

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

Agreement# 40063171

## Farewell to Founding Director of RESOLVE



*by Cheryl Fraehlich*

**A**fter more than 25 years, **Jane Ursel** is leaving her position as Director of RESOLVE on June 30, 2017. In addition to her role as Director, Jane is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba and throughout her career has made numerous contributions to the university and the community. She has been actively involved in the evolution of program and policy development in the area of family violence.

Jane's interest in the area of family violence came about by accident. In 1983, she was working as a sessional lecturer in the sociology department at the University of Manitoba where there were few individuals involved in this area of research. Her introduction occurred when she was asked to do an evaluation of a wife abuse committee in Winnipeg. In 1985, Jane left the university and spent the next five years working with the Manitoba government. She began in the new position as the Provincial Coordinator of Wife Abuse Services and spent over three years working with various community agencies to develop programs and services to address family violence. In 1986, she also created the Women's



Jane Ursel

Advocacy Program, which began with a staff of three and has since become the Victim Services Program with more than 50 staff. During this time Jane became interested in the court response to domestic violence and began collecting data on these cases. Her passion and commitment to improve the response to those experiencing family violence had been born.

During her last year working with government, Jane was on the Implementation Committee to establish the Winnipeg Family Violence Court (FVC), the first such specialized court in Canada. The need to have a new court evaluated was identified during committee meetings

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## Intimate Partner Violence in Rural and Northern Communities: *Hope on the Horizon*



by Y. Nichole Faller and Melissa Wuerch

**I**ntimate partner violence (IPV) has become a worldwide epidemic, yet little is known about the experiences of women survivors who live in rural and northern communities across Canada. Statistics suggest that women who live in remote areas of the Canadian Prairie Provinces and Northwest Territories (NWT) are at a significantly higher risk of IPV. For example, Statistics Canada reports indicate that rates of IPV are six times higher in the Territories in comparison to Saskatchewan, where rates are two times the national average. Despite these higher IPV rates, women in rural and remote areas are less likely to access services due to geographic isolation, anonymity concerns, as well as legal and cultural barriers (Wuerch, Zorn, Juschka, & Hampton, 2016).

To better understand the experiences of IPV in these regions, qualitative interviews were conducted with service providers and police within rural and remote areas of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and NWT. These interviews were then analyzed by each individual region with a grounded-theory approach. The analyses were pooled together and further analyzed for a theoretical understanding of IPV within all identified regions. An emergent theory suggests that macro-level social issues, such as isolation, poverty, resources (e.g., lack of integrated services), unemployment, isolation, legal systems, and Indigenous concerns intersect to form micro-level oppressions in IPV relationships. For instance, a woman may not be able to find a job due to her cultural background or because employment options are limited in rural communities, which leaves her financially dependent on her husband. She is then left with the choice to stay in the abusive relationship and provide for her children, or leave and live in poverty with no financial security. Service workers and members of the RCMP who try to help women in these situations are left to fight micro-level oppressions (e.g. lack of employment) on a daily basis,



Nichole Faller



Melissa Wuerch

which leaves them feeling disheartened. Fortunately, there are reasons to remain hopeful in the fight against IPV. For example, workers cited job training for women in remote areas, increased availability of victim services, IPV shelters, and transportation options as reasons to remain hopeful. This

hope tempered their feelings of disheartenment and allowed them to continue working in discouraging environments.

Results suggest that to reduce IPV incidences we must look beyond the violence itself and deal with the social context in which IPV resides. In-depth discussions with governments to address concerns of isolation, adequate childcare, poverty, confidentiality, and lack of resources can help accomplish IPV reduction. Indigenous peoples' concerns should also be addressed by ensuring all implemented programming considers racism, colonization, and patriarchal cultural norms through culturally-appropriate interventions. Furthermore, education of professionals and communities is needed to define and increase awareness of IPV and to help others learn how to be active supports to women in abusive relationships. Finally, service providers requested the establishment of community partnerships to help coordinate the services provided to IPV survivors. These partnerships would reduce the number of times women must retell their stories and increase the efficiency of available services.

We must also look beyond the violent act and address how these structures create IPV environments while they continue to oppress women. More specifically, we need to address a multitude of concerns in rural and northern communities, where issues such as isolation, lack of resources, unemployment, poverty, and Indigenous concerns create and maintain oppressive situations. Although progress is being made in the forms of job training, travel funds, childcare, and Emergency Intervention Orders, more needs to be done to address the larger social contexts in which IPV occurs. ❀

## Manitoba Update: A Study of Sexual Assault Reports to Police in Winnipeg



by Jane Ursel

**F**or the past 20 years researchers and women's advocates have known that sexual assault cases are greatly underreported. Evidence of this fact comes from many studies, including the Statistics Canada General Social Survey on Victimization, which asks Canadians to self-report victimization for various offenses, compared with the Statistics Canada Uniform Crime Reporting Survey that collects police-reported data. The gap between self-reports and police data is huge, and suggests that less than 10% of victims report to the police.

In 2015, I began an exploratory study of sexual assault cases in Winnipeg in an attempt to find out what happens when victims do report sexual assault to the police. Given the high prevalence and serious nature of sexual assault in our society, we need to have reliable statistics on the criminal justice processing of these cases so that victims can make well-informed decisions about whether or not to report to the police. Working in partnership with Klinik's Sexual Assault Program, the Winnipeg Police Service and Manitoba Justice, this study will collect two years of data (2015 and 2016) on all cases of sexual assault reported to the police. We will follow the cases that proceed to the prosecutor's desk and to court to answer two research questions: 1) What is the extent and the determinants of successful prosecution in sexual assault cases? and 2) What is the extent and the determinants of case attrition?

In Spring 2016, I lobbied the Justice Minister in Manitoba to add specialized sexual assault prosecutors to the specialized Domestic Violence Unit of Winnipeg Prosecutions. Happily, these prosecutors were in place in Summer 2016. This is a very important first step to ensure that the victims who do choose to report will have prosecutors who are knowledgeable about the crime and sensitive to their needs. This has been a successful strategy for the prosecution of domestic violence cases and it is hoped that it will be helpful in cases of sexual assault as well.

Currently, the lack of detailed evidence of the actual processing of sexual assault cases in the

criminal justice system may result in victims making decisions about reporting to the police that could be based on assumptions and impressions that may be incorrect. The goal of this study is to provide concrete evidence of the process in Winnipeg so that victims can make a truly informed decision about reporting to the police. This research project will analyze a large number of variables related to characteristics of the incident, characteristics of the suspect and the victim, location of investigation (Sex Crimes Unit, Child Abuse Unit), and the nature of the evidence. Examination of these variables will identify critical factors related to attrition or successful prosecution. Results of our data analysis will be shared with key stakeholders, including police, prosecutors and sexual assault crisis counsellors, to discuss practice changes that might improve their interventions.

While the primary consideration should always be, *What is in the best interests of the victim?*, there also needs to be identification of assailants and consequences for their behaviour. Studies of individuals who have been charged (Weinrott & Saylor, 1991) and individuals who have committed sexual assault and never been charged (Lisak & Miller, 2002) suggest that unless intervention occurs they will continue to victimize others. ❀



## Saskatchewan Update



### Introducing Our Steering Committee Member: Stephanie Martin

I am a Registered Doctoral Psychologist, Associate Professor (Counselling Psychology), and Graduate Chair in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan. My teaching areas encompass the theory and practice of counselling/psychotherapy, professional practice and ethics, qualitative research methodology, and the psychology of women and gender. Research interests focus on healing from interpersonal trauma, professional development and wellbeing, and early intervention and prevention of girls' and women's mental health concerns. My clinical/applied work, supervision/teaching, and research are founded on feminist/social justice principles and I most enjoy collaborating with others on projects that have direct positive impacts on individuals and communities.

In 2014, I listened to a story about an adolescent girl who used social media to share her experience of leaving an abusive relationship. This young woman did not want to be viewed as an isolated victim living in poverty and violence in a remote, isolated community. She was proud of her strength, her resistance to violence and being labeled as a victim, and her community. She shared her story via social networking and her message had a positive impact within her community. This story compelled me to want to explore the use of contemporary media to generate new understandings that promote more immediate individual and community change for victims of dating violence, in ways that traditional research and knowledge dissemination practices have not been able to achieve. I applied for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Insight Development Grant and was awarded funds to conduct a pilot project in this area. This project is titled *Using Digital Storytelling to Empower Young Women Exposed to Dating Violence*.

Young women who have experienced dating violence often hesitate to reach out for support for fear that their experiences will not be heard, respected, or appropriately responded to by friends, family, and the organizations designed to help them and hold perpetrators accountable. Being abused in

an intimate relationship is often a private, isolating experience, with grave consequences for personal and relational wellbeing and quality of life. Of greater concern is that exposure to one incident of abuse often creates a cycle where young women repeatedly seek out relationships that include abuse.

An element that recurs in many of the widely-publicized cases of the abuse of young women in dating relationships is the use and power of social media to perpetuate the abuse. Despite the prevalent use of social media in this way, social media tools—digital storytelling in particular—can be used positively to interrupt the cycle of abuse and give the young women exposed to dating violence a 'voice.' This pilot project will use digital storytelling to help women who have been exposed to dating violence to tell their stories and work towards having healthy, non-violent relationships.

I anticipate that involvement in this project will yield therapeutic benefit for participants, provide a powerful educational tool for young people engaged in intimate relationships, and inform the use of digital storytelling as an innovative methodology within anti-violence research.

I have been drawn to the study of violence and abuse, specifically how people heal from the effects of interpersonal trauma, my entire career. To create safe communities free from violence and abuse, many people must be involved in the search for solutions; I have always appreciated the academic-community structure of RESOLVE—which is why I've been involved since 2002—and the opportunity to work alongside other researchers and community members dedicated to constructing and conducting meaningful projects that impact real lives in real ways. Importantly, anti-violence research can be difficult, heartbreaking, and discouraging, especially when gains in reducing rates of violence and abuse are slow and many victims continue to suffer despite the best efforts of many who attempt to intervene. My hope is that the use of digital storytelling as an empowerment methodology with young women will bring new 'reach' to anti-violence research, and yield new questions and potential applications. ✂



## Alberta Update: Dating, Domestic and Sexual Violence Policies and Education for Post-Secondary Institutions



by D. Gaye Warthe, PhD, MSW, RSW

A recent focus on policy development to recognize and respond to sexual violence among post-secondary institutions in Canada is commendable. The Alberta government has led by facilitating discussions with post-secondary schools across the province, while the development and implementation of standalone sexual violence policies have been mandated by many other provincial governments.

Development of standalone sexual violence policies are an important first step in beginning to address violence that occurs on a post-secondary campus. However, such policies can also marginalize other forms of domestic or dating violence and abuse, inadvertently communicating that only one type of violence is important. All types of relationship violence are underreported, especially ones of sexual violence. Broadening the scope of campus policies to include types of violence that may have less stigma and that also pose risk makes sense. As well, including a requirement for education to increase awareness may result in earlier access to support and resources, and help reduce the stigma associated with identifying as a victim of sexual violence. Such has been the experience of post-secondary schools in the U.S. that have moved from a sole focus on policies and education on sexual violence. Also, expanded definitions have been introduced and now include dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking in addition to existing requirements specific to sexual assault (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2014).

Incidence and prevalence data supports the need for policy to address all types of relationship violence to more accurately reflect student experiences. At Mount Royal University in Calgary, **Dr. D. Gaye Warthe** and **Dr. Leslie Tutty** have been adding questions on dating violence to the National College Health Assessment since 2008. For the 2016 administration of the survey students were asked to respond to two questions on their experiences of abuse in dating, romantic or couple relationships:

- 25.5% students (15.6% men; 29.1% women) reported they had experienced an intimate (dating,



Gaye Warthe

romantic or couple) relationship that was emotionally, physically or sexually abusive; and

- 13.2% of students (4.7% men; 16.4% women) disclosed that they had been a victim of stalking by a romantic partner and/or sexual partner or former partner.

(Warthe & Tutty, 2016)

Students and employees require policies that clearly outline a commitment to responding to disclosures of violence and contributing to awareness, education and prevention. Clear protocols for support for victims/survivors, managing disclosures, and specialized investigative processes are necessary. Policies for all types of relationship violence and sexual assault should be consistent and institutions should be accountable for reporting outcomes and providing services in collaboration with community partners.

As part of the process of developing dating, domestic and sexual violence policies, campus communities can and should offer a range of activities associated with prevention and early intervention to increase awareness about risk, resources, consent, responding to disclosures of abuse, and strategies for bystander interventions.

At Mount Royal University, Warthe, **Dr. Pat Kostouros**, **Dr. Cathy Carter-Snell**, and Tutty developed a peer facilitated dating, domestic and sexual violence prevention project called *Stepping Up* that has been supported by the Alberta Government. Involving students in the development of curriculum and in facilitating discussions with peers, partnering with the community services, and focusing on the ability to differentiate healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships all contribute to a project that demonstrates consistently positive outcomes immediately following a prevention weekend and at eight month follow-up. The project has also recently been implemented at the University of Lethbridge.

Sexual violence policies are a great start but postsecondary can do more to contribute to safer campus communities. ❀

*RESOLVE Founding Director...* continued from Page 1

and given that Jane was already collecting court data, there was a natural fit for this evaluation. Jane left government to return to academic life as an Assistant Professor with the Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba in June of 1990. The FVC came into operation in September of that year and she started her work on the FVC Project, a longitudinal study of all cases processed through this court, now in the 27th year of data collection.

Shortly after her return to the university, Jane participated in a multidisciplinary group to develop an application answering a call made by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and Health Canada for proposals to develop family violence research centres. This application was successful and the Manitoba Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women—one of five such centres across the country—was established in 1992. Each centre needed an academic director and Jane accepted the position as co-director with Sid Frankel.

The initial funding from SSHRC and Health Canada was only for a five-year period. In 1996, with the idea of a funding model similar to the foundation funding the Muriel McQueen Ferguson Centre for Family Violence Research in New Brunswick, Jane met with **Sharon Carstairs**, (former Canadian Senator and leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party) to ask for assistance to set up a foundation to fund the Manitoba centre. They were put in contact with **Margaret Newall** (co-founder of the Prairieaction Foundation), who indicated that she was willing to work on the establishment of the foundation as long as a tri-provincial network for research and education was established. **Carolynne Boivin** (PAF founding president) and others joined Jane, Sharon and Margaret in the immense undertaking of raising funds for the foundation, and consulting with service providers and community groups to solicit feedback on the feasibility and utility of the establishment of a tri-provincial network.

Jane has fond memories of she and Margaret driving



across the prairies to meet with university presidents to see which universities were willing to house research centres. There was no budget for this travel and Jane would stay with Margaret or Carolynne to save money on hotel expenses. Jane recalls one of the highlights of these road trips as being when she offered to relieve Margaret by taking a turn driving which was "*The one and only time I got to drive a Lexus.*"

All of the hard work paid off and over 2.5 million dollars was raised. In 1997, the University of Manitoba centre developed regional capacity and established offices at the universities of Saskatchewan and Calgary and adopted the name RESOLVE. Jane remained director of RESOLVE Manitoba, which is the administrative centre of the network. That same year, Prairieaction Foundation was established and supports the work of RESOLVE through the endowment fund.

Since beginning RESOLVE, Jane's projects and accomplishments are far too numerous to describe here. In 1997–1998, she served as Chair of the Lavoie Inquiry Implementation Committee which was established to respond to the recommendations resulting from the inquiry into the tragic murder suicide of Rhonda and Roy Lavoie. She finds it very rewarding that all of the 73 recommendations that applied to the province were implemented. The FVC and Jane's evaluation have attracted national and international attention. Jane has presented information internationally and a number of colleagues have come to Winnipeg to observe our court, and have subsequently worked to establish specialized courts in their own jurisdictions. In addition to the FVC Project, Jane was the principal investigator of *The Healing*

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## Announcements, Conferences and Events



**May 12, 2017 - A Night of T.L.C, 5:30 - 9 PM**, a fundraising event for The Laurel Centre at the Royal Aviation Museum, Hangar T2, 958 Ferry Road, Winnipeg, MB. Gather your friends & join us in an exclusive evening of wine, small bites, and live jazz! Indulge in free manicures, hair styling, & make-up application at the MC College pamper corner. The evening ends with a silent auction, raffles & bidding on accessories. For tickets or more information contact Joyce Coady by email at [joyce.coady@thelaurelcentre.com](mailto:joyce.coady@thelaurelcentre.com), or call **204-783-5460 ext. 16**.



**October 18 – 19, 2017 - Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Conference**, in London, ON. This event is hosted by the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations. This conference is intended for policy makers, mental health, justice and social service professionals involved in the prevention, assessment, management, and safety planning for domestic violence and domestic homicide, particularly those who work with Indigenous, rural, remote, northern, immigrant and refugee populations, and children exposed to domestic violence. Early-bird registration is available before June 1, 2017.

For more information, refer online to [www.cdhipi.ca/canadian-domestic-homicide-prevention-conference](http://www.cdhipi.ca/canadian-domestic-homicide-prevention-conference).



**November 16 – 17, 2017 - Family Wellness Conference: Hope & Harmony**, at the Saskatoon Inn in Saskatoon, SK. Proudly sponsored by TFHQ Safe Shelters Inc., FHQ Tribal Council, and Okanese 82. Special guests are Dr. Gabor Mate, Susan Aglukark, and Dr. Sharon Acoose. Early registration is \$325 until September 1, 2017. Late registration is \$375. For more information contact **Frances Montgrand** at **306-332-1369**.

**November 16 – 17, 2017 - 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Diverse Voices Family Violence Conference** at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton, AB. For more information refer online to [www.diverse-voices.com](http://www.diverse-voices.com).

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*Journey*, a SSHRC funded longitudinal study investigating experiences of 665 women across the three Prairie Provinces. Along with the other RESOLVE centres, she is currently participating in a national homicide study entitled *National Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative for Vulnerable Populations*, and she is the principal investigator on a study of the processing of sexual assault cases in Winnipeg. In addition, through her teaching and research, Jane has mentored and supported hundreds of students.

In describing changes that she has witnessed, Jane points out that over the last 30 years services for victims have become more sensitive to the complexities of this issue of family violence. For example, our increased knowledge and understanding of trauma and the impact of trauma has been integrated into programming for women and children. Treatment programs for men have also evolved from a very narrow model of shame and blame to a more nuanced trauma informed model that has been much more successful.

To say that Jane's leadership and dedication to RESOLVE will be missed is a vast understatement. Her commitment to building the RESOLVE network and a focus on community-centred research, and her many contributions to this research is a legacy. Although she is leaving RESOLVE, Jane will not be leading a life of leisure. While on sabbatical next year, she will continue to work on her research projects. We are sad to say farewell, but wish her well. ☘

RESOLVEnews is a quarterly newsletter published by RESOLVE Manitoba. Any submissions, announcements and inquiries can be directed to the RESOLVE office in each of the three prairie provinces or to the editor, Ilze Cepelis, RESOLVE Manitoba - phone (204) 474-8965; fax: (204) 474-7686; e-mail: [newsedit@umanitoba.ca](mailto:newsedit@umanitoba.ca)



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## Special Tri-Provincial Research Call-Out

Prairieaction Foundation (PAF) is excited to announce a special tri-provincial research call-out that aims to fund research projects that will be conducted in all three prairie provinces. PAF is committed to funding research that leads to community awareness related to issues of violence and abuse and is specifically interested in research that engages in solution focused outcomes, leading to better programs to keep our communities safer. At this time, PAF is requesting three separate Tri-Provincial research projects to be conducted. Details regarding the criteria and the application for funding can be found on our website at [prairieaction.ca](http://prairieaction.ca). ☘

### **RESOLVE Manitoba**

*~ Dr. Jane Ursel ~  
Director (RESOLVE)*

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