

## **Canadian women taking action against violence and poverty**

From coast to coast, women's organizations are working to make a difference in the areas of violence against women and poverty – both issues have a major impact on the lives of many women and young girls in every milieu. Their work contributes to creating an awareness of these crucial issues among the general population as well as the decision-makers. Following is a sample of the kind of projects where women's organizations are making a difference.

### **ANTI-VIOLENCE INITIATIVES:**

#### **VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND THE GIRL CHILD**

In 1998, **The Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence (AFRCV)** completed an extensive literature review, focus groups and an inventory of programs to address violence against the girl child, and produced a report on its findings entitled ***Violence Prevention and the Girl Child***. Building on the first phase of this initiative, the research centres are currently undertaking further work including analysis of the impact of policy on marginalized girls; examination of innovative programming for children and youth involved in prostitution; evaluation of selected violence prevention programming; development of models for the successful generalization of violence prevention programs; and development and evaluation of violence prevention programming in rural settings.

#### ***For more information:***

- *Web site:* [www.uwo.ca/violence/alliance/alliance2.htm](http://www.uwo.ca/violence/alliance/alliance2.htm)
- BC/Yukon Feminist Research, Education, Development & Action (FREDA) Centre: (604) 291-5197; *e-mail:* [freda@sfu.ca](mailto:freda@sfu.ca); *Web site:* [www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda/](http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda/)
- RESOLVE Tri-Provincial Network (Manitoba): (204) 474-8965; *e-mail:* [herring@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:herring@cc.umanitoba.ca)
- The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children (Ontario): (519) 661-4040; *e-mail:* [nshanaha@julian.uwo.ca](mailto:nshanaha@julian.uwo.ca); *Web site:* [www.uwo.ca/violence/](http://www.uwo.ca/violence/)
- Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la violence familiale et la violence faite aux femmes (Québec): (514) 343-6111 ext. 3757; *e-mail:* [beauren@ere.umontreal.ca](mailto:beauren@ere.umontreal.ca)
- Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research (New Brunswick): (506) 453-3595; *e-mail:* [fvrc@unb.ca](mailto:fvrc@unb.ca); *Web site:* [www.unb.ca/arts/CFVR/](http://www.unb.ca/arts/CFVR/)

#### ***Some facts***

#### **on violence against women in Canada**

**Fact!** A higher proportion of women than men are victims of crimes against persons, especially sexual assault, robbery, attempted robbery and assault.<sup>1</sup>

**Fact!** Half of Canadian women (51%) have been victims of at least one act of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.<sup>2</sup>

**Fact!** In 1998, over 28,952 cases of sexual offence were reported in Canada, including 25,493 sexual assaults and 3,459 other types of sexual offence (such as sexual touching, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, sodomy and bestiality). Women made up the vast majority of victims of sexual assault (85%) and other types of sexual offence (75%).<sup>3</sup>

**Fact!** Over 22,254 cases of spousal violence were reported in 1997. Women accounted for 88% of the victims (19,575) and men for 12% (2,679). Women were 8 times more likely than men to be assaulted by a spouse.<sup>4</sup>

**Fact!** Women made up one third of the victims in the 555 cases of homicide committed in 1998. Data on solved crimes (i.e., the 410 cases in which a person was accused) indicate that women were almost five times more likely to be killed by a spouse than by a stranger.<sup>5</sup>

## ***Canadian Women Taking Action to Make a Difference!***

### **MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN Y2K**

***Making a Difference in Y2K*** is an initiative about empowering anglophone and francophone youth to develop strategic action plans to address the issue of dating violence in their schools and to ensure that appropriate provincial policies and protocols are implemented in the New Brunswick school system on the issue. It has been developed by the **Collective of Making Waves/Vague par Vague** which consists of two independent dating violence initiatives which joined together in 1999 to further their work in dating violence prevention in New Brunswick. Its mission is to create a climate in the New Brunswick educational system that supports healthy relationships, and where abuse is not tolerated.

#### ***For more information:***

- Making Waves: Simone Leibovitch (506) 648-0481; *e-mail:* [candlewd@nb.sympatico.ca](mailto:candlewd@nb.sympatico.ca)
- Vague par Vague: Carole F-Comeau (506) 849-2110; *e-mail:* [fda@nb.sympatico.ca](mailto:fda@nb.sympatico.ca)

### **PARTNERING TO COORDINATE A METRO RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT**

In 1998-99, the **Avalon Sexual Assault Centre** worked in cooperation with the Halifax Regional Police and the Nova Scotia Prosecution Services to research what had been done in other jurisdictions in the area of sexual assault policies and protocols. After having identified concerns and potential solutions, they worked cooperatively with all partners to develop a long term action plan to address the identified gaps and barriers and ultimately to provide more coordinated response to sexual assault cases in Nova Scotia.

#### ***For more information:***

- Avalon Sexual Assault Centre (902) 422-4240; *e-mail:* [avaloncentre@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:avaloncentre@ns.sympatico.ca)

### **WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES, DEAF WOMEN AND THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS**

Since its inception in 1978, **Education Wife Assault (EWA)** has been the backbone of education and information for anti-violence prevention in Ontario. Its mandate is to inform and educate the communities in Ontario about the issue of wife assault/woman abuse and its impact on children in order to decrease the incidence of physical, psychological, emotional and sexual violence against women and the effect that woman abuse has on children. In partnership with the Roeher Institute, **EWA** developed and implemented, in 1998-1999, information sessions for judges and training sessions on ***Women with Disabilities, Deaf Women and the Domestic Violence Courts*** to Crown Attorneys, Police, Victim/Witness Assistance Program Staff, community agencies and organizations working with women with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence. For this initiative, the organization has developed a participant manual, facilitator manual and training plan, a "tool kit" for participants and a directory of services in the seven cities where domestic violence courts are located. The directory is available on the EWA Web site.

#### ***For more information:***

- Education Wife Assault: (416) 968-3422; *e-mail:* [info@womanabuseprevention.com](mailto:info@womanabuseprevention.com);  
*Web site:* [www.womanabuseprevention.com](http://www.womanabuseprevention.com)

### **OUT OF THE SHADOW INTO THE LIGHT**

***Out from the shadows and into the Light*** is an initiative that grew out of the International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth held in Victoria, British Columbia, in March 1998. Launched in May 1999, it aims to address the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and boys by increasing public awareness of the realities of the problems facing these young people, primarily girls, by assisting them in leaving the sex trade and by deterring other youth from entering the sex trade. This initiative has been developed by **Save the Children - Canada**, a non profit organization who began its operation in 1921 and works to protect children against neglect, exploitation and cruelty.

#### ***For more information:***

- Save the Children – Canada: 1-800-325-6873 or (604) 437-5881; *e-mail:* [scc-bc@direct.ca](mailto:scc-bc@direct.ca);  
*Web site:* [www.savethechildren.ca](http://www.savethechildren.ca)

## ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVES:

### TRANSITION 50

**Transition 50** is a national initiative aimed at improving the economic independence of, and social justice for, women 48 to 60 years of age. **Transition 50** attempts to heighten awareness within women's groups about the various issues facing women in this age group and to encourage them to incorporate these issues into their action programs. A national conference on the issues facing women in their fifties will also be held in Montréal in spring 2001. This project is an initiative of **Nouveau Départ National Inc.**, which was founded in 1977 with a mandate to promote the reintegration of middle-aged women. Nouveau Départ has 17 member groups in Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon.

#### **For more information:**

- Nouveau Départ National Inc.: (514) 866-0416;  
e-mail: [nouveaudepart@videotron.ca](mailto:nouveaudepart@videotron.ca);  
Web site: [www.nouveaudepart.org](http://www.nouveaudepart.org) (starting March 8)

### DEVELOPING ACTIONS TOWARDS MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT (DAME)

**DAME** is a new initiative of **Women's Network PEI** to develop a process involving government representatives and women's organizations working in collaboration to address the economic inequality of women living in PEI. It intends to review the current services available to women through Human Resources Development Canada (PEI) and to identify whether or not women's issues are taken into consideration during the development, delivery and implementation of employment services. Women from visible minority communities, single mothers, women living with mental health challenges and physical disabilities, those living in poverty and women from Aboriginal communities in Prince Edward Island are the primary groups targeted by this project.

#### **For more information:**

- Women's Network PEI: (902) 368-5040; e-mail: [wnpei@isn.net](mailto:wnpei@isn.net); Web site: [www.wnpei.org/](http://www.wnpei.org/)

### ***Some facts on women and poverty in Canada***

**Fact!** Women face a significantly higher risk of poverty than men. In 1997, the poverty rate for women was 18.3%, the rate for men was 14.3% and the ratio between sexes was 1.28.<sup>6</sup>

**Fact!** Most of the differences between the sexes can be explained by the high poverty rates of three family types: single women under 65, single women 65 and older, and single mothers under 65 with children under 18.<sup>6</sup>

**Fact!** In 1997, the poverty rate for single women under 65 was 38.5%, compared to 33.4% for single men under 65. For single seniors, the poverty rates were 42% for women and 27.2% for men. Single mothers with children under 18 had a poverty rate of 57.1%.<sup>6</sup>

**Fact!** In 1997, average earning in current and constant dollars was \$30,915 for a full-year, full-time female worker as opposed to \$42,626 for a full-year, full-time male worker. The ratio between the sexes was 72.5%.<sup>7</sup>

**Fact!** In 1998, female employees earned an average of 81 cents for every dollar earned by men.<sup>8</sup>

**Fact!** In 1998, more women than men worked for minimum wage. In the first quarter of the year, 68% of 25 to 54 year old minimum wage workers were women. Also, 80,000 women aged 35 to 54 received no more than the minimum wage, compared to 33,000 men in the same age group.<sup>9</sup>

# Canadian Women Taking Action to Make a Difference!

## L'ENTREPRENEURSHIP AU FÉMININ

Above all, **L'Entrepreneurship au féminin** aims to improve women's economic well-being. Through many initiatives, such as the establishment of a fund to facilitate access to credit and risk capital, it aims to promote the development of entrepreneurial spirit among women, particularly those living in rural areas, as well as to assist them with starting up their own businesses. This initiative was launched in 1998-1999 by the **Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (AFEAS)** in collaboration with the Réseau des sociétés d'aide au développement des collectivités, the financial community, and various federal bodies. **AFEAS** was founded at the end of the 1960s to reorganize Québec associations interested in promoting women's equality and improving society.

### **For more information:**

- AFEAS: (514) 251-1636; e-mail: [girard.AFEAS@sympatico.ca](mailto:girard.AFEAS@sympatico.ca); Web site: [www.afeas.qc.ca](http://www.afeas.qc.ca)

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC LIBERATION

**Women's Economic Liberation** aims to enhance the economic autonomy of immigrant, refugee and visible minority women in Saskatchewan. It strives to bring institutional and policy change by identifying policies, programs and services of governmental and non-governmental institutions that pose barriers to these women in receiving training and development to secure jobs that befit their qualifications and experience; and recommending desired changes to address these barriers. This project which started in 1998 is an initiative of **Immigrant, Refugee and Visible Minority Women (IRVMW) of Saskatchewan Inc.**, a voluntary provincial umbrella organization. Their main purpose is to provide a forum for its membership to voice their concerns, and to advocate for better programs and services for these women in order to achieve their full potential and to facilitate their equal participation in the social, economic and political life of Canada. **For more information:**

- IRVMW of Saskatchewan Inc.: (306) 359-6523; e-mail: [irvmwomsask@sk.sympatico.ca](mailto:irvmwomsask@sk.sympatico.ca)

## INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE THROUGH THE BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRE

**Women's Economic and Business Solutions (WEBS)** started a three-year initiative in 1998 to engage the public and private sector in discussion and action regarding situational variables and systemic barriers which prevent successful micro-enterprises of women, particularly when they come from an economically depressed area. WEBS works to highlight the potential for recruitment for micro-enterprises development within non-traditional communities such as women in prostitution, retired women, incarcerated women and women with disabilities, where women face so many barriers that business development is often not even considered. It also tries to attract post-secondary students from faculties that have traditionally not been in close contact with low-income women for work placements. This initiative allows WEBS to document the creation and sustaining of at least 20 micro-enterprises by low-income women, leading to economic growth and autonomy for these women.

### **For more information:**

- WEBS: (780) 479-4196; e-mail: [mrenaud@telusplanet.net](mailto:mrenaud@telusplanet.net)

## Sources

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