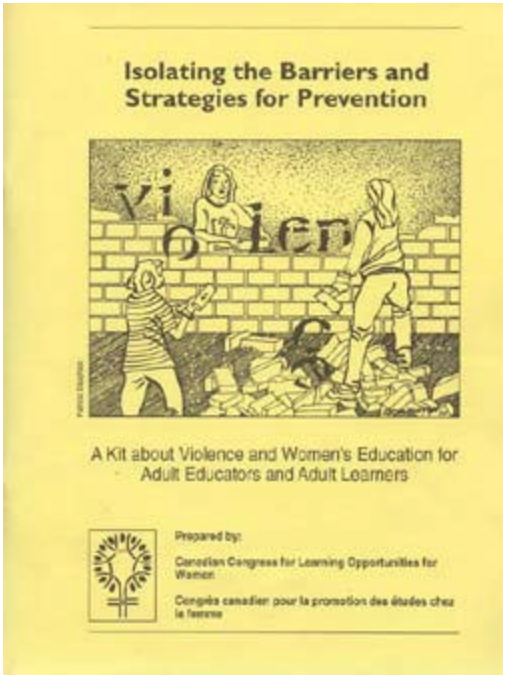

ISOLATING THE BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION

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A Kit about Violence and Women's Education for Adult Educators and Adult Learners

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Introducing
Isolating the Barriers and
Strategies for Prevention:
A kit about violence and women's education for adult educators and adult learners

Most of us believe that the right to education, from kindergarten through high school, is fundamental. However, not everyone is able to fully enjoy that right; not everyone is able to obtain an education that is empowering, relevant, safe and useful. Women who have lived in violent homes, who have been subjected to physical or sexual abuse, who have experienced systemic violence such as that experienced by many women at residential school, did not receive an education that was safe, empowering, relevant or useful.

Responding to these concerns, many school systems in Canada have developed resources and programs to educate both students and teachers about child abuse and spousal assault. Unfortunately, the same is not true for post-secondary education and training or adult education. There are few materials to enable female adult learners and those who work with them to understand, to cope with or to prevent violence in their own lives or in the lives of women around them. Often, women who have survived violence cannot cope with both the trauma of violence and with learning. Women may also experience violence in their home when they continue their education as adults.

Instructors and teachers are seldom trained to recognize the signs of abuse, especially emotional abuse, nor are they given the necessary resources and professional development to deal with such situations. Often instructors, counsellors and teachers are not connected to the community supports and networks for both survivors and women currently experiencing abuse.

The Project

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW), a national, feminist voice for women's education and training, works to raise the general awareness of the impact violence has on a woman's education and her ability to learn. In 1988, CCLOW-Quebec produced a handbook, "From Victim to Survivor," which encourages women to define themselves as survivors, not victims. In 1993, two special issues of our quarterly magazine, *Women's Education des femmes* , focused on violence and women's education. Next we conducted a series of pilot workshops, designed by CCLOW members, in four areas of the country. The success of the workshops and our learning from them made CCLOW members realize that we needed to share this information and seek out experiences from teachers and adult learners.

This kit is designed for adult educators and is our way sharing some of our experiences and ideas. We also hope it will encourage you to think about the issues raised here, to use

the ideas and techniques discussed by our authors, to share this material with your learners, to adapt and/or expand these ideas so they suit your learners, and to collect materials from your community.

introduction

Violence, as is increasingly acknowledged, has many faces. It can be past or present, physical or sexual, racism or ageism, emotional blackmail, or denying another's spirituality. Violence can come from an individual or an institution, i.e. government, school or social service agency.

Any form of violence can have a significant negative impact on a woman's education. A woman who remembers being sexually abused as a child might have anxiety attacks over exams or other pressure points in her education; a woman who worries about food and shelter for her children, a girl who worries about whether her mother will be beaten, a woman whose community tells her she should always be home with her children, a girl who is taunted because she has a different language or skin colour or sexual orientation or physical ability, cannot concentrate upon learning. Safety and survival will be more important, since being safe and surviving past and present trauma are continual challenges for the student.

What is in this Kit and how to use it

The workshop reports briefly describe what we did in and learned from pilot workshops on the connections between violence and women's education. You might want to use some of that information when you design a workshop or unit you are working on. You might want to use a list generated in one of the workshops as a springboard for discussion in a staff meeting, class, or small group. You might want more information about one or all of the workshops or you might want to have CCLOW put on a workshop for you. CCLOW's national office can help you connect with the groups who designed and gave the workshops.

"Describing the Barriers" looks at the barriers identified in the pilot workshops as well as those identified by women from virtually every province and territory. As we mention in the introduction to that section, the same barriers were mentioned again and again. These barriers are not isolated occurrences, but are realities that women from all parts of the country, and all segments of society have to confront daily. The section also includes several articles which look at some specific groups of women who may face violence because of their life situation.

The section titled "Sharing Our Experiences--Snapshots of Our Lives" has short articles by women from all over Canada. We asked women to submit stories and selected these to share with you. They might be useful in various learning situations--as writing prompts, as discussion prompts, as case studies, as inspiration to let other women learners know that they are not alone. We invite you to share these stories with learners and with other teachers. These stories graphically illustrate some of the situations that women face as a result of violence --violence that impacts on their education.

"Creating a Better Learning Environment" features articles which describe techniques or approaches you might want to use in your teaching. Three articles briefly describe various forms of safety audits. Your learners might want to do a safety audit as a group project. Safety audits allow women to gain more control over the space they use; they are a form of empowerment. Booklets published by METRAC (complete information is in the resource section) give the details on doing an audit.

The "Resources" section refers you to other materials, organizations and print and audio-visual resources. You might want to start with the two special issues of CCLOW's quarterly, *Women's Education des femmes* , that focused on the connections between violence and women's education. These issues are "Learning and Violence: Women Speak Out" (9:4, Summer 1992) and "Violence Prevention" (10:1, winter 1992/93).

We invite you to use any or all of these sections in your classroom, seminar, learning group, staff meeting or briefing session with funding agencies or governments. Use the material; ask students to rework it so it fits their specific situation. The more we become aware of the impact violence has on our education, the more we can do something about it. Knowledge is Power!

How we Produced this Kit

CCLOW established a national working group to oversee this project. Members of the group are: Bev Suderman, Calgary; Linda Shohet, Montreal; Paula Pasquali, Whitehorse; Wanita Koczka, Prince Albert; Sandra Campbell, Toronto; Anne Elliott, Saskatoon; Nayda Burton, Toronto; Aisla Thomson, Toronto. This group worked as a collective that oversaw the pilot workshops and nurtured the production of this kit. Funding from Health and Welfare Canada made the project possible.

Women across the country have contributed to this kit. We especially want to thank the many women who shared their stories with us, even if they were not able to share their names. We hope their courage will help educators understand how violence affects a women's education and ability to learn. Patricia Daughton and Nancy Reid created several

of the graphics we used. Anne Elliott and Patricia Williams of Saskatoon have written, solicited and collected material, have worked with individual authors to refine the articles and have edited the kit.

For more information about CCLOW's women's education and violence initiatives, contact: CCLOW; 47 Main Street; Toronto, Ont, M4E 2V6. Phone 416-699-1909; fax 416-699-2145.

Sharing Our Knowledge, Sharing Our Solutions:

Summaries of the Pilot Workshops

In 1992-93, CCLOW's quarterly, *Women's Education des femmes* , published two special issues focusing on the connection between women's experience of violence and its impact on our access to education and our ability to learn. These issues stimulated so much interest that CCLOW decided to pursue this subject further; we were particularly interested in "Identifying the Barriers" generated by our experience of violence.

One outcome was the decision to develop a series of pilot workshops on the connection between violence against women and women's access to education. Through our four pilot projects, we worked with women and some men in several parts of Canada. With each group, we sought to first tell participants about the issues, and then to draw from them strategies for ensuring that women are not re-victimized by educational systems as well as strategies for prevention.

In CCLOW's Whitehorse workshop, Paula worked with college instructors and counsellors as well as representatives of funding agencies and the territorial government. In Prince Albert, three facilitators worked with a mainly female staff at the women's Provincial Correctional Centre to explore these issues within a very specialized context. In Toronto, we worked with Beat the Street Women's Committee to discover the ideas of literacy workers. In Montreal, we worked with The Centre for Literacy to design a workshop for educators and community workers. These groups represent the diversity of educational situations and opportunities that women can experience.

Summaries of these workshops can be found on the next few pages. Our hope is that these summaries will provide you, the reader, with a foundation from which to better understand the needs of learners who have experienced violence or are currently in a violent relationship. Together, we can better advocate for changes in our institutions in order to prevent further marginalization of women who have experienced violence.

If you want more information about the workshops, please contact us at:

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workshop reports

What We learned at Pine Grove

The Saskatoon-Prince Albert chapter of CCLOW prepared and delivered a workshop for staff at the provincial correctional centre for women. About half of the staff at Pine Grove are of aboriginal ancestry, while about 80 per cent of the inmates are First Nations women.

The context

Women in conflict with the law have typically experienced many kinds of violence. This workshop sought to look at how violence in the lives of female inmates created barriers to their ability to learn and how staff could help them to begin to identify and dismantle the barriers.

The workshop had four main purposes:

- to collect data for CCLOW, through workshop evaluation, on the need for educational programs for staff about how violence affects women's ability to learn at a correctional facility;
- to provide workshop materials from an aboriginal perspective on how systemic racism, a form of violence, affects women's education and ability to learn;
- to provide workshop materials on how child sexual abuse, spousal abuse, ritual abuse and other forms of violence affect women's education and learning;
- to give Pine Grove staff an opportunity, both personally and institutionally, to explore ways to support women who are trying to tear down barriers that have

prevented them from obtaining an education, and participating in further learning.

What we learned

We learned and re-learned a number of things. We were yet again struck by how context of both place and culture impact on education and styles of learning. Though some of the things we learned are basic to adult education, we want to emphasize their importance.

- **It is important for women from different cultural backgrounds to work together to create learning programs that are appropriate for any given audience**. It might be difficult to work with women who do not share all the assumptions you have about education or social issues or the solutions to the problems that arise from those issues. It is, however, worth the effort.

We were absolutely committed to asking an aboriginal woman to join us, and we were fortunate to hire an extremely capable, knowledgeable woman to complete our team. Her knowledge of and experience with residential schools and their contribution to the violence cycle was essential for our workshop. Her method of operation was different from our other facilitator, but it was no less effective. The two facilitators had to work out their differences, but they worked hard on it, and with the help of the third member of the workshop team, the safe worker, each came to understand and respect the other.

This situation meant that the two facilitators had to spend time and energy on their interpersonal relationship and on how to create the entire workshop. Perhaps more importantly, it meant that the workshop participants had the benefit of two points of view, of two presentation styles. Most appreciated the variety.

- **It is time-consuming to prepare cross-cultural programs. It demands respect and tolerance from all parties**. This is difficult, but it is also well worth while. Our program was much stronger because it was cross-cultural.
- **It is absolutely crucial that a safe worker is part of any team that deals with violence issues.** We all know that women who are survivors can have flashbacks and that certain topics can trigger unpleasant or dangerous memories for survivors. A safe, or emotional, worker can go to another room with a woman who is experiencing unsafe memories and work with her. This help must be available

during the class or workshop; after class or tomorrow is too late.

- **A pre-workshop interview is crucial.** Since every audience is different, it is important to tailor any presentation about how violence influences a woman's education to the specific group. While we had some knowledge about the staff at Pine Grove, we were only able to finalize the workshop content and schedule after one of the facilitators had interviewed a number of the staff there. Because of the preparation work, we were able to direct attention to some of the specific concerns of the participants. They saw the relevance of what we presented and the importance of what we shared with them. Many felt they were able to use this new information immediately in their work.
- **Correctional workers have not had enough training about how violence affects a woman's ability to learn**. The staff at Pine Grove found our workshop relevant and useful. Workers in correctional facilities need on-going training on how violence affects the lives of the women incarcerated there.

What We Learned in Montreal

The Quebec chapter of CCLOW and the Centre for Literacy co-sponsored a workshop in Montreal that was designed to provide information for educators and community workers about violence as a barrier to learning and to explore potential strategies which can be carried back to the workplace.

Participants looked at issues such as how violence inhibits women's learning in formal and informal settings; how it prevents access to education; and how it is related to drop-out rates, literacy gaps, erratic study or work patterns, and to career and personal life choices.

During discussion of a case study about the relationship between the ability to learn and violence, participants made the following observations:

- A safe environment creates a learning environment.
- Everyone needs to become familiar with the signs of abuse.
- We need to explore alternative teaching methods.
- Teachers are required, by law, to report suspected cases of abuse.
- The responsibility to address violence rests most heavily upon the teacher.

- Teachers need training and re-training about the effects of violence on education and the ability to learn.
- We need systems in place to assist people in violent situations that interfere with their education.
- There are not enough resources available for educators or for women seeking an education.
- A situation should not be in crisis to finally warrant proper attention.
- Physiological damage from physical abuse needs to be considered when looking at learning disabilities.

During another discussion, groups looked at other aspects of the links between violence and learning and made suggestions about how to address some of these issues. Comments included:

- There should be anti-violence campaigns in schools, workplaces, etc., as there are none now.

- We should create and provide workshops for parents and teachers.
- We should implement peer counselling as well as training so teachers can recognize signs of abuse and become sensitized.
- What role will society play? If boys are still taught to be strong and powerful, how will attitudes change? It is important to teach children to appreciate themselves as well as others.
- Too often young victims of abuse are not given the opportunity to discuss what happened to them; this reinforces the negative experience and generates a sense of guilt which will often follow them through life. They are also absorbing a distorted picture of life, sexual roles and responsibility. Children, by nature, are dependant and powerless and it is important to be honest with them about their experiences.
- We must address the links between violence and literacy; we must reverse the "you are stupid" syndrome.
- Gender socialization, such as teaching women to put their personal needs second to the needs of others, can place women at a disadvantage, though some women in the group felt that being taught to be nurturing and open about emotions is, instead, an advantage to women.
- Women still feel responsible for maintaining a successful marriage. Often there is a sense of failure if things go wrong; emotional work is still women's work.

- How many women leave right away when the abuse starts? Many only leave when the abuse begins to affect their children. Often an increase in the level of violence becomes the catalyst for leaving; many women have said that they left when they lost hope of change or improvement or when they could not endure the situation any longer.
- Do women in positions of "social power," such as judges or politicians, lose their sensitivity?

workshop reports

What We Learned in Toronto

In Toronto, CCLOW co-sponsored a day and a half workshop with Beat the Street Women's Committee. Participants were women working in the field of literacy--students, tutors, workers and volunteers. Women came to the workshop for many reasons:

- to gain insight into women's feelings about violence.
- to learn how to deal with violence.
- to find out about alternative educational strategies.
- to share what we know about violence against women.
- to forge alliances between women.
- to plan for a working group to keep connected.
- to find out about resources available for women.

The workshop was participatory and based on women's experiences with violence and how to cope with violence in our programs as well as in our own lives. The facilitator for the workshop was a literacy worker with a great deal of experience in dealing with violence and helping prevent violence in her program. Two safe workers participated in the workshop and gave on-the-spot counselling or spoke with women.

We also painted a mural and T-shirts as a way to help us be creative in a different way and to express ourselves without words. It was fun, relaxing, relieved stress and helped women to get to know each other. As a way of starting to talk about the issues of women and violence, and how it affects our learning, the Women's Committee of Beat the Street made the presentation "Breaking the Cycle of Violence." This multi-media presentation, with poetry reading, body sculpting, and a video, is based on the thoughts and words of the members of the Women's Committee of Beat the Street.

What We Learned

- Women have a different idea from men about what we think "violence" is. Women mentioned physical, mental, psychological and verbal abuse. The medical, welfare and justice systems and institutions reinforce the abuse of women.
- Outward physical scars are not the only ones women have when abused. Violence manipulates women, and makes us feel powerless and dependent.
- Violence has an adverse effect on women's learning. Violence isolates women, and they become withdrawn, lose concentration, do not attend classes, have low self-esteem. Violence creates dependency, makes it unsafe to do school work at home, and as a result, women are unable to reach their full potential.

What Can We do to Remove Barriers Created by Violence?

- When a woman in a program discloses that she has been or is being abused, it is important to be supportive and to believe her story. When a woman discloses, don't interrupt, don't speak for her, don't doubt her; do ask her what she wants to do about it. Offer her options and provide her with information so that she can make up her mind about what to do.
- Literacy workers are not counsellors. If a counsellor is not on staff, then literacy workers must receive training in what sexual assault and assault are, and how to respond appropriately. They also need to know how to do crisis intervention and conflict resolution, and they need anti-racist and sensitivity training. Literacy workers should receive help with stress management and coping with violence in their own lives.
- Women who use literacy programs need to be offered development programs so that they can become their own resource person and take on leadership roles. Programs need to develop co-operative learning environments and to build student independence.
- Many literacy programs have been made safer for women. For instance, some programs have: all-women classes with a woman facilitator; anti-violence, anti-racism and equity policies; resources that are relevant to women's lives, written in clear language; support in terms of child care; connections with and referrals to the women's centre in the community.
- Programs must have supportive environments that offer resources and integrate

with other programs to build a network of supports. The culture of the program must affirm a woman's value and intellect, and let her regain integrity.
- Programs must provide safe and accessible learning space, a safe arrival and departure program, emergency housing, food and clothing. They also need to offer supportive curricula that relate to women's lives, are woman-positive, and help women bridge between literacy and other forms of education.
- The responsibility for removing barriers created by violence and making programs safer for women rests with the administrators and policy makers in programs and institutions. They need to be made aware of the impact of violence on women's learning, since they can make and implement anti-violence policies and act on them.

A network of women at the Toronto workshop has continued to meet to discuss the issues further, and to work on practical strategies to cope with and prevent violence in their programs.

workshop reports

What We Learned in the Yukon

The Yukon chapter of CCLOW, Yukon College and Health and Welfare Canada co-sponsored a one-day workshop on how violence interferes with a woman's ability to learn. Held during the College's annual professional development days, the workshop was also open to adult educators from outside Yukon College.

Focus and rationale of the workshop

The workshop focused on the experiences and needs of women learners who live with violence or the threat of violence on a daily basis. Such women have immediate and pressing safety concerns which take precedence over all other issues, including education. However, education may be a significant step in breaking a woman's isolation as well as her emotional and financial dependence upon her violent partner.

Goals of the workshop

We sought to:

- initiate a dialogue with adult educators, policy makers and funders of adult learners on the effects of violence on women's education;
- identify concrete ways in which the education system and those working within it can better support the needs of women survivors of violence.

Audience

The workshop was designed for college instructors, counsellors, policy makers and senior officials from Yukon College and the Yukon Department of Education as well as representatives from agencies which fund adult learners.

Format and content of the workshop

We included information sessions and both small and large group discussion. Case studies and exercises helped participants focus on this issue and enabled them to answer the following questions about violence and its impact on women's education.

- What is violence against women? What form does it take and how common is it?
- What are individual differences among adult learners and how might they be caused?
- What is wife abuse? What is the cycle of violence?
- How is this cycle experienced by the woman who is living with a violent man? How might she behave in a classroom? Are some of the individual differences among women learners actually the effects of violence?

- What are the immediate and concrete effects of violence on a woman? What are the potential roles and responsibilities of the education system in breaking the cycle of violence?
- What does a woman need from the education system? What barriers must she overcome if she wishes to continue or complete her education?

Conclusion

Participants identified some needs of women who are seeking to overcome violence in their lives. Some might be fully or partially met by educational institutions and programs; most apply to women in all parts of the country. Are these the needs of the women in your programs? Do these barriers prevent women in your community from realizing their full potential?

These actions can help women living with violent men:

- a workable safety plan, both for the individual woman and for the program or institution.
- financial assistance to cover costs of transportation to seek shelter when fleeing from a violent partner.
- individual, group and peer counselling
- adequate financial support for both full-and part-time learners.
- affordable, flexible, quality on-site 24-hour child care.
- affordable on-campus housing and regular study time.
- public transportation to and from the college.
- access to legal services.
- a positive learning environment.
- flexible entrance requirements for all institutions and programs.
- flexible time frames to complete course requirements.
- adjustments in funding criteria for take into account interruptions in education created by violence.

Describing the Barriers

This section looks at some of the barriers to women's education that are created by violence. The first part, "Naming the Barriers," has two sections. "Recognizing External or Systemic Barriers" describes some of the institutional and institutionalized barriers placed in front of women seeking an education. "Recognizing the Effects of Violence" describes some of the behaviors a woman who has survived or who is experiencing violence in her life may exhibit in a classroom.

Three further articles explore barriers faced by women as a result of their particular life situation. Cathleen Morris describes some of the situations encountered by a differently-abled woman seeking further education. She challenges educators to consider how they teach and what they require from the point of view of the differently-abled. She also suggests some solutions or ways to minimize those barriers.

An immigrant woman may find that she loses her voice when she comes to Canada; she becomes invisible. She also faces barriers that may be raised by her own immigrant community or by government funding and training regulations. If she is also a racialized woman, she may experience violence engendered by racism.

Lesbians also experience violence in a heterosexual society. As "G" tells us, a lesbian may find her very self ridiculed or described as abnormal in educational materials and classrooms. She is told by authority figures that she is "ill" or "evil" and in need of help for her "problem."

Naming the Barriers

By naming the barriers, we can begin to tear them down.

Violence permeates our society. It is something that any woman can experience; many women do. The report of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women confirmed what many women already knew--violence has many faces. It can be psychological, emotional, physical, spiritual, economic. It can be perpetrated by society, by institutions, by individuals.

Likewise, violence in all its forms has many effects. One area that is profoundly influenced by violence is education and a woman's ability to learn. Violence can raise barriers that prevent a woman from gaining access to an education; it can impair her ability to learn once she is there.

We asked women from across the country to briefly describe barriers to learning that they have experienced or observed. This list is a compilation of the observations of a number of women, both educators and learners.

We had the same or similar responses from a number of women. This reinforces our belief that all women potentially face these barriers, regardless of other differences in their lives.

By naming these barriers, we can begin to tear them down, to make the education systems of our country safer and more appropriate for women. By working together to tear them down, we make education safer and more available for all.

External or Systemic Barriers

Some of the barriers that influence a woman's ability to access or gain an education are external or systemic. That is, they are allowed or even fostered by our society, by norms of behaviour, by institutions.

Some barriers have been raised by governments. While the barriers created by these regulations may be unintentional, and funding rules are an obvious example, the reality is that many women are disadvantaged. Other women face systemic barriers when trying to enter an education program. When a woman lives in a rural area, when adult education in her area is offered only to UI recipients, when it is not in her language or does not offer childcare or transportation, she may be unable to surmount these systemic barriers.

Some external or systemic barriers are created, tolerated or fostered by patriarchal attitudes in our society and in our educational institutions. The "boys will be boys" attitude that ignores degrading graphics or that laughs off simulated gang rape as part of a college initiation is at best degrading and can be so terrifying that a woman drops out of that institution. Such attitudes make educational institutions inhospitable to women. Attitudes of male students or teachers who feel that women exist to serve them also create barriers for individual women and for groups of women.

Systemic barriers include:

concern for physical safety at education centre. "Women have to park some distance from where the evening classes are and at the end of class, walk through a dark path with poor lighting and few people, to get to their cars. There is no lot attendant."

sexual harassment by male instructors or students. For many women, this reinforces their experiences in their homes; for others, it is reminiscent of public school.

psychological harassment by male teachers or students. Many girls are told that "girls can't do math," that "why do you want to go to college, you'll just stay home and have babies?" When a girl is told this for many years, she may begin to believe it. When she is a woman trying to complete her education, she may find it difficult to let go of this belief created by psychological abuse.

pressure to conform to rigid, outdated stereotypes. Many girls and women are made to feel that they should speak softly, defer to men and boys and not excel in sports and other physical activity.

funding requirements that disadvantage part-time students. Many student loan and scholarship programs are designed for full-time students. For many women who are

survivors of violence or abuse, a full-time course load is not possible. They are disadvantaged because they are not able to get funding available to other students.

describing the barriers

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unreasonable demands from a male partner. A woman may have a male partner who makes unreasonable and constant demands so she cannot study, attend classes or otherwise participate in learning opportunities. Since violence and abuse are about power and control, this behaviour is another form of violence that limits a woman's ability to gain an education.

lack of sexual harassment policy in a program or institution. Students in an educational program do not always know how to report sexual abuse or harassment, even if there is a policy. The difficulty increases when there is no clear, well-understood, and enforced written policy.

program policies on absences. Women in abusive relationships may spend time recovering from physical abuse and thus miss classes. Programs need to consider why a woman misses classes. One woman "spent significant amounts of time at home recovering from beating, and also had frequent stays at the hospital to treat her more serious injuries. There was no system in place in our college to intervene with counselling or some other mechanism to free her from this abusive relationship. Ultimately, because of college regulations, and because she was a funded student, she was expelled from the program. The implications of this are that she will be a low priority applicant, should she ever decide to try again, as well as removing her from access to a place where she felt relatively safe and happy."

unresolved safety issues. Safety issues may present incredible problems for women who are in abusive situations or who are survivors; unresolved safety issues of any kind are a barrier. "The safety of women in our programs needs to be a number one concern. One student left the program suddenly when she was kidnapped by her ex-partner and taken to Toronto. As soon as she was able, she called to let us know what had happened, because she really wanted to complete the program and become free from the cycle of violence. Another student in the same program was hauled off the bus on which she was travelling home after school by a former partner who was enraged that she was trying to better herself. Eventually, the co-ordinators, together with senior management and the co-ordinators of other programs in the same building, put together a safety plan, which involved all students in the programs, in case the classrooms were invaded by angry family members who would probably be violent." All programs should have safety plans.

community pressure to conform. Some communities exert a great deal of pressure on their female members to stay home, to concern themselves only with family. A woman needs a great deal of courage as well as access to a safe support system in order to go

against the customs or mores of her community. Community pressure is a real barrier for many women.

government regulations. Government training programs disadvantage immigrant women who want language training and all women who want training before entering the work force. Presently, many language training programs are designed for the head of the family, usually considered to be a man; many training programs are tied to unemployment insurance. Possible changes to the social support system may make things even more difficult for women and create even more barriers.

describing the barriers

Recognizing the Effects of Violence

If a woman has overcome the systemic and institutional barriers that prevent her from even entering an educational program, she may bring other effects of violence with her. Many women display behaviors which are long-term effects of, for instance, child sexual abuse, systemic violence, rape or domestic battering. Some of these behaviors are described below.

These behaviors are defense mechanisms a woman has created in order to cope with trauma in her life; they protect her physical, emotional and spiritual self. When we understand why a woman is behaving in what at first may seem a contradictory manner, we realize that what she is doing makes perfect sense; she is protecting her safety. Our job, as educators, is to help her move to a place of trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, positive self-identity, and safety. A survivor of trauma needs to feel safe.

What do you, as an adult educator, tutor, counsellor or helper need to look for? Do you, a woman learner, see these behaviors in yourself or in others in your program? The behaviors include 1) those caused when a woman adopts her abuser's view of herself and 2) those caused by such abuse, past or present.

When a woman accepts her abuser's evaluation of her, she may experience:

erosion of the self. Abusers exert power and control over a woman's every move. She is constantly put down and degraded and told she is stupid. Even years later, a woman may not feel safe enough to have confidence about herself or her ability to learn. Many women survivors struggle to find the confidence to pursue education; other women question their own ability. "A client was physically abused by her father as a child and

constantly told she was stupid or retarded. She dropped out of school in grade 9 and was afraid to upgrade until recently. When she wrote a test and passed, she did not believe she had passed, but questioned the teacher several times to make sure those were her marks."

self blame, or a feeling that she attracts the abuse or is the cause of it. A woman may feel that she is responsible for her abuser's behaviour. He tells her that is responsible for his anger and violence. Because he controls her and her safety, she believes him.

negative self-image. Part of the process of victimization is dehumanization. This is incorporated into the self-concept and creates cycles of loss of self. Learning needs a belief in one's own potential and ability. This is frequently undermined by violence.

self-abuse. A woman who has experienced violence may abuse herself in order to feel pain. If the pain is great enough, she will not be able to complete a class project and her abuser will say he was right, she is stupid. Other women may mutilate themselves or try to commit suicide as a way to cope with extreme pain or trauma.

describing the barriers

Other effects of violence that affect a woman's ability to learn include:

inability to concentrate. A woman may not be able to focus on material at hand, even if she wants to. She may be distracted, pre-occupied. She may have trouble remembering detailed instructions. Because survival is most important, learning becomes secondary. "When you learn, low self-esteem and guilt hit you and you have a problem concentrating; the memory is slow and you think you will not be able to learn."

difficulty listening. Listening is not hearing. It is taking in and understanding what you hear; this requires concentration. If a woman has trouble concentrating, she might have equal difficulty listening.

sense of detachment. A woman may be unable to focus on immediate events. She may feel she is watching everything from a distance.

lack of trust. Violence creates a lack of trust both in one's self and in others. Learning is done within relationships, either internal or external; violence blocks this learning.

difficulty in beginning new things. A woman may lose her sense of her place in the larger scheme of things as she is always pre-occupied with her safety and damage control and is frightened to initiate projects.

less willingness to initiate things or to take risks. A woman who has experienced violence may well have a lack of experience as a risk taker or as a learner. For good reason, she may fear being punished, humiliated or rejected for making mistakes.

difficulty in assimilating new information. The abused woman's reality is so far removed from information being taught that the information seems to lack any value.

fear. It is difficult to do anything when you are afraid or intimidated. Some women in upgrading programs, for instance, are intimidated and psychologically abused by male students in their program. Others may bring fear from home.

uneasiness with new people. A woman may be scared when meeting new people and may need assurance that they are safe before she can focus on learning. This has obvious implications for classroom or group education programs.

tiredness. "One client reported that she could not sleep when it was dark outside, even as an adult, after experiencing sexual abuse as a child. She failed at school because she was always tired. As an adult she tried upgrading and re-training, and could sometimes get through a morning of studies, but never could concentrate or focus in the afternoon. She could only sleep during daylight, so would drop off frequently in the afternoon."

Even if a woman has adequate sleep, fatigue may set in sooner for a woman who has experienced violence. Women with good learning experiences find that learning new things is invigorating and energizing; survivors may find learning draining and tiring.

multiple personalities. Some survivors have developed multiple personalities as a way of surviving the abuse in their life. What they learn in one personality may not transfer to another.

panic attacks. A woman who is a survivor may experience a panic attack, characterized by faintness, dizziness, shaking or feeling out of control. She may be extremely nervous and anxious in the classroom.

misplaced anger. Women may focus their anger with their abuser onto the teacher. This makes it difficult to develop a relationship of trust in which the teacher might be able to help the woman.

violence toward others. Women who have experienced extreme violence may see such behaviour as normal. As we know from the cycle of violence, violence begets violence.

When It Isn't Obvious:
Personal Abilities and Learning

Sometimes the journey is the destination. This sentence may hold within it the very essence of learning. Nothing is ever, always, obvious. For many women, part of their journey involves education. It is essential to remember that as we pull open the doors of academic learning, we bring with us the baggage of our life experience. This baggage is also part of the journey.

As a woman who is first, and most importantly, a valuable, competent person, I would like to share with you part of my journey. From the very start of my life I have had to cope with being differently-abled. It is not always tremendously difficult, but it is never easy. Another aspect of my life concerns being sexually abused as a child. Although I am continually working to be a champion over these circumstances, I have to be realistic and admit that these issues affect every part of my personal journey, education included.

I have noticed several things that I would like to see changed within the walls confining adult education. Some of the necessary changes are instantly obvious. Most, however, are not.

Eyes to See

I believe it is crucial that educators start looking, making an honest effort to see circumstances that may hinder a student's ability to take in information. To illustrate my point, I cite a situation from my own experience. I was a student at a business college. The first day, everyone was assigned a desk according to her or his last name. The instructor offered me a desk at the front, though that is not where my name would have placed me. An easy solution to an obvious problem.

I had another course that involved a great deal of note-taking. In the beginning, I worked desperately to keep up. Daily I struggled and daily I'd borrow someone's notes and photocopy what I had missed. Administration gladly allowed me to do this at no cost. Finally, one day I realized that my energy was being foolishly spent when, in the end, I would undoubtedly borrow notes and use the copier. I then decided it was more to my benefit to put down my pen, listen to the lecture, copy a set of notes for myself later and conserve my energy for other things. This instructor, assuming that my actions were due to laziness, went to the administration and from that point on I was charged for using the photocopier. The speed at which a student can write is not always an obvious problem, nevertheless, it can be a problem and it deserves a respectful solution.

Instilling in a student an insatiable desire to search in every crack and every corner for ideas and possibilities is a privilege. Educators must be just as diligent with their own

thoughts. Is it always appropriate to insist that students not hold on to the lectern while making a presentation, if the necessary formalities are observed? Could an assigned report be done with drama instead of being hand-written?

describing the barriers

Would extra textbooks be helpful for those who have trouble carrying them home to study? For every seemingly simply action, there is a potential barrier. Keep this in mind as you move along your individual path.

Respect is Never an Intrusion

I believe it is also imperative that instructors allow themselves to be approachable. Before asking too many questions, check school records, find out from the administrator in charge of enrollment if any special needs have been voiced. I appreciate discreet inquiries and a genuine willingness to learn what only experience can teach. I am quite willing to accept my responsibilities. However, countless times I have found myself required to complete an assignment in a specific way and struggled to meet certain expectations. Because I knew that my voice would not be heard, I remained silent, my abilities not fully discovered or recognized. Now, as I move along in my life, I have begun to keep in perspective that the things I do are not who I am, nor are they my entire life. I am never only a student. I am never only a differently-abled person. My journey involves many other things that are surely as vital as education. Here is another personal experience that demonstrates this.

While in college, everyone was expected to compile a resume and fill out an application, just as we would within the community. Our instructor was adamant about the women wearing skirts. This was humiliating to me as a survivor. I felt cruelly exposed. I would have been professionally dressed and tremendously more confident wearing a business pantsuit. The other problem I had with the assignment was that as a physically challenged person, wearing a skirt meant wearing a certain kind of shoe, this in turn meant more anxiety. I followed the instructions to the letter; however, I was ill for the next few days.

Not one area of the lives we lead can be dismissed as unimportant, not one question ignored, not one barrier blind sighted. I remember making a presentation in a banking course. I gave everyone, the instructor included, a bundle of bills to count. The only restriction was that they could only use their non-dominant hand. I did not give them arthritis, horrific nightmares or poverty. What I gave them was something to think about.

The journey is not limited to one destination!

Cathleen Morris

Bringing Violence With You

Women come to Canada from all parts of the world; here, they must deal with all the bewilderment and sense of displacement, often tempered by hope and better living conditions, faced by all immigrants. Like women who were born in Canada, immigrant women experience violence in this country; however, they may also bring experiences of violence from their country of origin. Each of these situations affects a woman's ability to learn.

What are some of the faces of violence that influence an immigrant woman's education or her ability to learn? Here are some often mentioned by women from many different parts of the world:

- ***loss of voice***. Many women who come to Canada are well educated, literate women in their country of origin. When they arrive in Canada, they may find that they are no longer the articulate person they thought they were, even if they are fluent in English or French. For a woman who knows little or no English or French, the difficulty is that much greater. This loss of voice can be, and is, devastating. A woman may be thought stupid by others; she will be subjected to emotional stress and even violence because of the barriers created by language and the loss of her voice. Like other women who internalize the violence and lose self-esteem, she begins to doubt her ability and her self.

While the Canadian government does offer language training, it is inadequate on a number of levels. If a woman knows even a little English or French, she may not be eligible for training. If she does enter a program, she will not be given an opportunity to really learn the language and be comfortable with it before she is finished. A second problem is that the education and upgrading needs of men are given more attention by both the government and by the family. Typically, men take precedence over women.

Ethnic communities as well as families can reinforce these norms. These communities are extremely powerful and play a role in silencing women. They do not talk about women and women who dare to speak out, to seek an education in spite of community disapproval, can be ostracized.

- ***violence in the control of female children.*** In many cultures, a woman's sexuality is fixed to the family's honour. There is a great deal of pressure on girls and young women to behave in certain ways, for instance to marry early and to marry a man selected by her family. Pressure to marry early can and does work against a woman's ability to do well in school. This pressure and violence comes from the family and the community; some women speak of abuse from older

women in their husband's family, especially a mother-in-law.

- ***men in the family and community try to maintain control over women***. Even if a woman does manage, in spite of various governmental restrictions to enter a course or program, she will be under tremendous pressure to stay at home in order to pass "her culture" on to her children. If children do not do well, if they do not follow the cultural practices of their parent's country of origin, the mother is blamed, both by the family and by the community.

A woman who attends courses may be doing so in the face of family disapproval; her mere attendance at a program may be an act of courage on her part. Like other women who experience domestic violence on a daily basis, an immigrant woman in this situation spends a great deal of effort simply surviving, and may not be able to focus on learning.

- ***cultural mores she brings to Canada may discourage her from seeking help***. Violence in her family may be compounded by the feeling of many immigrant women that seeking outside help to deal with family violence would only bring shame to her family and herself. If domestic abuse takes the form of preventing a woman from attending classes, she may feel that she is unable to take steps to end this abuse. As the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women pointed out: "Discussion of violence within the family is still taboo in many cultures. Violence can be viewed as an illness, and marriage vows keep women in situations of violence in sickness and in health."
- ***racism erodes the self-esteem and self-confidence of many immigrant women***. When a woman first arrives in Canada, she may spend her time and energy simply surviving and learning her way around her new community. "At first you don't notice the racism, then you begin to notice it and after a time you feel depleted." Like racialized women born in Canada, she may become a target of violence--physical, emotional, spiritual--because of the colour of her skin.
- ***refugee women face special problems not recognized by most educational programs in Canada.*** Women who have been displaced from their country of origin by war and other organized political and military violence have had to deal with extreme violence on a personal level. They have probably seen family members and friends killed, they may have been victims of rape (increasingly used as a tool of war), they may have faced sexual harassment and rape in refugee camps. Any of these experiences will affect a woman's ability to learn. Few programs designed for immigrants even acknowledge, much less take into account the experiences of refugee women. The women themselves will probably be pre-occupied with basics of life--housing, food and jobs--all of which represent safety, something they were denied in their country of origin. Educational opportunities for refugee women must take these realities into account.

Compiled by immigrant women from several countries

Let Me Listen to Me

I am a survivor of sexual abuse and a lesbian. As a survivor, I brought fears, anxieties and low self-esteem, which were psychological scars from sexual abuse, to my post-secondary education. Psychological trauma is like a physical wound or disease; the body requires time to heal. Just as the physical healing process can leave extremely sensitive scar tissue, so the human spirit can become fragile and sensitive to external stimuli; trust and safety issues become extremely important. As a survivor, I found myself confronting these wounds daily at university as educators and other students failed to understand the fears and inadequacies I felt.

Conjointly I was dealing with my "sexual identity." I was beginning my coming out process; this process brings many fears that are real. A woman who loves another woman deviates from norms and values of a predominantly heterosexual society. Lesbians are subject to reproach from institutions within society--friends, family, employers, police, governments, and educators.

I feared isolation, rejection, and loneliness and I feared loss of self-respect. In spite of these battle scars, often called "post traumatic stress disorder," I still had a burning desire to succeed, a clear understanding of my intellectual abilities and a cognitive understanding and belief that someone would love me and return my love.

I was aware that educating myself would augment my self-esteem and disarm my fears. However, as I had little information about teachers or classes, I felt unsafe, unsure of which teachers I could trust. The content of classes--for example, sociology, psychology, philosophy--could also be unsafe as they often dealt with things that I was experiencing personally. Discussions on incest, homosexuality, and/or lesbianism terrified me. Often, students and professors would support homophobia or theories like "false memory syndrome." I often left my classes feeling angry, lonely, frightened and discouraged.

Some of the theoretical material presented in class diametrically opposed my existence as a lesbian and my experience as a survivor. When I did participate in class discussions, I felt both an enormous fear of exposure and a responsibility to educate others and defend myself and my gay community. Sometimes I experienced the direct consequences of sexism and homophobia. In one philosophy class, some students (who were apparently fundamentalist), said that because of my orientation I was "damned forever." In psychology, discussions concerning sexual abuse victims focused on the damage to the psyche, there was little positive discussion about survivors.

For example, there was no information about survivors and their incredible strength, endurance and determination to conquer their fears and find success in spite of adversity. When sexual abuse issues came up in class, I had flashbacks and panic attacks. I became

an expert at intellectualizing and hiding my feelings, anger and shame. Some classmates would giggle and laugh or comment about sexual abuse perpetrators and their victims--i.e. "children can be seductive" or that "it was one way of learning about sex." I often felt very different from my classmates. It was difficult to make friends who were safe enough so I could be to be honest about my feelings.

describing the barriers

The homophobia expressed by classmates and instructors was constant, and influenced my acceptance of myself as a lesbian. During these years I suffered from depression. Internally, I fought the idea that I was a lesbian. Like many of my classmates, I believed that my sexual identity was a choice, and if I just worked at it harder, I could change that choice. I internalized all the negative and homophobic reality around me.

At one point, my depression became so severe I required treatment and hospitalization. I could not bear the pain of the "choice" I seemed compelled to make. Although I was extremely suicidal at the time, I continued to attend classes during the day and to return to the hospital in the evening; no one, not my family, classmates or my professors, knew. Living a dual life-style and hiding my problems left me tired and afraid that I would not graduate or be successful.

One weakness in my post-graduate studies was a absence of literature that dealt with sexual abuse or lesbianism in a healthy way. Books or lecture materials (videos, articles) that portrayed survivors and/or lesbians as healthy, successful, competent women were virtually non-existent. Most books and videos showed lesbians and survivors as troubled, unhealthy, and different from the social norm. This angered me. Not only was it not true, but it encouraged homophobia and sexism in my classmates and instructors and appeared to legitimize their behaviour.

What Can We Do?

Teachers must understand the effects of sexual abuse and acknowledge that using certain materials in class may negatively affect some adult students. It would be sensitive and appropriate to acknowledge this at the start of a course, and offer confidential and appropriate support systems or students who require it. As well, diligent and sensitive educators will have current and accurate materials on gay history, gay culture, and resources within the gay community available for all students, but particularly for those dealing with sexual identity issues.

Most importantly, teachers need to be extremely clear about the environment of their class--there is zero tolerance for homophobia, sexism, racism or other insensitivity.

Most of my university years were extremely painful, though the personal growth and maturity I gained at such great cost have become invaluable. During the last two years of my studies, I began to accept myself and to be more open about myself with others. I found friends and teachers who were gay-positive and with whom I felt I could share my life experiences. At this point, I became strong and sensitive toward myself and others.

As a lesbian survivor, it is fundamental that my life work is to educate society and condemn any beliefs that permeate and nurture oppression. My beliefs and my experiences have taught me to listen to myself and to believe that I am an important contributor to and loving member of society. My post-graduate studies taught me how to be critical and analytical of materials and courses taught in formal institutions of learning.

In the words of Gertrude Stein: "Let me listen to me and not to them."

"G"

Sharing Our Experiences: Snapshots of Our Lives

As part of this project, we sent requests for short stories that answered the question, "How has violence affected your education?" to individual women and women's groups all over Canada. We asked women to describe how violence affected their education, and if relevant, to tell us what they did about it. The following stories are the result.

We appreciate the courage of the women, who shared their experiences and their stories. Each of the women whose stories form part of this kit is a survivor. Each of us can learn from them.

We learn about how constantly seeing your mother beaten affects your self-esteem, how incest denies a child a safe home, how violence engendered by racism denies a girl an education, how sexual abuse by a teacher haunts a woman in further education, how safety must come before education. Some of these women have been able to carve new lives with the strength they developed in order to survive, some are still trying to solve the daily problems that violence created for them. Their stories tell their realities and the realities of many women; we must all listen and learn from them.

All of these women had the courage to share their story with us. We know of others who were not yet ready to share. We had phone calls from women who wanted to write a story

and who were able to talk about their situation to us, but who were not yet able to write about it or to have us write it for them.

It is interesting to note, as well, that few of our authors felt safe enough to use her real name. We offered all authors the option of using a pseudonym and fears for safety demanded that most chose that option. Some of the names they chose are symbolic; Grace Anne's story about a woman's struggle to get a university education is named in honour of Grace Anne Lockhart, the first woman in the British Empire to receive a BA from an accredited university.

If you are a teacher, tutor or literacy worker, you might want to share some or all of these stories with your learners. For women who are living in violent situations, or who have survived such situations, reading the story of another woman may be helpful. If you share these stories with your learners, you may trigger memories of abuse. You should have a plan to help women who need an immediate safe place or someone to speak with. For safety reasons, you might want to consider using these stories in a women-only class, even if you normally teach a mixed group.

You might want to use the stories as writing prompts for a life writing session, as described in an article by Sharon Ferguson-Hood elsewhere in this kit. We hope these stories will inspire other women to share their story, to seek healing, to seek an education. Sharing is a way to dismantle the barriers.

sharing our experiences

Grace Anne's Story

When I was between 12 and 15, I was sexually abused by a high school teacher. Then he was charged in an incident involving another girl, and I remember feeling great relief and freedom when he vanished from the halls. After grade 12, I set out for university, with excitement, anticipation and anxiety. The city was an unknown to me, but I found my way and got a place to stay. Attending classes, though, came as a shock. I simply could not pay attention. I tried many things, but after coming out of class time after time with only two or three lines of notes and no idea of what the professor had said, I decided I was just too stupid and undisciplined to pay attention. Still, I was determined to continue. I developed a routine of memorizing texts and attending each class once a week or so to ask fellow students about assignments and tests. No one seemed to notice my absences.

Twenty-five years later, I realize this lack of concentration was a pattern of disassociation I developed in school. I had found I could get good marks by memorizing the texts. The same technique worked in university.

A greater difficulty appeared in my second year. I experienced my first severe depression, one that made it impossible for me to study. The anti-depressant I was given dulled the pain, but I could not keep a thought in my head. I stopped taking the drug and gradually

got back on my feet, but from this time, life again became a struggle. I was working part time to support myself. Because my hopelessness interfered with studying, I started taking amphetamines to stay awake so I could study and write late into the night. After several months I stopped taking drugs (I did save a few for emergencies).

In the last semester of my third year, as I was completing a BA and preparing to take an honours history year, I again experienced a breakdown. I asked for an incomplete in one class and stumbled through the other three; I felt my options for further study and career were pretty much closed. I understood I didn't have the capacity to study consistently--I never knew when depression would disorientate me. I did not speak to anyone about this. To me, it was simply a matter of intelligence--I wasn't intelligent enough. Still, I re-took the class that was essential for my BA (ending up with one of my lowest marks ever) and enrolled in an honors history program for lack of other options. In the middle of my first semester, I just walked away from the program. And that was the end of my academic career.

Amy's Story

I am a 31 year old woman. I am slowly getting my life back together and I have also been off drugs for two months now. My story begins like this.

As a child, I was in foster homes and in and out of different schools because after being in one foster home for 6 months they move you so you don't get too attached. I was in so many different schools I lost count, in many different cities, across Saskatchewan and Alberta. Anyways, when I turned 15, I finally found myself in a good foster home where my foster parents really cared. I started school once again and was doing really well and then we had a dance for all the students. One boy kept asking me to dance and I did, not knowing that he had just broken up with his girlfriend. The following Monday this girlfriend confronted me. An argument started which continued into a physical confrontation. She got me mad when she called me a black squaw and I hit her back so hard she fell. That's when her two friends jumped me from the back. I was called to the office and told my side. The principal didn't believe me and I was suspended; I felt like I was suspended for being native. I was mad and honestly thought all teachers and principals were prejudiced so therefore I decided to quit school and give up.

I left my good foster home and went on my own. I began my street life. But over the years I became dependent on drugs and was consistently in and out of jail. In my last incarceration, I decided to straighten out my life. I studied for my GED 12 and when I got out signed up for my GED tests. I passed all my subjects except math because I know nothing about the metric system. But I am not a quitter. My goal is to get my academic 12 and study to be a drug addiction counsellor which takes 4 years of school. Right now I am trying to straighten out my life. In fact, I've been more or less straight but relapsed and got drunk and ended up getting 30 days for willful damage. However, I am not a quitter. Now I believe it's never too late and a person needs an education to get anywhere.

Elizabeth's Story

Fear of violence prevented me from focusing on my education. I come from a dysfunctional background, my parents were alcoholics and I was often left in the care of an abusive older brother.

At school, I asserted "control" over my world by not speaking. My goal was to draw as little attention to myself as possible, thus reducing the possibility of being hurt. Unfortunately, my silence attracted the attention of other children. Often, I was surrounded in the school yard and subjected to the attention I did not want. I remember quite clearly an incident in grade eight; I was completely surrounded by several classmates. As they closed in on me, I panicked and delivered a swift kick to one of my abusers. Was I angry at them? No! I was angry at myself for losing control! I reported the incident to the school principal and was ignored. The message I got was that I deserved it, that I needed to change. I didn't go to my grade eight graduation.

I started high school. My parents had quit drinking and I suppose their courage inspired me to change. I decided to have back surgery to correct my spine; I had been wearing a brace--which attracted a lot of abuse. I waited a year to have surgery, during that year I failed every class. It wasn't that I couldn't do the work, I just didn't care. Getting my life together was my first concern; until then, it had been survival.

After surgery, I had months of recovery to assess my situation. I needed a fresh start, as I wanted more than anything just to be a normal teenager. So, I changed schools and behaved as if I had never had a problem. I talked in the hall; I talked during class (what a proud moment it was when the teacher asked me to be quiet!) I was very happy with the progress I was making socially; unfortunately, I was not doing well academically. Eventually, the school counsellor suggested that I drop out!! So I did. And I've been struggling for an education ever since.

Children need to know they have a right to safety. They need to know they are not to blame for what is being done to them. No one has a right to abuse them, no matter what their shortcomings may be.

Children have a right to an education. Educators need to recognize the barriers that prevent children from asserting that right.

Windy's Story

I'm now a grown woman of thirty-four years, thinking back to my childhood and how violence has affected my education... When I was between six and eleven years old, my mother was frequently beaten. I remember the many beatings; I wonder how she could have lived through them. Her arm was broken and in a different incident her leg was broken. Face bruised, her body ached so from the punching, kicking and being dragged around. My two younger brothers and I would be screaming and crying for my father to stop. My father stopped only when we would cover our mother with our bodies. "Oh how I wish this was not happening. Oh God! When is this going to stop?" It made me feel so sad and feel regret for my mother. What I felt for my father were anger and shame but yet I loved him. Growing up, we were always taught to respect our parents, so what could I do?

Going to school I always tried my best, received good marks but the proudness I did have was no longer there. My father made me feel so ashamed and hurt. I always ended up thinking and feeling: "Nobody is going to want to associate with me, with the kind of upbringing I have or had" (even though physical abuse was happening around me, to friends and families I grew up with). I noticed I lost my goal to make something of myself or even try to achieve graduation.

Now...sitting here in jail, I've got time to look hard at my life. From the age of twenty-four till now, my pattern has turned into violence towards men.

What I know now, how violence affects us mentally and the strong aspect of emotions, not to mention the physical impact, we all need to speak out. That's the first step. Next is to receive counselling.

This chain of violence needs to be broken.

Christine's Story

Has violence affected my education? Absolutely! As a sexually violated child, I kept the family secret, the family "respectability," while my abuser indulged in his power trip within our home.

To the rest of the world, he was an excellent mathematics teacher, head of a large department in an inner-city school in a large Canadian city, mathematics consultant to the Board and Education and President of the Masters Association. What a master!!! The arbitrary, excessive, psychological control of my mother, brothers and I made disclosure of my private invasion unthinkable for my first twelve years.

But I screamed silently and found a powerful revenge by not succeeding in his discipline! I was hopeless in math and we were all convinced, including myself, that I had not inherited the ability to succeed in the subject. My standard testing scores administered in Grade 13 confirmed our conclusions: only twenty-third percentile (so at least 77 people out of 100 scored higher in math than me).

Years later, I received excellent, extensive therapy to come to terms with my childhood abuse. Subsequently, I took standardized tests at a technical institute, tests which were comparable to my grade 13 tests. My math scores were all in the 90-98 percentile range. I believe my original potential has been unlocked and is fully available to me because of the healing I have experienced regarding my childhood sexual abuse.

sharing our experiences

Marie Ann's Story

My name is Marie Ann. I am 38 years old. When I was a little girl, I was abused by my father and my Uncle Charlie molested me. When I was in kindergarten, my Dad didn't want me to go to school. He didn't want me to learn nothing. He didn't want me to be like other people. He wanted me to look after my brothers. I also had to do house work for him every day. He hit me with his buckle. When I was 9 years old he raped me. I hadn't been to school for a very long time. I ran away from home. I went to my grandmother's apartment. The cops took me back home that night. Then he beat me up again. The day I

ran away my Uncle Charlie touched me in the afternoon and my father touched me at night time, that's why I ran away.

Then I went to the police station and they phoned the Children's Aid. Then they took me to the Sick Children's Hospital. I went to a farm for abused children. I had school at the farm. I stayed on the farm until I was 12 years old. I didn't like it there. I wished somebody would adopt me. When I was 13 years old I went to school. I like it. They learn your name. They show us to read and write. We went to Winnipeg with our school. I like it. I quit school because I was on drugs. When I went and got help and my family put me down. I was the black sheep of the family.

I am very happy I am back to school at Beat the Street. Now I am back to school and I am doing well. When I have finished school, I love to help children in day care. I want to read to them and paint with them. When I was very small, I wished someone would talk to me about my problems. I would have finished my schooling by now.

sharing our experiences

Joan's Story

Violence barely affected my education until my ex-husband was released on parole near the end of my first year of university. Although during that year I had felt fear and tension, the stress was worse now he was out. I had my safety to think about; I did not want to be another murder statistic, so I had to go to a woman's shelter until I completed my first year.

I knew I could not stay in the province to get my diploma so arrangements had to be made to transfer my credits to another province. If I did not complete my first year I would have to start over which I felt was unfair as I had already done one year except for two subjects. With a lot of edginess, fear and anger, I stayed to complete the two subjects. The added stress caused me to lose concentration, bringing my marks down. I was also denied the social life I needed for balance in my life. This was ironic--he was free and I was now like a prisoner. My attitude was "I don't care whether or not I make this course, I just want out of here." I had many sleepless nights and would go to class in a "zombied state."

People in our education systems and programs need to be aware that one in every four women is a victim of abuse; they need better knowledge and understanding of this issue. Counsellors should be available for abused woman. There should also be training on gender issues in violence and abuse. The system must be flexible enough accommodate the real life situations that many women face. Confidentiality is another important factor

so a woman is protected while taking classes.

I know I will complete the course I am taking and it will be because of the determination I have had to do this. I have had to leave the province to complete my course, the abuser has control of my life even though we are no longer together.

Bo's Story

I am a 29 year old woman and mother of three children. I come from a very dysfunctional family, where I was the youngest of nine children. The abuse I have to talk about is mental, emotional, and physical. It led me to abuse alcohol and drugs. It had a great effect on me mentally throughout my earlier years.

My self esteem was very low, and I had no enthusiasm towards my education because of the physical abuse that was happening to me at that time. I had no desire to further my education, to achieve any kind of goal, because I felt useless and ashamed to be me. I was always told I would never become anything, even though I was an "A" student. I would sit in class thinking about it and feeling the abuse from the night before, and trying to concentrate in class. This abuse carried on throughout my childhood, teenage years, right into my adult years.

Even now this cycle of abuse has followed me. It led me here for a lengthy incarceration at Pine Grove. Through many years of psychological help through counselling and from friends, I have learned to deal with my abuse and break this cycle, starting with myself.

I know now I can speak out about my abuse and how it affected me. I lost all of my self worth, and self esteem, believing I could not make anything of myself. But with the help of the programs offered here, help from positive friends, my psychologist and staff at Pine Grove, I know I can further my education. I have a better attitude. I can be just as good as the next person and be able to speak out about how to break the vicious cycle of abuse that has affected me throughout my life.

If you dare to dream, just reach out and grab it. I did and so can you! Break the cycle of abuse. Speak out and talk about it. Thank you for reading my story.

Jeanne's Story

Although my high school principle was asking me if I was having any problems and offering me his help, I sensed little compassion in his voice.

I wondered why this was the only note of concern that I had received from any staff member in my two years at that school. Except for the gibes from my classmates, no one had commented on the almost six months of school I had missed while suffering from extreme emotional distress and a stress-induced illness. I was not aware of any attempt to halt the racially motivated physical and emotional battering to which my younger siblings were routinely subjected, and about which I constantly worried. I needed help but I was wary of making matters worse.

As new African immigrants in small town Canada, we faced some harsh realities. Were my state of physiological distress to become public knowledge, I could expect little compassion or understanding for the years of abuse that had caused it. Instead I would be judged a failure. My personal tragedy could easily become a new weapon in the hands of my tormentors. I declined my principal's aid. He seemed relieved.

I realized I would have to transcend this abuse through my own efforts. I turned to Dr Carol Weeke's book, *Hope and Help for Your Nerves*. It taught me deep breathing and relaxation techniques that helped me gradually recover from my anxiety attacks, heart palpitations and agoraphobia. I learned to selectively concentrate on individual tasks and began to methodically and systemically tackle my school work one assignment at a time.

Three months later, I graduated and left the town for good. The most poignant lesson I took with me was how to survive and triumph in a solitary struggle.

Creating A Better Learning Environment

This section has articles on teaching, on systemic changes needed in universities and colleges, on counselling, on Maslow's theory of needs, on safety in the classroom.

Sharon Ferguson-Hood describes life writing and suggests how you can use it. Patricia Daughton takes a thoughtful look at art and how it can be used by anyone, even non-artists, to create a more realistic self-image and generate higher self- esteem. Wanita Koczka describes how correctional institutions can meet the educational needs of incarcerated women. Marilyn Boechler describes some of the ingredients of a program for women who have experienced so much violence that they were unable to get even a basic education. Moon Joyce uses her experience as an instructor in an Outward Bound program to describe how physical challenge, in a woman-positive environment, promotes learning. Paula Pasquali considers some of the barriers created by program and funding requirements. Kathy Story reflects on several decades of teaching woman-centred courses at the University of Saskatchewan and on what universities must do to make education more woman-positive.

Counselling is the focus of two articles. J. D. Inamuco describes her experiences with counselling in "Reclaiming my Life" and suggests that good counselling services are an essential part of any educational institution or program. "Choosing a counsellor" is a checklist you might want to share with your students or use as a writing or discussion prompt.

Safety is the overwhelming concern of all survivors. Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" theory is a way to describe and understand why this is so, and how the need for safety takes precedence over all else, including learning. "Making Learning Safer: A checklist for teachers" focuses on things you can do to make your classroom or program safer. You might want to share it with your colleagues. Three articles focus on various aspects of safety audits. We have summarized several of the audits METRAC describes in more detail in their own publications. As we point out in the summaries, safety audits are a way for all women, including women learners, to take control of their environment, to empower themselves.

Life Writing:
Empowerment for the Future

Women who have been victims of violence, whether it is verbal, emotional, psychological or physical, often have been deprived of an education. One technique that can open the learning process to women who have been alienated from educational institutions, or that can reverse the effects of violence, is life writing.
Life writing is the opportunity to write about our lives.

In the beginning, we put aside worries about structure, grammar and punctuation. Kristjana Gunnars says that we must simply write and not worry about our work being formally correct. If we are allowed to write freely and let the story come from within, it will appear with more tension and emotion than if we are worried about sentence structure and grammar.

In my first year of University as a mature student, I was given the opportunity in a Sociology class to write a paper that involved life experience. I received an 80 on that paper, but that was the only opportunity I had, in three years, to write about life experience. I found writing for university professors a very difficult process. I was seldom allowed to use the word "I" in formal essays. Nor do most professors consider the problems a mature student might be facing. Hence it can be a very isolating experience.

In my final year, I entered a class called "Feminist Critical Theory and Literature by Women." We used a text called "Women's Voices"; from that text we studied such pieces as "The Poets in the Kitchen" by Paule Marshall and "Birthing" by Kate Simone. This was literature known as life writing. We were then given the opportunity to write our own stories. The assignment was to write about kitchens we had lived in. That was the first time I felt I was in control of my writing. I wrote about the violence that had taken place in my kitchen, and I felt empowered by my writing. Later I published my story about kitchens.

Life writing can also be a painful experience. Memories return that have been suppressed for years. I find doing life writing a long process; while the first draft may come quite quickly, it might be some time before I can attempt to read it or re-work it.

Using Life Writing

Life writing is a process for healing. This past year I used life writing as a tool in pastoral care. I also used it with a women's spirituality group. I had the most success here. Not all of the people had experienced violence in their lives, but most had.

They all agreed that writing their stories was a very emotional and an empowering experience. All of them said they had no idea they could write this sort of story. Or they would say "I don't know where this came from."

There are many techniques to start the writing process. One I often use is to read a few sentences from a story, and then have the people write whatever the reading evoked for them. They would write non-stop for 10 to 15 minutes. When we were finished writing, we would share, if we wished, our writing with the class. The class would write a piece at home for the following week, and that would be shared and work shopped. Work shopping means that the class works together, commenting and giving a critique of the work offered. It is helpful if everyone can have a copy of everyone's work.

Some people want to write only for the healing process. Most, however, write to heal and then to publish their work. If we want to publish we have to learn the rules of good writing. We can only use language to our advantage once we understand it incredibly well.

For women who have never had any power, or an opportunity to tell their stories, or a chance to be heard and understood, life writing is a powerful experience. There is justice and healing in writing our stories. There can be no justice without healing. I believe healing and justice are closely connected. It is a very political act to write and to be heard. Language is power.

I don't think our ability to learn comes into question; the question is, where can we go to inherit the power that is rightfully ours to learn the way we learn best? That is difficult in our androcentric institutions. However, we do have to survive in them, and we will find the occasional offering there. I found life writing. If we can find a way for empowerment to happen before we get there, we will survive much better.

Sharon Ferguson-Hood

The Creative Process and Expressive Communication:
A personal perspective

Visual art has always been a part of my life. At times, I have focused more attention on relationships, work for pay and education, but I have always returned to visual art. I now find I am able to integrate creativity into all aspects of my life. Recently, I was accepted into a graduate level Art Therapy Program, and, funding permitting, I hope to help others lead a creative life.

I would like to focus on my explorations in art and how it has assisted me in healing. I will include some personal strategies on how the creative process can foster self-awareness and growth.

The Role of Art

In my early years as a student, I did not consciously examine the role art practice played in my life. I simply felt myself compelled to create and communicate via a visual language. Later, in university, I began to realize how systemic sexism and violence had a controlling effect on every aspect on my life. Incidents in my teens and early adult years come into focus under a harsh new light. I had in me an incredible plethora of repressed emotions: fear, anger, hate, and pain. After failed attempts to intellectualize these emotions, I began to use the tool most accessible to me--visual art.

The visual process allowed me a voice that was absent from other areas of my life. I was, in fact, free to communicate in a way which presented few external barriers. I began focusing on the visual expression of hostility and anger. Art began to take on a cathartic role; that is, by expressing my hostility and anger in my art, I came to address repressed emotions.

Finding voice and expressing emotions is an empowering experience. To have voice, in whatever form, is a necessary tool for self-awareness. Within the framework of visual art we can examine our behaviours or attitudes and seek out options. The following section will present one of the many ways in which to explore the self.

Healing Through Art: An Exercise

Often, the effects of violence and oppression obscure or destroy a healthy body image. An excellent way of examining this, and an ongoing project of mine, is through self-portraiture. A variety of media can be used for this: masks, clay sculptures, photography, paint and so on. A simple exercise to examine body perception is to sculpt a self-portrait in clay without the use of a mirror. This is accomplished by feeling your face with your hands, and transferring that information from fingertip to clay. Without a mirror, the portrait leaves behind pre-conceptions and expectations of what we look like and who we are. What may emerge from this exercise is a reflection of one's inner spirit that goes beyond surface features; a portrait of the soul. At the very least, this exercise will facilitate new perceptions of one's face. I continue to practice self-portraiture, often placing myself in different contexts and time frames. If such self-portraiture is practiced over a period of time, it can provide a visual diary of one's self-awareness and growth.

The Power of Art

The creative process provides a framework for the world inside to integrate with the world outside. Thus, visual art provides an excellent basis for group interaction. Whether in the production or exhibition of art, a network of women engaged in creative practices engenders a rich mosaic of awareness and growth. In December 1993, I participated in an art exhibition on women and violence in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Through this exhibition, I was able to share experiences with women who had eloquently communicated their pain and strength through a common non-verbal language. During this time, two women in my life were able to verbalize their stories of violence and allow me to transfer their pain and healing into a visual narrative. By utilizing the creative process in a meaningful social context, pain is shared and healing is re-affirmed.

It is my belief that women throughout time have used art for its cathartic qualities as well as for its soul uplifting beauty. The concepts and examples described above reflect what I have learned from being in pain, working through that pain and finding my voice in the process. I have touched briefly on the potential of visual art in dismantling the barriers women face as a result of violence. I hope this has been enough to pique your interest for further investigation.

Patricia Daughton

Education in Prison

Programming for Incarcerated Women

When a woman enters prison, she generally has a few basic needs she wants dealt with immediately. She first tends to the care and safety of her children, then her immediate safety needs and her health needs. After she is satisfied these needs are met as best as possible considering her limited freedom, the routine of prison life begins. This routine includes participation in programs, most of which have an educational, informational or skill development component.

My experience working with women in prison indicates that most have an addiction to alcohol and/or drugs, are victims of physical, sexual and/or mental abuse, are not lawfully employed, are poor, have low self-esteem, have less than a grade eight education and have not had positive experiences within the education system. In addition, most of them are mothers, and in Saskatchewan, most are Aboriginal.

The trauma these women have endured both as a result of violence and from their life styles does not allow conventional educational programs or teaching methods to work. Given the vulnerability of each of the women in relation to each other, group disclosure programs are not highly desirable or valuable to the women. Likewise, programs that are based on the "norm," which in most cases means "male based," offer very little.

In order for programs within prison to be valuable, they need to be culturally relevant and gender specific as well as take into account the violence these women live with daily. Programs need to recognize that the women are at different levels of self-awareness, self-confidence, life skills, cultural awareness and healing stages. For various reasons, some women have short attention spans and learn best with methods presently used with learning disadvantaged students.

I have observed that violence stagnates the learning process. The learner quickly learns to know and see only what her aggressor allows or wants her to know or see; little growth or learning is possible. The learner is too pre-occupied with escaping the violence or coping with it; she cannot afford the luxury of freedom to learn. If the learner is allowed, for example, to attend upgrading, the violent partner most often does not offer the necessary support for the learner to attend classes or complete assignments. The violent partner often feels threatened by the learner trying to gain new information or skills and further violence results. Her efforts are sabotaged by the aggressor and the power imbalance within the relationship. Since most women in prison come from an oppressive and violent background, it is difficult for them to value learning--it has always had negative consequences in the context of their lives. It is difficult for them to open their mind to learn; they have been conditioned to know only what they are told to know in their power relationship.

All of the women genuinely want to stay out of jail. Unfortunately, when they return to their previous violent environment, the cycle often begins again.

These factors must be taken into consideration when developing and delivering programs for women in prison. **Programs must be culturally based, with woman-positive content**. In prisons with many First Nations inmates, an aboriginal woman presenter is essential. Programs should include:

- ***Information on violence and its culture***. Given their violent backgrounds, many of the women are themselves violent and almost all are victims of violence. A cultural history as it relates to violence and victimization gives them some perspective. Information on the cycle of violence is also useful.
- ***Programs on safety plans***. Safety plans for themselves and their children help women cope or escape from abusive relationships when required.
- ***Programs to raise knowledge and acceptance of the self***. Cultural awareness, self-awareness, self-confidence and basic life skills are necessary for self-acceptance. Programs that help women heal from abuse or understand and break addictions also contribute to self healing.
- ***Programs about parenting***. Parenting and children's visiting programs are essential for these women to feel better about parenting and to have access to their children. All of the women value children and family. Generally only female relatives--mothers, grandmothers, aunties or sisters--maintain contact with them while they are incarcerated. The children of some women are in foster care while others are with female relatives. All of the women want to be better parents.
- ***Programs about health, in its broadest sense***. Spiritual and recreational programs help the women gain better health overall. Health care information programs on a variety of topics help the women to look after their physical and mental health.
- ***Skill development.*** Educational and skills development programs help engender confidence. They can range from basic literacy to household and yard maintenance.

The delivery and context of all these programs must relate to the lives of the women. Neither a lecture format nor teacher-driven programs are effective. Learner-driven and modular programs that build on one another are effective. Frequent breaks and activity changes are essential to maintain overall interest. At the same time, the women value routine and reliability; most women come from a violent background where things are very concrete and controlled. Their willingness to accept flexibility increases as they begin to feel safe. As flexibility creating a better learning environment increases, the women gain the freedom to learn. **Safety is critical to learning and programming.**

Violence and control stagnate learning, while safety and flexibility enhance learning. It is ironic that within prison, safe from outside violence and with programs designed and delivered to meet their needs, women in prison can being to learn and grow and heal.

Wanita Koczka

creating a better learning environment

Beyond the Wall:
A literacy program designed to prepare women for their return to the community

These observations are based on my experience during three years when, as a volunteer, I organized, developed and taught a literacy program at the Gabriel Dumont Institute Community Training Residence, a minimum security facility for women in Saskatoon. Women who have experienced violence in their lives are often too emotionally scarred to benefit from a regular academic education. A tutoring program must help them gain skills so they can survive in their home community.

What We Learned

I started the program with two women who wanted to "learn more reading and arithmetic." As the program developed and more women became involved, several things became apparent.

1. Classroom activities had to be structured so that the women felt safe and could relax. Here, the tutor's attitude is crucial. It must be relaxed, friendly, non-judgemental and caring. Constant positive reinforcement is essential.
2. The student's knowledge gained through daily living must be recognized and validated. We discussed using math skills while shopping, using verbal skills when dealing with a landlord or social service agencies or reading and understanding school letters.
3. Teaching materials must be relevant to the student's life. We used newspapers and current magazine articles; we selected materials with Canadian content.
4. Oral language activities were an important ingredient. They had to teach the women to:

- express an opinion
- explain (and defend) that opinion
- discuss ideas

- develop questioning techniques to learn from others
- develop basic research skills, i.e. using a dictionary or map

Our Goals

Our aim was to show the women the value and joy of becoming life-long learners. They needed to develop self-confidence and a positive self-image. We did no placement testing when a woman entered the program. Instead, we interviewed each student and asked her what she would like to study. This afforded her a degree of decision making. Unless she had been attending classes while she was incarcerated, we encouraged each woman to review the basics in reading, writing and math. This showed the women what they could do and so it was a positive experience. It also enabled the tutors to develop an individualized program for each student.

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Some Specific Techniques We Used

Journals

We asked each student to keep a journal. This gave each woman privacy to express her feelings and an opportunity to put her feelings into words. We never read the journals.

However, just encouraging them to write every day was not successful, so we had them bring their journals to class. We dated and initialed each journal. The students began writing regularly so they could show us how much they had written. It truly was an activity that promoted writing skills.

Circle Checks

We began each session with a circle check. Each student was asked to tell how she was feeling and what was happening in her life. There could be no comment from other students. This gave the women a safe opportunity to speak in a group setting. In order to encourage vocabulary development, we had a list of "no-no" words. These included "good," "bad," "o.k.," "kinda"; we also provided a long list of descriptive adjectives and adverbs. The tutors always participated in the circle check.

Safe Person

We found that discussion often triggered painful memories and fears, for instance, a clipping about adoption or teen pregnancy.

Ideally, a safe person, skilled in counselling should have been available so the student

could leave the class and receive help. Unfortunately, this service was not provided in the facility. We felt that this was a gap in the program.

We must start teaching "where the students are" and expand the subject matter as they become comfortable with learning. Only a holistic approach to education can meet the emotional, social, and academic needs of the women so they will be able to develop a positive life-style when they are "beyond the wall."

Marilyn Boechler

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Women of Courage

Healing Through Wilderness Adventure

A woman can develop the courage to take risks and the confidence to try again.

Women of Courage is a wilderness course for women who are survivors of chronic and acute abuse. Since 1988, about 400 women have participated in this specialized Outward Bound program. While building on the philosophy of all Outward Bound programs, it differs from them in that the main theme is "challenge by choice." Participants define the limits of their own challenges.

Outward Bound and various agencies in southern Ontario choose women who are beyond the crisis stage of recovery but are active in a group or individual counselling program with a recognized social service agency. A number of agencies in southern Ontario refer women to the program, and in 1994, the Body Shop sponsored courses for women from other parts of Canada. Major funding comes from the Trillium Foundation, which allows full scholarships for all participants, including transportation, child care, food, and equipment and clothing for the course.

A Woman of Courage course centres around an expedition that includes canoeing, camping and 24 hours of reflection time, alone or with another. Through these activities, participants engage in a series of increasingly difficult challenges. The progression of these challenges is geared to the social and emotional resources of the individual and the group. Stress is kept to a reasonable level and challenges are met with success rather than frustration of failure. This is the meaning behind "challenge by choice," each woman determines the level of risk she will take to meet each challenge.

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This program uses a feminist approach that is essential for long-term, multi-dimensional change. An important element in our discussions is the theme of empowerment including the crucial understanding of the context in which violence occurs. "Empowerment" is necessarily a discussion about "power." Each survivor begins to see how her individual experiences fit within a larger picture of violence in society.

Each program element addresses issues common to survivors. Experiencing violence contributes to low self-esteem, inability to trust, disconnection from personal thoughts and feelings, and social isolation. Activities are designed to increase participants' body awareness, communication skills, and the ability to make choices and set their own goals while assessing their limits. Experiencing significant personal achievement leads to feelings of empowerment and mastery. When a woman accomplishes what a day earlier she thought was impossible, she sees the world anew. She develops the courage to take risks and the confidence to try again.

Because Women of Courage is designed specifically for women who are survivors of violence, it is designed to incorporate a number of educational principles relevant to these learners.

- The experience is holistic. It engages each woman's learning capabilities--cognitive, emotional, physical, relational, spiritual and intuitive.
- Hands-on experience allows survivors to see real progress. Coupled with feedback from staff and others in the group, and the opportunity to process her experience alone, learning is immediately accessible.
- The heightened sense of experience often translates into long term remembrance of significant learning moments.
- The physical nature of this program is particularly important for survivors whose history of being in a body that is violated and abused is overwhelmingly negative.

Many survivors disconnect body, mind and spirit. Women of Courage offers a woman a new way to exist in her body, controlled by *her* self and featuring mastery of new skills, sensory pleasure and physical achievement. The physical pain that often comes with uncharacteristic physical tasks can be re-framed to that of achievement of one's own defined goals rather than the result of externally imposed punishment.

- Built-in challenges, while in a context of emotional and physical safety, encourage progressive levels of risk taking for women whose experiences of risk taking have historically been fraught with anxiety, lack of support, ridicule or humiliation.

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- As women learn and try new, and progressively more challenging skills, they begin to believe in themselves. As trust in self and other group members grows, self-esteem and confidence levels can rise in a significant, concrete way.

- As women are led to set personal goals for the course, responsibility for daily decisions is put into their hands. As instructors, our job is to assist them in identifying their feelings and articulating their needs and desires, and then to guide them in asking for the support they need to meet their goals. This process is central to our work; we have learned that women who are survivors frequently have difficulty discerning their own feelings, are rarely, if ever, heard or respected for their voice, and rarely, if ever, supported in their growth or in making changes for themselves. These are new and foreign skills for many survivors. Their right to say "no" is paramount. This, in itself, is often an enormous revelation to female survivors who live in a world where women are expected to be available to others unconditionally.

- Learning occurs in the context of community. Women begin to connect with other women in a supportive environment, in a program entirely led by women staff. For many women, who have been taught to distrust other women, it is a revelation.

The Women of Courage program has helped many survivors discover their own strengths and helped them develop skills to build new lives. While few educational programs can offer a week-long wilderness trip, many of the principles of this program are applicable to virtually all education programs. As instructors, we occupy a position of power and must be vigilant in maintaining our boundaries and resisting the role of rescuer that may mean re-victimization for the survivor.

Moon Joyce

Making the Grade:
What Colleges and Universities Can Do To Help Women Living with the Threat of Violence

All you do these days is study. What about me and the kids? School doesn't make you smart, you know. It's a waste of time. I don't know why you're not staying home, looking after the kids and taking care of the house. You know I need you at home. What's the matter? Don't I make enough? Maybe you think I'm not good enough for you any more? Think you'll find someone better at college?

Joe's tirades are becoming more and more frequent. On "good" nights, Susan can get to her assignments after Joe has fallen asleep. On other nights, she and her children must leave home, looking for shelter at a friend's place. If she's "lucky," she'll be able to get out before he starts swinging his fists.

Access to training and education programs alone will not improve the quality of women's lives unless the barriers uniquely encountered by women are identified and removed. For many women like Susan, the most significant obstacle is living with a violent, abusive man. Absences caused by injuries, competing demands on her time and energy and sleep deprivation are examples of how violence and the threat of violence can and does interfere with a woman's ability to achieve her academic goals. As a result of poor attendance and uneven performance, these women may be seen as unmotivated or unable to fulfill program requirements, and labelled as "poor students." They may be failed or asked to withdraw from classes; they may lose their funding.

Education can be a way to break the cycle of despair that envelops a woman living with a violent man. School breaks the isolation which he imposes upon her. It also is an opportunity to get meaningful support and realistic feedback to counter the hurtful and demeaning treatment she receives at home. School may provide opportunities for success which challenge her partner's view of her as "incompetent," or "stupid" or "good-for-nothing." Job opportunities which come from her education may break her partner's financial stranglehold.

Achieving educational goals may be a significant step for women like Susan in creating a life for themselves and their children which is free from violence and abuse. Colleges and universities can make a difference if their policies and procedures take the realities of women's lives into account. To do so, most educational institutions need to take a hard look at their present policies and re-think those which disadvantage women.

What can colleges and universities do to assist women like Susan?
They can attend to her emergency and longer-term housing needs by:

- reserving dormitory space in all-women residences for women and children who need emergency shelter.

- supporting and working closely with transition homes, shelters, and sexual centres in the community.

- developing victim-centred housing policies to address violence perpetrated by men in co-ed and married/co-habiting student residences.

They can address medical and emotional needs by:

- providing on-campus health services.
- ensuring that student counselling staff know about violence against women and are accessible.
- developing standards and protocols for appropriate and complete documentation of injuries for possible use in future legal proceedings.
- working with and making referrals to community rape crisis centres and shelters.
- supporting on-campus, student driven services such as women's centres.

They can ensure access to legal services by:

- establishing a legal aid clinic in conjunction with a local law school or feminist lawyers and developing a lawyer referral service.

They can ensure student services include:

- on-campus child care that accepts infants or drop-ins and has extended hours.
- emergency financial assistance and adequate on-going financial support.

They can create a violence-free, woman-positive campus by:

- conducting personal safety audits of campus buildings and grounds, and addressing features which pose safety risks to women.
- ensuring safe access to public transportation.
- amending policies on attendance, course load, extensions, waiving of fees, standing, medical leave, dismissals, re-admission, any of which may disproportionately disadvantage women who are living with the threat of violence.
- making financial assistance available to both full-and part-time students.
- developing policies and procedures to address and prevent sexual harassment and

violence against women by students and staff.

Paula Pasquali

creating a better learning environment

A View from the University:
An Interview with Kathy Storrie

Interviewer: How do you think violence affects women's education?

Kathy: In classes where I have taught about violence against women, a woman may have memory flashbacks of her own abuse. In these cases, the content of the classes actually triggered memories. When a student lives with domestic abuse, she will experience a lot of physical problems and may have to struggle with legal matters and finances. She may drop out because she cannot continue. If she has a learning disability, it will be worsened by trauma she remembers or that she experiences. Past or current abuse can have devastating effects on a woman's health; it affects her education tremendously.

I: How can a teacher recognize the effects of violence?

K: If a student shows an interest in a particular area of abuse, it is likely that if she trusts you, she will tell you about her own abuse. When women are failing or not getting assignments in on time or are not attending classes, they might disclose they are in an abusive relationship.

I: How does learning or being aware of violence affect the teacher?

K: It is important for teachers to know what stage the survivor is in. Women who are still working through child sexual abuse issues can, at certain stages, be walking time bombs of anger. Anger can sometimes be triggered by a young male professor. Some students are not ready to be in university because they are experiencing too many flash backs. The world they live in is both past and present. Teachers are not psychologists or counsellors and have to stay in their academic role, otherwise they become the counsellor. Teachers can encourage their students to get counselling so they can identify and work on their anger. Unfortunately, this is problematic; many university campuses are over-loaded in career counselling. These counsellors have cognitive-academic training but need more training about sexual abuse and domestic violence. Student counselling services are good but they are always full.

I: How does learning about violence affect the content of the class?

K: Teachers, especially in the humanities and social sciences, need to think very carefully about films they use in their class, for example, the NFB's *Not a Love Story*. Teachers need to ensure that students are aware that certain films could trigger memories and strong emotions and be sure they know what counselling resources are available to them. Further, male professors can experience a lot of anger from female students who are survivors of abuse.

When we critically examine violence or sexism, many female students feel affirmed.

creating a better learning environment

In one course I taught a session on "blaming the victim." The class brainstormed all the different groups that get blamed in our society and then broke into small groups to focus on one area. Wife abuse was one of the topics. Groups were asked to discuss why women got blamed, how they got blamed and the consequences. One student came up afterwards and explained she was on cloud nine. This was the first time she found a professor who understood her life. Students are taught to believe that the world is a just place. When you teach material like blaming the victim, you help students understand systemic evil and they realize that if something bad happens to them, it is not their fault. They move from thinking of themselves as a victim to realizing they survived a trauma and an evil act. When this occurs, students gain tremendous energy, they become a social change agent. They also realize they have to take responsibility for their own healing work.

Another way this affects class content is that students decide they want to work through and make sense of what happened to them. They may take sociology or psychology as therapy. Whenever a student wants to write a paper on abuse, I always have a very serious discussion with them. The material may prove to be too emotional and the student will become drained and the assignment turns out problematic. I always ask: "are you ready to do it?" I suggest they start if they think they are ready, but if it is too much, they can switch to something else. Often survivors of abuse are trying to put pieces together from their lives so they can locate themselves.

Students can move from thinking of themselves as a victim to realizing they survived a trauma and an evil act.

I: How does the education system need to change to reflect this reality?

K: We know that abusers create more stress around exam time. Exams are real triggers and are a problem for survivors of violence. Universities need to be aware of class loads, especially for single parents. How much can a student manage in these situations? The question of security is also important. Students working late isolated areas may need protection.

Unfortunately, university campuses are major areas of sexual harassment. On our campus, we have had difficulty with the Engineering students. It is better now, but in the past, they used gross sexism in their student publication, and, during orientation, they had a naked woman ride a horse on an annual "Lady Godiva" ride. More recently, the engineering students simulated a gang rape in the centre of the university. These actions have left many students feeling terrified and unsafe.

Universities could do a better job of preparing students during orientation about issues related to sexual violence. Students often do not know how to complain about sexual harassment. Sexual harassment officers are often half-time and are not able to do all that is required. In order for heads of departments to act, they need a complaint and evidence. We had a situation with three mature graduate students who felt they could not follow through with a complaint for fear of retribution. A question we need to address is: "How can we make it easier for students to complain?"

I: What can individual teachers do?

K: It is better than it was 20 years ago. Professors are getting educated despite themselves, especially in social sciences and humanities. Things are difficult for women faculty. They are over-loaded; this makes it difficult to support the many female students who are working through violence issues. Women's centres are good things, although they suffer from sexist attitudes and are often under-funded. But women can find good support there.

Reclaiming My Life

I often wonder whether I learned more from the courses I studied in university or from the hours I spent in counselling provided by the Student Counselling Services. After years of unsuccessfully attempting to enlist help in dealing with the fall-out of abuse inflicted on me in my teen-age years, I finally sank into a deep depression.

I was in my second year of a Bachelor of Arts degree and did not care whether I lived or died, much less how well I did in my courses. The pain of my daily existence had become almost unbearable and I was tempted to succumb to utter and total hopelessness. Somehow, I managed to find within myself just enough courage, hope and strength to make one last effort to save myself. I contacted a psychologist at the Student Counselling Centre and found my story and pain taken seriously for the very first time.

Simply being heard renewed my will to live and revived my determination to reclaim my life from the nightmare my abusers had set in motion. The process was seldom easy, often it was excruciatingly painful, but it was also tremendously satisfying and sometimes even joyful.

I was frightened, but also pleased and grateful to find that I was expected to define the parameters and the goals of my counselling process. I felt that I was being shown respect as a whole person and that a safe place had been created for me to explore my hurts and my healing.

In the years that followed, I did not always choose to be actively involved in the counselling process, but I found that these sessions provided me with techniques and processes that have become invaluable tools in my life-long quest for healing and growth. They also gave me the freedom to explore my newly discovered insights--knowing help was readily available if I found myself out of my depth, the ability to recognize when I needed to return for professional help and the discernment to choose psychologists and counsellors who would be most helpful to me. Most importantly, I gained an intimate knowledge and respect for my pain. Gradually, it became transformed from an enemy to an ally in my efforts to become more fully alive.

These gains would not have been possible without a tremendous effort on my part and a huge investment of emotional energy. Consequently, I was not always able to devote my full attention to my academic pursuits. My counsellors were extremely helpful not only in assisting me to assess my priorities and set realistic academic goals, but they also helped me navigate through the university's administrative rules and regulations. Acting as a liaison between me, my professors and various administrative departments, they were able to tailor an academic program and timetable that was much more responsive to my individual emotional needs.

This was made possible by the university's written policy that students facing emotional and mental challenges were to be given the same recognition and consideration as those dealing with physical illness or disability. It was a great comfort to me to not have to expose my private suffering and struggle to each professor or administrator in turn. Had my counsellor not also been my advocate, I believe I would have dropped out of school.

Counselling was absolutely necessary for my academic success. I am convinced that there are many other students who could also benefit. To reach these students, educational institutions and programs need policies that acknowledge, respect and support the efforts of those facing emotional and mental challenges.

Teachers and administrators should be well acquainted with the early warning signs of emotional distress and the services available in their institutions and communities so they can encourage students to use them when it is appropriate. Those of us who have been victimized can triumph over our misfortune if we are provided with the necessary tools and support; without them, many of life's simple pleasures, like the joy of learning, remain effectively out of our reach despite our best efforts.

Were it not for what I learned in counselling, I would have learned very little from my university courses. The assistance provided by Student Counselling Services not only enabled me to graduate, it gave me the hope and means to reclaim my life from the nightmare it had become.

J. D. Inamuco creating a better learning environment

Choosing a Counsellor

Students need to know what counselling services and/or healing groups are available to them. This is especially true for women who have or are experiencing domestic violence and general abuse.

This check list will help you or your students choose an appropriate counsellor. While designed for survivors of violence and abuse, this checklist can be used by anyone who seeks counselling, for whatever reason.

What is Available?

Healing can take many forms, including individual counselling, family therapy, support groups, self-help groups and professionally led groups. Your program or institution should have information about what is available in your community. Many institutions have student counselling departments which offer both counselling services and community information.

You might find that combining these approaches is best. You may find that other approaches, for instance, healing circles or sweat ceremonies, help you. The important thing is to find what works for you.

Choosing a Therapist for Individual or Group Counselling

Ask others, especially other women survivors, about their experiences. How would they choose? Who would they recommend?

Ask other professionals you trust, i.e. clergy, physician, social worker, school counsellor for a recommendation.

Interview a potential therapist. Here are some questions you might ask:

- What training do you have?
- What experience do you have working with survivors?
- How often will we have sessions?
- On average, how long are survivors in counselling with you?
- Are you available outside regular sessions? How available are you?
- What will you do if I am suicidal?
- Can you help me with other resources I may need?
  Can you give me an example of one and how or when you might use it?
- How do you deal with confidentiality?
- What is your fee? Do you have a lower fee for students?

After the interview, ask yourself these questions.

- Do you feel that you have the therapist's respect?
- Did you feel you were part of the process?
- Are you comfortable speaking with her or him?

- Has the therapist been open?
- Has the therapist responded in an easily understandable manner?
- Are you able to ask follow-up questions? Are the answers relevant to your experiences?
- Have your experiences been valued?

Many women find it useful to have both a counsellor and a group, while other women find that they wish only one or the other. A counsellor can help you work through some issues; being part of a group will help you realize that other women do understand what you have experienced.

Choosing a Support or Self-Help Group

If you decide that a group would be useful for you, you might want to look at several potential groups in order to select the one that would be best for you. Ask yourself:

- How often does the group meet?
- Where does the group meet? Is it a safe place?
- How many women are in the group? Is there a leader?
- Is the group open or closed, that is, can new members join any time or is membership limited? At what point can a woman join?
- What confidentiality guidelines does the group use?
- Are all women respected for where they are in their healing?
- Do members listen without giving advice, criticism or trying to fix the other's life.
- What back-up resources are available to the group?

What to Look for in Group Process

- The group welcomes input from all members, but no member is required to share.
- No one has control over anyone else in the group.
- Members respect the boundaries of other members.
- Members understand that the group process can take time, and do not become impatient with the perceived slowness.
- Members do not offer to touch or hug unless invited.

Adapted from a brochure by the Interagency Council on Survivors' Services, Saskatoon

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Psychologists have devised many theories and models to explain human behaviour. One of the most widely used is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The chart on the next page illustrates the theory.

Each item on the chart is a human need; however, Maslow claims that some are more basic than others and must be met before less basic needs can be satisfied. The two categories at the bottom of the chart, *Physiological Needs and Security Needs*, are also known as basic or deficiency needs. If a woman lacks these things, she will not be able meet needs higher on the scale. For instance, if a woman lacks food, self-esteem and love, she will demand food first, as it is an even more basic need than self-esteem or love.

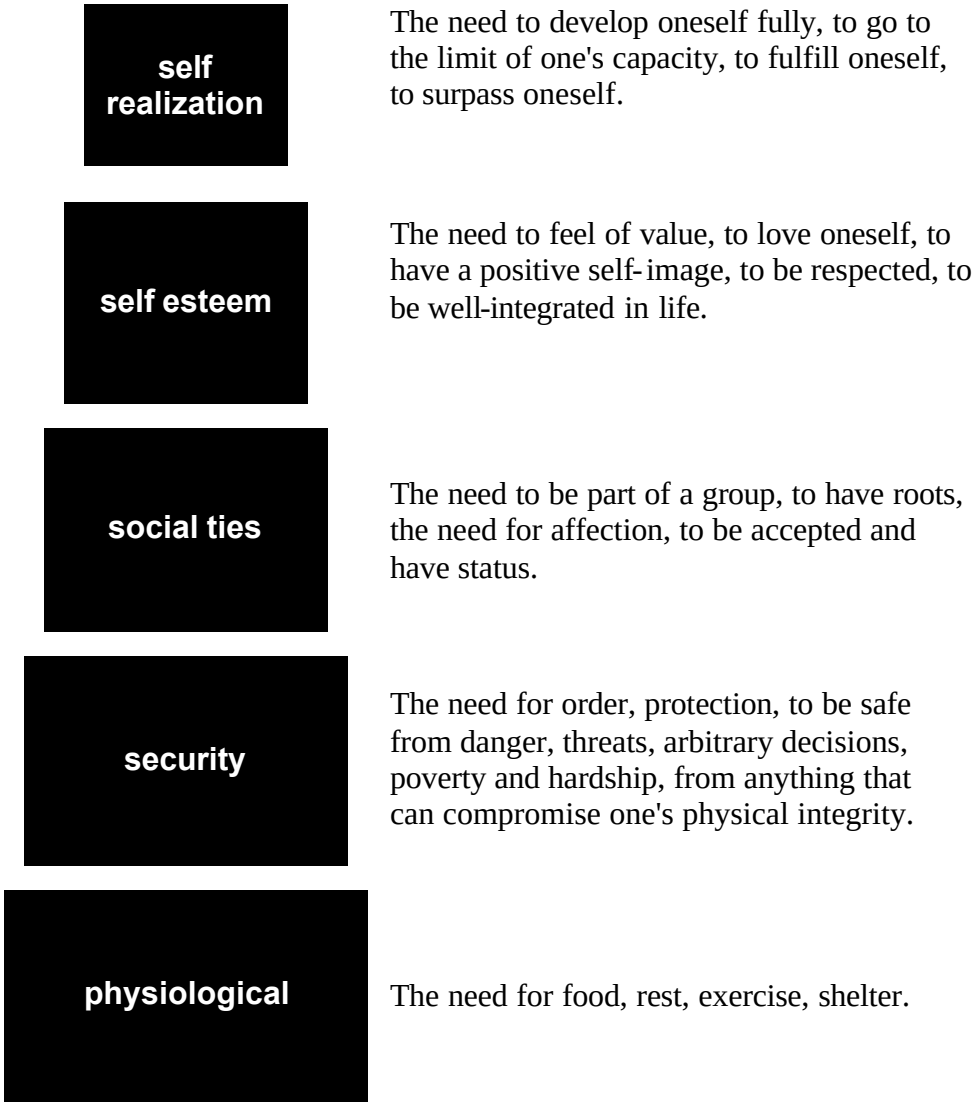
Maslow's theory is useful for educators, counsellors and psychologists as it helps us understand why, for instance, a woman may have difficulty getting or taking advantage of an education. If an adult woman does not have a home because she left a violent partner, her ability to concentrate in class may be greatly impaired. She must meet her need for shelter and security before she can work on self-actualization or meaningfulness, which are growth needs in Maslow's hierarchy. If a woman was abused by a teacher when she was a child, she may not feel safe and secure in classroom situations and may drop out of school.

The need for order and protection and to be safe from danger and threats is the second rung of Maslow's hierarchy. Women who are still recovering from child sexual abuse may have flashback memories of the abuse, and thus experience or re-experience the terror of that abuse. Although living in a safe environment now, they remember when they were not safe. If the memory comes to a student in the context of a classroom, she may well be terrified and gripped by panic.

Survivors of child sexual abuse may be constantly on guard as the normal, everyday environment is full of things that remind a survivor what she has suffered. A sudden noise, certain footsteps, a voice, a smell, gesture or attitude could startle her, triggering memories that are difficult to deal with. A survivor will probably spend her energy overcoming her fear and reclaiming her safety and be unable to focus on her class work. While these associative triggers can't necessarily be avoided or changed, the response to the survivor can change. Educator awareness is the first step. Reassuring a student that she is safe is mandatory. Safety is a complex issue for women who are living with a batterer. He may stalk her outside the classroom or be there when she gets off the bus. She may be unsafe in her own home if she still lives with her abuser. He could punch, kick, or rape her at any time. She walks on egg shells. School may be her only safe place. If she trusts her teacher or instructor, she might ask for help which could include developing a safety plan.

Maslow probably had no idea that his security category would be so central to women in their everyday lives. But for women who have or are living with violence, safety needs are central to their daily existence. Teachers need to learn about safety issues, ensure safety when possible, and understand the sad reality that no woman is safe from violence in our society.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Making Learning Safer:
A Teacher's Checklist

As educators, we have the obligation to make the place where we teach and learn hospitable to our learners. This includes physical, emotional and mental safety.

As we have learned, any woman may experience societal and systemic violence. Some of our women learners have experienced such extreme violence, for instance sexual abuse, that their ability to get an education or to take advantage of one has been negatively affected.

Working together with our colleagues, we can strive to implement woman-positive programs and to create a learning environment that is welcoming and safe. We can work together to create policies that promote safe learning environments. Such an environment will ultimately benefit all students and teachers.

As individuals, we can make education more relevant and hospitable to our learners. We need to be sure we:

- seek out information about the effects of violence on women's education. This kit is a good place to start.
- respect the right of a woman learner to not share her life with us.
- respect the personal space of our learners. For example, we should not touch a learner unless invited to do so; many survivors see uninvited touching as threatening.
- refrain from slamming doors or making other loud, unexpected, noises. Because of its association with violence in her life, a survivor may react unexpectedly to loud noise; it will certainly make her feel less safe.
- critically examine the films and videos we use, trying to anticipate how survivors might react and taking appropriate steps when necessary.
- critically examine written materials for sexist, racist, able-ist, ageist or homophobic bias.
- support our learner in the choices she makes, even if they are not the ones we would have made.
- learn about the support services available in our program, in our institution, and in our community. We must also make sure our learners know about these services and help them to gain access to the services, if requested to do so.
- insist that our educational institutions and programs have a counsellor trained in dealing with survivors of sexual abuse and violence. Career counsellors seldom have this background. We must also insist that safe workers be available when we deal with particularly sensitive issues, i.e. child sexual abuse, partner abuse.

- support women learners who feel unsafe in their learning environment and help them to take back the space. Safety audits are one way to do this.
- give up some of our authority and let our learners take responsibility for some of the daily decisions.
- create a non-hierarchial learning environment as much as possible.
- respect the life experiences of our learners; life experience is also a learning experience.

Safety Audits

Any woman, from those who have experienced extreme overt violence to those who have "just" experienced the institutionalized, systemic violence that is part of most societies, has concerns for her safety. As we know, women who have experienced sexual violence find that safety concerns often take precedence over all else, including learning. Safety issues need to be resolved before a woman can take advantage of learning opportunities. *Unresolved safety issues can be a barrier to learning*.

One way women are working together to take control of their environment, be it neighbourhood, school, university, community centre or workplace, is through a safety audit. This useful tool can be used by women or by groups of women and men; it takes time, but it costs little money. The information here is adapted from the *Women's Safety Audit Guide*, put out by METRAC, Toronto's Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children. For more information, or to order their booklet, see the reference section of this kit.

What is a Safety Audit?

A safety audit is a detailed evaluation of your physical environment. The goal of a safety audit is to reduce the opportunity for sexual assaults and harassment and to make places safe for everyone. A place which discourages sexual assault will also lower the chance of other crime. Look at a place that bothers you and note any problems: What's the lighting like? Would anyone hear you if you called for help? What improvements would you like to see?

The process of the audit can be used to respond to the most obvious threats to safety such as burned out light bulbs. It can also be used to evaluate policies and practices that contribute to a lack of safety.

A safety audit underlines the fact that women experience and evaluate their space in a different way from men and that, in general, people in positions of power or privilege experience fear differently. The environment is experienced differently according to a person's ethnicity, race, class, age, ability and sexuality. In the process of an audit, it is essential that no woman's fear be trivialized or ignored.

METRAC's helpful booklet has a list of questions you might want to use in your safety audit. It also details the practical aspects of organizing an audit. METRAC suggests you do a preliminary survey to discover what is most pressing in the eyes of other women who work, live or study where you do. Preliminary questions could include:

- How safe do you feel in your building/on the street/waiting for the bus?
- Have you limited what you do because you don't feel safe?
- Have you ever felt unsafe, or at risk of sexual assault in this area?

- List five specific places where you feel most unsafe.
- What would make you feel safer?

METRAC stresses that the audit group should reflect the needs of the women in the entire community. While it may not be possible to have a representative of every group on an audit committee of 3 to 7 women, try to be aware of the points of view of women who might be: using a wheelchair; hearing or visually impaired; mentally challenged; very young or old; poor; lesbian; shift workers; travelling with young children; carrying parcels; members of a minority culture; unable to read; not familiar with English or French. Women who have experienced physical violence perceive safety differently from whose who have not; their concerns must be taken into account.

Safety audits can also be used to look at programs or policies. Are there practices in your literacy program that make women feel unsafe? Are there books or leaflets that use sexist or racist language or make assumptions about people based solely on gender, race or sexual orientation? These books might make some women feel threatened.

Do you trust the people you would have to go to for help if you had been sexually assaulted? Would they be sensitive to your needs? Is there a safe place, such as a woman's centre where you can go if you need to be alone or to talk to someone? Safety audits give those who participate a sense of control. The results can be used to support the need for changes that you feel are necessary to your environment.

Auditing Relationships

Just as we can evaluate or audit our physical environment, we can audit our emotional environment. Personal relationships form part of our emotional environment. METRAC describes how to audit both casual and intimate relationships. This information is adapted from their booklet. You may want to audit relationships with acquaintances or with people you are with in an education program.

- Is there a man at work or in a class who is bothersome? Do you always feel uncomfortable having to walk past a particular man or group of men or pin-ups of naked women in a hallway, classroom or workshop? Most women are assaulted by men they either know or are acquainted with. It is therefore important for us to pay attention to people around us. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.
- Sometimes we can't put our finger on why we feel uncomfortable with men we know. Pay attention to your gut reaction--there is likely a good reason for it. You may be experiencing, or be at risk of, abuse.
- It is important to recognize a situation which puts you at risk, so don't ignore your intuition. You might regret it later.

Women in some education programs have worked together to make their place of learning safer for themselves and other women. Two such groups of women tell about their experiences in *Listen to Women in Literacy*; published by CCLOW.

You might want to look at the relationships in your personal life. While METRAC's booklet focuses on male-female relationships, you might want to audit your relationships with other women as well. For instance, lesbians can be in an abusive partnership or may face abuse from other women. If you wish to audit a relationship with another woman, re-phrase the METRAC questions.

METRAC suggests questions you may want to pose. "If something seems wrong in your relationship, it might have to do with abuse. You can audit your relationships for danger signs just as you would audit a place. Some of the signs which should warn you of danger, especially with men you are close to, are listed below:

Do any of the following statements apply to him?

- He is very jealous and doesn't want you to talk to other men.
- He criticizes your women friends and wants you to stop seeing them.
- He wants to know where you are and who you are with all the time.
- He tries to control your contacts with family members.
- He often criticizes what you wear.
- He usually criticizes what you do and say.

If they do, then he is trying to control your activities and who you see and talk to. If he succeeds, you will be much more dependent on him.

- He tells people about things you did or said that are embarrassing and makes you feel stupid.
- He blames you for things that go wrong for him.
- He makes jokes which put you and other women down.
- He calls you stupid, lazy, fat, ugly, a slut, or other things that make you feel bad.

If any of these statement apply to him, he is putting you down and making you feel less confident and in control.

- He likes to drive fast or do dangerous things to scare you.
- He gets carried away when you are playing and hurts you, or holds you down to make you feel helpless and humiliated, and give in.

- He becomes angry or violent when he drinks or uses drugs.
- He makes threats about hitting you, hurting your friends, your pets, or members of your family if you don't do what he wants.
- He threatens to leave you or kill himself if you don't obey him.
- He forces you to do sexual things that you don't want to do--by threatening or physical force.
- He becomes very angry about small, unimportant things.
- He won't express his feelings when asked and then he blows up.
- He hits you--he may be sorry afterwards, but he hits you.

If he does any of these things, he is threatening you and in some cases using physical violence.

Relationships with Teachers

The relationship between a woman and her teacher may be a problem that confronts a woman in a formal learning program. Because teachers are traditionally in positions of authority, some teachers, especially those who teach in hierarchical or patriarchal institutions, may see their use of power as normal. For a woman learner, this power may lead to abuse and violence; it may reinforce negative feelings or experiences from her personal life; it may create a barrier to learning.

Examine your relationship with your teachers or tutors. Has a teacher or tutor ever:

- told sexist jokes? This may happen more often in courses that are considered "male," such as science, math or trades. Some teachers do this deliberately, some simply do not see how such behaviour affects their female, and some of their male, students.
- offered a good grade or preference in exchange for sex? It may be difficult for a woman to say no, especially if she needs a good grade for a degree or certificate.
- showed graphics in classes, laboratories or shops that make women feel uncomfortable? Some teachers show slides that are sexist or racist to "get attention"; others have pin-ups in their office or shop.
- made you read things that you know are racist, sexist, homophobic? It is legitimate to ask students to read materials that are racist, sexist or homophobic and then use the reading to examine issues raised by the materials. However, it is not right to treat the racism, sexism or homophobia as proper ways to act or to use the material to put down or make fun of students in the program.
- taught racism, sexism or homophobia? All of these behaviours are forms of violence.

If you have experienced any of these in a learning situation, you are being mistreated. Talk to someone else about what you experience. You may find that this teacher, tutor or administrator has a history of this behaviour. File a complaint about what happened to you. You and other women and some men may be able to do something about this person's behaviour. Don't assume that all men are sexist, many are also uncomfortable with violence.

Workshop Guidelines

As used by CCLOW in an Isolating the Barriers Workshop for staff at Pine Grove Correctional Centre

The following are basic guidelines to develop and maintain a learning atmosphere of safety and trust.

1. You may experience this workshop in a variety of ways. You may feel angry, sad, panicky, bored, pain, or nothing at all. Whatever you feel is okay. It's okay to cry, be angry, to laugh, to swear or to ask for a hug. We ask that you respect what others are experiencing and not pass judgement. There is not a wrong way to feel.

2. We ask that you respect the confidentiality of others. If you wish to later discuss something someone has shared, please discuss it with the person who shared that information, rather than discussing it with other workshop participants.

3. Please do not "cross-talk" by interrupting someone who is sharing information. Please do not provide verbal feedback or advice unless it is requested. If you would like verbal feedback about something you have said, please feel free to ask for it.

4. No touching unless it is requested.

5. You are not required to share information, opinions, or feelings unless you wish to. If you are asked to contribute and do not feel comfortable, please say so. Please do not feel you need to explain yourself.

6. To respect others attending this workshop, please arrive on time following breaks.

7. During the day, periodically check out how you are feeling and ask yourself what you need. If you need to talk with someone, the safe worker is available throughout the day. If you need some time out by yourself or need to leave, please let the safe worker know your plans. We need to know that everyone is okay.

YOUR BILL OF RIGHTS

To be treated with respect

To have and express your own feelings and opinions

To be listened to and taken seriously

To set your own priorities

To say no without feeling guilty

To ask for what you want

To make mistakes

Each right has a complementary responsibility

A Guide to Survivor's Language

Blocking out

Blocking out is a coping skill that prevents a woman from gaining full or partial memory of traumatic experience. A woman may have blocked out (or can't remember) large parts of her life.

Body Memory

This is re-experienced body sensation and/or pain originally associated with the trauma. The body will always remember what was done to it.

Boundaries

Because her private space was violated, a survivor has to learn that she does have the right to establish boundaries about where and when people can touch her.

Denial

A survivor may resist accepting the reality of the traumatic event; it feel safer to not believe. Denial is a way to cope with memories. ("There's no way this could have happened to me. I must be crazy.")

Flashback

A flashback is an intrusive recalling of a traumatic event(s). It can be experienced by visualizing the event or moment and feeling numb or detached. An event can be re-experienced emotionally, with or without memory of the event. Flashbacks can include "body memories."

Healing

To heal, a survivor must re-live the feelings and pain she was unable to feel at the time of abuse. Healing can be long and highly traumatic as a woman attempts to integrate the fragmented parts of herself. "You can't heal what you can't feel."

Multiple

This is a person who has survived and coped by developing , multiple personalities (MPD). It is a form, or level, of dissociation. Some women may notice severe and rapid mood swings, loss of time, changes with vision, headaches and other symptoms, although those these symptoms alone do not define MPD.

Numbed Out

This means a person is unable to feel anything.

Panic Attack

A panic attack is feeling out of control; a woman may feel like she may faint or die. She learns how to breath deeply and work her way through an attack.

RA

RA is ritual abuse. A woman may refer to herself as being RA or an RA survivor.

Safety

In order to heal, a survivor needs to find or create a safe place or space. It may be a physical space or a place imaged, possibly through meditation.

Spacing Out

In this situation, a woman dissociates herself; she is not able to concentrate, she is not grounded in the present. She may not be able to feel, emotionally.

Self-injury

A woman injures herself in order to convert deeply rooted emotional pain into more manageable physical pain.

Survivor

A survivor is a person who has been victimized by violence, though it usually refers to sexual abuse and violence. It is a word used to acknowledge that one has survived abuse and is not a victim. In time, a woman learns that she is not bad, and that what happened to her was not her fault.

Trigger

A trigger can be a sound, sight, touch, smell or feeling which reminds a woman of a traumatic experience. She may respond by spacing out, numbing out, going into denial or going into a fight or flight response. It may initiate an anxiety attack, flashback and/or body memory. A woman may or may not be aware of the trigger or why she is reacting to it the way she does.

Developed by New Hope, a self-help group for adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse and ritual abuse in Saskatoon.

Some of the Faces of Abuse

Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse
Pushing Shoving Hitting Throwing Punching Grabbing Pinching Burning Using a Weapon Choking Tying up Restraining Kicking Slapping Pulling hair	Forcing her to have sex at times, in ways, or in places which are against her will Preventing her from sleeping Forcing her to view or mimic pornography Interrupting her sleep Having or flaunting an affair Withholding sex Ignoring her sexual needs or desires

Psychological Abuse	Financial Abuse
Threats, intimidating behaviour Isolating her Name calling Being overly critical Defining her reality, including her motivations and emotions Withholding information Controlling her space Possessiveness, jealousy	Controlling her access to money Forcing her to stay within an unrealistic budget Having her account for every cent spent Prohibiting her from obtaining paid work

Accusing her of infidelity Controlling her time Controlling access to non-monetary resources (ie care, child care) Threats of suicide if she leaves Putting down her friends, family Forcing her to engage in degrading acts Destroying her belongings	

Chart used by CCLOW at Isolating the Barriers Workshop in Whitehore, Yukon.

Resource List

Print Materials

Women and Violence--General

Almack, Shirley. *Street Mother*. Garlic Press, 1993.

Bass, Ellen and Laura Davis. *The Courage to Heal: A guide for women survivors of child sexual abuse.* New York: Perennial Library, 1988.

Beat the Street Women's Committee. *Recipes for Political Action*. Order from: Beat the Street, 290 Jarvis Street, Toronto, ON, M5B 2C5, phone 416-979-3361, fax 416-979- 1993.

Buberman, Connie and Margie Wolfe, eds. *No Safe Place: Violence Against Women and Children.* Toronto: Women's Press, 1985.

Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. *Changing the Landscape: Ending Violence--Achieving Equality*. Final Report. Executive Summary. Ottawa: Minister of Supplies and Services, 1993.

Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. *The Community Kit*. Ottawa: Minister of Supplies and Services, 1993. This is a workbook that asks you to look at various aspects of your community, including schools and other places of learning.

Community Action on Violence Against Women, YWCA of/du Canada. *There's No Excuse for Abuse.* 80 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1G6; phone 416- 593-9886; fax 416-971-8084.

Cumberland County Transition House Association. *Not the Way to Love: Violence Against Young Women in Dating Relationships*. Amherst, NS, 1992.

Ellis, Megan and Women Against Violence Against Women. *Surviving Procedures After a Sexual Assault*. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1988.

Family Violence Prevention Project. *A Handbook for the Prevention of Family Violence*. Hamilton: Seldon Printing, 1990.

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Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation. *Changing the Landscape:Focus on the School*. Saskatoon: STF, 1993.

Literacy Programs

The first three works describe the research and the results from a CCLOW project on woman-positive literacy work. There is also material written by literacy students in the various programs that participated in the research project. To order, contact: CCLOW, 47 Main Street, Toronto, ON, M4E 2V6, phone 416-699-1909, fax 416-699-2145.

Atkinson, Tannis with Frances Ennis and Betty-Ann Lloyd. *Listen to Women in Literacy: The power of woman-positive literacy work.* Toronto: CCLOW, 1994.

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METRAC and Council of Ontario Universities Committee on the Status of Women. *Women's Campus Safety Audit Guide.*

For more information or to order either of these books, contact METRAC at: 158 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON, M5R 2Y8, phone 416-392-3135, fax 416-392-3136.

First Nations Women

Community Holistic Circle Healing. Available from Hollow Water First Nation, Wanipigow, Manitoba, ROE 2EO, 204-363-7426.

Native Women's Association of Canada. *Voices of Aboriginal Women: Aboriginal Women Speak Out About Violence*. Ottawa: 1991. For more information contact: Native Women's Association of Canada, 9 Melrose Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 1T8, 613- 722-3033.

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Immigrant Women and Visible Minority Women

Developing an Anti-Racist Action Plan. Cross Cultural Communications Centre, 2909 Dundas Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M6P 1Z1 , 416-760-7855.

Jenkinson, Joan. Let Me Tell You: *Language Rights for Immigrant* Women. Toronto: Community Legal Education Ontario, n.d.

Like a Winged Bird: A Tribute to the Survival and Courage of Women who are Abused and Who Speak Neither English or French. Family Violence Prevention Division, Department of Hearth. Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1B5, 1-800-561-5643.

Maart, Rozena. *Violence Against Women of Colour*. Ottawa: The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993.

National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women. 251 Bank Street, Suite 506, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1X3, 613-232-0689.

Rafiq, Fauzia, ed. Towards Equal Access: *A Handbook for Service Providers Working with Immigrant Women Survivors of Wife Assault.* 1991. Available from: Education Wife Assault, 427 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1 X7, 416-968-3422.

Shin, Maria and Michele Kerisit. *Violence Against Immigrant and Racial Minority Women: Speaking with Our Voice, Organizing from our Experience*. National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women, 1992.

Wekbe, Kathy. Violence Against Immigrant Women and Children. Vancouver: Vancouver Rape Crisis Centre, 1985.

Rural Women

Naomi Society for Victims of Family Violence. *A Holistic Response to the Victims of Family Violence in a Rural Environment.* Antigonish, NS, 1990.

Jennifer Watts. *Cultivating our Rural Communities: Farm Women Organizing.* Saskatoon: Oxfam and National Farmers Union, 1990.

Differently-Abled Women

DisAbled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN), 658 Danforth Avenue, Suite 203, Toronto, Ontario, M4J 1L1, 416-406-1080; 416-406-1081 (TDD).

Doucette, Joanne. *Violent Acts Against Disabled Women*. Toronto: DisAbled Women's Network, 1987.

Masuda, Shirley with Jillian Ridington. *Meeting Our Needs: Access Manual for Transition Houses.* DAWN Canada, June 1990.

McPherson, Cathy. "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Violence Against Women with Disabilities," *Canadian Women's Studies Journal*. vol. 11, no. 4 (Summer 1991).

Ridington, Jillian. *Beating the Odds: Violence and Women with Disabilities*. Toronto: DisAbled Women's Network, 1989.

Lesbian Women

Garber, Linda, ed. Tilting the Tower. New York: Routledge. This book looks at the status of lesbians in education and has strategies for including lesbian experience in the curriculum.

Human Sexuality Program, Toronto Board of Education. *Suggestions for Teachers Working with Children Whose Parents are Lesbian or Gay* (working title). Forthcoming from the Human Sexuality Program, Student Support Services, Toronto Board of Education, 155 College Street, Toronto, ON, M5T 1P6, 416-397-3755, fax 416-397- 3758.

London Battered Women's Advocacy Centre. Confronting Lesbian Battering. Order from Centre at 69 Wellington Street; London, ON, N6B 2K4

Women of Courage and Outward Bound

For more information about the Women of Courage Program, please contact The Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School, 150 Laird Drive, Suite 302, Toronto, Ontario, M4G 3V7 or call toll-free at 1-800-268-7329.

The Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School Instructor's Handbook. June 1991.

Goldman, Ruth. "Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School and the Women of Courage Program" in *Using Wilderness: Essays in the Evolution of Youth Camping in Ontario.* ed. B Hodgins and B Dodge. Peterborough, Ont: The Frost Centre for Canadian Heritage and Development Studies, Trent University, 1992.

"The Women of Courage Program," Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School Brochure, 1992.

Life Writing

Bass, Ellen and Louise Thornton. *I Never Told Anyone: Writing by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*. Harper Perennial, 1991.

Gold, Joseph. Read for Your Life: *Literature as a Support System*. Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1990.

Gunnars, Kristjana. *The Substance of Forgetting*. Red Deer Alberta: Red Deer College Press, 1992.

Gunnars, Kristjana. *Zero Hour* Red Deer College Press, 1991.

Kadar, Marlene. *Essays on Life Writing.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

VIDEO MATERIALS

It is important to preview video materials that deal with violence, abuse or other issues that may trigger memories in a survivor. This is crucial, even if you are not aware of any survivors in your class. You should also arrange to have a counsellor or safe worker available, so that any trauma or pain can be dealt with immediately.

You might also want to consider whether or not you need to show some videos to a single sex audience. This may make discussion about the issues raised in the video safer for the women watching and lead to more productive talk.

The National Film Board of Canada publishes several catalogues that focus on women's issues, including violence. You can get copies from your nearest NFB office. Catalogues of particular interest include:

The Family Violence Audio-Visual Catalogue. Produced by Health and Welfare Canada for the NFB and available from the NFB.

Beyond the Image. A guide to films about women's issues.

Films of interest include:

Bridging the River Silence. A film about wife abuse and the legal protocols in Renfrew County. Available from the NFB.

Gay and Lesbian Video Collection. This collection of 10 videos is available from the NFB.

The Ground Shook Beneath Her. A video about how immigrant women can deal with violence in their homes. Available from Indo-Canadian Women's

Association; Millwoods Centre for Immigrants, 2024 57th Street, Suite 106, Edmonton, Alberta, T6L 2Z3, phone 403-490-0477.

A Room Full of Men. (48 minutes) Heartland Motion Pictures. This video examines a group of men who have abused their female partners. It demonstrates that violence is more than bruises and beatings. It has important messages about the signs of an abusive partner and shows how abuse typically progresses in a relationship, inside or outside marriage.

Sandra's Garden. Documents one woman's journey to healing from sexual abuse. NFB.

Still Killing Us Softly. (30 minutes) Kinetic Inc. Available from NFB. The film looks at the negative impact advertising has on women. It is a useful catalyst for discussion of gender stereotyping and helps viewers understand why violence is directed toward women. It also demonstrates how women are objectified by advertisers.

Time to Heal. A project of the PEl Services for Adult Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault, distributed by Atlantic Independent Media, Box 1647, Station M, Halifax, NS, B3J 2Z1.

When Love Hurts. (17 minutes) Available from the NFB. This video has a dramatization of physical, sexual and emotional abuse among dating couples. It was made for use in high school and college classrooms, youth groups, shelters, rape crisis centres, groups homes, teacher in-service programs.

Without Fear. A video and study guide about violence against women. NFB.

Other publications by CCLOW:

Women's Education des femmes
a feminist connection to the world of learning and education, published quarterly

Decade of Promise: An Assessment of Canadian Women's Status in Education, Training, and Employment 1976-1985 (1986)

Roadblocks to Women's Learning: Issues for Advocacy (1987)

Telling Our Stories Our Way: A guide to good Canadian materials for women learning to read (1990)

Discovering the Strength of our Voices: Women and Literacy Programs (1991)

The Power of Woman-Positive Literacy Work (1994)

Women in Literacy Speak (1994)

Listen to Women in Literacy (1994)

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women
47 Main Street, Toronto, Ontario M4E 2V6 (416) 699-1909
fax (416) 699-2145

Isolating the Barriers and Strategies for Prevention