

# CASAC Resolutions 2005

## The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centers/Association canadienne des centres contre les agressions a caractere sexuel

We are a pan Canadian group of sexual assault centers who have come together to implement the legal social and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent, and ultimately eradicate, rape and sexual assault. As feminists we recognize that violence against women is one of the strongest indicators of prevailing societal attitudes towards women. The intent of CASAC is to act as a force for social change regarding violence against women at the individual, the institutional and the political level.

## Toward an End to Violence And Poverty

Violence Against Women prevents women's equality. Any lack of equality makes women vulnerable to violence. Consequently working to aid women after sexist violent attack is not enough. We must end the inequality of women and the use men make of it. These are the recent policies that are relevant to women's equality passed at the convention of Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC) in April 2005. These positions emerge from our frontline work with the women who call us daily and in turn they inform that work. It was a decision of the convention that these policies are interrelated and should be read together. In that way they produce the strongest political meaning. When we weave together our vision our work and our successes on these reforms their power to transform increases exponentially.

## CASAC Policy 2005

We demand for ourselves and other women in Canada a ***Guaranteed Liveable Income***. Toward that end we agreed to explore and incorporate ***The Pictou Statement***. But recognizing the impoverishment of Third World Women we also demand a ***redistribution of wealth*** on the international level and so we support the call by the World March of Women to ***cancel the debt of Third World Countries***. We passed a call for our centers to work harder ***to support and ally with existing organizations within Canada of women of color and Indigenous women***. CASAC supports the Native Women Association of Canada's call for ***10 million dollars for the "Sisters in Spirit Campaign"*** to lead the campaign to document the missing Native women country-wide and to support their families. Our policy calls for the ***abolition of prostitution and all forms of sexual exploitation*** and views prostitution as sexist and racist. We analyzed and stated that prostitution is based on inequalities between men and women, rich and poor adults and children, between counties of the global North and South makes ***the connection between women's poverty, racism and global patriarchy*** and therefore requires ***global feminist action and***

*solidarity*. This policy is a continuation of policies uniting CASAC members in October 2001. Faced with the *government decriminalization of violence against women* and the *increased targeted criminalization of women who defended themselves from violence and poverty* we acted. Decriminalizing violence against women comes in many forms: through restorative justice or other alternate dispute resolution measures, through diversion from court processes to religious or cultural programs and even through ineffective policing. We passed a resolution *to oppose diversion in all forms including “Restorative Justice”* as dangerous to women and undermining women’s equality. CASAC Members together call for *the criminalization of men who traffick women both internationally and domestically* and agreed *no criminalization of prostituted women*. Last April we strengthened our policy by passing a resolution that calls to an end to all forms of prostitution including pornography and that we *place prostitution within the context of globalization*.

## **Beyond CASAC to 2006**

We recognize that our membership is not fully representative of the world- wide demographics of women. We are not yet fully representative of the population of women in Canada or Quebec. Believing in democracy, we invented an alliance process to test and complement our thinking, analysis and plans until full integration is achieved.

These policy resolutions were presented to our identifiable feminist allies in our *“Day of Feminist Dialogue”*. We offered the work, shared analysis and leadership coming from anti-violence workers across Canada for criticism. We were endorsed by those allies in our approach and have launched several joint plans of action.

In resistance to violence against women and in memory of the Montreal Massacre we invite further dialogue and alliance. The women of Vancouver Rape Relief and Women’s Shelter as members of CASAC have invited women from our local community, from the Aboriginal women’s struggle, from the anti violence work in the interior and Quebec from anti-poverty work and from the Third World to dialogue with Vancouver activists to increase solidarity and our separate and joint impact.

## **Prostitution is Violence Against Women**

CASAC stands in solidarity with all those who are sexually exploited

- We believe in a world free from prostitution and all forms of sexual exploitation
- We declare that the prostitution system is profoundly sexist and racist. It is based on the existing inequalities between men and women, adults and children, rich and poor, between countries of the north and south and racialized inequalities.
- We declare that the root cause of prostitution is the demand for women and children for sexual exploitation that is those men who see it as their unlimitable right to purchase and sexually exploit women and girls.
- We declare that prostitution is usually the consequence of women living in economic and affective misery, as well as different forms of sexual violence and social and political

inequalities. It is linked to the sexualization of young women and girls. It is therefore not a "choice" of work or a "right" to dispose of one's body as one wishes.

- We believe that sexually exploited women are drawn into a prostitution culture by buyers, procurers and traffickers over a period of time due to the violence of men, to poverty, to the terrible cycle of drug addiction, and to the precarious status of immigrants in this country.
- We believe that sexual exploitation based on the commercialization of women's bodies and is situated on a continuum that includes: pornography, prostitution, all forms of sexual violence (pedophilia), domestic and international sexual trafficking and sexual slavery.
- We believe that the globalization of sexual trafficking feeds the sex industry's constant demand for "new blood" and "exoticism". It touches the life of millions of people, mostly women and girls from southern countries, Eastern Europe, but also within Canada.
- We denounce the sex industry which in the context of globalization exploits the misery and the vulnerability of the most fragile members of society and those made vulnerable due to war, armed conflicts and economics, social, political and environmental crises.
- We reaffirm that the struggle against all the forms of sexual exploitation is an integral part of the battle for the respect of human rights, sexual equality, and the equality between all peoples.

Therefore be it resolved:

- We consider prostitution a form of violence against women and demand the criminal prosecution of all procurers and traffickers.
- We demand that the Canadian government respects the commitments that it made signing and ratifying the United Nations Palermo protocol by ensuring the security, protection of and assistance to trafficked persons and people, and ceasing all detention and deportation of victims of trafficking.

## **No Restorative Justice/ADR in cases of Violence Against Women**

Whereas:

- Current Canadian Restorative and Alternative Justice models do not effectively or adequately address women's equality issues; use of these programs in cases of male violence against women is dangerous and counterproductive to women achieving safety and justice after rape.

Be it resolved that

- There are no Restorative or Alternative Justice programs in Canada at present that the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres will support for use in cases of male violence against women.

- We as an Association do not support the decriminalization of sexual violence: we acknowledge that current Restorative and Alternative Justice programs have the potential to effectively decriminalize sexual violence.
- The Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres will not consider supporting any Restorative or Alternative Justice Programs for use in cases of male violence against women unless the following criteria are met:
- Women have control over whether their case of male violence is addressed through Restorative or Alternative Justice measures.
- The program has a structure and philosophy that reflects a demonstrated commitment to women's equality. Specifically, the program is developed in collaboration with women's equality seeking groups, and is based in narrative research conducted in collaboration with women's equality seeking groups.
- The program treats all forms of male violence against women with equal seriousness. The program does not assume that any category of offense or perpetrator is more amenable to resolution by restorative justice means.
- The program is adequately resourced to address the extensive support necessary for women to go through a Restorative or Alternative Justice process.

note: CASAC agrees we are not in favour of prosecuting boys the same as adult men.

## **CASAC in solidarity with Native Women in Canada**

We, members of CASAC, in solidarity with and respect for the rights and demands of our Native sisters all across Canada.

We denounce and we are deeply angry about the disappearance during the last 20 years of 500 Native women from various Native communities in Canada.

We deplore that Native women remain the target of violence and hatred based on race. Unfortunately, they continue to be objectified, disrespected, dishonoured, ignored and killed-very often without any punishment.

We support the Native Women's Association of Canada's "Sisters in Spirit" campaign, which is asking for \$10 million in fundraising to:

- Research and document the number of circumstances of the Native women who have disappeared and been killed in Canada.
- Public education about the causes of violence against Native women.
- Public workshops about the missing women and their families
- An emergency telephone line and official registry to report the disappearances and keep statistics.

We are asking our federal government to provide this funding for research and education as asked for by NWAC.

## **Women's Poverty**

Given that poverty is completely unnecessary and unacceptable reality

Given that poverty is disproportionately imposed on women, and in a particular fashion on indigenous women, women of colour, immigrant and refugee women, women with disabilities, and single mothers.

Given that poverty increases the vulnerability of women to being attacked in their homes, on the job, and on the street

And given that poverty creates barriers to women's autonomy which are difficult to overcome

And given that poverty prevents women's access to health and justice after attacks of violence

And given the CASAC sees hopes in the analysis and attitude of the Pictou gathering

Be it resolved that CASAC supports the Pictou Statement as a starting point for a feminist economic theory

## **A call for an integration strategy for CASAC members (coming from the Women of Colour Caucus)**

Whereas when women gain equality, equality will be achieved for all.

Whereas when women's organizing may look different in different communities, locally and world wide, and

Whereas the major reason women flee their countries is because the forces of patriarchy, including capitalism, this requires global feminist solidarity with poor women, indigenous women and women of colour worldwide,

And whereas the majority of the people in the world are women, women of colour, indigenous and poor women,

If the world were fair there would be no poor and women of colour and indigenous women would hold 75% of the world's power,

And whereas we want liberation for women inside and outside Canada, any affirmative action strategy will have to work on a world wide scale that would mean more power held by indigenous and women of colour world wide.

And whereas we see the uprising of the women of the global south as an integrated uprising,

Therefore be it resolved:

We will support and ally with existing organized women of colour and indigenous anti-violence women's groups locally and globally.

Be it resolved that CASAC members support the emergence of autonomous groups of women of colour and indigenous women and race integration of CASAC members. This requires extra resources tactics, strategies and commitment on the part of our centres in order to achieve this.

Further be it resolved, that in our demand for a guaranteed livable income, and our demand for the redistribution of wealth, we include and support the call of the World March of Women to cancel debt of Third World Countries.