroots action and sharing family violence resources (pamphlets, handbooks, videos) and networking in French and English.</p> <p>There are currently 13 caring community committees around the province, including a First Nations community. The aim is to promote a province-wide effort to create awareness of family violence issues and solutions by encouraging grassroots responses that speak to people. Special focus on rural and small towns.</p>	<p>PCPC is a provincial committee whose members include Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation/and Centre for Family Violence Research, Public Legal Education and Information Service of NB, Coalition of Transition Homes, Seniors Federation, Women’s Institute, Dames d’Acadie, NB John Howard Society, Red Cross, police and RCMP, YMCA, and others.</p> <p>Partners and funding have shifted over time and have come from various sources including Health Canada, Provincial Government, National Crime Prevention Centre, RCMP, and the NB Advisory Council on the Status of Women.</p>	<p>The initiative started with 2 pilot communities and now has 13, with several more starting up.</p> <p>Each community has undertaken numerous events and activities relating to family violence.</p> <p>One committee transformed into a family crisis intervention centre.</p> <p>Some local initiatives are so successful they are becoming provincial initiatives such as the <i>Silent Witness Project</i>.</p> <p>The Provincial Government identified PCPC as a vehicle for future public awareness campaigns in their Strategic Framework for addressing violence against women¹⁰.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Committee members identify and support key local people who are interested in starting a public awareness campaign in a local area.
- Communities form their own committees of “movers and shakers” who come up with projects that range from putting articles in local newspapers, and anti-violence messages in church bulletins, developing workshops and posters, putting pamphlets in doctors’ private offices, creating a video on local services for abused women, and so on.
- The Provincial Committee keeps communities linked by regular mail outs, a newsletter, an annual networking conference, and a Web site - www.violencepreventionnb.org
- The committee shares research findings, resources and best practices. By linking communities everyone has access to information that might otherwise not be known or effectively disseminated in rural communities.

¹⁰ Government of New Brunswick, *A Better World for Women: Government Response to the Minister’s Working Group on Violence Against Women*, Fredericton, New Brunswick, December 2001.

Promising Practices - In Community Coordination

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Community Coordination for Women's Safety</i></p> <p>This project is intended to help communities develop new models of coordination on violence against women.</p> <p>Family violence law information is just one component that could be more effectively disseminated through the development of effective and consistent community responses to promote abused women's access to the justice system and other relevant systems.</p> <p>The project hopes to effect systemic change through community development.</p>	<p>BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs</p> <p>Partners: BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Victim Services</p>	<p>This project ultimately hopes to measure systemic change.</p> <p>It will determine, from a woman's perspective, if systems become better at responding to needs.</p> <p>In the short-term, sponsors see success as getting more relevant people to become involved in the committees (e.g. bringing faith communities into the strategy); creating more awareness among service providers; promoting more cooperation between stakeholders (e.g. police and transition houses).</p> <p>It plans to assess whether communities obtained the necessary tools to work together to identify specific issues and resolve them.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- The project focuses on rural, remote and isolated communities.
- It targets women who face particular discrimination in accessing justice system.
- Have consulted provincial organizations to identify needs and have conducted outreach in rural and isolated communities.
- Have set up 40 Coordination Committees around the province.
- Based on identified community needs, have developed information bulletins dealing with information on sexual assault, enforcing protection orders, assistance for immigrant women.
- Share feedback and strategies with key government staff.

Promising Practices - Partnering with Employers and Local Service Clubs

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>The Potty Project</i></p> <p>The aim of this project is to inform all women in PEI that there is help available if they are being abused.</p> <p>The objective is to “put a poster about family violence including contact numbers in every washroom in PEI because this may be the only private and safe space for many women.”</p> <p>The project includes kits, posters and stickers and is also targetted at Island employers.</p>	<p>PEI Transition House Association</p> <p>In cooperation with PEI Worker’s Compensation Board, PEI Occupational Health and Safety Commission, PEI Rotary Club.</p> <p>An Island printing company printed the posters and stickers.</p>	<p>The project is still being implemented.</p> <p>To determine success, the project will monitor increases in calls to help lines as an indicator that it is helping abused rural women find help.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Focus on reaching rural and isolated women.
- Employers around province are partnering. Will send kits to PEI’s 7,000 employers with posters, stickers, pamphlet.
- Will put posters into safe places where women will see. Plan to hire summer students to put up 40,000 posters in bathrooms across PEI, including gas stations, coffee shops, tourist attractions, etc.
- Poster describes abusive actions, rather than using vague terms.
- Poster is sticky backed, hangs up easily, hard to deface or tear down. Can be wiped clean. Stickers smaller version of poster to go on cash registers, windows, bumpers, etc.

Promising Practices - In Creating a Safe Space to Recover

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>“Women and Children's Healing and Recovery Program”</i></p> <p>This is a non-residential program that provides group and individual counselling services for abused women and their children. Training includes family violence education. To be successful, the program must show cultural sensitivity. Elders and workers from local communities act as consultants in on-going planning. Women learn about setting boundaries in relation to cultural and family expectations, self care, and other recovery information. Clients who need law information are referred to partner agencies such as the Women’s Centre. However, the program is intended to help prepare women to act on the information they obtain from other places, like transition homes or women’s centres.</p>	<p>The Women's and Children’s Healing and Recovery Program is supported and funded by the YWCA Yellowknife and the Women’s Centre</p>	<p>Use an assessment tool when women come into the program and as they leave to determine if there has been any change in their lives in the intervening time.</p> <p>Also conduct exit interviews. The interviews are conducted by a team member other than the counselling staff who worked with the woman while in the program.</p> <p>Monitor the qualitative results which reflects women’s own determination of success.</p> <p>Quantitatively, the program keeps track of the number of women who utilize the service.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- In rural/remote communities everyone knows everyone else, and sometimes to get help it is necessary to leave the community. Local Health Boards in every community identify individuals who require assistance. The Health Boards pay for the women and her children to fly to Yellowknife and for their accommodation.
- Information that is available “down south” is adapted and put into plain language to make it appropriate and relevant to women in the NWT.
- If a woman goes back to her community, staff conduct extensive telephone follow-up over a 6 months period. She gets information about staying safe and protecting her children.
- The program works by word of mouth although it is also advertised in targetted mailings to service providers.

Promising Practices - Partnering with Farm or Women's Group

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>The Alberta Family Law Tool Kit Project</i></p> <p>This is a train the trainer project centred on a square brown box filled with resource information on family law. The toolbox was developed by Justice Canada.</p> <p>PLENA has decided to augment the tool kit with family/domestic violence materials and resource lists.</p> <p>The project based on the premise that there is no disconnect between the family law and family violence information that people need when they are leaving abusive relationships.</p>	<p>Public Legal Education Network of Alberta</p> <p>In partnership with: Medicine Hat College Justice Canada Alberta Law Foundation.</p>	<p>PLENA will develop a questionnaire for participants to complete after participating at the forum. This will help identify what data should be collected and the key family law and family violence issues that need to be addressed.</p> <p>PLENA plans to evaluate workshops.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Members will initiate joint ventures with local communities to offer training around the tool kit.
- Members will set up regional forums by piggy backing on existing inter-agency meetings. Agencies are always anxious for free materials.
- Members will deliver training primarily in rural centres.
- Information will be incorporated into use through a strategy of long term social /community development.

Promising Practices - Partnering with Farm or Women's Group

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Information and Resources for Abused Women in Rural Ontario</i></p> <p>This resource guide for rural women contains information and resources specifically for abused women in rural Ontario.</p>	<p>Education Wife Assault and Community Abuse Program of Rural Ontario</p> <p>The initiative was funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate</p>	<p>Please Note: Not able to set up an interview to discuss this initiative. However, ordered and received the information materials in the mail.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- The content of the resource guide was specifically designed to be meaningful to farm women and rural women.
- The guide contains numbers for counselling services available to deal with financial stress for farm families.
- It gives contact number for the Ontario Farm Women's Network.

Promising Practices - Coordinating Rural Responses

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead role, partners and funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>“A Women’s Right for a Safe Tomorrow”</i></p> <p>This is an information booklet describing the cycle of abuse and a resource list for victims.</p> <p>The best practice relates not so much to the booklets themselves, but to the dissemination strategy which has actively sought to get the booklet out into rural areas and into the hands of victims.</p>	<p>Medicine Hat College, Public Legal Education Program</p> <p>In partnership with the Alberta Law Foundation and Justice Canada.</p> <p>(PLENA also helped by arranging for funding for the booklet’s re-printing.)</p>	<p>The fact that the Community Adult Learning Councils were enthusiastic about the booklet and its relevance to rural areas was seen as indicator of success.</p> <p>Unsolicited requests for the booklet, which come about from word of mouth promotion about the usefulness of the booklet are also seen as an indicator of success.</p> <p>For example, RCMP in Pincher Creek (rural area) called and asked for a supply of booklets to provide to victims and to have available at their offices.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Alberta’s Community Adult Learning Councils (CALCs) that are really “tapped into rural areas” plays a vital role by distributing the booklets across the province.
- Councils are made up of representatives from many small towns and rural areas; they meet quarterly to discuss ways to distribute information to people in their communities.
- The Lethbridge YMCA uses its own distribution network to get booklets out to rural “pockets” around the city.
- The College targeted rural areas in its initial mail out, and distributed the booklets to family services groups that service rural communities.

Promising Practices - Partnering with Rural Churches

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead role, partners and funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Before You Say Your Vows, Make Sure Your Home is Loving and Safe</i></p> <p>This is a pamphlet about keeping abuse out of marriages. It is intended to act as springboard for ministers to discuss a sensitive topic.</p> <p>The need for such a pamphlet was identified by the minister who sat on a rural family violence awareness group called the Woodstock Caring Communities Committee. The pamphlet was developed in partnership with PLEIS-NB and local faith communities.</p>	<p>Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick (PLEIS-NB)</p> <p>In partnership with the Woodstock Interministerial Committee and the Woodstock Caring Community Committee.</p> <p>The pamphlet was a collaborative effort which involved all the Christian faiths in this small town and the surrounding rural area providing feedback and suggestions during the development of a pamphlet.</p>	<p>The pamphlets are being used for the purpose for which they were developed.</p> <p>They are routinely ordered by faith communities, including rural areas, and are being used in marriage preparation classes to help religious leaders tackle issues of abuse and discuss them with couples planning to marry.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- The church plays a central role in these rural communities and they act as the primary distributor, sharing it in a proactive fashion.
- The pamphlets are given to couples attending marriage preparation classes to take home and read. At the next session, the minister/priest will discuss the content of the pamphlet with the couple.
- Since most young couples participate in marriage preparation classes, it acts as a “tool” to stimulate discussion of abuse - which for many faith leaders is a sensitive topic to bring up.

Promising Practices - Partnering in Getting Information Directly into the Hands of Rural People

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>The Hot Peach Pages Abuse Help Lines Project (HPP)</i></p> <p>This initiative involves a special hotline help page in all the provinces telephone books.</p> <p>PATHS conducted a survey of 5 rural towns asking them what they felt would make a difference for people experiencing abuse. People said, ‘give us numbers and places to call to get reliable information’. The Hot Peach Pages project emerged as a way to respond and get information about abuse and helping services into every home in Saskatchewan in a non-threatening way.</p> <p>Sponsors say they consider their province to be rural with exception of Saskatoon and Regina.</p>	<p>Provincial Association of Transition Houses of Saskatchewan (PATHS)</p> <p>In partnership with: SaskTel and Government of Saskatchewan</p>	<p>This project started as pilot in Saskatoon and was evaluated by SaskTel and extended around the province.</p> <p>PATHs conducted a follow-up survey between August 2001 and January 2001. All of PATHS member agencies and Sexual Assault Centres were asked to canvass callers on how they found the number for their service. Depending on location, the Hot Peach Pages were the source of referral anywhere from 13% to 100% of the callers. Rural callers were more likely to have found the number in the HPP.</p> <p>Because this project was not core funded, PATHs will not be able to continue to monitor outcomes at the same level. However, SaskTel is going to continue this initiative.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- HPP is a special page about abuse help lines that can be found in all 10 telephone books in Saskatchewan.
- The telephone books are delivered free to every rural household, church, business, services, farm, etc. that has a phone.
- Content of each telephone book is customized for each region with specific local contact numbers as well as appropriate provincial numbers.
- Sponsors also conducted a public relations campaign to create awareness. Did this by: having a project launch with the Premier; using family violence prevention week as a HPP week; creating a billboard campaign (19 rural locations) that used a Teaser (What are the HPP?) and 2 weeks later posted the answer; preparing articles in rural papers and news releases, creating a poster about HPP and sending mail outs to service providers; and contracting with a service to conduct a province-wide fax campaign about the HPP to 21,000 fax machines.

Promising Practices - Partnership with Schools

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead role, partners and funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Safe and Caring Schools Project</i></p> <p>This is a series of five community-based workshops that reinforce and support the violence prevention program in schools. It is geared to adults in the community who interact with children such as parents, coaches, teachers and school staff, seniors, business people, etc. It is based on premise that children learn pro-social behaviour if violence prevention messages/behaviours are modeled and reinforced by important adults in a child's life.</p> <p>ATA trained facilitators to deliver five workshops over a 10-month period (during the school year) and coordinate them with the delivery of corresponding units in the curriculum.</p>	<p>Alberta Teacher's Association (ATA)</p> <p>Partners and financial supporters of the initiative include: Alberta Learning, The Muttart Foundation, Alberta Community Development's Human Rights Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund, Lions Clubs, National Crime Prevention Centre and ATA.</p>	<p>The ATA tracked information on communities that call from across Alberta to book the workshop series. By analyzing phone numbers and emails they knew if they were reaching rural communities.</p> <p>Community responses to the workshops have been very positive. They are particularly popular in rural areas.</p> <p>The workshops were so popular in one rural farming community, Grand Prairie, that they hired a coordinator to book and handle the requests for the workshops.</p> <p>National Safe and Caring Canada is attempting to promote a similar program across Canada.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- ATA trains people from different communities, including rural areas, to conduct the workshops in their own community.
- There is a \$125 registration fee that includes materials. Participants pay out of pocket, or are sponsored by a local agency. The Lion's Club is a big sponsor of the workshops.
- The workshops suggest strategies for dealing with abuse and encourage self-reflection and this is particularly helpful in rural areas where there may not be as many helping services available for individuals.

Promising Practices - Partnering with the Legal System

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Home Front</i></p> <p>This project created a family violence justice system with its own courts, police and judges, victim advocates and duty counsel.</p> <p>Offenders who plead guilty to a domestic violence offence can go through the Home Front court system. Cases are fast tracked so they are heard within a couple of weeks. If the offender enters a not guilty plea, the case goes through regular court. Victims are supported and offenders are given access to substance abuse programs. Women from surrounding rural areas may benefit from not having to make several trips to town.</p>	<p>Action Committee Against Violence (Calgary)</p> <p>Established in partnership with law enforcement agencies and provincial government. Includes Crowns and Judges, specially trained and assigned to this court.</p> <p>Have federal, provincial and private sector funding.</p>	<p>In first 19 months, 67% of 3000 cases resolved at initial stage with guilty plea.</p> <p>Victims have expressed a favourable response because of advocacy and treatment options for abusers.</p> <p>Breaches of orders are handled quickly and severely. (Although probation case load has quadrupled.)</p> <p>Positive response to domestic violence counselling.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Although Calgary based, women from surrounding rural areas use Calgary court system.
- Rural women seem particularly well served by new system. They may not have to make several trips to town for court dates and face adjournments. This seems to make them less reluctant to cooperate. Follow up advocacy support for victims and counselling for abusers is promoting greater cooperation.

Promising Practices - Piggy Backing on Rural Events

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>“Community Outreach Program”</i></p> <p>This is an initiative that takes PLEI out to rural communities. It is based on responding to requests for information or identifying opportunities to set up displays in rural communities.</p>	<p>Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland (PLIAN)</p> <p>Newfoundland is a largely rural province so rural outreach is seen as part of the core activities, not an add on.</p>	<p>The fact that local groups, such as women’s centres, libraries, literacy groups, are now asking for a display at events, or requesting information on specific topics, is seen as indicator the PLIAN is successful.</p> <p>The number of calls to the legal information line and the number of “hits” on the web site is increasing due to the public relations activity in local communities.</p> <p>The mailing list gets bigger every month showing increasing interest in law information.</p> <p>People at these rural events often invite PLIA back to participate in other activities.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- By identifying events happening around the province in rural areas, such as summer festivals, winter carnivals, and so on, PLIA is able to offer information in non-threatening venues.
- Travel around to these rural events and set up a display of law information which will include family violence materials.

Promising Practices - Targetted Mailouts to Rural Areas

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Public Awareness of PLEI Materials in Rural Areas.</i></p> <p>This initiative was undertaken to reach people living in rural counties by creating awareness of PLEI services and products.</p> <p>The initiative was developed as a result of monitoring usage of PLEI materials around the province. Analysis of distribution patterns in 1996-97 showed that the four most rural counties did not order and disseminate law information in proportion to the populations living in those counties.</p> <p>PLEIS launched a targetted public relations campaign based on the belief that greater awareness would increase rural demand.</p>	<p>Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick (PLEIS-NB)</p>	<p>In 1996-97, the rural county of Gloucester, which comprised 11.9% of the province's population, requested about 1% of the materials distributed by PLEIS-NB.</p> <p>By 1999-2000, two years after the awareness campaign, 14.2% of the materials distributed by PELIS-NB went to Gloucester County.</p> <p>This pattern for enhancing access to and usage of materials was repeated in all the rural Counties. Dramatic increases in requests resulted.</p> <p>The majority of requests for pamphlets coming from rural areas has been for family violence and family law information.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- About 51% of NB population live in rural communities with a population of less than 1,000. About 80% of PLEI materials are ordered by service providers. To reach rural areas, PLEIS identified a wide variety of social service agencies, family resource centres, and family violence prevention groups associated within these rural areas that were not requesting materials.
- PLEIS then sent out a targetted bilingual memo to all of these organizations. It explained what information was available and encouraged these organizations to make use of PLEI services and products, free of charge, in either official language. The mail out included a large sample of popular materials, particularly family violence information products, and an order form.

Promising Practices - Using Internet to Reach Rural People

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Violetnet</i> www.violetnet.org</p> <p>And</p> <p><i>Rosenet</i> www.rosenet-ca.org</p> <p>These are web-based family violence projects. Violet is the “law and abused women” site and RoseNet is the “law and abused immigrant women” site.</p> <p>The sites were developed in consultation with the key service providers around the Province to get contact information.</p> <p>These sites update information regularly.</p>	<p>Legal Studies Program, University of Alberta</p> <p>Violet is sponsored by: Status of Women; Alberta Law Foundation; HRDC’s Office of Learning Technology.</p> <p>RoseNet is sponsored by: Alberta Human Rights Education Fund; and Alberta Law Foundation.</p>	<p>Success is determined by community acceptance which is discussed at meetings and stories told by staff and volunteers.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence from shelters across the province suggests that women are accessing the web sites and finding them helpful.</p> <p>The numbers of visitors on the web sites and the number of “hits” shows usage is up significantly. Rosenet went from an average of 13 user sessions per day in 2000, to 73 in 2002. Violetnet went from an average of 109 in 2000 to 170 in 2002.</p> <p>The women’s shelters now see the site as their own and update information on it.</p> <p>Violetnet has a discussion forum with a Qs & As. Staff can often tell by the kinds of questions that users live in rural areas.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Legal Studies Program staff met with local service providers, volunteers, and others interested in the issue in 3 areas to create sense of “shared ownership of site”.
- Used feedback to make the site as relevant as possible to rural and urban women.
- Reduced Internet barriers by partnering with the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters, which got funding for computers at all 60 women’s shelters in Alberta including “Internet Station.”
- Site includes local addresses and phone numbers of shelters and other service providers.
- Used public access sites as safe places to share information with rural women.
- Violet project conducted training sessions for staff and volunteers of women’s shelters in rural areas.
- Promoted sites with bookmarks of URL addresses, and information about the web sites. Distributed to all libraries.

Promising Practices - Incorporating Rural Context in a Product

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Changing the Ending</i></p> <p>This is a video depicting two abused women in a transition house who are reluctant to deal with the criminal justice system. One is a rural woman. A discussion guide accompanies video including questions on barriers faced by women in rural areas.</p> <p>The video was produced because crisis community advisors suggested that PLEI organizations create a tool to supplement written information as women who arrive in shelters often find it difficult to read pamphlets when they are in crisis. Also, some women in shelters have low literacy skills. Interveners were asking for a less didactic tool.</p>	<p>Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick</p> <p>Funded by NB Victim Services.</p> <p>Advisory committee of police, victim services, crisis workers, Crown Prosecutor, social workers, and others.</p> <p>Provincial government assisted in distribution strategy to make video and discussion guide available free to all of the transition homes, mental health clinics, victim services offices, and libraries around province. Other PLEI organizations also helped to promote the video in their provinces, as did Educate Wife Assault.</p>	<p>Monitored distribution, sales and lending patterns. Steady sales and loans, especially over the first two years, was seen as an indicator of success. Significant sales outside the province of NB reflected positive response to the promotional activities of other PLEI organizations.</p> <p>Qualitative feedback was also used to show success. Lots of positive feedback was received from people who had borrowed it from video lending library.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Video in lending library and used by rural agencies.
- The victim in the video makes excuses for her abuser because of farm debt.
- Emotional turmoil women face depicted in a realistic way with law information woven in.
- Drafts of script reviewed by advisory committee (victim and crisis workers, RCMP, various experts and community reps) who paid attention to rural content.
- Created a promotional brochure and distributed video in NB and across Canada. Education Wife Assault put article in their national newsletter
- National Clearinghouse on Family Violence selected the video for promotion as a recommended family violence resource, included in their catalogue and distributed to over 70 libraries across Canada.

Promising Practices - Partnering with Women’s Groups and Local Service Providers

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Custody and Access Workshops</i></p> <p>The Institute develops workshops on a variety of topics. However, family law information is extremely important to women leaving violent relationships and the custody and access workshop is the most frequently requested.</p> <p>The Institute has a Resource Centre, with extensive materials on family violence. They mail materials, on loan, to groups outside the Vancouver area. Workshops help create awareness of the Institute and the resources available.</p>	<p>British Columbia Institute Against Family Violence</p> <p>Sponsored by the B.C. Law Foundation</p>	<p>After each workshop, the service provider participants are asked if they can be called in six months to find out what the reaction has been, and how many people have accessed the information.</p> <p>This is a non-scientific way of gauging women’s interest in and relevance of materials, but very valuable.</p> <p>Many rural agencies call to borrow materials, as well as receive the Institute’s newsletter.</p> <p>The Institute’s Board has hired a consultant to do a “needs assessment” study, which will show where the “gaps” are.</p> <p>Plan to hold at least one focus group in a rural community to assess needs.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- Respond to requests from local groups, and then partner with them to deliver the workshop.
- Since cities have more services, many of the requests come from rural areas.
- Also actively target rural areas and look for local partners. For example, presented workshop in Queen Charlotte Islands last fall with the assistance of a Board Member from that area.
- Key strategy has been to partner with the Women’s Centres since there are 50 around the province and they typically house critical services for women. This is especially important in rural areas.

Promising Practices - Partnering with Provincial and Local Service Providers

Initiative for Delivering Family Violence Information	Lead Role, Partners and Funders	Promising Indicators of Success
<p><i>Legal Information Workshops for Women Experiencing Violence</i></p> <p>OWJN developed nine different workshops on various topics in relation to women living with violence and their law information needs.</p> <p>The goal of the workshops is to train women’s groups and family service organizations to be able to provide basic, easily understood law information with their clients and staff.</p> <p>Kits are provided with valuable, accurate, plain language information.</p>	<p>Ontario Women’s Justice Network (OWJN)</p> <p>And</p> <p>Metropolitan Committee on Violence Against Women and Children. (METRAC)</p> <p>Initiative sponsored by the Law Foundation of Ontario</p>	<p>After each workshop, OWJN gets more requests for “kits,” from rural organizations and service providers who hear about the project by word-of-mouth.</p> <p>The response has been “really exciting, and just keeps on growing.”</p> <p>The trainers use an evaluation at each workshop. Presenters and participants have consistently evaluated the workshops as “sensitive to the rural experience.”</p> <p>OWJN gets a lot of e-mail from victims of family violence who identify themselves as living in rural areas.</p>

How does it reach Abused Rural Women/other Victims?

- The workshops were first delivered in Toronto, but were expanded into rural areas.
- They set up an advisory committee to determine where the needs were greatest and what topics were most relevant.
- They found advisors by recruiting them on the web site and got a great response.
- Most of the advisors live and work in rural communities as crisis workers, legal advocates, social workers, and so on.
- The advisors chose workshops and were then trained to deliver them to people in their own community (ex, police, faith leaders, etc.)
- Many advisors were then invited out to present the workshop to other groups in surrounding rural areas.

Section 4 - Insights on Developing Effective Strategies To Reach Rural Areas

4.1 Promising Practices – Key Learnings and Strategies for Reaching People in Rural Areas

Participants were asked what kinds of strategies and mechanisms they use, if any, to ensure that the information is distributed to, or readily accessible to, rural people generally and rural clients experiencing family violence in particular. A wealth of promising and best practices emerged for reaching rural audiences with information about family violence, ranging from a special page in the telephone directory, to coordination of agencies, a poster project, lipstick campaign and train the trainer and information sessions.

Below is an overview of the learnings that underlie the various methods and strategies for getting family violence information to rural audiences, particularly those dealing with family violence. The list is not exhaustive, however, it offers insights into what we have learned on how best to touch the lives of people in rural areas.

Although a project that was developed for a particular rural area may be specific to that community, the methods used are often based on replicable strategies that can be applied across jurisdictions.

“We felt strongly that we should use a community-based model if we wanted to be successful in reaching rural people.”

Lorraine Whalley, Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre

4.2 Establish Rural Partnerships With Service Providers, Farm & Women’s Groups, Local People

Partnering with rural service providers and others living in rural areas was one of the most frequently cited strategies for sharing family violence information in rural areas. Some of the key learnings from this strategy include:

Build up a good rapport with service providers

- If you have established a good relationship with service providers, then they will be quite willing and anxious to work with you.

“We attend events, go to meetings, stay connected and generally work hard to build a strong connection to service providers around PEI. It pays off because they want us to be involved in addressing issues like family violence.”

Ann Sherman, Community Legal Education Association of PEI

Identify key rural people with an interest in the topic

- It is important to identify some of the local “movers and shakers” and provide the opportunity for them to become stakeholders in the initiative. This might be service groups such as the Rotary Clubs, women’s groups or church groups.

- Women’s centres and family resource centres are places that can offer support and security to single mothers, abused women, rural women, and others who experience significant access barriers. Staff members are committed to helping their clients through a range of experiences. These centres are ideally positioned to share relevant family violence law information and help direct victims of abuse to shelter, services and more detailed information.
- Working with schools or churches provides many ready-made contacts and opportunities for reaching rural folk. One organization put announcements about an event in church bulletins, along with radio announcements and posters. They were surprised when over 200 people showed up at the information session. Most had heard about it from their church bulletins.

“We have helped produce PLE materials and have been involved in training our intake staff to recognize signs of abuse. To promote use of the materials, we encourage our offices to be involved in local coordinating committees on stopping the violence.”

Carol McEown, BC Legal Services Society

Don’t impose a project on a rural community - work together

- Projects that turn over ownership to local committees work well because they help to build confidence in local solutions.
- Asking a local group to co-host an event gives it a concrete link to the area.

Seek the help of rural service providers at the front end when developing products and initiatives

- Ask local people to act in an advisory capacity, for example, on how best to invite women out to an information session. However, it is preferable to provide opportunities for the local groups to play a leadership role in the initiative.
- People living and working in rural communities know what works and does not work. They know what nights to avoid, like bingo night. They know when men and women are involved in seasonal work and the most appropriate public relations strategies for reaching the target audience. One rural community suggested that information sessions for women should be timed with the departure of the men in the community who work in the woods for several weeks at time. Others tied events to when the boats were away fishing and so on. It is important to know about the “life” of the community and when and how to deliver information.
- Word of mouth and personal contact are significant tools for success when you are dealing with people who live in rural areas.

“It made all the difference. The more we got out there into rural areas, the more people we met. Then those people would tell their neighbours what we’re doing, and it goes from there.”

Liz Lautard, Sexual Assault Crisis Centre

Consult rural agencies about the content of information – relevance, etc.

- Rural service providers should be asked how the information provided to them is shared with victims of family violence, whether they feel it is helpful to the victims, and whether there is any information missing. This lets them know that you care about the outcomes, that you will continue to support them with information, resources and advice and that you can be counted on.

Find appropriate places to display materials in rural areas

- Print materials should be available in public areas frequented by rural people (wherever people have to sit around). This could include doctor’s offices, grocery stores, recreation centres, drug stores, libraries, schools, post offices and banks, churches, and community halls.

“Not everyone feels comfortable picking up information about abuse when sitting in a crowded public waiting room, especially in rural areas. Everyone knows everyone else, so people avoid eye contact with family violence pamphlets for fear of being seen. Some of our ‘caring communities’ worked with doctors in their areas to get the information into private examining rooms.”

Therese Murray, Provincial Caring Partnership Committee

- However, you also need to make family violence information available in “private spaces” or “women only” spaces. The most frequently mentioned places included washrooms (see the potty project), change rooms, examining rooms, and so on.
- Direct messages for men in places such as garages, bars and gyms.

Incorporate family violence information into non-threatening events

- Incorporate family violence information into “non-threatening events” such as health fairs, baby clinics, summer festivals, etc. Piggybacking on various local community events, such as seniors’ health forums, is an effective way to share law information.

- Don’t hold events that are advertised as “women only” events or “family violence information sessions”. The women who most need the information will not be able to participate. Turn the event into a social or potluck affair and provide the information along with other materials.

“We were told by our rural advisors, ‘don’t make it sound as if the event is only for women or it’ll turn the men off and they won’t “allow” their women to come’”

Maria Franks, Legal Education Society of Nova Scotia

- Non-threatening events may be associated with places people already frequent, such as church suppers, socials, family and child welfare events and health related events. By incorporating the information into the context of general events, it is easier for women to attend.

4.3 Promote Direct Access to Information

Getting family violence information directly into the hands of individuals is an important goal for many PLEI organizations. Rural victims often do not have access to social service providers who can explain options and present information to them.

- It is important to look for outreach opportunities that offer direct, face-to-face access for women and other rural victims.
- When trying to reach victims of abuse directly, do not offer large quantities of detailed information.

“There’s always something going on, no matter how tiny the community. We just get in there and become part of it. It works because it’s so simple and informal, and it doesn’t intimidate people.”

Susan Doyle, Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland

Rather, use cards or bookmarks or posters to highlight salient tips and provide a toll-free number or local help lines that can offer greater detail.

4.4 Promote Sustainability

It was clear from talking to PLEI practitioners and others delivering family violence related information that sustainability of exciting, promising practices are a significant obstacle to on-going success and transferability of projects. Unfortunately, many of the initiatives described in Chapter 3 as promising practices, were funded as one-time projects.

Practitioners explained that they have been involved in highly successful initiatives that seem to reach rural victims of family violence, but that once the funding is over, the initiative ends. If the initiative continues without further funding, there may no longer be time to monitor or evaluate outcomes. Nevertheless, there were some suggestions about developing strategies to help ensure longer-term success of projects or to keep them “running” after the funding was over.

“Our family violence initiatives are not core funded so when we get funding for a family violence project it is usually time limited causing great difficulty in implementing any follow-up activities.”

Catherine Carry, Pauktuutit Inuit Women’s Association

Support and stay linked to rural services

- After working with a rural community on an event, be sure to keep some key contacts that can be contacted from time to time. Just keeping people “in the loop” about new pamphlets or services can keep them interested.
- Establishing regular and supportive communication with local communities is important.
- If you want service providers to share family violence information, then you must be prepared to keep up contact.
- Encouraging people in rural areas to take ownership of the issues in their community makes them feel like stakeholders in addressing family violence solutions.

Help communities obtain resources to help themselves

- The Legal Studies Program worked with the transition house association in Alberta to access programs that could help bring computers to all the transition houses. If you are able to share information over the Internet, but you know clients who need it do not have Internet access, then you too could consider working with local groups and organizations to help them secure resources. Programs like VolNet¹¹ helped to bridge the gap particularly for rural areas.
- Consider providing training to help the service providers find useful family violence information when they are assisting their own clients to navigate the Internet. PLEI organizations can play an active role in developing law information sessions for volunteers and staff of front-line agencies who work with clients who require a variety of family violence and family law information.

“We conducted training sessions for volunteers and staff of women’s shelters in several rural communities. They were taught how to use the Internet, and how to navigate the Violet web site; they, in turn, can teach the women who come to stay at the shelters. We also post information on “cap sites” so women who might not feel safe looking up this kind of information on their home computers, or who don’t own one, have a safe place to learn about their options”.

San San Sy, Legal Studies Program

4.5 Be Sensitive to the Rural Context - Social and Cultural Factors

In order to reach people in rural and remote communities, we must not only address the transportation barriers and other access obstacles such as poverty and literacy, we must know the culture of our community and make our information culturally appropriate and relevant.

“Our staff presented the workshops in partnership with women’s organizations in various rural communities and then we integrated the suggestions and comments that came from participants into the workshops to highlight the specifics of the rural experience.”

Paula Wansborough, Ontario Women’s Justice Network

Incorporate examples of rural or farm context

- A research study (Hornosty and Doherty 2001) on family violence in rural areas suggested that family violence materials, programs and information should incorporate examples of abuse that are relevant in a farm or rural context. Materials designed for urban markets may not speak to rural or farm women.
- The study suggests that family violence information targeted for rural audiences offer concrete examples. It might indicate that emotional abuse may take many forms and these sometimes involve blaming the victim for everything that goes wrong around the farm, including broken equipment or bad weather.

¹¹ The Voluntary Sector Network Support Program (VolNet) came to an end on March 31st, 2002. This federally funded program had successfully met and surpassed its objectives of connecting 10,000 voluntary organizations to the Internet while at the same time training more than 17,000 staff and volunteers.

Know the culture and issues in your rural communities

- Rural areas are not monolithic – address cultural issues¹².
- The Inuit Women’s Association creates Inuktitut versions of information so that it is meaningful to women living in remote and isolated communities.

“We know that family violence is a concern throughout Nunavut. If we are going to develop a spousal abuse program that works, it has to be sensitive and respectful of the “old ways” of dealing with abusive spouses. We have hired local elders as consultants to help share traditional knowledge and encourage people to find the solutions that work for our people.”

David Mablick, Pulaarvik Kablu

Recognize that personal safety issues are different in rural areas

- Advice on personal safety is often a component of family violence information. But, the kinds of tips that are relevant for urban women are not necessarily appropriate for rural women. For example, you can’t suggest that a victim stand in front of window where she will be seen or run out into the street. This does not work when the nearest neighbour is miles away. Personal safety tips for rural women must take this into account that most rural homes have guns.
- One research study (Hornosty and Doherty 2001) found that rural women often experience threats that the abuser will kill the pets or farm animals. Some of the abused women in the study saw their spouse act on those threats. Address concerns for the safety of animals in the materials about family violence. Farm women felt revictimized when service providers made them feel guilty or stupid for caring so much for their pets and farm animals.
- Women in rural areas may be isolated and police response times may be long so it is important to offer tips on how to keep safe until help arrives.
- Consider packaging family violence information in formats that may not be as threatening if an abuser discovers them.

“We purposefully chose an innocuous title for our women’s law guide. It contains family violence information, mixed with other content, and this is less threatening if seen by an abusive spouse.”

Joel Janow, Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan

Put family violence law information into a rural/farm context

- Identify obstacles that rural folk experience in accessing the legal system and other services. Fear of dealing with police, courts and the criminal law system keep many victims from reporting assaults. Sometimes, knowing what will happen will make it less frightening – though not necessarily less daunting. Rural people have advised PLEI providers not to “white wash the information”. Information should explain how the system works without minimizing the challenges, the delays, the red tape and the revictimization that may occur when victims turn to social services, police and the legal system for help.

¹² Pulaarvik Kablu (Friendship Centre) in Nunavut is just beginning to implement a spousal abuse program in Rankin Inlet that will be sensitive, not only to the isolation and great distances, but to Northern cultures and traditions. The Centre plans to incorporate “traditional knowledge” in the development and implementation of the project and hire local elders as consultants. The intent is to build a program based on respect of the traditional cultures and solutions.

Include information about the impact of family violence on children.

- A recent study¹³ on family violence in rural areas notes that children play an important role in the decision making of abused women. This study suggests that it is important to speak to the impact on children who witness or experience abuse in their families. Knowing the significant negative long term effects of family violence on children may motivate many women to learn more about their options.

4.6 Know and Address the Barriers Confronting Rural People in Your Area

On page 10, this report examined barriers that inhibit rural victims of abuse from accessing family violence information and services. Most of the successful dissemination and distribution techniques and strategies for getting information into the hands of people living in rural areas involved strategies for mitigating these barriers. They included, for example:

Isolation and transportation problems

- If possible, arrange transportation to the event, such as a shuttle service, etc.
- Take information out into smaller villages.
- Give information to service providers and others who actually go into rural homes.

Poverty

- Events intended to provide family violence information to a rural audience should be free. Even a small entrance fee can be a deterrent.
- If the information is provided by piggy backing on another local event, people with limited resources will not have to make several trips to town.
- If possible, offer babysitting services so women who cannot afford a babysitter, or do not have access to babysitting, can bring the children along and leave them in supervised care while they attend the event.
- Offer subsidies for women from rural communities to attend regional or provincial events or conferences.
- Advertise that the event is free, with nutrition breaks for participants and children.

Low literacy / educational levels

- Put information into formats other than pamphlets - face-to-face works well.
- Use the Internet.
- Consider theatre with social messages, radio programs especially women's shows or ethnic language programs. Put messages on bingo cards, bookmarks, etc.

“A detailed pamphlet about family violence is not the answer for everyone – some people simply can't read it. That's why other formats, like posters, are useful. They contain short messages with contact numbers. Just enough to direct somebody to helping resources.”

Joanne Ings, Association of Transition Homes of PEI

¹³ Hornosty, J and Doherty, D. “Barriers Women Face in Leaving Abusive Relationships in Farm and Rural communities: The Importance of Understanding the Social and Cultural Context of Abuse,” Paper Presented at: 7th International Family Violence Research Conference Portsmouth, New Hampshire, July 2001.

Address lack of privacy

- Since confidentiality is difficult in small communities, it is important to integrate the information into existing services, for example, festivals or health care events, seniors fairs, and so on.
- Information should be delivered through activities and services already present in the community.
- Get information into local “informed gossip” networks.
- Find “private” or “women only spaces” where victims can read information in safety.

4.7 Connect family violence information with other related issues

Interestingly, from the checklist of possible topics set out on the questionnaire, most respondents indicated that they offer not only criminal law information, but also considerable amounts of family law information, general information on shelters, recognizing the signs of abuse and how to access other services.

“We don’t see a disconnect between family law and family violence in people’s lives. When people need information - they need both.”

Kim Pasula, Public Legal Education Network of Alberta

Law is a highly specialized field and the judicial system can be complex. Having to deal with the justice system can be daunting for anyone, even those for whom access to information is easy. However, rural women often face tremendous barriers in accessing accurate information. They may need information about family law, as well as their role as the victim/witness in a criminal case against their spouse, information on personal safety and crisis services, not to mention referrals to counselling and possibly information on employment/training opportunities and housing. The entry point into the information system is not likely to be directly through public legal education. For this reason, social service agencies, shelters, health care providers and others involved in family violence prevention organizations have typically sought and disseminated law information as well. Here are a few of the key learnings.

Recognize that family law information is important to women leaving violent relationships

- People do not compartmentalize their lives. Somebody leaving a violent relationship does not want to go to ten different places to get information about shelters, going to court, restraining orders, getting subsidized or second stage housing, ensuring support for their children, safety and security, and so on.
- It can be frustrating for victims to look for information when leaving a violent relationship. Such frustration may

“Since many women leaving violent relationships want to explore a range of options, they will have questions about their rights to custody of the children, access issues, support and so on. Family law information sessions are particularly well suited to sharing information about family violence and exploring options. Our Custody and Access Workshop is the most requested.”

Penny Bain, BC Institute Against Family Violence

contribute to their decision to give up and go back to an abusive home. Try to integrate a variety of information into packages that are available to service providers who help abused women. This is particularly important for rural women because they might have to make long, expensive trips to town to get the information.

Work with agencies who create safe spaces for recovery

- Sometimes victims of family violence are not ready to consider their legal rights or digest law information until they have dealt with the trauma in their lives and begun a recovery process. It is important to maintain connections with agencies that do provide trauma counselling so that individuals who do request law information have easy access or referral.

“We help women in our program find ways to set boundaries that respond to the cultural and family expectations that they are bound to encounter. No matter what kind of family violence information women receive, if they do not have the tools and skills to keep violence out of their lives, it won’t help them.”

Judy Geggie, Healing and Recovery Program, Yellowknife

4.8 Consider the appropriateness of the vehicles used to share information

Print materials can facilitate easy and safe access

Print materials still tend to be one of the most popular ways of sharing information about family violence. The materials developed by PLEI organizations and others range from flyers and pamphlets, to booklets and handbooks. Often the family violence law information produced is intended to educate service providers who can then better inform persons dealing with family violence about their options. However, the format of print materials can sometimes facilitate easy and safe access for victims themselves. In order to address issues of safety and privacy several organizations have presented information in new and unusual formats. These have included

- wallet-sized cards with contact numbers for police, legal aid, mental health and others
- lipstick tubes containing contact information to help a victim of family violence, or any format that can be easily hidden from an abuser
- bookmarks that refer people to web site information
- posters that describe abusive behaviours and give toll-free or contact numbers
- stickers with short, direct messages about abuse

Other formats considered useful for reaching rural audiences

- Videos and multimedia games (games on the Internet are a good way get information about abuse to youth)
- Television and radio advertisements or talk shows. (Particularly in rural communities, people listen to satellite radio and even Internet radio access and there are special programs designed to reach rural audiences or various ethnic languages)
- Advertising campaigns, billboards and poster campaigns

Toll-free Information Lines

The telephone is an important means of communication in the farming regions where neighbors are separated by distance. Several PLEI organizations offer a general toll-free law information line. Saskatchewan, which considers itself a largely rural province, has promoted the help line as an excellent vehicle for reaching people living in rural areas with information about family violence. A toll-free family violence line helps to address the obvious issue of financial constraints of rural people as well as concerns related to privacy and literacy. For example, if an abused woman calls long distance to find out about services such as a transition house, this would leave a telltale long distance call on the phone bill. A toll-free line avoids this. However, there should be on-going advertising to promote the purpose of the help lines and create familiarity with where to find the numbers. Advertising should be widespread and in places frequented by rural people. Saskatchewan used billboards and newspaper articles to promote awareness of the Hot Peach Pages (See Best Practices, page 23).

“Almost every home has a phone so if the directory happens to have a page that gives information about abuse and spells out the help lines that people can call, the abuser does not see this as something targeted at his or her household. Of course, you have to advertise the pages so people will know to look at them.”

Virginia Fisher, Provincial Association of Transition Houses of Saskatchewan

The Internet and new technologies.

- Many PLEI organizations, as well as federal government departments, are turning to the Internet to distribute information. The effectiveness of the Internet as a distribution tool for rural areas is growing. Almost all PLEI organizations have web sites and many believe that this helps to promote access for rural people.
- However, abusers can track the sites that their victims have been accessing so it is important to create partnerships with community access sites, libraries and other places that provide a “safe place” for abused women to gather information on the web and find out about their rights.

“The Internet is one of the most effective ways to reach rural women. More rural people are “connected” than their city counterparts: it’s a great resource and method of communication when you live in any degree of isolation. We did a study that shows Alberta farmers have a high rate of connectivity. They use the Internet for many things, including getting updates on the weather.”

San San Sy, Legal Studies Program

Train-the-Trainer sessions

- Several organizations that participated in this study mentioned the importance of developing and offering train-the-trainer sessions on family violence and family law. Such training has been given to other service providers, professional associations and even to their own staff. The intent is to help anyone who might be a point of access for a victim to feel comfortable sharing family violence law information in a sensitive and effective way. When family violence materials are given to local agencies to distribute to victims, it is much more likely that they will incorporate the information into their practice if that information has been mentored into their workplace through training.

4.9 Consider adapting the information for a rural audience

Participants in this inventory felt that information directed at rural clients should be adapted, although many had not been able to do so. Certainly, research findings from studies of family violence in rural areas also point to the need to adapt information to make it relevant and appropriate. The costs associated with producing separate products for people in rural areas were often a deterrent. Nevertheless, many organizations have adapted their materials to make them more relevant and culturally sensitive to victims of abuse and violence living in rural and remote areas. As well, research studies offer additional insights into reaching people experiencing abuse in a rural context.

There are primarily two ways in which organizations producing family violence information adapt their products for rural areas. They can adapt the content to make it more relevant, or they can customize the resources and local contacts. In light of the barriers confronting many rural people living with abuse, the following adaptations may help to make the information relevant and tailor messages to a rural audience. Here is an overview of some of the adaptations that have been made or suggested by participants and by research findings in this area.

Use local contact information

Some PLEI organizations have adapted the content of their materials by including specific information on support and resources in the rural areas. For example, pamphlets produced for urban areas may contain contact numbers that are inaccessible and perhaps long distance calls for rural clients. Education Wife Assault and the Community Abuse Program of Rural Ontario produced a pamphlet containing information and resources specifically for abused women in rural Ontario.

Simplify Information

Participants felt that many existing print resources about family violence or family law are valuable for service providers. However, in order to be more directly accessible to rural women and men the formats should be more visual and the language should be simple and accessible. Print materials should be short. Statistics show that the majority of abused women do not go to transition houses or other services for battered women to get information. Therefore, it is important to bring graphically striking print information about the law and services to public areas frequented by rural people.

Define Abuse

Several studies on family violence in rural areas suggest that family violence is often considered a private family matter that is not readily discussed by rural people. Rural people may not even think they have a problem in their community and women experiencing abuse may not want to be identified as a victim. Many will minimize their situation or attribute it to everyday family life. In one study that involved interviews with dozens of women who

“We are designing posters to tell abused women where they can find help. But we’re not using the term family violence, instead the poster says things like, “Is someone calling you names, putting you down, slapping you?” and so on. People can identify with the actual behaviours, not some vague term.”

Joanne Ings, PEI Transition House Association

experienced abuse in a rural context¹⁴, it was found that although people typically thought that family violence is wrong, there was a great deal of tolerance for abusive behaviours and a tendency to make excuses for the abusers and/or blame the victims. Many people felt “family violence” only referred to severe physical assaults - not the "everyday" hurtful things that happen in many families. Since people do not really know what is meant by the term family violence, it is better to define it.

Use pictures and graphics

Given the lower levels of literacy and education among many rural populations, messages should be straightforward in their presentation. When possible, pamphlets and brochures should include pictures and graphics. When text is necessary, it should be written in plain language and preferably in point form. People will not devote a great deal of time to reading elaborate explanations of the law.

4.10 Coordination of services is the best way to share information

Those organizations that have had an opportunity to work collaboratively, or develop interagency approaches, were adamant that this is the best way to ensure success. British Columbia’s experience in implementing the Community Coordination for Women’s Safety, Alberta’s experience in working with Community Adult Learning Councils to find effective ways of reaching rural audiences, and New Brunswick’s Caring Communities initiative to deliver public awareness of family violence at the grassroots level, all attest to the benefits of giving communities the tools to solve problems and work together to develop solutions.

Community development approaches encourage long-term social solutions

- When information becomes an integral part of the response to family violence, rather than an “add on”, it is more likely to be shared and acted on.
- Many provinces have family violence committees, inter-agency committees, family violence working groups or advisory committees that are consulted by government and others. Be sure that you are connected to and participate in such forums. They can ensure that your organization, and the family violence law information you produce are part of a larger strategy for addressing the issues.

“Local organizations, even rural ones, already have lots of information. But they don’t always use or share it effectively. We want to work with communities to give them the tools to build partnerships and coordinate responses to family violence. Information that is part of such a problem solving approach is much more likely to be accessed and shared effectively.”

Morgen Baldwin, Community Coordination for Women’s Safety

¹⁴ Family Violence on the Farm and in Rural Communities Research Team, *Barriers to the use of Support Services by Family Violence Victims in Northumberland County*, Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, 1997.

4.11 Develop Indicators of Success

Those who participated in this inventory project felt positive about the projects and methods they had developed to reach rural people. The PLEI organizations routinely monitor their distribution of law information. Most organizations can say how many thousands of copies of a particular pamphlet were distributed around their province and what kinds of agencies used it. However, monitoring and evaluating the success of projects and initiatives in terms of whether they specifically reached rural people dealing with abuse was more problematic. Although most of the participants in this project felt intuitively that their family violence initiatives or products were successful, many had not established specific indicators of success. To a certain extent, this is a reflection of the lack of funding to conduct full-scale evaluations. However, establishing parameters around what you hope to accomplish and periodically reviewing progress can help immensely in ensuring the effectiveness of dissemination strategies and uptake of the information. Here are a few key learnings and suggestions.

Know what you want to accomplish –set goals

- Set some standards to measure progress. If you develop a new web site, how many hits are you expecting each week? Do you expect the volume to increase because of a promotional campaign? If so, be sure to assess your measurement capabilities and put some indicators in place.

“We plan to start asking the question ‘where did you hear about us?’ and ‘where do you live?’ so we can get a better idea of how well we are serving rural areas.”

Susan Doyle, Public Legal Education Association of Newfoundland.
- Be proactive. If you want to reach more rural people, then think of strategies for doing so. New Brunswick monitored usage and found very low uptake in rural counties. After conducting a public awareness initiative in these counties, they were able to detect a dramatic increase in usage of law information products, particularly family violence materials. By having a baseline, you can measure the use of your materials before and after you make an effort to strengthen your presence in an area.

“When people visit our website, they are asked a few basic questions about themselves, including “where do you live?” Because the site is so new, we have only preliminary figures. But we will analyze them at the end of the first year, to see how many rural people are accessing the site. That will let us know if we have to be more active in reaching rural areas.”

Annick Gariepy, Educaloi

Recognize that qualitative information is important

- Many of the PLEI organizations use anecdotal feedback from front-line service providers who distribute the family violence information directly to abuse victims to determine whether it is helpful and making a difference. Also, the comments and call backs from people who have called an agency directly for information sheds light on information that is difficult to understand as well as information that has been very helpful. In one community that used newspaper articles about family violence, the Provincial Caring Partnership initiative reported that the local committee received a letter from a woman

thanking them for saving her life. That letter became a key indicator of success and a motivation to continue the public awareness effort.

- Even in evaluating a web site, the number of hits is not the only indicator of success. Sometimes just the fact that local organizations are becoming keen to partner with you in the future, or see the website as their “own tool”, is a sign that you are setting up a process to ensure success in the long term.

“Most people would look at the increased usage of our sites as a sign of success. However, that’s not the only way that we define success. In fact we think the sites are successful because the women’s shelters have come to see them as “their own sites” and are willing to update them, etc.”

San San Sy, Legal Studies Program

Monitor growth in requests to deliver information at events

- Many organizations have speaker’s bureaus and other services that encourage community organizations to call when they are organizing events in their area and want a speaker to address a specific law information topic. By monitoring where and how often communities request speakers, the organizations have a way of knowing what areas of the province they are known in and what areas they should consider targeting for greater public relations.
- If you use “information requests” as an indicator of interest in a topic, then you must be willing to promote your services so people are aware they can make requests. It may not be a lack of interest that is keeping people from calling and booking a speaker, rather a lack of awareness of what you offer.
- In Saskatchewan, calls to help lines were monitored for three months after the Hot Peach Pages had come out to determine if this project made a difference in access. The service agencies reported anywhere from 12% to 100% of the callers having found their number from the new peach pages. Usage of the phone book was highest in rural areas. This kind of evaluative information supports the maintenance and continuation of such services.

“We track the number of people who attend our workshops and we judge our success by how often we get asked to do more.”

Kim Winger, Portage College

Look for a variety of indicators of success

- If you are monitoring a project or program that hopes to disseminate information through a network of coordinated agencies, your indicator of success might not be the quantity of information shared, but how it is used. One participant in this inventory noted that success would mean getting more relevant people to become involved in responding to family violence issues, such as faith communities. Success would also be measured by creating more awareness among service providers of best practices and, finally, success would be linked to promoting more cooperation between all of the stakeholders

Section 5 - Key Findings and Proposed Actions

The following chapter is intended to present a capsule commentary on the key findings in the report, each of which is accompanied by a proposed action for effective delivery of family violence law information in rural areas.

Key Finding	Proposed Action
Establish rural partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build up a good rapport with service providers - Identify key rural people with an interest family violence prevention - Do not impose a project on a rural community - Seek the help of rural service providers at the front end when developing products and initiatives - Consult rural agencies about the relevance of the content of the information - Find appropriate places to display materials in rural areas - Incorporate family violence into non-threatening events in rural areas
Promote direct access to the information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look for ways to get information directly into the hands of people experiencing abuse.
Promote sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and stay linked to rural service providers - Help communities obtain resources to help themselves
Be sensitive to the rural context – social and cultural factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate examples of rural or farm context into family violence products - Know the culture of your rural community - Recognize that personal safety issues are different in rural areas - Put family violence information into a rural context. - Include information about the impact of family violence on children
Know and address the barriers confronting rural people in your area	<p>Be sure to address issues such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Isolation and lack of transportation - Poverty (free entrance, daycare, nutritious snacks, piggy backing on other services) - Low literacy/education levels (short, plain language message directing people to helping services)

Key Finding	Proposed Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of privacy (look for safe places to put materials)
<p>Connect family violence information with related issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize that family law information is important to women leaving violent relationships - Put together packages that contain a wealth of information on criminal and non-criminal remedies and social services.
<p>Consider the appropriateness of the vehicles used to share information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Print materials can facilitate safe and easy access - Toll-free lines can offer safe and effective ways for victims to find help - The Internet and new technologies can also offer information especially when accessed in safe places where women can use computers. - Train-the-trainer sessions are important to promote new practices in family violence prevention
<p>Consider adapting the information for a rural audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use local contact information - Simplify the information - Define abuse - Use pictures and graphics
<p>Coordinate services as a “best practice” for disseminating information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community development approaches encourage long term social solutions
<p>Develop indicators of success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know what you want to accomplish and set goals - Recognize that qualitative information is important too - Monitor growth in requests to deliver information at rural events - Look for a variety of indicators of success such as getting more relevant people involved in responding to family violence, creating more awareness among service providers of best practices, and promoting more cooperation between all stakeholders.
<p>Share best practices whenever possible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hold an event to further explore the best practices in this inventory and to find ways to enhance and sustain these initiatives and promote transferability.

Appendix A: Data Collection Instruments – Covering Letter and Questionnaire

Dear Colleagues:

RE: COMPILATION OF AN INVENTORY FOR GETTING FAMILY VIOLENCE INFORMATION TO PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS

The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research is compiling a national inventory for Justice Canada relating to how public legal education organizations, family violence prevention services, and others, strive to get appropriate family violence related information to people living in rural areas.

As you know, most provinces and territories in Canada have large rural populations. Living in rural communities can create barriers to accessing information generally and these obstacles are even greater for victims of family violence. Barriers can range from sheer geography and isolation, to language or literacy barriers, community norms against speaking out about abuse, myths and misconceptions about victims rights, lack of infrastructure to deliver information, and others. How do you get information to people who may be experiencing abuse and violence in a rural context? What kind of information do they need? How do you know if you have been successful?

We want to explore these questions with you in order to prepare an inventory of “best” and “promising” practices. A listing of existing family violence pamphlets or materials is not particularly useful by itself. What we need to share with one another are the unique and effective ways that we have found for touching the lives of rural people. Justice Canada is committed to translating the final report/inventory and making it available to all of you as a tool for future action.

Please help us to make this inventory as comprehensive as possible. We need to hear about the effective strategies and methods that you have used to accomplish this challenging task. We ask that you complete the attached questionnaire and return it to the Research Centre by fax at 506-453-4788. Because the time lines for this project are short, we encourage your responses by February 15, 2002.

After analyzing the feedback, a representative of the Centre will be contacting many of you to arrange an interview. I thank you in advance for your cooperation and insights.

Yours truly,

Deborah Doherty, Ph.D.

Consultant Community Research and Special Projects

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MAKING FAMILY VIOLENCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE LIVING IN RURAL AREAS

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. We do not want extensive detail at this time. We hope that the general information you provide will help us to identify promising strategies and methods for making law-related information and other helpful resources and service available and accessible to *rural* victims of family violence. After receiving the completed questionnaires, we will contact many of you to arrange a follow-up interview in order to obtain detailed information about your strategies.

PLEASE FAX COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO 506-453-4788 (att: D. Doherty)

1. What kind of information does your organization have to help victims of family violence and how is it packaged? (Please check all relevant boxes)

Subject of Information	Formats
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal law	<input type="checkbox"/> Fact sheets Booklets, pamphlets
<input type="checkbox"/> Family law	<input type="checkbox"/> Videos, Audio tapes
<input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing signs of abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Toll-free line
<input type="checkbox"/> Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper column
<input type="checkbox"/> Services (shelters, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

2. What kinds of strategies and mechanisms do you use, if any, to ensure that the information is distributed to, or readily accessible for, rural people generally and rural clients experiencing family violence in particular? Do you...

- Partner with rural service providers
- Partner with farm or women's organizations
- Partner with local churches, schools, other groups
- Partner with special programs (well-baby, health clinics, etc.)
- Piggy back on rural events
- Monitor distribution in rural areas
- Target mail outs to rural areas
- Set up displays in rural areas
- Have rural outreach initiatives
- Other (please specify) _____

3. Do you ever modify the content of your information (specific contact numbers, specialized versions, etc.) to make it more relevant for rural clients? If so, how?

4. How do you know you have been successful in reaching rural clients? What are some of the indicators that rural clients are accessing your information?

Your Name: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ Email _____

Appendix B - Organizations/Individuals Completing Questionnaires and/or Participating in Interviews/Consultations

BC Institute Against Family Violence
Penny Bain, Director
#515 409 Granville Vancouver, BC V6C 1T2
Phone: 604-669-7055 Fax: 604-660-7054

Paukuutit Inuit Women's Association of Canada
Catherine Carry, Special Projects Coordinator
131 Bank St. 3rd Floor, Ottawa, ON
Phone: 613-238-3977 Fax: 613-238-1787

Public Legal Education Program, Medicine Hat College – PLENA Member
Catherine Crockford, Coordinator
299 College Dr. SE, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 3Y6
Phone: 529-3875 Fax: 504-3512

Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland
Susan Doyle, Executive Director
Suite 101, Fortis Building. 139 Water Street, St. John's, NF A1C 1B2
Phone: 709-722-2643 Fax: 709-722-0054

Calgary John Howard Society Community Justice Education Program
April Dort,
919-9th Ave St, Calgary, AB T2G 0S5
Phone: 403-543-7817 Fax: 403-265-2458

Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia
Maria Franks, Executive Director
5523 B Young Street, The Hydrostone Market, Halifax, NS B3K 1Z7
Phone: 902-454-2198 Fax: 902-455-3105

PEI Transition House Association
Joanne Ings, Executive Director
84 Fitzroy St. Charlottetown, PEI C1A 1R7
Phone: 902-894-3354 Fax: 902-628-8718

Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan
Joel Janow, Co-director
300-201 21st Street East, Saskatoon, SK S7H 0B8
Phone: 306-653-1868 ext.227 Fax: 306-653-1869

Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre
Lorraine Whalley, Executive Director
Liz A. Lautard, Aware and Supportive Communities Project Coordinator
P.O.Box 174, Fredericton, NB E3B 4Y9
Phone: 506-452-6986 Fax: 506-457-2780

Rankin Inlet Spousal Abuse Program
David Mablick, Director
Box 429, Rankin Inlet, NV X0C 0G0
Phone: 867-645-3785 Fax: 867-645-3785

Alberta Teacher's Association, Safe and Caring Schools Project
Barb Maheu, Program Manager
11010-142 St., Edmonton, AB T5N ZR1
Phone: 780-455-6481 Fax: 780-455-6481

Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary
Crime, Violence and Abuse Prevention Program
Kelli Moore
7 – 11 Street N.E, Calgary, AB T2E 4Z2
Phone: 263-6880 Fax: 263-6811

Public Legal Education Network of Alberta
Kim Pasula Executive Office
5520 47A Ave, Red Deer, AB T4N 3V6
Phone: 403-343-3712 Fax: 403-340-2890

Community Legal Education Information Association of PEI
Ann Sherman, Executive Director
P.O. Box 1207, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7M8
Phone: 902-892-0853 Fax: 902-368-4096

Legal Studies Program, University of Alberta
San San Sy, Associate Director
8303-112 St. Edmonton, AB T6G 2T4
Phone: 780-492-1720 Fax: 780-492-1720

Public Legal Education and Information Services of New Brunswick
Teena Thorne, Acting Executive Director
P.O. Box 6000, Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
Phone: 506-453-5360 Fax: 506-457-7899

Community Legal Education Association of Manitoba
Mary Troszko, Executive Director
501 – 204 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0B9
Phone: 203-943-2382 Fax: 204-943-3600

Nunavut Legal Aid
Bonnie Tulloch, Executive Director
General Delivery, Gjoa Haven, Nunavut X0E 1J0
Phone: 867-360-4603 Fax: 867-360-6112

Action Committee Against Violence (Calgary)
Home Front Project, Karen Walroth
Mail Code 19, P.O. Box 2100, Station M. Calgary, AB T2P 2M5
Phone: 403-268-6755 Fax: 403-268-5458

Ontario Women's Justice Network (OWJN) and
Metropolitan Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)
Paula Wansbrough
158 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON M5R 2T8
Phone: 416-392-3138 Fax: 416-392-3136

Legal Education Program, Portage College
Kim Winger, Coordinator
Box 417, AB T0A 2C0
Phone: 780-623-5347 Fax: 780-623-5347

Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research
Deborah Doherty, Consultant Community Research and Special Projects
P.O. Box 4400, 678 Windsor Street, Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3
Phone: 506-453-3595 Fax: 506-453-4788

Educaloi
Annick Gariépy
Cp 1537, succ, Place d'Armes, Montreal, QC
Phone: 514-954-3408 Fax: 514-954-3493

Community Coordination for Women's Safety
Morgen Baldwin, Regional Coordinator
213 South Lyon Street, Prince George, BC V2M 3K9
Phone: 250-564-5337 Fax: 250-564-4494

Provincial Caring Partnership Committee
Therese Murray, Liaison Coordinator
C/o MMFF, P.O. Box 50 000, Fredericton, NB E3B 6C2
Phone: 1-888-673-6633 Fax: 506-472-5084

British Columbia Legal Services Society
Carol McEown, Director
1500-1140 West Pender Street, Vancouver, BC V6E 4G1
Phone: 604-601-6117 Fax: 604-682-0965

Public Legal Education Association of Canada (PLEAC)
Paul Gerhart, President
C/o 3000 College Drive South, Lethbridge, AB T1K 1L6
Phone: 403-320-3346 Fax: 403-380-3450

Education Wife Assault and the Community Abuse Program of Rural Ontario
(No able to set up interview)
427 Bloor Street West, Box 7, Toronto, ON M5S 1X7
Phone: 416-968-3422 Fax: 416-968-2026

Victim Services Division, Provincial Government

Jane Coombe

P.O. Box 4288, Victoria, BC V8W 9J7

Phone: 250-387-1554 Fax: 250-356-1092

Women and Children's Recovery Program

Judy Geggie, Director

23 Ryan Street,

Yellowknife, NWT X1A 2V7

Phone: 867-669-9122 Fax: 869-669-9255

Appendix Appendix C -- Project Staff

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Consultant, Community Research and Special Projects

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P.O. Box 4400, 678 Windsor Street

Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3

Tel: 506-452-6367

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Email: doherty@unb.ca or fvrc@unb.ca

Willa Stevenson

Research Assistant/Interviewer

Mark Garrett

UNB Law Student - Interviewer

Appendix D: References

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Martz, D., and Sarauer, D. *Domestic Violence and the Experiences of Rural Women in East Central Saskatchewan* [online]. Muenster: Centre for Rural Studies and Enrichment, 2000 [cited 05 November 2001]. Available from World Wide Web:
(http://www.hotpeachpages.org/paths/rural_dv_eastsask.html)

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