

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF IMMIGRANT
AND VISIBLE MINORITY WOMEN OF CANADA
(NOIVMWC)

VIOLENCE AGAINST IMMIGRANT, REFUGEE AND
RACIAL MINORITY WOMEN

PHASE II & III

A Manual for:

**Promoting Awareness and Understanding
Networking and Linking
Organizing Activities for Breaking Down Barriers**

1995

Funding for this project was provided by the
Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada.
Views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Health Canada.

Contents may not be commercially reproduced,
but any other reproduction, with acknowledgment, is encouraged.
Please send copy of reproduction or publication in which extracts
from this report are reproduced or quoted to NOIVMWC.
If you wish to reproduce this report in full, please write to NOIVMWC.

NOIVMWC, 251 Bank St, Suite 504, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1X3

**VIOLENCE AGAINST IMMIGRANT, REFUGEE
AND RACIAL MINORITY WOMEN**

PHASE II & III

A Manual for:

**Promoting Awareness and Understanding
Networking and Linking
Organizing Activities for Breaking Down Barriers**

prepared by

Indra Maharaj

for

National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada

Project # 4887-15-93-015

Submitted to

**Family Violence Prevention Division
Health Canada**

1995

Acknowledgments

Materials and informations supplied by participants are vital to a project of this type. I express my deepest gratitude to the women whose names I am unable to print for reasons of confidentiality and privacy.

The following individuals kindly provided their time, experiences and creative work:

Eunadie Johnson, Pamela Dos Ramos, Cynthia Lam, Phyllis Marsh-Jarvis, Jivan Maharaj, Jenelle Maharaj, Tara Nanayakkara, Mary Jose Romano, Marie Celie Roumer, Ila Sakara, Mign Shyr, Melly Swamidas, Cheryl Van-De-Cruize, Joan Young.

On behalf of NOIVWMC, I extend my appreciation also to Ms Vera Lagasse and Ms Katalin Kennedy, the Program Development Consultants of the Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada, for their inputs and assistance to the project.

This project was made possible by funding from the Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada.

Indra Maharaj
Project Coordinator

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	2
Why	2
Where	2
Process	3
How	4
Outreach	4
Issues and Challenges	7
Community Issues	7
Challenges to the research	7
THE PROJECT	9
Organization of the information	9
SUMMARY OF OUTREACH/REGIONAL WORKERS REPORTS	10
SASKATCHEWAN	10
NEWFOUNDLAND	13
A CULTURALLY DIVERSE MUTUAL HELP GROUP	16
Making Contact	17
Conducting a group meeting	18
Meeting women's needs in the group	19
Checklist	21
Sample workshop	22
ALBERTA	24
Proposal writing	28
NOVA SCOTIA	29
Racism	31
History of racism	31
AN ANTI-RACISM TRAINING MODEL	36
The Training Process	37

MONTREAL - REPORT #1	41
Identifying and adapting cultural values in counselling	42
MONTREAL - REPORT #2	44
CONCLUSION	46
APPENDIX I	47
APPENDIX II	58
APPENDIX III	60
APPENDIX IV	62
APPENDIX V	65
APPENDIX VI	67
REFERENCES	68

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is clear that Canada is a "multi-ethnic" society; the diversity of ethnic groups is reflected in the pursuit of distinctive interests. However, there is a common goal of achieving full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the shaping of all aspects of Canadian society.

In the power structures of Canadian society immigrant and racial minority women are under-represented. This is a continuing dilemma for these groups and serves to limit the ability of these women to participate in the decision making processes which have a real impact on their lives.

The process of "naming" is a familiar one to disadvantaged groups. To gain recognition of their life circumstances disadvantaged groups must ensure their voices are heard, their perspectives taken seriously and their issues accepted by those with the power to make the necessary changes.

Increasingly, it has become important for immigrant, refugee and racial minority women to address their immediate needs and concerns. Too often, by linking at the problem in the wrong way, we are disappointed by the results. That is, viewing issues solely from the dominant perspective and failing to acknowledge alternative views can limit responses to urgent needs.

There is a growing awareness that violence against women poses a significant threat to individuals. As we all know, our general well-being is determined by our health. Good health depends on the conditions of society; when there is a breakdown of the social and physical environments our well-being is affected. In ensuring the well-being of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women, we need to address the social and physical factors (racism, sexism, shelter, education, employment, good relationships and a safe work environment) which affect the daily lives of this population.

The work of NOIVMWC is timely and essential in addressing the specific needs and realities of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women of Canada.

The main objective of the family violence project is to mobilize and organize around the issues of woman abuse as identified by the ethno-cultural communities themselves in the various regions of Canada. In particular, the aim is to address the problem of domestic violence and to formulate a national strategy to overcome this violence in women's lives. It is proposed that the objectives of the project can be accomplished in five phases over a three year period. Phases II and III, reported in the document, are a continuation of Phase I in which the theoretical framework and methodology of the project were developed.

NOIVMWC's strategy for action involved a strong outreach component to the regions of Canada. To ensure relevance and success of the project, the main efforts of Phases II and III were to provide support, establish networks, and make links for the building of awareness and movement for change by individuals and communities engaged in addressing violence against women.

The local alliances formed among those working on wife abuse and other forms of violence against women increased communication and the recognition of the community's responsibility to deal with such issues. In its commitment to avoid duplication of similar work, NOIVMWC was successful in one region (Montreal) in building on an existing project. Our positive working relationship demonstrated that working together is a useful strategy we can employ for maximizing resources.

Learning from immigrant, refugee and racial minority women and identifying the common threads of their experiences is important for finding solutions. Although some of the findings suggest that people in the community are aware that domestic violence is pervasive, continuing public education programs are necessary for making sure the community at large remains aware of the problem.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada

The National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada (NOIVMWC) is a non-profit, non-partisan and non-sectarian organization. The purpose of the organization is to ensure equality for immigrant, refugee and racial minority women within bilingual Canada.

The objectives of the organization are:

- * to form a united national voice and liaise with other national women's groups for the betterment of the status of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women;
- * to put in place strategies that will combat sexism, racism, poverty, isolation and violence;
- * to act as an advocate on issues dealing with immigrant, refugee, and racial minority women;
- * to heighten public awareness on the status of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women;
- * to work with all levels of government and public and private agencies to develop effective strategies.

OVERVIEW

WHY

The issue of violence against women has gained much attention in recent years and has been identified as a priority for action. An enormous amount of work has gone into identifying and documenting the problem and related issues. However, documentation of the experiences of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women is limited. As a result, it is necessary to document the existence of alternative realities and to describe those realities in their own terms.

For too long, the experiences of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women have been assumed to be the same as the mainstream. It is limiting to organize and understand an issue based on assumptions. The nature of the situation of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women is different from that of mainstream women and cannot be treated as similar.

While mainstream women are sensitive to the fact that they must continue to deal with sexism and patriarchy in their everyday lives, immigrant, refugee and non-white women have to face the added realities of racism and exclusion. White (1993) describes the current practice of racism in Canada as "gentle" discrimination in which the dominant white majority subtly and quietly excludes minority group members in order not to disturb the status quo; she goes on to add that ethnic groups need to insist that racism be recognized

Many obstacles exist that make it difficult for immigrant, refugee and racial minority women to seek help or prevent the violence. There is a need to look at the forces that control women's lives, especially the forces that control the lives of battered immigrant, refugee and racial minority women. Many women of colour are Canadian-born and are aware of the services and how the system works, but they experience gender and racial discrimination when they use these services. Other women, because of their newness to the country, resident status, language or culture, are totally cut off from services.

WHERE

NOIVMWC's project was implemented in three geographical regions: the Prairies, Atlantic Provinces and Quebec. Six community /regional outreach workers were hired, two from each region. Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Halifax, St. John's, Cornerbrook and Montreal are some of the areas in which outreach workers were able to make contact and gather information.

Process

Community workers consulted with mainstream organizations, women's agencies, immigrant, refugee and racial minority women. In some regions outreach workers successfully brought together women from different ethnic groups, irrespective of class or social standing, around the issue of wife abuse.

The following ethnic-minority groups participated: Afro-Canadian, Nigerian, Chinese, South Asian, Latin American, Haitian, South African, Sri Lankan, Filipino and Vietnamese.

The purpose of outreach into the communities was to get people together who shared a common concern about the issue of violence against women to come together and jointly seek solutions to the problem. Throughout the project, community/regional outreach workers consulted with members of possible target communities to gain information and insight into the nature of the problem as experienced in their communities as well as the types of solutions they felt would be most effective. It was intended that this would maximize our ability to meet local needs and perform in ways consistent with community values and expectations.

Creating new understanding can be achieved by working together at the local levels, regional levels and finally at the national level. There is a growing need to learn more about each other, to find out what is going on with each other, to understand how we can make sense of the situation and, finally, to determine what should be done to deal with the violence in our lives. According to Pence (1987) if you talk to women you are going to organize them, but she cautions that organizing involves a lot of work because women will not come to you and so you have to go to them. In order to be inclusive, outreach is necessary for ensuring everyone an opportunity to give voice to their experience, needs, fears and ideas to work together for change.

HOW

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Outreach to three geographic regions of Canada. Community/regional outreach workers were contracted in their geographic regions to act in three specific ways: as participant/observer, as popular educator and as advocate.

Community development

Target groups

- Ethno-cultural and racial populations

Community / Regional outreach worker as participant / observer

Community / Regional outreach workers were requested to take a "how-to-approach" to organizing with the groups in their regions. They were asked to :

- Maximize all resources in communities
- Identify key community organizations (resource)
- Contact grassroots organizations (resource)
- Approach key influential community members working against woman abuse
- Assess situation in the community with the assistance of local resource people
- Identify needs and issues of individuals and groups which represent their greatest struggles and social tensions
- Assess stage of organizing (well established or newly formed)
- Assess level of understanding of violence against women

Community / Regional worker as popular educator - linking education and organizing, so that heightened sensitivity and knowledge give the power to struggle effectively against violence.

- Facilitating in naming the issues by fostering a democratic process which will create the conditions for full and equal participation by community members
- Planning with groups starting with participants' knowledge and experiences and bringing those experience into a collective framework
- Holding educational events, exchanging new information, practicing skill and creating strategies
- Educating for change using popular education models

Community/Regional outreach worker as Advocate - breaking down the barriers, and educating ourselves by unlearning the attitudes and behaviors that maintain our oppression.

- Initiating group work to begin process of challenging dominant ideologies/agendas and practices
- Verifying needs issues of women, giving voice to participants who otherwise would not have a chance to be heard
- Identifying priorities and begin planning for action
- Building links for collaborative work and sharing information

Outreach

In keeping with the theme of outreach, networking, linking and building on existing resources, a National Advisory Group was formed as NOIVMWC's connection to immigrant, refugee and racial minority women working within their communities. The Advisory Group members serve as key liaison people in establishing local contacts, identifying local issues, providing information on new projects in their communities and advising on and supporting the overall implementation of the project in their respective provinces.

Outreach workers met with women in many places: in women's homes, in women's groups, in coffee shops, at church, in shelters, prenatal classes, seniors groups and in their own homes. It was important for the purpose of this project to document the process involved in every step of organizing.

For example, from the time contact was made with an interested participant or group, and the participant became engaged in the process, the outreach worker attempted to identify the following:

- Where the awareness of issues of violence came from?
- From an individual or a group of women?
- What was the next step taken after identification of the issue for action?
- What problems, barriers and successes were presented along the way?
- What is the current status of action on the issue?

It is intended that documentation of this type of information as well as other information gathered during the project would be useful as a tool for enabling other women to organize in their communities. In addition, issues identified as special concerns will be examined and presented along with some suggestions and ideas for dealing with these concerns.

Since outreach was conducted according to geographic regions, our understanding and analysis of the issue is drawn from regional differences, provincial politics of funding, settlement patterns and cultural traditions that exist in Canada today.

This manual is intended to respond to a need for information and is to be used as a tool for understanding and building on our diverse experiences. The purpose is to provide materials that can help women and groups who are working for changes that are important to them.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Community Issues

- Inadequate financial support.
- Competition for funding.
- Women are expected to provide their time and expertise free of charge.
- At the grassroots level only a few people try to do everything under incredible barriers/restraints due to limited energy and resources. While there is an increased encouragement for women's participation, it is important to make sure that this participation is not abused and exploited for the purpose of agencies or governments who are trying to improve their image.
- A major problem with "women's" projects is that they are often considered relatively unimportant and fail to get the support of the community at large.
- In some places there is a feeling of an unequal balance amongst regions regarding funding.

Challenges to the research

- Timeline was limiting; therefore, outreach workers were able to engage with a limited number of communities and organizations.
- The limited timeline did not allow for alliance building. Developing alliances takes time and effort.
- Community denial
- Some communities expressed their discontent with yet another research project, which presented an unwillingness to cooperate in information sharing.

In areas where small populations were spread over a large geographical region it was necessary to take a look at the existing services and programs for the community at large. Where there were no ethno-specific services and programs it was essential to identify how "mainstream" was meeting the needs of our target population. Ethno-cultural communities do not always benefit from information and services designed for the mainstream. Therefore, it was critical for outreach/regional workers to evaluate how culturally sensitive and responsive

mainstream organizations were in meeting the needs of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women.

Outreach workers used the following criteria in their attempt to assess programs and services:

Access - defined as an individual's ability to receive services and to participate in existing services and programs.

Representation - refers to programs and services which are reflective of immigrant, refugee and racial minority communities.

Participation - the degree to which target communities have input in the development and delivery of services and programs.

Non-discrimination - services do not present barriers to access on the basis of a person's race, sex, sexual orientation, place of origin or ethnic origin and religion.

Racial Sensitivity - sensitivity to the life experiences and special needs of racial minority communities.

Cultural appropriateness - sensitive and responsive to the life experience and special needs of ethno-cultural minority communities.

THE PROJECT

Organization of the information

Women's needs and interests differ from place to place. Different groups of women will take different kinds of action. In compiling the information, there were some obvious gaps and some issues highlighted. Taking into consideration the political nature of project funding women, some women were interested in organizing a formal structure of operation and required information on proposal writing and non-profit organizations. Other women were concerned with establishing multicultural support and organizing groups and leadership training; many women wanted to find ways of combating racism. Access to services was equally important for most women and in particular their need for counselling practices that are sensitive to their realities.

By using the information gathered by the community/regional outreach workers and the real life stories of the women, this manual will:

- Give information on how to build a culturally diverse support group;
- provide information on proposal writing and non-profit organizations;
- present a source for service providers to understand the causes, effects and extent by which a racist system can oppress non-white people;
- give information on how to develop culturally responsive counselling.

We will explore the complex personal, political, historical and social situations surrounding immigrant, refugee and racial minority women in Canadian society. While this manual does not cover all the issues identified by participants, the focus is on the themes which were identified as urgent and necessary at this time.

The manual includes women's personal stories as well as some practical aspects of accurately understanding the priorities and strategies for working with immigrant, refugee and racial minority communities. The materials presented are **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE**, that is, they provide a process through which culture can be integrated into education, intervention and prevention of violence against women.

SUMMARY OF OUTREACH\REGIONAL WORKERS REPORTS

There are common experiences and issues faced by immigrant, refugee and racial minority throughout the various regions. For the purpose of this project, the regional reports are grouped together to demonstrate common themes that arose.

SASKATCHEWAN

The project in Saskatchewan focused on two groups: community service providing agencies and the immigrant community. The immigrant women represented different ethno-cultural backgrounds. No specific ethno-cultural communities were chosen, as most of these communities are not large. The use of a questionnaire was not successful. Most service providing agencies provided standard responses and were found to be well-meaning with an interest in working with the immigrant community. However a good understanding of the problems and issues of immigrant women was absent.

The assumption that immigrant women would like to organize themselves as ethno-language specific enclaves has not proven to be true in Saskatchewan. While such an environment may provide a comfort zone for some women, it might create a ghettoized situation. Besides, ethnic communities in Saskatchewan are small in size and a private confidential matter may very quickly become a matter of public knowledge. This fear is real and should not be ignored.

NOIVMWC's outreach to the community has been a start in assessing the community sentiment regarding the issue of violence and methods of combating the problem. While most of the people contacted agreed that some measures are necessary to address the issue, there seems to be no agreement for a single means to a solution.

Both the geographic situation and social climate in this province are different from those in larger metropolitan areas. Ethnic communities can be divided in two groups - people who came as independent immigrants, usually having higher education and generally being economically secure; and the other group who came as refugees or as dependents of refugees. The later group arrived in the early eighties. In most cases, Saskatchewan was not their first choice for settlement as it is isolated from the major centers and the prospects of employment are not very promising. This group in general has lower education and income levels. Most ethnic communities provide primary support to their group members and their main social activities are confined to religious and cultural events. The response towards violence against women is minimal. However, members from two communities indicated the occasional availability of some informal support.

The responses of agencies are interesting. All indicated a willingness to work together with the immigrant and refugee community for a better understanding of the problem of violence. But how this is to be achieved has not been spelled out.

Again, the assumption appears to be that immigrant women will continue to provide free consultation services towards this end. Immigrant women, on the other hand, are not clear about the issue. The class difference certainly becomes a factor. Women from upper class backgrounds, with good English capabilities, either deny the existence of the problem or show complete apathy. Women at the grassroots level often lack the English language capability and other means to articulate their needs.

New immigrant women, including government-sponsored refugees, generally access the services of settlement service organizations in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert and Moose Jaw, while the Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan (IWS) provides services mainly in the areas of long term integration and community participation. The IWS is the only organization which adopts gender analysis and equity issues in its approaches to all social issues affecting immigrant and refugee women.

Presently, one of the settlement service organizations offers a violence prevention program for women, in collaboration with another community agency, but with no input from the IWS. The result, then, is the lack of referrals from one organization to another, lack of coordination and lack of proper utilization of existing community services.

Settlement agencies are generally run through mainstream approaches. As in other provinces, the trend is also present in Saskatchewan to incorporate services for immigrant women and other special groups into the mainstream service organizations. This seems to be a good approach during the current era of fiscal restraint. After all, the expectation is that immigrants need to integrate with the society at large. But there is the likelihood that the concerns of immigrant women will be marginalized due to the existence of a power imbalance. Immigrant women as a group will lose their voice.

In Saskatchewan, IWS has established a certain level of credibility in terms of its advocacy role on behalf of immigrant women in the province. It has been the only organization to address the issue of family violence within the immigrant

community. Given the limited resources available there is a feeling that it is best to strengthen IWS instead of creating new groups. There is a preference for a multicultural setting for women to gather and deal with their unique problems. At the same time, there is the knowledge that empowering women would only be a partial answer to the problem and that it would be important to develop education programs for men as well.

The idea of an ethno-specific setting is not feasible in Saskatchewan since the total immigrant community is not large or organized enough to benefit from a programming structure delivered along ethno-cultural lines.

Outreach to ethno-cultural communities through community development workers is a useful tool for raising awareness and bringing immigrant women's concerns to the public. It is also important to provide means for abused women to express and share their thoughts, needs and wisdom in order to break their isolation from the rest of the community.

Educational workshops organized by the IWS are usually attended by a small group of people who are sympathetic of immigrant issues, but possess no power or resources to follow through. Lack of representation in the decision-making power structures is a reality; for example, none of the eleven officers of the Provincial Women's Secretariat, which advises government on women's issues, represents immigrant, refugee or racial minority women.

It is fashionable these days to discuss having inclusiveness and cross-cultural perspectives among service providers. But in actual terms, no commitment has been demonstrated in allocating resources for taking any corrective measures.

In Saskatchewan funding sources are confined to the programs of the federal government. The provincial and civil governments have almost no program for immigrant women. In the absence of ongoing programs and services, the situation of women with respect to family violence has not improved.

NEWFOUNDLAND

The immigrant, refugee and racial minority communities of St. John's and Corner Brook were selected for the purpose of identifying how the ethno-cultural communities define family violence, how the communities respond to family violence and what services were available for prevention of and intervention in family violence in these communities.

The majority of crime and violence in ethnic communities goes unreported. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Newfoundland is a small province with closely knit ethnic communities.

NOIVMWC's project on violence against immigrant refugee and racial minority women was presented to the Ethno-cultural Executive Committee and the Multicultural Women's Organization (MWO) of Newfoundland. MWO presented an article to the local newspaper about the project titled "Help available for ethnic women". This article generated quite a lot of positive response.

In 1993 the Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland carried out a study to assess and identify the needs and concerns of immigrant and refugee women in Newfoundland. A questionnaire was administered to women, of which one section addressed the issue of family and societal violence. This section of the questionnaire generated anger from many women who felt the questions were too personal, while others felt that confidentiality of the questionnaire would not be possible. The matter was further complicated when language was a barrier and an interpreter was involved, resulting in women being less honest in their responses.

From this information and similar observations, a questionnaire was not used in this current project; instead relationship building played an important role in acquiring information. The aim was to establish a working group of women who were willing to be involved in the project on violence against women.

Speaking engagements were arranged with various groups of women: The Multicultural Women's Organization, The Christian Women's Prayer group, The Mall walking group, The Seniors Bridging club and the Filipinos Cafe. The Association for New Canadians where English as a second language (ESL) is taught provided a diverse group of women who discussed their views on family violence in their various countries and in Canada. Information pamphlets on transition houses and other resources were distributed at the meetings.

Extensive networking by phone calls, through friends, visiting and meeting women at their places of work and leisure activities and informing them about the project resulted in ten women getting together. The women were from different ethnic

backgrounds (Chinese, South Asian, Filipino, South American, Vietnamese and Indonesian) and different walks of life. One woman was a survivor of wife abuse, others were peer supporters or counsellors of women who had experienced abuse or were experiencing abuse and some women were just interested in learning about the dynamics of wife abuse and helping the group in any way possible.

At an initial meeting the first item on the agenda was exploring the value of getting together as a group which would work towards the eradication of violence against immigrant, refugee and racial minority women. The need for a few ground rules was explained, and the creation of a non judgmental, safe place for discussion was emphasized, most importantly with trust and confidentiality preserved.

The project on violence against women was then presented to the women. Various issues were raised and discussed along with a set of questions distributed at that time. One of the women in the group who had recently been divorced expressed her feeling of lack of support from her community and was excited to know that she could be a part of a group that would reach out to other ethnic women who are being abused. From her experience she felt that a lot of women who were experiencing abuse in their homes are not able to seek services for many reasons. For example, the ability to communicate with locals was a problem and is often compounded with subtle racism. For these reasons women are afraid of facing the hostile society alone if they walk out of their marriage. Some of the women felt uncertain about beginning to address the abuse in their lives when the services necessary to respond to their needs were not available.

In general, it was a good beginning since the women were supportive of each other and were able to discuss and challenge their attitudes about cultural myths and taboos. The women agreed to meet again to learn more about the dynamics of wife assault and how to begin to deal with it effectively. A second meeting was arranged at which time a resource person from the Provincial Association Against Family Violence made a presentation and distributed some literature about family violence. The Association will continue to strengthen the network and provide necessary information and encouragement to the group. As the group continued to meet, the dynamics revealed different levels of understanding on the issue of violence against women, especially wife assault.

After identifying some of the problems and the various resources available for battered women, interviews were conducted with service providers, shelter workers, a women's center and associations dealing with violence against women. From the interviews, language and cultural barriers were highlighted. Some ethnic minority women did access the shelters and received support but not to the satisfaction of both the service providers and the clients since cultural interpreters were not available. As mainstream service providers had to rely on volunteer interpreters who are not trained for handling problems of wife abuse and were not aware that a translation must be culturally sensitive as well as linguistically accurate, the effectiveness of their services were limited.

There are no ethno-specific services provided for immigrant and refugee women in Newfoundland. **The cultural restraints and the small size of the specific ethnic communities have prevented women from coming out and seeking professional or other help.**

A CULTURALLY DIVERSE MUTUAL HELP GROUP

Both Saskatchewan and Atlantic Provinces have small ethnic communities; multicultural setting where women can get together seems to be best choice of organizing.

A mutual help group presents a solution for women in other regions where there are small scattered ethnic communities and limited resources. Below are some specific ways that women can use to build a culturally diverse group.

Rationale

Identification of a common problem - Violence against women
Bring women together to share their mutual problems, experiences and possible solutions. Mutual help can provide:

- * information on how to cope with problems
- * a feeling of being cared about and supported
- * a place to find other people with similar problems

Mutual help groups can take many forms. Including informal sessions, educational seminars and social gatherings. Mutual help groups can provide a means for implementing programs that promote well-being in a community.

Who can benefit

- * women who are abused
- * women who are isolated in their communities
- * women who are unaware of services and resources
- * women who need additional support and encouragement

Making contact

The first step in organizing involves making contact. There is no best way to make contact with women in the community; however the following ways are helpful:

Community meetings - this can be a good opportunity to let women know about the project

Leaders - grassroots organizers and community leaders can be useful in making connections

Social gatherings - at a party or specially planned celebration

Organizations - local organizations can sponsor the project for members

Publicity - local radio or television shows

Shelters - where women seek refuge

Who can coordinate or facilitate the group

The group leader can be a group member or someone from outside the group who is invited to facilitate. The facilitator should:

- * have gained some perspective of the problem
- * have a concern for others who share the problem

Role of facilitator

Facilitating means searching and seeking change.

The facilitator's focus must be on what group members can do for each other, allowing women to choose a course of action themselves. A facilitator respects the knowledge and experience women have, she helps the women to feel comfortable about expressing their ideas and discussing problems from their own perspective. The facilitator should also become, when possible an equal participant sharing any of her experiences that are relevant to the group's problem.

Conducting a group meeting

Once participants have been recruited, the group can begin by presenting a series of informal discussion groups. Since violence against women is a reasonably well researched problem, topics such as wife assault and related issues can be included in the program for group meetings.

Meetings should be held at a time and place convenient for the women. They should be scheduled approximately one week apart, so women have time to think about and act on what they have discussed.

Each meeting will involve an activity. The facilitator explains why an activity is included and what it will accomplish. Materials may be needed for some activities to promote discussion.

Materials

Materials can include stories, skits, songs, photographs, puppets, etc.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component of any group or program.

After the meeting it is useful to get some feedback from the women about what they liked and did not like about the meeting. The responses can help to strengthen the group.

It is also good for the facilitator to assess her skill development. By taking the time at the end of the meeting to answer and record the following questions the facilitator will be able to enhance her skills:

- How did the participants react to the session?
- How did women feel about the session and why did they feel that way?
- What did I do well?
- What difficulties or problems occurred? Why?

Meeting women's needs in the group

Each group of women will be different and so their needs will also be different. Each group of women will identify their goals. The outcome of the group cannot be predetermined; the diversity of the group and the process provides the context and content while the women guide the way.

These are some suggestion for topics important for women:

- Women's rights
- Working together for personal and social change
- Women and their families
- Organizing to solve community problems
- Problem solving
- Parenting
- Causes and effects of battering. What is abuse?
- Forms of wife abuse
- Power and control
- What you can do to help an abused women you know
- Myths about woman abuse

Topics which are especially important for immigrant, refugee and racial minority women are :

- Racism
- Cultural Isolation
- Language
- Immigration/ sponsorship
- Degree of acculturation
- Stress of setting in a new country

The group offers a place for discovery. Excerpts from "The Purple House: Susan's story" (Appendix I) can be used by facilitators to generate discussion about many of the topics listed above. Using Susan's story to highlight aspects of wife abuse and other related issues may begin a process of comprehension and understanding for women. That is, women may begin to analyze their own personal situation by relating to Susan's problems.

These are some of the questions many women have about their abusive situations and can be used to develop themes:

- Why do men have to be so controlling?
- Why can't men take responsibility for their children?
- What does a man want in a woman?
- Is there life after leaving an abusive relationship?
- How to get a career going especially when there are young children?
- Will children appreciate the sacrifices?
- Is it possible to ever trust men again?
- Is it possible to feel good about yourself again?
- Why am I being punished for his problem?
- Where/how to get legal advise?

Checklist

Before developing the activities for the group meeting you should consider:

- * the local context
- * the number of participants
- * who the participants are: their cultural background, social class, ethnicity
- * will women be comfortable doing the activity
- * objectives
- * the design - when in the workshop should the activity take place?
to get out participants' experiences, analyze a topic, add new information and make an action plan.
- * the time of day
- * amount of time for the meeting
- * language level and literacy
- * space
- * theme or topic
- * resources you have
- * participant experience, how much they know about the theme
- * potential resistance to the activity

Taken from: Educating for change by Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James D'Arcy Martin and Barb Thomas. Doris Marshall Institute. Toronto, Ontario, 1991.

SAMPLE WORKSHOP (first meeting)

Purpose

Getting to know each other and the purpose of the group.
The facilitator will serve as the guide.

Materials

Small matching pairs of objects. Objects can be cut from colored paper. Cut two of each object and in the event of an odd number of participants cut three of one of the objects.

Steps

- 1) Before the first meeting, think about how the women who will be attending feel about attending the meeting. Do the women know each other? Have they attended other kinds of meeting before? Will they feel comfortable sharing with the other women? Will they feel shy or distrustful?
- 2) Make women feel comfortable.
- 3) Make the room comfortable, have refreshments.
- 4) When all the women have arrived and after everyone is seated explain that the purpose of the meeting is to get to know something about each other. Ask if there are any questions, then proceed with the activity.
- 5) Have each participant and facilitator select an object or paper cut-out from a box or basket. Tell everyone to find a partner by matching objects. When partners are matched up, explain that they will have twenty minutes to interview each other.

After the interview they will introduce their partners to the entire group.

In the interviews, the partners should ask each other these questions:

What would you like the other women to know about you?

What is something you love to do?

What do you hope to achieve in this group?

- 6) Get the women back together and let each woman introduce her partner.
- 7) Take a short break.
- 8) After the break proceed with the purpose of the group and give women the opportunity to talk about what is important to them.

Adapted and taken from: Women working together; for personal, economic and community developmen, Suzanne Kindervatte. UNIFEM, 1991.

This is just an example of some of the steps you will need to take for putting together a first meeting and this format can be used to organize other themes other than violence. The group is based on the assumption that most people have the ability to deal with their problems if they have enough information, support, some role models, and some help in learning how to use resources.

Another method for the meeting can be followed in which the participants introduce themselves, giving their names if they wish and recounting a bit about their own lives and reasons for coming to the meeting. They may want to start commenting and reacting to one another's stories right away.

The group must decide how it wishes to structure its meetings. When there is no formal activity the group may simply decide to allow participants to bring up anything that is bothering them at the moment. As the group develops, members of the group can take turns as facilitators.

Group members may develop a strong concern for those with problems similar to theirs and may want to advocate for change at another level. At this time the group may be of a sufficient number of committed individuals to establish an independent permanent organization. How to build on this type of mutual help organization is discussed in the report from Alberta.

ALBERTA

Calgary and Edmonton have taken different approaches to services for immigrant, refugee and racial minority women. In Edmonton there are more ethno-specific services whereas in Calgary there is a move towards more collaborative efforts between mainstream and ethno-communities/agencies. However, mainstream organizations continue to receive funding for new programs for immigrants. As a result, there is a need to conduct barrier analysis of mainstream services. It has become critical for immigrant, refugee and racial minority women to challenge and make mainstream organizations take responsibility and action for the goals they have outlined. There is not much acknowledgment of the need for less formal, community based organizations to assist in the transition and referral to mainstream organizations even though there was some discussion around collaboration.

There is a belief that immigrant women's organizations can deal with all immigrants and that no specialization is needed. These agencies become volunteer driven. Volunteers do the work under the supervision of "qualified" white staff. There is a great deal of difficulty in recruiting volunteers and having them commit to staying long enough to train. It was identified that because of the cultural differences women do not understand the need to volunteer. If they do volunteer, they face restrictions of travel, finances and lack of support of immediate family members and extended family members at home.

There is competition for funding and lack of trust within the immigrant communities. There is a very important need for education about violence against women and, in particular, wife abuse in the immigrant, refugee and racial minority communities. But proposals that have been developed to address this need in ethnic communities are turned down because they are considered to be too ethno-specific and funders claim that services are already available from mainstream programs.

Ethno-specific groups have difficulty in getting a charitable number since one of the conditions for acquiring a number is that the group must serve the public at large. Without a charitable number it is difficult to do fundraising from donations because groups or individuals cannot receive a tax deduction for their gift. According to Silverman (1980) if a group wants to be autonomous, it must incorporate in its own name and then apply for tax-exempt status, which can be very costly. One way of having the benefit of a charitable number is for the group to be affiliated with an agency.

Safety risks are extremely high for women organizing in some immigrant communities that are resistant to change. This is due to the roles, values and beliefs of those cultures. Women who are meeting and organizing themselves for personal and social change risk their reputation and status in the community. **Their work is done from an unsecure base unlike mainstream shelters etc. Lack of funding for established formalized operations place these women at risk of physical harm.**

Jay's story

While in university Jay became aware of the need for counselling abused women and children. Her personal experiences and knowledge of friend's experiences within her own culture identified the existence of abuse within that culture. After hearing about an incident where a woman was shot by a relative because she did not marry the man her family wanted her to marry, Jay felt she had to do something to help the women of her community. She had the education, knowledge and working experience in this area.

Through Jay's working experience she realized the contradiction between the mandate of mainstream service organizations and their practices. Even though they stated that they would provide service to all people, in reality most organization work from a model which is developed to meet the needs of white people. At most these organizations provided a band-aid for women from her culture as programs and services were not culturally sensitive to these women's needs and often the direction given was not appropriate for women from this ethnic community.

Jay tried to address the fact that the practices of many mainstream service organizations tend to perpetuate the systemic and institutionalized racism of Canadian society. The result of her efforts to confront the issue of racism was that she ended up being a victim of racism herself and was asked to leave the mainstream organization where she was employed.

Jay found herself in a very difficult position in that she was unable to get support from other mainstream organizations as she was trying to deal with the issue of family violence within her own community but which the community itself chose to deny. Jay received no support from her community or from the mainstream in her attempts to set up services for her community.

With very little finances and the support of her family, Jay eventually was able to set up counselling services for women and children in her community experiencing family violence. Jay was determined to develop her own model as she believed that the short term counselling of most mainstream agencies did not meet the needs of the women from her community and many women would not go on to use follow up services. In addition there appeared to be an overload on the immigrant services and much demand to provide a wide range of services with workers having no special training in the area of family violence.

Jay's services have been in operation for over three years now and although more people have become involved, a Board has been formed and a professional fund raiser has volunteered, the organization continues to have difficulty getting support from mainstream funders and organizations.

Under incredible circumstance and with tremendous courage Jay has continued to offer services to women and children. She understands that to provide these services she places herself at risk but Jay believes that family violence must be stopped for everyone and not just a certain segment of the population of Canada.

Jay's work demonstrates that, however few in numbers or limited in resources, it is best to get started with some activity rather than to wait until supports and resources are in place.

To permit the growth of any group, a more formalized structure that defines tasks and functions of group members should be adopted. In addition, the group will have to become familiar with proposal writing to access funds for its programs and services. Following is a sample breakdown of structure and functions, as well as an outline on proposal writing (see also Appendix II).

RESPONSIBILITIES OF GROUP MEMBERS

Division of labor is necessary. There are a variety of functions that must be performed if the group is to survive.

Board of Directors

The affairs of the group will be managed by a Board of Directors composed of the officers and chairperson.

The officers of the group are the Secretary and the Treasurer called the Executive Committee.

The Chairperson

The chairperson is responsible for convening meetings, leading meetings, supervising and coordinating all activities of the group.

The Secretary

All groups need someone who will keep its records. Notes of meetings must be kept, lists of members maintained and correspondence must be answered.

The Treasurer

The treasurer is a very important office, and is the person responsible for keeping full and accurate accounts of all receipts and disbursements of the group. The treasurer does the banking and all other financial administration and management of the group.

Membership

Some groups have neither membership nor charge dues. When membership fees are determined they cover a period of time after which membership is renewed. This generates some income for the group.

As the group expands, the members may find that they need additional officers, such as a co-chair person.

PROPOSAL WRITING

A proposal should reflect the thoughtful planning of an applicant seeking funds from a grant making agency with which to address a need in the community. The function of a proposal is to demonstrate how the project will help fulfill the funder's mission. It describes why the project is important, who will benefit from it and why it is the best approach.

The components of a proposal are :

- 1) Summary - Clearly and concisely summarize the request. The summary should frame your proposal
- 2) Introduction - Describe the organization and its purpose.
- 3) Problem statement of Needs Assessment - Document the needs to be met or the problems to be solved by the proposed funding. That is, describe the general need and include a profile of the target group that will be served. It is important to demonstrate to the funder that the services to be provided will complement, not duplicate, existing services.
- 4) Objectives - Establish the benefits of the funding. Describe goal and tell what you want to do and how you want to approach it.
- 5) Methods - Describe the activities to be employed to achieve the desired results.
- 6) Evaluation - Present a plan for determining the degree to which objectives are met and methods are followed.
- 7) Future funding - Describe a plan for continuation beyond the grant period and/or the availability of other resources to complement the grant.
- 8) Budget - The budget is an estimate of revenues and expenses.

NOVA SCOTIA

Blacks have always occupied a subordinate position in Nova Scotian society. To make changes in the Black community in Nova Scotia with regards to abuse, the first step is to understand the culture, resources and program providers. As a person often interprets events within the context of their own life, it is necessary to understand the circumstances which have shaped and influenced the lives of Blacks in Nova Scotia and how as a racial minority community they have survived and adapted to those events.

Historically, the Black father played a strong role in the African societies from which most slaves were seized. African men were active in caring for children and protecting their families. These family structures were drastically changed by slave traders who split up families to bring them to American shores. The slaves struggled against great odds to maintain some form of family structure. Even though Black men were separated from their families, most maintained some connections. The father remained an important figure, as was indicated by the fact that children were named, both first and last names, for their father and not their mother. When slave fathers were physically separated from their home, other men became spiritual fathers to the women and children. Spiritual leaders, male relatives and friends became substitute fathers and were given kinship designation.

The general condition of Blacks in the Atlantic region today may be described as impoverished, with significant underemployment and unemployment. In the urban ghetto poverty tensions fester, frustrations mount and implode as crimes of violence.

Why do Blacks seem always to live under depressed circumstances? Negative stereotypes, discrimination and unequal access to education and jobs are some of the factors which continue to keep Blacks from economic success. Blacks are not represented at the policy making levels. To understand abuse one must understand Afro-Canadian men and their roles and that many Black males feel a lack of control and power over their environment.

They do not have economic or social power. Black men, like white men are taught to be aggressive, to show little emotion and affection and to bring home the money. Some Black men, however, have a difficult time bringing home the money in contrast to their white counterparts. Some Black men wish to dominate women and control their lives as they see white men trying to do, but Black men do not control the means of production.

There is some reluctance to speak publicly about sexism and domestic violence within the Black community based on the fear that such disclosure will feed into popular perceptions of the violence of Black males, particularly in the context of relations with police.

When women report abuse to the authorities, especially if they are Black and low income and involved with Children's Aid or the court, they feel they become further victimized by the system. Often when these women report abuse they are subjected to psychological assessments and counselling services that deal with their personal past instead of addressing the immediate issues. These women feel they are blamed for the abuse they have experienced and that they are treated by professionals within the context of a mental health approach. Some women stated that because of their past experience of reporting and dealing with the system they have not reported other situations and do not feel the "professionals" have a true understanding of their circumstances.

The following are some comments from women interviewed:

"The system sucks because I am not getting the assistance I need."

"I am angry because I was penalized for his problems and my children were taken away from me."

"Nobody cares and professionals are too judgmental."

Included in the indigenous Black community in Nova Scotia are recent immigrants, some of whom were involved in the project and who introduced the notion of obedience and abuse. The notion of obedience is rooted in religion. But the interpretation of obedience from the Bible is that women should be subservient to man to the extent and acceptance of abuse. This issue was raised by some women from Nigeria, who follow their religion to the word. These women feel it is a part of their duty to be obedient to their man. The question raised is where to draw the line between obedience and abuse. In many cultures women learn to rely on elders for guidance and assistance and they talk about how issues are settled by either the husband's parents or the elders in Nigeria.

RACISM

As familiarity with the experiences of the Black community in Nova Scotia increases it becomes obvious that different levels of interpretation are apparent. However, an inquiry into aspects of race and racism is fundamental to any analysis. Failure to deal with the full historical, political and social context of the Black experience and the reality of racism would result in a poor strategy.

Racism is a problem growing at an alarming rate in Canada. Racism, discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices are closely linked in that they affect one another and the potential exists for hurtful action. These issues are prevalent, historically and today; they have had and continue to have a negative impact on world society and in Canadian society, to the extent that we must have policies and programs dealing with race relations and multiculturalism. There are individuals and groups who are in a position to promote equity just as there is the potential to do otherwise as our history shows and continues to show.

In order to justly deal with racism, it is crucial that the issue be placed in context of time, place and situations. It is in the best interest of all to deal openly and frankly with a mind to eliminate racism not just reduce prejudices. Racism is a process by which the physical and/or cultural characteristics of one group of people acquire negative social significance in a multiracial society such as Canada. Racism is a harmful influence in that the personal and cultural integrity of the discriminated group is traumatized.

Further, the damaging aspects of prejudice and stereotypes serve to stigmatize groups and attribute their status to "inherited inferior traits" rather than to other causes such as lack of access to opportunities and economic strength.

A power base of social, economic and political authority is needed to carry out racist beliefs. It is noted that racism is having the "power" to practice the negative aspects of stereotypes and prejudices. The normal established way of doing things is potentially racist.

History of Racism

Institutional racism has existed for centuries; however, a renewed wave of intolerance is sweeping Canada. In order to understand racism it is necessary to examine the historical and social roots and how it has developed and manifested itself through the years.

Historically, the cause of racism can be traced to Europe. Modern racism had its foundations in the Age of Enlightenment and in the religious revival of the eighteenth century (Banton 1977 and Mosse 1978). Despite the conflict which existed between the new sciences, which proposed a rational universe, and Christianity, which was based on the "...proper functioning of the soul" (Mosse , 1978, p. 3), there emerged integration of both concepts. Racism was nurtured in Europe as a result of a need to define man's place in nature, which meant an emphasis was placed on man's outward physical signs and intuitive abilities. It was on this premise that racial judgments about a man's soul emerged: "the inner man could be read through his outward appearance - a conviction that was to prove fatal in encouraging racism" (Mosse , p. 5).

Imperialism necessitated the invention of racism as the only possible explanation and excuse for its deeds (Arendt, 1985; Curtin, 1971). This led to racism becoming a legitimizing concept for Europe's conquest and administration of the "new world". According to Kallen (1982) theories of white supremacy were used to legitimate the subordination and exploitation of colonized non-white people by white colonizers.

History can be interpreted through the concepts of the time and it is necessary to understand the events taking place in Europe. Throughout the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century Europe underwent a massive and severe crisis which shook the whole of its society (Institute of Race Relations , 1982). Social changes resulting from the ravages of war and famine eventually led to the search for a more secure existence. This search for alternatives led to European expansion beyond its frontiers.

The material interest of Europeans, and the exploration of America, Africa and Asia influenced racial thought. Expansion to acquire greater wealth encouraged investment in science and inventions and the development of new technology. It was these new developments which enabled Europeans to explore and expand beyond their known world, to sail and chart the seas, to publish the knowledge of them, and to conquer and rule the peoples whom they found there (Institute of Race Relations, 1982).

"Race" was the emergency explanation for the existence of human beings no European or "civilized man" could understand and whose humanity so frightened them that they no longer wanted to belong to the same species. As Europeans encountered people who appeared different from them, the desire to rationalize and justify exploitation of non-white peoples fostered the elaboration of a complex ideology of racism (Banks, 1975; Kallen, 1982).

Banks (1975) stated that in a racist society the political, economic and social systems reflect and perpetuate racism. This notion is supported by others. Racist theories were often seized upon, exaggerated and publicized because they were convenient to those who held power in Europe at the time. According to Baton (1977) racist theories were seen as a scientific response to the ideological need of imperialism. In other words, the colonizers needed to justify what they were doing.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century biologists believed that, in the beginning God created a limited number of species which were unchanging and the higher the race in the natural hierarchy of mankind the more civilized and human. One of the roots of racist thought came from biological sciences- biology explained the chain of life which joined man to animals. That is, the ape, considered to be the highest animal, reached out to the lowest kind of man, usually thought to be the Black man (Mosse, 1978). This proposition of racial typology was later replaced by social Darwinism.

Darwin's theory of biological evolution and in particular the idea of "survival of the fittest" was misused by nineteenth century scholars to lend scientific proof to the notion that the culture of whites provided evidence of their innate superiority (McCaskell, 1988). The political implications of this type of reasoning meant that the highest or more civilized of the human race should naturally dominate, if not exterminate, the "lower ones". Ideologies of white supremacy developed by Europeans during colonial expansion depict the white race as the fittest; that is, culturally and biologically superior to other so-called races.

In conclusion, we can reason that in order for racist thought to have been developed and maintained in the manner in which it was, it must have started with ideas in people's minds. Prejudicisms and stereotypes about others were then built into social institutions and later put into practice in order to influence public opinion. Through the manipulation of public opinion, it is possible to enact laws to legitimize racist ideas which eventually lead to the psychological indoctrination of those who are oppressed. Racial thoughts and ideas have prevailed throughout the years and still today, ordinary people make judgments about others based on the implications of racial stereotypes.

Increasingly, educators, researchers, leaders (political, social and religious) and concerned individuals and groups are becoming more enlightened about the dynamics of racism and wish to confront it. In some cases individuals are working at personal changes for equity thinking. In other cases educational institutions, governmental and private institutions appear to be addressing and putting into practice anti-racist policies. Yet vigilance is advised as there may still be hidden agendas.

We must continue to work together to challenge each other about the notions of race, while coming to recognize how personal notions of race inform the creation of racist action. Understanding the relationship of sexism and racism as forms of oppression can help women to recognize how their own oppression and their participation in the oppression of others strengthens men's power over women (Pence, 1987). In order to aid in the breakdown of racism, following is a chart which compares power tactics used in racism and sexism, as well as a sample model for developing anti-racist training.

SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION : RACISM AND SEXISM

Tactics of power and control	Racism (Immigrant, refugee and racial minorities)	Sexism (All women)
Isolation	Lack of programs and services. Quotas for immigration. Exclusion from decision making process.	Women need men for protection. Fear of being out at night.
Emotional Abuse	Considered to be uneducated and backward and unproductive. Silenced, by others who assume an understanding of issues.	Called names Blamed for abuse. Stereotyped. Sexist language
Economic abuse	Last hired. First laid off. Low paying jobs. Discrimination in employment.	Value of work underestimated, paid less than men for the same jobs.
Privilege of status	Assumption that white culture is the only culture	Subservient to men. Religion used as a tool to keep women in place
Threats	Police brutality. Subject to greater scrutiny.	Threats of violence
Intimidation	Deportation. More arrests.	Termination of benefits. Lack of access to legal system.
Violence	Easy targets	Battering, rape, incest.

Adapted from: In our best Interest, written by Ellen Pence. Minnesota Program Development, 1987

AN ANTI-RACISM TRAINING MODEL

With regard to ethnicity and racial group, it should be understood that each group has its own history and its own position within Canadian society.

The principles of anti-racism must be present in all aspects of any agency or organization's policies, programs and practices, and at all levels.

Question: Where do we begin?

Answer: (1) Acknowledge racism for a start.

- (2) Recognize, assess and understand oneself as a member of a particular group.
- (3) Become aware of one's own racism.
- (4) Take active steps to change racist thoughts and actions.

Racial identity development theory provides a conceptual framework based on four stages of development: acceptance, resistance, redefinition and internalization (Corvin & Wiggins, 1989).

Acceptance. In this stage the person denies that there is a race problem and takes the many manifestations of racism for granted as a part of everyday life. There is a lack of awareness of privilege and denial of cultural differences based on the assumption that people are people.

Resistance. The failure to see one's own personal racism but is aware of other people's racism. Feelings of anger and the need to actively address the issue is characteristic of this stage of development.

Redefinition. Energy is redirected to self exploration of values and goals and the focus is on a commitment to equity.

Internalization. Internalization represents the person's integration of race into their identity. The person can now interact without being oppressive to those who are racially different.

The training process

The training consists of a sequence of experiential activities designed for each stage of development. It is necessary to create an environment which will encourage openness and exploration about individual feelings and attitudes about racism. Creating a safe place is essential for critical discussion, since this environment is conducive to sharing of personal experiences and individual thoughts. Discussion in small groups is a good place to start. Once people become more comfortable, the whole group can come back together to engage in further discussion.

The suggested progression at different levels for this type of training should start from simpler to complex tasks, non-threatening to more personally challenging topics and group building. It is important to note that one of the problems of doing this type of work is that it needs time for development to occur. Rushing through activities will only give a cursory overview.

The following ground rules must be established:

- (1) A contract to maintain confidentiality regarding what is discussed in the group.
- (2) Respect must be demonstrated at all times.

The training goals

Corvin and Wiggins (1989) have developed training goals based on the four developmental stages with the intention of increasing racial awareness by learning to examine individual biases.

Acceptance stage

The training goals for participants at this stage of development are:

- (a) increasing one's awareness of oneself as a member of a racial group;
- (b) heightening one's sensitivity to what it means to have privilege;
- (c) expanding one's awareness of cultural differences;
- (d) acknowledging one's internalized values, and attitudes.

Racial self-awareness involves activities and exercise to help the participants explore their existence and experiences as a racial being.

The following activity was developed for white participants:

White participants are asked to think of themselves as white and to remember their experiences growing up as a member of the white race and a product of white culture. This activity forces the white participants to consider themselves as a white person and to become aware of their "whiteness" instead of considering themselves as Canadian.

Sample questions include:

- 1) Where do you come from? What about your parents and their parents?
- 2) Do you know a lot about your roots or family heritage?
- 3) Do you know people who are racially different from you and with whom you interact with on a daily basis?
- 4) What ideas were you encouraged to believe about people of your own racial group?
- 5) How were you taught to interact with people of other racial groups?

It is intended that this process will create a heightened sensitivity of oneself as a racial being.

Resistance stage

The goals for participants are:

- (a) identifying racist attitudes and behaviors
- (b) dealing with guilt about being racist

Activities should help participants recognize their own racism and how it is demonstrated. Participants are encouraged to generate stereotypes about their own and other racial groups and to consider how they themselves perpetuate those stereotypes. Feelings of guilt and despair can occur during this stage and have to be worked through to avoid participants becoming immobilized.

Films and role playing can also be used to generate discussion about racism.

Redefinition stage

Training goals are:

- (a) to re-evaluate personal values, behaviors and attitudes;
- (b) to become more aware of one's own racism

Participants are encouraged to consider their role and responsibility in perpetuating a racist system and to get in touch with their own racism by examining ways in which their attitudes, actions and inaction may encourage the continuation of racism.

Activity should focus on value clarification by engaging in exercises that focus on challenging racist beliefs. Current events or news stories regarding incidents of racism or personal experiences involving racism can be discussed.

The following statements and assumptions can be used to challenge prevailing attitudes and beliefs about immigrants and racial minorities:

"If they keep letting those guys in, there won't be any jobs for real Canadians."

"Everybody gets called names. It doesn't matter what colour you are. Don't take it seriously."

"Canadian? They don't even try to adapt to our ways. They're always talking among themselves in their own language; they live together, and look at the way they dress."

"If you don't like it here, why don't you go back where you came from?"

"Look, I know what you think, and so do I, but on this next round of hiring we've got to put a coloured face on the payroll."

Internalization stage

Training goals:

- (a) Elimination of oppressive attitudes and behaviors.
- (b) Implementation of action strategies for change.

At this stage of racial identity development there is an awareness that differences exist and are good and that unfair treatment of differences must be challenged and stopped. Activities at this stage would include working together or individually to identify specific racist situations and to involve others in anti-racist work.

Changes in thinking and feeling about racism and a heightened awareness of one's own biases are only the beginning of becoming culturally skilled. How to integrate this awareness and knowledge in one's work with culturally different groups is the focus of the report from Montreal. Interventions based on an understanding of the cultural context, the values and behaviors of a particular group, is a much better approach for success in changing harmful patterns.

MONTREAL - REPORT #1

Montreal's Chinese community is composed of people from many different regions: mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South-East Asia and other countries. Although these people have different educational backgrounds, languages and ways of thinking, they hold common views on their responsibility to the family and the protection of their own honor (face). Losing one's face is equivalent to losing one's dignity. According to traditional education, an individual is not only responsible for one's own honor, but for the honor of the family, national identity and the country. This kind of ideological control restricts an individual's behavior.

Individual happiness and harmony is sacrificed for the harmony and benefit of the group. "Willingness to sacrifice" and "tolerance" are the cardinal virtues most used to praise Chinese women. Conformity, harmony, shame and collectivism combine to create a social pressure and expectation which influence Chinese women to be less assertive. Great emphasis is placed on achieving harmony in life and in interpersonal relations. This involves compassion, respect for life, moderation in behavior, self discipline, patience, modesty, selflessness and reluctance to express an opinion.

Despite the increasing number of Chinese women who have been brave enough to seek help, it appears that with the new wave of immigrants, many women do not dare to seek help from the community and mainstream organizations or do not know how because of their isolation, the language barrier, inadequate legal knowledge and the restriction of traditional values.

As the population and service needs of Chinese families continue to grow, strategies for culturally responsive intervention must be available. Because of language difficulties and cultural value conflicts, Chinese clients will need more competent service workers and counsellors who can be culturally sensitive to their needs. Since most Asians, especially those from immigrant families, find it difficult to admit they have emotional or family difficulties, the service provider may need to reframe the presenting problem relative to their practical and concrete needs.

Identifying and Adapting Cultural Values in Counselling

The position of Chinese women within their culture is strictly regulated by sex role expectations. Strong psychological forces within the family and society reinforce women's subordinate position to men. Shame is particularly powerful and is used to control behavior both in the family and in the community. To act in an unacceptable manner is to bring shame not only on the individual but upon the entire family and the family's ancestors. As a result, the battered woman hides her victimization to avoid shaming herself as well as her husband in the eyes of the community. Members of her family will support her in this effort by hiding her from the community until her injuries are no longer visible. In most cases divorce is unacceptable and could result in being ostracized and isolated socially. Since women are supposed to maintain harmony, they often carry the burden of their situation without complaint. The result is that battered women from this culture will be less likely to reach out for help to free themselves from violence.

The first step in assisting and supporting a woman from this culture is to reduce the powerful influence that shame has on her behavior. Self blame is typical of most victims of wife abuse and can be even worse for Chinese women due to the cultural belief that dysfunction results from immoral behavior.

The role of the counsellor is to reduce the power of self-blame by encouraging the woman to explore social explanations for the problem. Finding a social source for the problem allows the woman to avoid assuming responsibility for her husband's decision to use violence and may reduce the feeling of shame. The counsellor also has to encourage the woman to see herself as a valuable, worthwhile human being.

The counsellor can point out that by acting in an irresponsible manner it is the husband who is bringing shame to the family. When children are involved, the counsellor can use the woman's responsibility to her children to encourage her to take action against the abuse. Working from the woman's cultural value system, a counsellor can help a woman to see that greater shame will result if she fails to protect her children from the negative influence of witnessing or experiencing violence. This may be the strongest motivation to a woman who otherwise faces ostracism and isolation from her family and the community.

Fortunately, counsellors and social workers serve an important role, due to the value placed on hierarchy in Asian culture. These service providers are seen as experts and, as a result, they are expected to take an active role in providing guidance to women in exploring options and developing plans.

Xiao Fang's story

After several years of abuse, Xiao Fang finally sought help from the Chinese Family Services. She found refuge in a woman's shelter and with the help of a social worker she was able to receive assistance from legal aid and Social Welfare.

Because of her lack of understanding of the legal system, Xiao Fang didn't press charges against her husband for his violent behavior. During her stay at the shelter Xiao Fang's husband stole her handbag while she was walking on the street. Later, when she had her own apartment, she was repeatedly harassed by her husband and even received death threats from him. Finally, with the advice of her social worker, she called the police and her husband was arrested and charged.

Xiao Fang's husband did not want to give her a divorce and used the question of guardianship to hinder the legal process. At the present time the matter is still unsettled.

According to Xiao Fang's social worker, her lack of knowledge about the legal procedures and the language barrier she faced were the biggest hurdles in seeking help. Xiao Fang has come to rely on her Chinese social worker. Consequently, her ability to deal with the situation has become dependent upon the availability and knowledge of her social worker.

MONTREAL - REPORT # 2

The information presented in this report is based on discussions and interviews carried out with immigrant and refugee women and shelter workers.

There is a problem of family violence in all immigrant communities in Montreal, particularly in the communities which are considered as the poorest (Haitian, Latin American, African and newly arrived immigrants). Understanding of the problem is growing but resources are decreasing and there is a lack of support for organizations and shelters. Shelter workers are overwhelmed with the increased need for a safe place; because of decreased funding they have to improvise and create their own resources to help the victims of violence.

The second report from Montreal addresses the unfair and oppressive conditions caused by a lack of legal remedies, associated in part with immigration policies that affect women. The "family reunification" system or sponsorship, which allows women into Canada is at fault more often than not. It keeps women in a state of total subordination, leading to isolation and social marginalization, thereby making them vulnerable to violence. When experiencing violence, these women often do not take action due to their isolation, their ignorance of the legal system, their fear of being deported and separated from their children or losing their status. But failing to report the acts of violence puts their lives and the lives of their children in danger.

One of the worst consequences of sponsorship is the state of dependence in which women are placed. This state of dependency leaves women vulnerable and helpless. "Sponsorship breakdown" happens if sponsors refuse or are unable to meet their obligations to the sponsored member, this often occurs in cases of abuse. The sponsor agreement exists between the sponsor and the Canadian government, not between the sponsor and the person being sponsored. Therefore, sponsored immigrants cannot legally force their sponsors to honor their obligations. Many immigrant women continue to suffer abuse by husbands who refuse to follow through with sponsorship.

There should be a federal law that imposes a duty upon the sponsor to help his immigrant spouse obtain residency status. If sponsorship is withdrawn before the application is finalized, especially in the case of abuse, women should be allowed to file for permanent residency independently without the cooperation of the husband.

The investigation we conducted revealed the need for documentation. Currently the legal system provides little relief to battered women whose immigration status depends on the cooperation of abusive husbands. **Keeping records of real-life cases of the many problems immigrant women face as a result of immigration policies is a valuable strategy in advocating for change and may identify possible solutions.**

CONCLUSION

The success of Phase II and III and the resulting document is an accomplishment for everyone involved in the project. It was our intention that this project serve as a means of educating and organizing immigrant, refugee and racial minority women in addressing the violence in their lives. Working together and drawing from each other's experience and expertise we have begun to address the particular needs of these women. It is difficult to address the issues affecting battered immigrant, refugee and racial minority women without looking at the unique conditions that affect these women.

As we educate ourselves, we begin to make links with others, break down the barriers of understanding, and can look ahead to work in a more comprehensive manner, that is, addressing the problems at the core.

Appendix I

**The purple house
(Susan's Story)**

Written By

Tara Nanayakkara

November, 1994

**"Susan" is a real person
living somewhere in Canada.
Though her story is true,
names, places and events have
been disguised to protect the
identity of those concerned.**

I'm standing in the middle of my white living room staring at the evening rain as it washes the windows clean. An ominous November wind rattles their panes making me feel only slightly chilled inside. I take immense comfort from my surrounding. My little white apartment, devoid of furniture, carpets and television should be a lonely, barren place but it is not. In fact, it is quite the opposite. It is a home filled with the warmth of children's laughter and the generosity of a caring community. The walls, floors and ceiling, all of which are white, represent the clean sheet of paper on which I'm to rewrite my life, or the sparkling new canvas on which I'll paint a new beginning for my children and for me. My name is Susan and I am a battered wife.

My story began on January 10, 1966 when I was born to a businessman and his wife in a far away country in the Old World. I was the oldest of three sisters. Physical and emotional abuse was part of my early childhood. Sadly, it is a part of my culture. Women and children are constantly subjected to brutal forms of terror and humiliation by the male members of the family. This is not rooted in religious doctrine. Rather, it stems from a twisted sense of traditional value dictated and doctored by men for the convenience of men.

I began to internalize the turmoil in my life, because I couldn't overtly express my anger. My feelings would seep into my subconscious, surfacing in the form of a recurring dream that haunted me many nights. I was on a rooftop, trying to scream for help but the words were stuck in my throat. I didn't have to be a psychologist to understand that this was my way of coping with my anguish.

I doubted my faith; I asked myself how a kind and loving God could allow me to endure such misery. My self esteem was at its lowest ebb as I approached my teen years. By the time I reached university, I almost began to feel good about myself. I was a bright student and I was also pretty. I was slender and had honey coloured skin and curly dark hair. Despite my looks I did not date. Respectable girls did not date unless they were serious about getting married. I knew marriage was in my future but I wanted to finish my studies first. I was in premed when my father decided the time had come for me to think about settling down. A suitable gentleman, known to the family was formally introduced to me. I found this man controlling and promiscuous. My father was disappointed that I did not agree to marry the man he'd selected for me. However the issue wasn't forced.

Bill was a handsome doctor whom I met and from the beginning Bill expressed a deep interest in me. Although I found him overly quiet and very cynical, I allowed him to court me. In the early days of courtship, there was no tangible sign that Bill had a sadistic streak in his personality. While he was not very warm or loving, he was a responsible individual who seemed to care very deeply for his family. His mother was his own personal queen.

What I didn't realize was just how much Bill's mother disliked me. In her view, I wasn't particularly bright, my parents weren't rich enough and my tea making skill were just not up to par. She had her heart set on Bill marrying another girl of her choice; but the girl's family had broken it off after hearing rumors that Bill had a violent temper. These same rumors filtered into our home as well but nobody took them seriously.

Bill and I were engaged two months after we met. The wedding was scheduled for the 29th of March, 1988. The only shadow over the upcoming festivities was my father's deteriorating health. I wanted him to be well enough for the wedding by that was not to be. In January of 1988, just two weeks after my 22nd birthday, he passed away after a massive heart attack. My one candle of hope had been extinguished. I was about to be married and yet I was alone.

We had a very small ceremony. After a brief honeymoon in the countryside, Bill and I settled into married life at his mother's home. From the word go, sparks flew. Bill had been the only child in his family and his mother was very quick to show her resentment towards me. Bill merely looked the other way when she ridiculed my cooking and house-cleaning skills. Food was rationed even though Bill was earning a very good wage as a doctor. I was only permitted to see my mother and sisters once a week, on supervised visits. Bill ordered me to drop out of premed. It was time to start a family and I would be too busy looking after the children to focus on a career.

Whatever my feelings for Bill, I longed to have his children. I was used to playing the role of mother to my younger sisters and I believed Bill would learn to respect and love me once we had a son. I kidded myself into all kinds of fantasies about how life would be once we had a family of our own.

My first pregnancy ended in miscarriage in the fall of 1988. Bill was furious with me. As a doctor's wife, it was a very bad reflection on him that I had not been able to carry the baby to term. It didn't matter that his mother made me do backbreaking labour in their garden during the crucial early months of my pregnancy or that food was still being rationed. It didn't matter that I was ordered to scrub the kitchen floor even after my family doctor suspected problems with the pregnancy. What did matter was that I lost the baby. The only way to save face was to try again. If I couldn't conceive within the following two years, Bill would have to think seriously about leaving me. The humiliation for me would be unbearable. I would return to my mother's home in disgrace. In my country, rather than offering sympathy or support when a woman loses a child, society offers ridicule and derision.

Lucky for me, by the summer of 1989, I was pregnant again and Bill was making noises about leaving the country. There were no opportunities here. He'd heard great things about Canada and was scooping the possibilities of us immigrating there.

By the spring of 1990 when our twin daughters had been born the wheels were in motion for the great move. Without discussing it with me, Bill had efficiently and quietly made the arrangement for us to fly to a big city in Canada where he would take the necessary courses to qualify as a doctor there. I not only welcomed the chance to get away from my mother-in-law's home, I wanted to get out of my country as well.

My marriage had not improved with the birth of my daughters. Bill had been saddened that I hadn't given him a son. He didn't so much as smile at his little girls, much less want to hold them. Instead he took to beating me. At first the blows were both unexpected and unprovoked. If I so much as contradicted his opinion on the weather, I received a swift blow to the side of my head. If I asked him for extra money for groceries, he unhooked his belt and asked me if a bit of leather would do instead.

Even before we left for Canada in the fall of 1990, I'd heard from friends who had relatives there, that Canada had laws protecting people from abuse. I took this information in my heart. However, it was only when we had to go for medical tests and speak to officials about immigration procedure that I actually got to see a little of what I'd be experiencing in my new land. Pamphlets with glossy photos of maple trees and expansive wheat fields intrigued me. Pictures of tall buildings that seemed to puncture the sky and faces of many colours and nationalities excited me. This was going to be the land of hope for my children and me.

The beatings continued almost to the time we left my country. However, Bill's mood was improving and he admitted that he lashed out at me because he had been frustrated with his life. Leaving my country was not the one sided joy I'd anticipated. For one thing, there were many relatives, sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins who had been very good to me throughout my life. I might never see them again and this realization hurt me deeply.

We arrived in Canada on a chilly fall day in early November. We met some of Bill's distant relatives who had immigrated a few years earlier. I knew that things would not be easy for us in the big city in which we found ourselves. Money would be tight as Bill took a day job to finance himself through equivalency courses to obtain a Canadian medical license. I offered to work, but Bill was adamant that I stay home with the twins. Money or not, it was high time we tried for a third child. Life without a son was becoming a bit ridiculous as far as Bill was concerned.

We found a small apartment in the city's downtown core and slowly. I began to fashion a new life for myself with my daughters. In the early weeks in Canada there were no beatings, primarily, because Bill was too busy. He was hardly ever home. He worked during the day as an orderly at a big hospital and at night, he took courses. When he was away, I had the freedom to explore my new surroundings. I quickly learned that there was an association of people of my nationality in the neighborhood. I called the building in which we met, the Association House. Before long, I was mixing with women I could have easily grown up with back home. Many were enrolled in a course called ESL, English as a Second Language. They wanted to improve their communication skills so that they could go out into the work force.

By associating with my new friends, I began to learn a few things about Canadian life, primarily that it was not okay for a man to abuse his wife or child. There were laws that made such actions illegal. There was an organization called The Human Rights Commission that advocated equal and just treatment of people, regardless of race, disability and sex. I learned about the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, an organization founded nearly twenty-five years ago to protect and promote the rights of women. I learned some pretty amazing things about Canada. I did not have to stay with my husband if he abused me. I could go to a place called a shelter while we tried to "work things out," failing which I would be taught how to go solo; how to build a life for my children and myself. I would not be disgraced by leaving my husband. It would also be no crime if I couldn't conceive a son.

The knowledge I was acquiring was too much to process at one time. I would love to have taken home the literature that was freely available at the Association House but wouldn't dare. If Bill knew what I was learning he would prohibit me from leaving the house.

As the fall progressed into winter, Bill's contentment began to dissipate. Being an immigrant wasn't quite as exciting as he once imagined. Although most people were very nice to him, there were others he felt were discriminating against him because of his color and accent. He couldn't prove this because nobody was blatantly rude. The courses were difficult and he found his job demeaning. It was only a matter of time before the beating started again. At first, they were relatively minor assaults at the end of the day when he was tired; within a matter of weeks, it was back to the same old routine. Even the fact that I was pregnant again didn't soften Bill's mood. During one particularly bad incident, he threw me down the stairs. That act of violence made me realize that the safety of my unborn child was in jeopardy.

The morning after that beating, I bundled the twins in the snowsuits we'd bought at the discount store and went to a friend's place. A single mother, also victimized by an abusive husband, she did what she felt was the best for me. She gave me bus money (I was never allowed to handle money in our marriage) and directed me to a women's shelter. I knew how to deal in Canadian currency, thanks to friends at the Association House.

At the shelter, I was taken to a tiny little office that looked as if it needed some serious dusting. When the social worker came in to talk to me, I felt like telling her that if she protected me and my children from my husband, I would clean the office from top to bottom. Instead, I broke down with a tearful saga about my life. She listened, expressionless and then finally told me that while beatings might have been acceptable in my old country, they were not tolerated in Canada. If I didn't want to go home, I didn't have to. I could stay here for as many weeks as it would take to get set up in some form of a social assistance program so I could move into my own apartment. I was offered a small room for the twins and myself. I had to keep the children with me at all times. They couldn't make a sound. Meals were served at specific times of the day. If I missed them, it was too bad. I should keep all my belongings near me because things got stolen. We were in the midst of a high crime neighborhood.

I found the shelter to be a very cold and lonely place. Though I was open to the concept of meeting people from different nationalities and races, I was a bit intimidated by the diversity of them. My English had seemed perfect to me all these years; but here, people were suddenly telling me that they couldn't understand what I was trying to say. Strangely, the idea of life with Bill didn't seem so harrowing. Simply put, I wanted to go home.

I called Bill and told him I was willing to give our marriage another try. To my amazement, he was even more relieved about my decision to return home than I was. He implied that he had missed me during my absence. Bill assured me that things would be different when I returned home with my children. I believed him. What Bill did not admit was that my walking out on him had been an embarrassment to him. In our culture, women did not leave their husbands, no matter how brutally they were treated.

The rest of my pregnancy proceeded uneventfully, the beatings ceased. We were miles away from a happy marriage, but there were a few good times: taking the twins to the park, going to movies, that sort of thing. Although Bill didn't show me any affection, yet I was so relieved to be back in the comfort of my apartment where everything was familiar to me that I could tolerate his coldness.

In June of 1991, I finally gave birth to our long awaited son. It should have been a joyous time in our lives, but it wasn't. Bill was slogging through his studies, fretting about how we could support an extra child. He suddenly realized that he was no longer the only male in my life and this upset him. Instead of taking pride in our son, he became even more aloof and indifferent towards him than he was of his daughters. He grew furious when the baby cried. He refused to hold his new son, much less change a diaper.

The beatings resumed that summer. Before 1991 was up, I'd gone back to that same shelter three times. Life there with a new baby was next to impossible for me. The strain was too much. All I wanted was the chance to get a job and make enough money to move the children and myself into a decent apartment. I could have filed for divorce: but things were not going to be easy for me. Even if I was lucky enough to find work, whom could I trust to look after three children all under the age of three?

In April of 1992 Bill passed his medical exams and was offered a position in a cottage hospital in the northern end of the province, about 500 miles away from where we then lived. I did not want to leave the big city where my friends were, Bill insisted and I had no choice. On a bright sunny day in the middle of May, we packed up and drove to a remote village that seemed to be out in the middle of nowhere. Bill was probably no happier than me about our new surroundings, but at last he would be getting a very good salary here.

Now our material needs could be met easily, yet he still refused to let me handle the money and he did all the shopping. I couldn't even mail a letter back home without begging him for a stamp. The beatings ceased again because he was very busy at the new hospital. He came home only to sleep. In public, I played the role of the doctor's wife to the hilt. I gave the requisite dinners, learned how to organize fund raising bake sales and even knitted booties for babies in the pediatric unit. Our new friends thought we had a perfect marriage and why shouldn't they? Bill was very attentive in public. He bragged about my house-cleaning skills to whomever would listen. He bought me pretty clothes to show off my hour-glass figure and one day after I jokingly complained to a friend that I had what the TV commercials called "dish pan hands", Bill announced he was buying me a dishwasher. He also promised me a series of professional manicures at the local beauty salon. The dishwasher arrived but not the money for the manicures.

Now that we were starting to get established in our new life, I asked Bill why couldn't things be good between us? His words chilled me. "This is as good as it will ever get," his tone was ominous. "As long as you keep my house clean and the children presentable, I won't have to beat you but, disobey me and your life will be hell. Never expect cuddles and kisses and all the other rubbish you see on TV because you're not getting any. Fear me and we'll get along. Be grateful for that much."

Those were the words that sparked the rage within me. I was only twenty-five years old. How could I live the rest of my life under such a harsh sentence? What crime had I committed to be subjected to this prison like existence?

If this was really as good as it was going to get, then I was going to get out. The starkest form of penury would be paradise compared to living in a sterile environment with a man who had nothing but contempt for me.

I began to phone around to various shelter to find out which one was suitable for me. From what I heard, they weren't much different from the one I'd visited in the big city. To get up one morning and simply walk out seemed lame. I needed a really good excuse to leave Bill. I was shocked to realize that I actually wanted him to beat me, one final time.

One day in January 1994, the fights took place. Our son Raoul had gotten a hold of some of Bill's old medical journals from the bookshelf. All he wanted was to play with the glossy pages. Bill saw his two and a half year old son sitting on the ground, struggling to stack the books into a tower. This was enough to send the rage surging through his skull. He grabbed Raoul by the neck of his sweater with the intention of shaking the life out of him. Until now, he had never laid a hand on the children but his anger and hatred was so overwhelming. I honestly thought he would throttle the boy to death. I lunged his anger and hatred was so overwhelming. I honestly thought her would throttle the boy to death. I lunged towards my husband, virtually knocking him off his feet onto the floor where he struck his head on the coffee table. Horrified, Raoul began to shriek at the top of his lungs. I wanted to grab the child and run to cover but I could not. I had struck my husband, something utterly unthinkable in my culture. Petrified I stood rooted to my position as Bill slowly rose to his feet. He grasped me around the waist and flung me to the ground. I felt his powerful fists pounding the back on my head as if my brain was nothing more than bread dough being pounded and kneaded before being put into the oven to bake. I felt the heel of a shoe smashing into the small of my back. Bill's voice was soft and threatening as he called me every filthy word he could think of. "Oh God" I gasped for breath, "if you're going to kill me, at least get the children out of the house..." my head crashed against the hardwood floor and then it was dark.

That was exactly ten months ago. The memories pulsate menacingly against the screen of my mind. The first twinges of a tension headache settle upon my brow as I call up the stress and trauma that dominated my life till I finally had the courage to walk out of my marriage for good.

It's been a long haul since that blustery night last winter. Bill's boot-walk on my back left many bruises both physical and emotional. He must have left the house shortly after that brutal attack because when I came to several minutes later, my terrified four year old twins were kneeling beside me sobbing to break their little hearts. This was not the first time they had seen their mother beaten but by God it would be the last if I had any say over the matter. My small son, cowered nearby, lulled into a shock induced stupor. Somehow I summoned the strength to pick up myself up off the floor, gather my children around me and threw a few essentials into one large suitcase. Carrying my son in one arm and the suitcase in the other. I shepherded my girls into the cold winter night and to a friend's place.

We stayed with my friend Anna and her husband. They were a kind Canadian couple we had met on one of the rare occasions when Bill permitted me to take the children to a park. Anna wanted me to call the police and press charges against Bill but I refused. It was one thing to flee from my husband's tyranny but it was quite another to involve the law. Bill was a sick man; jail would not have helped him because his problem was largely a cultural one. In my country women were perhaps one notch above chattel. Although I hated the man, I felt it was up to our God to punish him. Though examples of kindness and sensitivity were uncommon to my husband, they did exist. To have Bill arrested would be to humiliate him in front of our people. I did not want vengeance. I just wanted a safe life for my children and me.

Anna could not understand my line of thinking but she tried to respect my wishes. Before Bill could figure out where I'd gone with the children, she and her husband drove me to a shelter not far from home. I remained there for several weeks while a social worker was assigned to help me to figure out the best way for me to survive with my children. Phone calls were made to provincial agencies. There was talk of social assistance packages, housing allowances. My case worker tried to explain everything to me as patiently as possible. It was distressing to note that she didn't understand my accent any better than I could gauge hers. Canada is a vast country and accents vary from region to region, even among non visible minorities.

Eventually the paper work was complete and arrangements were made for me to go to a city roughly 200 miles away from Bill. My husband was informed that we were leaving town but he wasn't concerned. His children meant nothing to him.

We lived in a string of shelters before finally arriving at the house at which we are now residing. Some shelters were better than others. Some were overcrowded and understaffed, others provided comfortable beds and hot meals, others still were overly strict about daily schedule and there were still some where indifference reigned supreme. There was one common denominator among these various hostels and that is none of them are specifically geared towards the immigrant woman. Most of the social and community workers who work with battered women are white.

Despite the negative things I have said about my country, there are some redeeming values that I would like to instill in my children; our respect for elders and our spicy dishes to name a few. There are some very fine men and women in my land who live the religion the way it is written and not the way man has twisted it to be. These are the legacies I want to pass to my children. In order to do that, I would have to find an ethnic support group where our special needs can be met. I must be free to prepare my native dishes without being shy, I would like to converse in my native tongue every now and then and most of all I would like to give my children the sense that they have come to a land where they can imbibe the best of both cultures, the one I left behind in the old country and the one they will embrace as Canadians.

Social services found this house for me only three weeks ago. My daughters call it the purple house because purple is their favorite color and as far as they are concerned, only good things have happened since we got here. The government is paying for my rent, food and other necessities. When I left Bill, I left with nothing. The children's toys and books remained behind in my desperate bid to get away from the man who had terrorized me for years. Word has gotten out about our plight and women's groups have stepped forward with generous contributions of food, clothes and toys for my family. I am anxious to return to the big city where we landed some three years ago when we arrived in Canada. I think about the Association House and long for it with a passion. Once all three children are in school, I would like to develop my career and become a contributing member of Canadian society. For the moment, however, I am going nowhere.

Lawyers have been hired to wade through the shambles of my life. Custody agreements, alimony payments and child support are only some of the issues to be ironed out before we can proceed with our lives. There are times when I get impatient with the paperwork that faces us. However, my twins are attending kindergarten near-by and my son is thoroughly enjoying nursery school. These children are young and resilient. I pray that the trauma of their early years will be softened by a spiritually rich and happy childhood. At present, my finances are in disarray. I traded a high material standard of living with a dangerous man for a safe life where every penny has to be treasured. I am not bitter about this. I am only grateful to be alive and free in a wonderful country such as this. I am a forgiving person by nature. One day I will learn to forgive my husband. For the rain and wind have abated. The storm is over.

Appendix II

Proposal writing

Proposal Summary

The summary appears at the beginning of the proposal, but it is written after the actual proposal is written. The summary includes the identification of the applicant, the reason for the proposal (issue, problem or need to be met), the objectives to be met through the funding, the method to be used in achieving the objective and the total cost of the project.

Introduction

The following points should be included in an introduction:

- * A statement of purpose and goals
- * Description of agency programs
- * Identification and profile of the target group to be served
- * Information on what project will accomplish
- * Explanation of what difference the project will make to the target population

Program objectives

- * Describes outcomes of the program / activities
- * Is supported by needs assessment
- * Is developed with input from clients
- * States time frame when objectives will be met

Methods

- * Describe program activities
- * State reasons for selection of activities
- * Describe sequence of activities
- * Describe client and client selection
- * Present a reasonable scope of activities that can be accomplished with the specified time frame

Evaluation

- * Evaluate results of the program
- * Evaluate the extent to which the program has achieved its stated objectives
- * Describe the process of analysis
- * Show how evaluation will be used for improvements

In conclusion, a proposal is a step by step working plan, which shows objectives to be accomplished, the specific tasks these objectives imply, how long it will take to accomplish objectives and the estimated cost.

Appendix III

Glossary

Culturally Responsive

Culturally responsive refers to an emphasis on action based on an understanding of what is relevant and has meaning for another.

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity refers to an understanding of what is meaningful to another.

Discrimination

An action or behavior based on prejudice.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a means of organizing people and is a social construction.

Mainstream

Mainstream is a term used to make a distinction between groups or services which are intended to serve the general population.

Outreach

Outreach is a mechanism for consultation.

Prejudice

Prejudice is a preconceived idea/notion of what people must be like and how they probably will behave regardless of knowledge that contradicts the thought.

Racism

Racism is a process by which the physical and/or cultural characteristics of one group of people acquire negative social significance in a multiracial society.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping is a generalization about members of a group not based on fact, but something corresponding to a fixed or general pattern, and lacking individual distinguishing features or qualities.

Strategy

To take action, to intervene for change.

Appendix IV

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AWARENESS PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What ethnic group do you belong to? (Response optional)

2. What does violence against women mean to you?
3. Do you feel that violence against women is a community problem?
Please Comment.
4. In your opinion where is violence more prevalent? Home___, School___,
Work place___, Other___, All?
5. How do you feel about discussing violence against women among your
family members, friends and your ethnic community?
6. Do you know some one who has experienced violence/abuse?
7. If so, was there any intervention? (e.g. elders, community leader, police,
physician, social service agencies, women's shelter etc.).
8. How easy or difficult was it to receive help/service?
9. What are some of the things which might have been done in your country of
origin?
10. What do you think are the barriers to accessing services in Canada?

11. Are you aware of the resources available in the community to deal with violence against women?
12. What do you feel are lacking in terms of support and services?
13. Do you feel that immigrant, refugee and racial minority women are treated differently when accessing services in the wider community?
Please comment.
14. In your opinion who are the people who can work better with immigrant women in the services delivery agencies? (e.g. professionals and para-professionals from immigrant or ethnic minority backgrounds, people with cross-cultural training etc.)?
15. What is your opinion about immigrant and refugee clients receiving service in their own languages?
16. What do you know about women's shelters in? How do you feel about them?
17. What type of support program (formal or informal) is available for abused women in your ethnic community?
18. What do you think are some of the things that your community might like to do to organize a support program for women?
19. Please identify (if you know) any other ethnic or immigrant groups who might be active in this area?
20. How would your community or friends feel about joining or networking with them?

21. What do you feel are the greatest barriers to organizing groups of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women?
22. In your opinion what kind of resources are needed to organize support groups for these women who are victims of violence?
23. Are you aware of the Canadian laws dealing with violence against women?
24. What are the changes in the law you would like to see happen?
25. Do you think that women's support groups would work better in a ethno-cultural and language specific setting, or in a multi-cultural setting?
27. In your opinion what other approaches can be taken in dealing with the issues of violence against women?
28. Please feel free to provide other comments and recommendations.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix V

National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada (NOIVMWC)

1. Agency:

Address:

Telephone No:

2. Type of service:

3. Do you receive immigrant, refugee and racial minority women clients who are victims of violence/abuse?

4. If yes, what kind of problems do you generally experience and how do you deal with them?

5. In your opinion what kind of difficulties might these women face in accessing your services?

6. What kind of records or statistics does your agency keep of immigrant, refugee and racial minority women utilizing your services?

7. What kind of training does your staff possess to deal with clients from the above groups?

8. What type of policies (if any) does your agency have with regard to providing or improving services to women from immigrant, refugee and racial minority groups?

9. Do you feel that professionals and para-professionals from multicultural backgrounds are better able to handle the clients from the above groups?

10. What do you think about providing support and services to abused women in an ethno-cultural and a language specific setting?
11. Can you tell me about other groups in the community which might be engaged in providing such services?
12. Do you feel that it is useful for your agency to liaison with them?
13. In your opinion who is best equipped to deal with the issues of violence against immigrant, refugee and racial minority women?
14. In your opinion what measures are needed to organize and provide culturally appropriate and effective services to the above groups?
15. Please identify the barriers to organizing such programs.
16. Please feel free to provide other comments and recommendations.

[Please use the back of questionnaire or extra pages, if necessary]

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix VI

STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZING

- Accessing groups that are already organized, such, as employment training programs, women's groups, self defense groups , senior's groups, ESL classes, prenatal groups.
- Getting more people involved at decision making levels (boards, committees).
- Networking and learning from each other, for example , collaboration with mainstream agencies and ethno-specific agencies.
- Sharing resources.
- Including religious leaders.
- Using language that has meaning for us, terms such as problematic, diversity, at risk , high risk, visible, immigrant, refugee, etc. should be changed. For example, visible could become racial, immigrant could be resident, refugee could be non- resident.
- Building trust and alliances since this allows for continuity, accountability and credibility.
- Organizing by being inclusive instead of being exclusive: class, race and religion.
- Targeting young people.

References

- Arnold, R., Burke, B., Jones, C., Martin, D., Thomas, B. (1991) Educating for a change. Toronto: Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action.
- Banton, H. (1977) The idea of race. London: Tavistock Publications
- Corvin, S.A. and Wiggins F. (1989) An Antiracism Training Model for White Professionals. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 17, pp. 105-115
- Kallen, E. (1982) Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada. Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company.
- Kindervatter, S. (1991) Women working together for personal, economic and community development. New York: Women Ink
- Mosse, G.L. (1978) Towards the final solution: A history of European Racism. London: Harper Colophon Books
- Pence, E. (1987) In our best interest: A Process for personal and social change. Minnesota Program Development Inc. Minnesota
- Silverman, P.R. (1980) Mutual help groups. California: Sage Publications
- White, J. (1993) Sisters and Solidarity: Women and Unions in Canada. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing Inc.