

# What Women Need Now from Police and Prosecutors

## 35 Years of Working to Improve Police Response to Male Violence Against Women

LOUISA RUSSELL

*En dépit des efforts déployés par les activistes depuis 1970, la réaction policière à la violence des hommes contre les femmes demeure troublante. Pour le 35<sup>e</sup> anniversaire du Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, nous avons travaillé avec des personnes impliquées dans cette lutte. Elles sont venues du Canada, de l'Angleterre, de l'Écosse, du pays de Galles, de la Nouvelle-Zélande, de l'Australie, de l'Afrique du Sud, et des États-Unis, même des féministes autochtones. Il nous faut reconsidérer le climat politique actuel, évaluer nos stratégies et déterminer où nous devrions orienter nos efforts à l'avenir.*

As long as there is rape ... there is not going to be any peace or justice or equality or freedom. You are not going to become what you want to become or who you want to become. You are not going to live in the world you want to live in. (Dworkin 169)

The collective that operates Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter (VRRWS) celebrated our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008. We are proud to be the first rape crisis centre in Canada. Over the past three and a half decades, Vancouver Rape Relief has put significant efforts toward improving police response to women escaping male violence, including rape. Despite important formal equality gains, intense advocacy efforts, and more women reporting male violence to their local detachments, many troubling aspects of police response remain unchanged since the 1970s.

Canadian conviction rates in cases of sexist violence remain extremely low.<sup>1</sup> RCMP member Matt Logan was recently quoted as saying, "If you are a sex offender in B.C. right now, you have a 98.5 percent chance of getting away with it."<sup>2</sup> The highest percentage of cases "lost" by the criminal justice system continues to be at the initial police level (Lakeman 2005: 182). No wonder that over 70 per cent of women who call transition houses and sexual assault centres in Canada do not report male violence to police (Lakeman 2005: 148, 153). That figure is even

starker if we only look at sexual assault cases reported to police, which is less than ten per cent. We know from our records that reporting may have increased slightly, but the actual percentage has not changed much since we opened. There are many reasons for women's reluctance to report, one of the top ones being that we won't be taken seriously.<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal women, particularly those on reserves, tell us there has been little to no change at all (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women 4).

Vancouver Rape Relief responds to around 1,400 new women each year on the crisis lines and we organize women, through peer counselling and in our support groups, in response to all forms of male violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, incest, drug facilitated rape, wife assault, wife rape, prostitution, and trafficking. In support of a caller, Rape Relief members may accompany a woman to the hospital or to the local police to give her initial statement regarding a violent attack. Appropriate speed is important so that professional investigation is possible, and to ensure that no-contact bail conditions can be put into place by the courts so that a woman can get to her work, move around her community safely, and protect her children from witnessing or experiencing further violence. It is common for women to ask us to assist in persuading police to take any action at all, including charging a man for breaching a restraining order.

Despite abysmal conviction rates and internationally accepted criticism of the Canadian police system's response to sexist violence (Ertürk), VRRWS continues to support the small percentage of women who call police. VRRWS is a member of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC), a pan-Canadian group of sexual assault centres that strives to act as a force for social change regarding violence against women at the individual, the institutional and the political level, which has, for political reasons, taken this position of supporting those women who decide to report.<sup>4</sup>

One of the first crisis calls I responded to at Rape Relief, nearly ten years ago, was from Bonnie Mooney, who sued the RCMP for their wilful refusal to protect her and her family from her violent ex-partner. Vancouver Rape Relief intervened in her case, and argued to the B.C. Supreme Court that Mooney's experience of being denied police protection amounted to sex discrimination by the criminal justice system against battered women (Vancouver Rape Relief): Rape Relief organized a very fine feminist legal team including Christine Boyle, Vaughan Black, and Elizabeth Sheehy, among other feminists. We were incredibly

- How do the police get rid of cases of male violence against women?
- What are feminist activists' recommendations regarding mechanisms to hold the police to account?
- How have the police countered our efforts to establish more democratic control and civilian oversight of them?
- What impact does the current state of liberal democracy and rise of capitalism/privatization have on our efforts to improve police response for women escaping male violence?

---

## **There remain many reasons to not report, especially for Aboriginal and racialized women who have historic and current negative relationships with the state and policing. Indigenous women do not believe that police will provide the protection they require.**

---

hopeful, believing that if we made the logical arguments, backed up by statistics, the courts would act in our favour and on the side of the *Charter* that promises women equal protection of the law. We lost. Canada successfully argued that the perpetrator's attack was unpredictable and not causally related to the failure of duty by police (*Mooney vs. British Columbia*). However, Mooney's case, like *Jane Doe vs. Board of Commissioners of Police for the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto*, created a precedent that is available to other women who have experienced an inadequate police response to male violence, to advance their struggles.

What really restored our hope and gave us a renewed sense of commitment was the international conference, *Policing Male Violence*, which Vancouver Rape Relief hosted in spring of 2008. Rape Relief grouped over 60 frontline anti-violence advocates from several countries with similar legal and political conditions to question whether and how we can improve police response for women reporting and escaping male violence. We gathered some of the best feminist thinkers and activists working on the issue, trusted the process of consciousness-raising, and stayed open to old and new strategies that might emerge.

In a year of planning for the conference, we talked to anti-violence advocates, academics, and lawyers in Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, the United States, and Aboriginal feminists on the issues. We asked them what major obstacles they currently identified as forces working against them. What were some of the important advances that they observed since we set out in the 1970s? Through phone calls, Skype, and e-mails we developed a proposed agenda, which grappled with the key questions and debates that included:

- What is effective feminist advocacy regarding police response?

Below I summarize some of the findings from our deliberations.

### **Deciding to Report**

More women report to the police now than when we opened our doors in the 1970s. I think that this is related to a combination of advances in women's equality.<sup>5</sup> I was a product of the first generation to grow up in a legal system that at least claimed that violence against women is criminally wrong and that the police are obliged to enforce the law to stop it. We have much to thank front line workers for this advance: there is a direct relationship between our advocacy and a woman's success in getting her case into the criminal justice system. Women know it and that is why they call us when they call the police (Lakeman 2005: 195).

Yet there remain many reasons to not report, especially for Aboriginal and racialized women who have historic and current negative relationships with the state and policing. At our conference many of the Aboriginal leaders reported that Indigenous women, particularly those living on reserve, do not believe that police will provide the protection they require. In its recent report, *Nothing to Report*, to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the B.C. CEDAW Working Group commented on the police and government failure to prevent or effectively investigate male violence against Aboriginal women and girls:

Although the Committee notes that a working group has been established to review the situation relating to missing and murdered women in the State party and those at risk in that context, it remains concerned that hundreds of cases involving Aboriginal women

who have gone missing or been murdered in the past two decades have neither been fully investigated nor attracted priority attention, with the perpetrators remaining unpunished....

Aboriginal women in Canada report rates of violence including domestic violence and sexual assault, 3.5 times higher than non-Aboriginal women. Also, young Aboriginal women are five times more likely than other Canadian women of the same age to die of violence. Aboriginal women and girls experience both high levels of sexual abuse and violence in their own families and communities, and high levels of stranger violence in the broader society. (B.C. CEDAW Group 3, 4)

The situation is similar for immigrant women from militarized states and those who fear deportation, especially if their abuser is their sponsor. Similarly, women with disabilities experience shocking rates of male violence. The Disabled Women's Action Network of Canada reports that 40 per cent of women with disabilities experience rape, abuse, or assault; girls with disabilities have a less than equal chance of escaping violence; and women with disabilities have little access to services for victims of violence. Women with multiple disabilities are multiply abused. Women with disabilities are most commonly sexually assaulted by care givers and/or family members and at double the rate of non-disabled women (Pelletier 1). But reporting sexual assault and the protracted investigation and trial, if even pursued by police and prosecutors, will most likely remove that caregiver life-line. Further, "[y]outh or old age, lesbianism and prostitution are additional factors that increase the likelihood of women being targeted," and being less likely to receive an adequate police response (World Social Forum).

### **Training**

Vancouver Rape Relief spearheaded and developed one of the first comprehensive training packages for the police in North America, including *This Film is About Rape*. In 1980, Vancouver Rape Relief published *Breaking the Hold: Self Defence in the Legal System: A Rape Relief Court Watchers Manual* (Ellis). This handbook was the first of its kind in Canada. It recognized the role of frontline workers in the criminal justice process and is still used by crisis workers today.

Very quickly we learned that while the training was excellent, there was no cooperation from the top echelons down to make the significant changes required to transform police response at a macro level. Rape Relief concluded that training for any profession, especially police, has only limited value. A few individual officers might "get it." Police sensitivity training programs have resulted in a caring voice at times, or a female officer, or a plain-clothes officer. These are humane improve-

ments, but they offer no increased likelihood of proper application of the law and established procedures. Moreover, training takes a massive toll on the trainers that is not worth the low level impact.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, there are no substantial rewards or promotions for officers who do effective police work in response to male violence against women. If the police really wanted to make a difference in terms of policing male violence, they would make it a requirement of entry to the police to demonstrate some understanding of wife assault and rape, or make it a job performance category on which promotions are based. Given that police neither enforce nor reward change, we stopped the direct classroom style training.

Jane Doe, the woman who in 1998 won her eleven-year lawsuit against the Toronto Police Force when they were found responsible for negligence and sex discrimination in their investigation of her rape, took a different approach to challenging police attitudes and practices. Toronto City Council responded to the judge's findings with an audit or inquiry into the policing of sexual assault, which in turn produced 57 recommendations for change. After years of additional struggle, as is documented in "A New Chapter in Feminist Organizing" (Doe, Bain and Dale), Toronto women including Jane Doe, developed a unique, woman-centred Steering Committee process to implement those changes. The authors describe the multiple barriers to effecting institutional change in policing and the Steering Committee's inevitable demise. They also reflect on the feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, community-based process they were successful in establishing, and the critical importance of chronicling and sharing information about such initiatives.

At our conference we heard from the advocates of rape crisis centres in England and Wales that there is currently some significant political will to make changes in policing male violence. There are strong demands from the Home Office, with quotas for improving the current statistics on male violence and a budget, advertising campaigns, and serious performance reviews ("Crack down on wife-beaters"). There, advocates believe that training might be having some impact. We believe that the training might be working because officers will be rewarded for complying and/or face consequences for not implementing the training. In contrast, given our current political climate, conference participants advised strongly against giving any more of our resources to training Canadian police.

### **Collection of Forensics**

In 1979 the first Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK) was used in a Canadian hospital. Feminists argued for standards of care for women who had been sexually assaulted, regardless of police interest in collecting forensic evidence (CASAC). Yet, advances in collection of forensics have not increased the likelihood of arrests or convictions (Feld-

berg 97) and have become another site of oppression for women (Doe). Julie Bindle argues that “alcohol and the proof of her drinking have become the new short skirt” for the police (Bindle). Women’s injuries do not increase the likelihood of the police filing charges of rape or even enhance women’s credibility in the eyes of police. Sergeant Dan Bezanson of the Vancouver Sexual Offence Squad remarked on one case: “well maybe she just liked rough sex and that is why there are injuries.”<sup>7</sup>

Given that most women know their attacker and that at best the SAEK is used to identify the attacker, much of

at 9). When I tell police to get her written statement in her own language and that they cannot use her husband or children as the interpreter, I am too often met with stunned eyes and resistance (Ministry of the Attorney General *Women and Children: Services to Special Needs Victims* #33 at 13).

### **24-Hour Response**

One successful strategy has been to have anti-violence workers available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Nearly

---

**Police officers often apply bias rather than do their job, on the pretext that they cannot proceed because that would require believing the woman without “proof.” They are unwilling to believe her until they have determined they do not believe him; only then will they search for supporting evidence.**

---

this debate is inconsequential. Yet our experience from the frontline is that the timely collection of forensics does increase the chances of a case going to court, even if the likelihood of conviction remains low. Ultimately, each woman makes her own decision about whether to have forensics collected given her particular circumstances. Our role as advocates is to ensure that if she does decide to have forensics collected, she receives the best health care and is treated with as much dignity as possible throughout that process.

One of the most frequent complaints of women and prosecutors about the police is their failure to collect other evidence immediately after the attack. Cases often fall apart because police have not taken photographs of the scene, they have failed to document women’s injuries, they have not interviewed the neighbours or sought out the person who called 911 or the first person to whom the woman spoke. It remains common in Rape Relief’s experience that police wait until they have interviewed the suspect before going back to collect evidence, if the investigation even proceeds after that point. Police officers often apply bias rather than do their job, on the pretext that they cannot proceed because that would require believing the woman without “proof.” They are unwilling to believe her until they have determined they do not believe him; only then will they search for supporting evidence, which may by that time be unavailable.

Police failure to record crucial information or even the woman’s statement is all fodder for the perpetrator’s defence. We daily tell the attending officers that they are obliged by law to obtain sufficient evidence, meaning photographs of injuries, medical reports, records of the physical damage at the family home, and a full written statement from her in her own language (Ministry of Attorney General Section D *Investigation and Charge* #9

all of the cases that help advance the police response for other women involved an independent, feminist advocate beside the complainant (Lakeman 195). Often when police refused to help her get to safety or did not adequately protect her, our transition houses did. Transition houses continue to save lives when the police won’t. Anti-violence centres around the world would not have been able to do this without the voluntary political contributions of women.

From the start, police objected to women being accompanied by advocates (professional or not) during the police interview when women report rape or battering. Vancouver Rape Relief argued that every woman was entitled to a support person, a neighbour, whomever the woman trusted and wanted beside her. But the police argued back that support was better provided by qualified social workers, victim services workers, doctors, psychologists and lawyers. Some services negotiated with police, advancing their credentials rather than the woman’s rights. Volunteers and activists take the brunt of this backlash that sees political activists as less qualified than paid professional staff. In B.C., we won a policy for battered women to have a “victim support worker or advocate ... present for the police interview of the victim, if she so wishes” (Ministry of the Attorney General), but it is not always respected and we still have no such policy for sexual assault.

### **Reform**

In 1993, Vancouver Rape Relief organized with other activists to deliver three days of public testimony at the Oppal Commission Inquiry into Policing in British Columbia (Unity Statement). Rape Relief recommended that police resources be reallocated to ensure full and proper inves-





Shary Boyle, "untitled," 2003, ink on paper, 21 x 28 cm. Excerpted from *The Story of Jane Doe*, Randon House, Canada. Reprinted with permission.

tigation of complaints of male violence against women. In addition, Rape Relief recommended establishment of an ombudsman-style body to oversee complaints against police that would answer to the Legislature. These two recommendations were, to some extent, adopted.

Although weakened by the last governments of British Columbia, and limited by prosecutors who implement it, the revised Attorney General of British Columbia's "Violence Against Women in Relationships Policy" is still considered by frontline workers to be one of the better policies in Canada. The RCMP fought that policy but in 1996, after the Vernon massacre<sup>8</sup> and huge public outcry by Vancouver Rape Relief and others, Josiah Wood was appointed by the RCMP to make recommendations to match the provincial wife assault policies and firearms policy. The new policy was gendered and more pro-active.

These were significant gains, yet I must remind police of the policy in my advocacy work daily. For instance, if police suspect a man has assaulted his female partner, then they have less discretion than before to avoid arrest. In response to the decrease in their discretionary pow-

ers, police started arresting women in record numbers instead of violent men. The unofficial policy remains the same: keep paper work low and don't arrest abusive men unless you absolutely must. Yet overall, the policy was a major step forward: for example, the B.C. courts in Bonnie Mooney's case did find that the police had failed to fulfill their legal duty to properly investigate based in part on the policy, even though ultimately her claim against police failed (*Mooney v. British Columbia*).

Frontline activists continue to campaign that 911 records, police decisions whether to recommend charges, and Crown decisions to prosecute or not should be recorded and made publicly available. Public confidence in the administration of justice would be bolstered by a system where Crown counsel routinely made strong and public arguments to prosecute sexist violence. By the same token, if the decisions by the Crown not to proceed were made available to the public, there would be room for protest and possibly legal action.

### **What Forces Oppose an Anti-Op-pressive Police Response Today?**

The global drive for privatization is a major factor in the context in which we work. Private police now outnumber state police three to one worldwide (Pastor 42). In general, private security guards serve private interests and are neither required nor expected to uphold the rule of law and respect Charter rights. When women are attacked on public transit, in the mall, in a bar, in a hotel or a massage parlour, private security is often the first point of contact for help. It remains to be seen what this shift towards privatization will mean for the policing of sexual assault.

Coupled with the rise in privatization of security, we have also experienced the "shrinking of the provisioning state." Funds for social change agents like national women's groups are now essentially gone. Federal funding mechanisms for local women's advocacy services like rape crisis centers through the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) arrangements, which used to fund and standardize women's access to welfare, health care and education (including transition houses), were eliminated. The Court Challenges program was axed; many provinces have no test case litigation funds. We have lost many of the basics that women need to leave abusive fathers, lovers and employers, never mind to exercise substantive equality rights. Since then, provinces have

set their own policies, mostly copying the welfare “reforms” of the United States: placing time limits on the receipt of benefits, slashing the rates, and introducing regional disparities and other punitive and regressive policies (Lakeman 2004: 213). At the same time that the provisioning state is shrinking, capitalism pushes for globalization and pressure mounts to participate in the “global economy.” We worry that women will be increasingly displaced, bearing the brunt of sacrifices made by our governments. Women’s equality rights will continue to erode (Whisnant and Stark).

### **What Are Some Recommendations from the Frontline to Improve Policing for Raped and Battered Women?**

Firstly, it’s helpful to remember that improved police response was never what women really set out to get—freedom from male violence. Violence against women is one of the strongest indicators of prevailing societal attitudes towards women (CASAC).

Frontline methods to pressure police are summed up in CASAC’s report, *Canada’s Promises to Keep: The Char-*

---

## **Raped women, who so often find their reports of rape “unfounded” by police, would stand to benefit from some method of holding police accountable. What women demand is a civilian-run police complaints system that is empowered to order police to co-operate and to enforce its decisions against police.**

---

What we know about rape is that it is about power and control: the less substantive equality that women have, the more vulnerable we are to sexist attacks, as exemplified in countries like Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo where the rates at which women and girls are raped are terrifying. We are also less able to resist or fight back, with or without police protection, or to access state provisions that we need to increase our security like affordable housing, education, child care, welfare, etc. Without these provisions, we are more likely to be entrapped by abusive employers, fathers, husbands, lovers, johns, pimps, and traffickers.

Women without citizenship and paperless women are increasingly being pushed into the hands of global traders in labour, flesh, and drugs (Whisnant and Stark 219). As protection they are offered racist immigration practices that jail the trafficked and criminalization of the prostitution industry. Of course we don’t want the policing of women in prostitution. Rape Relief and other feminists do, however, want action taken against the multi-billion dollar industry itself and its involvement in the legalization of the trade in women’s bodies (Whisnant and Stark 219). We also want our police forces to go after the pimps and traffickers and reverse their current refusal to offer police protection to prostituted women and girls in official or non-official “red light” districts.<sup>9</sup>

Our work with battered women sponsored by husbands, mail order brides, domestic workers, exotic dancers, and women trafficked for prostitution has exposed the state’s response as appalling. In the situation where the woman has no status, the crime committed against her is often ignored. Instead she is dealt with as an immigration risk. Often, abusive husbands who sponsor women from overseas are not charged, and the women are left on their own to fight through the legal system.

*ter and Violence Against Women.* For example, at Rape Relief all the member women respond to the media as well as answer the crisis line, which has proven to be an immensely successful tactic. Our resort to the media has led to more pressure on the police and ultimately forced them to do their job in some cases.<sup>10</sup> Allocating a budget for frontline workers to be trained to do media as well to participate in the alternative media outlets such as blogs, twitters, websites and Youtube would be good strategic moves right now.

Responding on the streets with protest is another strategy to keep the pressure on the police. Rape Relief spoke publicly, rallied, organized, criticized, and engaged the media to address the “missing women” issue time and again. Eventually protest efforts combined with growing public pressure forced the Vancouver Police to investigate the reports of the missing women in the downtown east-side—predominantly Aboriginal women. This ultimately led to the arrest of Robert William Pickton (Kler).

Then there is the police complaints process. The complaints systems in B.C. and Canada are particularly weak.<sup>11</sup> The process is so bad that Justice for Girls and other groups boycotted the B.C. Police Complaints Commission, demanding that the watchdog be granted more independence to oversee the police and increased resources to undertake new functions (“BCCLA and Pivot Announce Police Complaints Boycott”).

Raped women, who so often find their reports of rape “unfounded” by police, would stand to benefit from some method of holding police accountable. Police investigate themselves and keep what Colleen Lewis, author of *Complaints Against the Police: The Politics of Reform*, calls the “blue curtain of silence”—a code that encourages police to cover up the misconduct and even the criminal activities of other officers at every level, from the top ranks and

down (23). What is required and what women demand is a civilian-run police complaints system that is empowered to order police to co-operate and to enforce its decisions against police.

Advances in policing can come from a Royal or International Commission that exposes the underbelly of the police for scrutiny. Vancouver Rape Relief has invested in parliamentary sub-committee reports to the provincial as well as federal government. Like any democratic process, these are time consuming and the process can be corrupted. At least they allow us to be on the public record, and we have influenced reforms in law and the administration of law on occasion.<sup>12</sup>

Of course these kinds of reforms are not self-implementing and require pressure from the community to force government action. Frontline workers have little time or inclination to attend police board meetings, monitor the media, debate political shifts, watch what is happening at city hall meetings, and make strategic decisions about their participation. But without doing so, our impact is limited. It is these sites and not the police classroom where the best reforms can be initiated. This is exactly what Jane Doe and other feminists did for ten years through the Audit Reference Group (Doe, Bain and Dale). Their conclusions are that the regulatory requirements of the institution of policing trump any and all concerns and initiatives brought forward by non-police groups or personnel (Bain).

Litigation efforts can also offer possibility of change. Thanks to Jane Doe and the feminists who supported her, we now have the right in Canada to sue police for breach of our equality rights and in negligence. Vancouver Rape Relief has assisted Bonnie Mooney and more recently Gayle Hull, in suing the RCMP. Although these fights have the potential to hold police accountable in law and to educate the public about the reality of policing of crimes like rape, they are very long, outrageously expensive, and incredibly hard on the survivor and the supporting women's organizations.

We seem to be in a moment in history where many are very cynical about government, particularly women of my generation. Over the ten years that I've been an activist, I have also experienced the increasing policing of equality-seeking activists. The *Take Back the Night* marches I attended went from being a few thousand women on the street to an ever-increasing number of police on the street monitoring and at times interfering with our political activity. Increased policing of activists was a shared experience by conference guests.<sup>13</sup>

But others at the *Policing Male Violence Conference* argued that abandoning engagement with the state fits perfectly with the marketization thrust we are experiencing: it puts more power into the hands of those who would privatize goods and services, including anti-violence policing. As feminists, we must continue to lobby for "good" government and work with reform strategies when they are consistent with our long-term goals. As Lakeman states,

"while we do not expect the women's liberation movement to be a product of governments, we do not exempt our communities or our governments from the responsibility for assisting women, as we resist repression. We expect our government to respond appropriately to women's legitimate aspirations for peace, freedom, autonomy, and economic well being" (Lakeman 2005: 2).

It is with this spirit that I found myself recommitting to old and new strategies, both alternative and state-sanctioned, to improve police response for raped and battered women.

*Louisa Russell has been a feminist active for ten years with Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter.*

<sup>1</sup>In 1977 the conviction rate for sexual offences was 32 per cent in England and Wales. It has now fallen to 5.3 per cent. That means that the attrition between a police call and prison is 99.5 percent. Liz Kelly describes this as more of a *chasm* than a *gap* (Kelly, Lovett and Regan 25).

<sup>2</sup>RCMP member, Dr. Matt Logan in his presentation on High Risk and Repeat Offenders at the Premier's Congress on Public Safety. CASAC has always been concerned with the low conviction rates and high attrition rates in cases of violence against women. In the CASAC LINKS project, we found that each of 92 cases women brought to the system merited conviction on at least one charge. Yet the justice system convicted men in only 34 of women's cases. This percentage was much higher than the national statistics in part because the women were all connected to an independent advocate (see Lakeman 2005: 205).

<sup>3</sup>"The system discredits women at every level both actively and passively and women know it. Seventy to 90 percent of women talking to rape crisis centres and transition houses have already refused to initiate or participate in criminal proceedings because they will be disregarded, disbelieved, discredited and blamed. Many of those who did initiate or cooperate have been rejected or abandoned by the same system" (Lakeman and Crean 8).

<sup>4</sup>"CASAC women continue to debate whether and when it is wise for women to use the state and when it is dangerous.... But it has been policy of all CASAC centres to support the will of women calling regarding their personal situation ... consequently, all centres have always assisted women who call the police ... about the violence they endured. CASAC has never wavered from the belief that women have a right to the rule of law and the involvement and protection and relief of the state to assist them in resisting their oppression, including the particular acts of violence we call violence against women" (Lakeman 2005: 148).

<sup>5</sup>Although not immediately related to policing it's worth noting that it was in this time frame that getting a divorce became easier (in legal terms, at least) and a woman could get welfare cheques in her own name. Shelters opened in every major city and became more accessible to women in



rural areas. Overall, probably the most significant change in the last 35 years was the adoption of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. There is now an over-arching promise to women that should inform all law and policy and towards guarantees of women's equality.

<sup>6</sup>Bonnie Agnew, a staunch advocate with Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, wrote in "Violence Against Women: Another Vernon Waiting to Explode": "when I joined Rape Relief in 1979, at the very first meeting I attended we discussed whether or not to continue training the police at the police academy which Rape Relief had done for five years. There was debate and discussion among some women, but it was clear that this training that we'd been doing for five years was not working. I heard the Attorney General this morning on the radio suggest that what was needed was police training. Let me say, that was what should have happened 20 years ago. We don't need mandatory training; there is no mandatory learning going on. There is nothing to be trained about, in my opinion, except believe the woman, believe us and do your jobs, investigate" (Agnew).

<sup>7</sup>Meeting with Rape Relief and Acting Sergeant Dan Bezanson, Vancouver Police Sex Crimes, July 2007. Despite these remarks, our advocacy helped push police to arrest and charge the man with sexual assault.

<sup>8</sup>On April, 5th 1996, Marc Chahal of Vernon, British Columbia, shot to death his estranged wife Rajwar Gakhal, her sister, the bride to be and seven of her relatives from the Saran family. Two others were wounded. Chahal then drove a rental van to his motel room and killed himself. One of the most horrific mass murders in Canada raised questions regarding the connection between the way the RCMP processed the murderer's gun application and about the way police had not handled Rajwar's complaints regarding his threats to hurt her.

<sup>9</sup>Recently an RCMP officer informed one of our callers that there was no crime committed because the victim accepted cash and therefore the brutal anal rape must have been consensual.

<sup>10</sup>One such example is in the John Horace Oughton case, a.k.a. "The Paper Bag Rapist." He raped 150 or more girls in the lower mainland of British Columbia over a ten-year period. Many of his victims called Rape Relief for help to get the police to act. The upper echelons of the police tried to stop the investigation because it was costing too much. Partly due to Rape Relief's public awareness campaigns and the families' outcry about the slow police response, the *Province Newspaper* put out a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the capture of the rapist.

<sup>11</sup>The death of Frank Paul is one such recent example from B.C.: <<http://www.straight.com/article-119335/frank-paul-inquiry-raises-questions-of-police-cover-up>>.

<sup>12</sup>See Lee Lakeman's submissions on behalf of CASAC before the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia Special Committee to Review the Police Complaint Process. Second

Report. 9 August 2002. Online: <<http://www.leg.bc.ca/cmt/37thparl/session-3/pcp/reports/aug2002.htm>>.

<sup>13</sup>Transcript excerpt of Lee Lakeman speaking on the final day of the *Policing Male Violence* Conference, April 2008.

## References

Agnew, Bonnie. "Violence Against Women: Another Vernon Waiting to Explode" *Kinesis* May 1997.

"BCCLA and Pivot Announce Police Complaints Boycott." *Civil Liberties Update*. July 2008. <<http://www.bccla.org/Update/Jul08update.htm>>.

B.C. CEDAW Group. *Nothing to Report: Submission of the B.C. CEDAW Group to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A Report on Progress in Implementing Priority Recommendations made by the Committee in its 2008 Concluding Observations on Canada*. 2010.

Bain, Beverly. "Uncovering Conceptual Practices: Bringing into "Lived Consciousness" Feminists' Activities on the Toronto Police Sexual Assault Audit and the Follow-up Sexual Assault Audit Committee of Toronto (SAACT)" *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* (this issue).

Bindle, Julie. "Nowhere near enough: The government has no excuse not to put serious cash into the protection of women from violence." *The Guardian* 24 November 2005.

*Canada's Promises to Keep: The Charter and Violence Against Women*. Online: <<http://www.casac.ca/content/canadas-promises-keep-charter-and-violence-against-women>>.

Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres (CASAC). *Constitution*. Online: <<http://www.casac.ca/en/constitution>>.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Forty-second Session, 20 October-7 November 2008. Online: <<http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/CEDAW-C-CAN-CO74.pdf>>.

"Crack down on wife-beaters." *BBC News*. 8 March 2000. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/670142.stm>>.

Doe, Jane. "Who Benefits From the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit?" *Sexual Assault Law, Practice and Activism in a Post-Jane Doe Era*. Elizabeth Sheehy, Ed. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010.

Doe, Jane, Beverly Bain and Amanda Dale. "A New Chapter in Feminist Organizing: The Sexual Assault Audit Steering Committee." *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* (this issue).

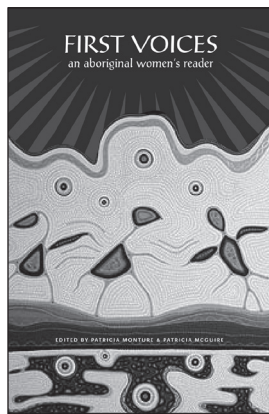
Dworkin, Andrea. *Letters from a War Zone: Writings*. Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 1993.

Ellis, Megan. *Breaking the Hold: Self Defence in the Legal System; A Rape Relief Court Watchers Manual*. Vancouver: Press Gang, 1980.

Ertürk, Yakin. *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence Against*



- Women and the Due Diligence Standard as a Tool for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.* Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences. Online: [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw53/off\\_statements/Erturk\\_s.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw53/off_statements/Erturk_s.pdf)
- Feldberg, Georgina. "Defining the Facts of Rape: The Uses of Medical Evidence in Sexual Assault Trials." *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 9 (1997): 89-114.
- Jane Doe v Board of Commissioners of Police for the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto* (1998), 39 O. R. (3d) 487 (Ont. Ct. G.D.)
- Kelly, Liz, Jo Lovett and Linda Regan. *A Gap or a Chasm? Attrition in Reported Rape Cases.* Home Office Research Study 293. London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, 2005.
- Kler, Daisy. Speech delivered on the steps of the Vancouver Police Department on the 10th Annual Memorial for the Missing and Murdered Women of the Downtown Eastside. February 14, 2001. Online: [http://www.rape-reliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside\\_women03.html](http://www.rape-reliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/eastside_women03.html).
- Lakeman, Lee. *Obsession with Intent.* Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005.
- Lakeman, Lee, Alice Lee and Suzanne Jay. "Resisting the Promotion of Prostitution in Canada: A View from the Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter." *Not For Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography.* Eds. Rebecca Whisnant and Christine Stark. North Melbourne, Victoria: Spinifex Press, 2004: 210-251.
- Lakeman, Lee. "A Consideration of Feminist Process." *DAWNings: How to Start and Maintain a Group.* Eds. J. Meister and S. Masuda. Vancouver: DAWN, 1999: 85-98.
- Lakeman, Lee and Susan Crean, eds. *99 Federal Steps Toward an End to Violence Against Women.* Toronto: National Action Committee on the Status of Women, 1993.
- Lee, Alice. "Working With Refugee Women." *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* 20:3 2000: 105-107.
- Lewis, Colleen. *Complaints Against the Police: The Politics of Reform.* Annandale: Hawkins Press, 1999.
- Lupick, Travis. "Private Police." *The Georgia Straight* 18 October 2007.
- Ministry of Attorney General and Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. *Policy on the Criminal Justice System Response to Violence Against Women In Relationships.* Updated March 2004.
- Mooney v. British Columbia (Attorney General)*, Court of Appeal for British Columbia. 2004 BCCA 402. Online: [http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/Bonnie\\_mooney COURT\\_OF\\_APPEAL\\_FOR\\_percent20BC\\_final.pdf](http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/Bonnie_mooney COURT_OF_APPEAL_FOR_percent20BC_final.pdf).
- Pastor, James F. *The Privatization of Police in America: An Analysis and Case Study.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2003.
- Pelletier, Jacqueline. *Beating the Odds: Violence and Women with Disabilities.* Online: <http://www.dawncanada.net/ENG.ENGODDS.HTM>.
- Stark, Evan. *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- The Oppal Commission Inquiring into Policing in British Columbia.* As reported orally by Tracey McIntosh, on behalf of Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre, May 4th, 1993, Vancouver. Online: [http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/oppal\\_tracey.html](http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/oppal_tracey.html).
- This Film is About Rape.* Dir. Bonnie Kreps. Co-sponsored by Vancouver Rape Relief and the B.C. Police Commission, 1976.
- Unity Statement of the Women's Groups Presenting to the Oppal Commission May 1993 Online: <http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca/herstory/oppal.html>.
- Vancouver Rape Relief. *Rape Relief's Factum Regarding Bonnie Mooney's lawsuit.* Online: [http://www.rape-reliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/Factum\\_Intervener5.pdf](http://www.rape-reliefshelter.bc.ca/issues/Factum_Intervener5.pdf).
- Whisnant, Rebecca and Christine Stark, eds. *Not For Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography.* North Melbourne, Vic.: Spinifex Press, 2004.
- World Social Forum. *Violence Against Women: The "Other World" Must Act. The Causes of Violence against Women.* <http://www.casac.ca/content/world-social-forum>.



**FIRST VOICES**  
an aboriginal women's reader

**First Voices:  
An Aboriginal  
Women's Reader**

edited by  
PATRICIA A. MONTURE and  
PATRICIA D. MCGUIRE

**"A WORK OF LOVE AND  
GREAT BEAUTY"**

ISBN 978-0-9808822-9-2  
6 x 9" / November 2009  
556 pages / \$39.95

"This volume brings us the stories of ... the women who have carried us, and the women ... who are working in different ways to bring about justice and healing for our people and our land. It is a work of love, and of great beauty." —BONITA LAWRENCE, author of *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native People and Indigenous Nationhood*

**INANNA PUBLICATIONS**  
Essential Readings for Feminists Everywhere  
[www.yorku.ca/inanna](http://www.yorku.ca/inanna)