

LearningNetwork



The Network Comes to Life

OUR PURPOSE is to increase the effectiveness and reach of public education and professional training materials developed to address violence against women (VAW).

OUR ROOTS are based in the work and innovation of the Domestic Violence Advisory Council (DVAC). In the DVAC's 2009 report, they recommended the development of a Learning Network. [Learn more.](#)

OUR MANDATE is to cover the continuum of violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence, sexual harassment and stalking, and the effects of exposure to domestic violence on children.

The Learning Network will function primarily in English and we will explore ways to share research, information and promising practices with the French Language Training Institute on Violence Against Women.

We will ensure that the principles of diversity, equity and accessibility, as well as a strong gender analysis, are evident in all of our work.

OUR WORK will undertake a range of objectives and activities. For instance, we will

- identify gaps, emerging issues and best practices on VAW prevention;
- research, collect and promote effective public education and professional training materials, resources, and methods for those working on issues of VAW;
- research, collect and promote models for evaluation of training and public education on issues of VAW;
- provide leadership in the development and maintenance of a network of professionals working to improve training and public education on the prevention of VAW;
- enhance and maintain an electronic clearinghouse where information and resources on effective training and public education initiatives are posted in a user-friendly and accessible format;
- work with the VAW experts to develop a lexicon of common VAW terms to use in professional training and public education materials;
- host meetings and events to bring together professionals to identify core competencies and standards of practice, share innovative approaches, develop evaluation frameworks, and identify emerging needs;
- create and disseminate an electronic newsletter four times per year.



"The Learning Network will provide tools and information to improve the quality and consistency of training and public education resources," said Laurel Broten, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. "This will contribute to better services for women and a reduction in violence against women in Ontario."

Your Role

We want the Learning Network to be relevant and useful to everyone working on issues of violence against women. To achieve this goal, we need your input. Help us learn about gaps in information, training or services. Tell us about emerging issues. Let us know about helpful educational resources and tools that you have developed and/or discovered. We welcome your ideas, questions, and comments. Contact us at

vawln@uwo.ca

Facilitate.

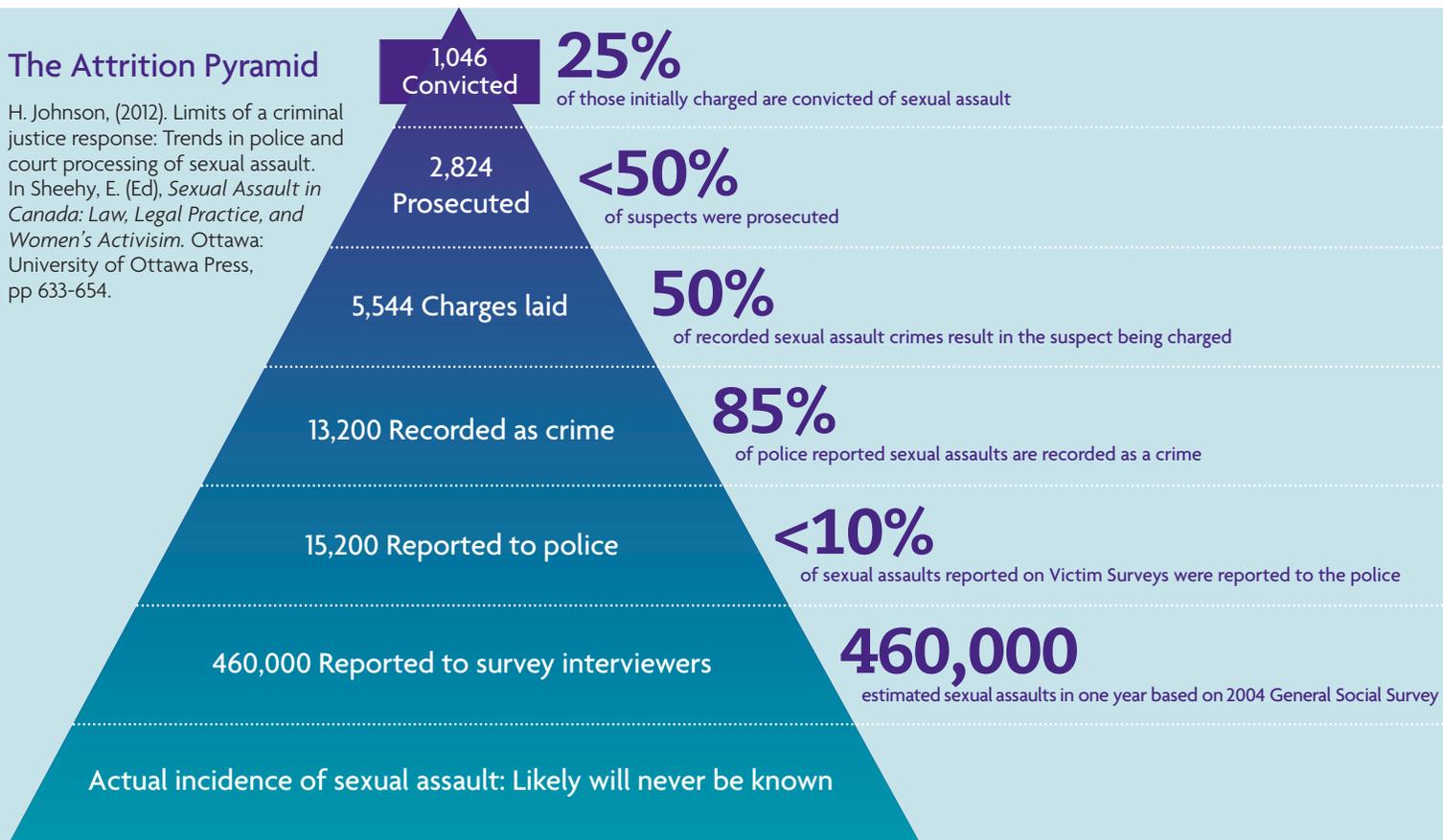
Educate.

Collaborate.

Few Sexual Assaults Lead to Court Convictions

Using data from Statistics Canada, Holly Johnson estimated the conviction rate for sexual assaults reported on victim surveys to be .3% to 1.6%.

[Learn more.](#)



"The value of forensic evidence of sexual assault is often inflated by the general public. Our popular television shows tell us that forensic evidence is everywhere, meaningful and will virtually guarantee a conviction. Folks think that a sexual assault exam will be able to prove that a sexual assault occurred and that when there are no findings that a sexual assault did not occur. In reality, the sexual evidence exam results can at most indicate that sexual contact occurred, it does not prove consent. Moreover, 'the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence' is particularly applicable in cases of sexual assault in the criminal justice system. If there is no evidence of injury or body fluids on a victim then the tendency is to believe that no sexual assault occurred. However, there are many reasons we may not find body fluids in a forensic examination. Perpetrators wear

condoms, perpetrators who have sexual dysfunction during the assault (1 in 3) may not be able to achieve penetration or may not ejaculate, the sexual assault may not have included body fluids (finger penetration or groping). Injury often does not occur or is not observable with sexual assault. A majority of sexual assault is committed by men known to the victim. Nonstranger perpetrators tend to use alcohol, drugs, isolation, physical presence and instrumental violence to overcome intended victims (Lisak). In other words, a perpetrator coerces just enough to frighten her into acquiescing to his sexual demands, so there are few, if any, injuries. They do this deliberately and then insist that she consented and it was a misunderstanding (Lisak). These cases are very difficult to prosecute successfully. The phrase 'she said/he said' is often used to describe

them. Essentially, there are no witnesses other than the victim witness and her account differs from his. Defense strategies focus on discrediting the only witness/the victim. Its time to start talking about 'enthusiastic consent' not just consent."

— **Deidre Bainbridge**, NP-PHC, BScN (hons.), PHCNP, SANE-A Nurse Practitioner, Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Care Centre, Adjunct Lecturer, Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto, Women's College Hospital

Challenging Misconceptions

Systemic Factors create Vulnerabilities for Aboriginal Women

Sexual and other forms of violence in the lives of Aboriginal women are compounded by systemic and institutionalized racism as well as the effects of historical violence, such as residential schools, the Indian Act, and other legacies of colonization. The resulting impacts have included the breakdown of family and community structures, intergenerational trauma, lack of opportunity for education and employment, and economic deprivation. These realities have created vulnerabilities that are exploited by perpetrators and have “pushed women into exploitive industries, particularly in the sex trade.”

[Learn more:](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. \(2012\). Interim report.](#)

[Barnett, L. \(2008\). Trafficking in Persons, Library of Parliament, Canada.](#)

Facts

Sexual violence...

- is gender-based violence
- the vast majority of perpetrators are men
- the vast majority of victims/survivors are women
- uses power and control over a victim/survivor
- is not about love, lust, or unsatisfied sexual desire
- is rooted in gender inequalities and other systems of oppression
- is best understood within a human rights framework

Victims/survivors of sexual assault most often know the perpetrator.

Consent means saying YES to sexual activity. Myths distort the meaning of consent to be about a woman saying “no”.

No behaviour or attire justifies sexual violence.

Sexual assault is one of the most under-reported crimes.

The number of false reports for sexual assault is consistent with the number of false reports for other crimes.

[Learn more.](#)

34%	of adults in the UK agreed a woman is partially or completely responsible for a sexual assault if she behaves in a flirtatious manner
40%	of men in Alberta said women who dress revealingly risk being raped
25-35%	of population are estimated to endorse rape myths
30%	of adults in the UK agreed a woman is partially or completely responsible for a sexual assault if she was intoxicated
37%	of adults in UK agreed a woman is partially or completely responsible for a sexual assault if she does not say “no” clearly
1/3	of Australian adults were fairly certain or suspected women lie about rape

Sexual Assault and Disabled Women Ten Years after Jane Doe

In this 2011 paper, Fran Odette writes about the lived experience of disabled women who are sexually assaulted. Topics addressed in the paper include: the impacts of linguistic constructs in shaping practice around disability; the mythology that denies disabled women access to their own identity and sexuality and contributes to the sexual assault of disabled women; and the impediments to equality for disabled women who have been sexually assaulted. She examines how gaps and limitations in research have hindered policy development, legal responses, and feminist community-based services in responding to the lived experience of disabled women.

[Learn more.](#)

“The lived experience of disabled women who are sexually assaulted is that when such crimes are reported to authorities, our credibility is called into question, particularly those of us who live with the label of intellectual impairment, who have been psychiatrized, or who have learning differences.”

“Indeed, the situation becomes much worse for disabled women when charges are unfounded by police or unproven in court. These negative consequences can in turn result in loss of caregivers, institutionalization, forced sterilization, unwanted pregnancy, racism, sexism, deportation, further sexual assaults, and even death.”



– Fran Odette
Program Manager, Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women’s Program
Springtide Resources

Promising Practices

Respond supportively when women disclose sexual violence:

- Treat the victim/survivor with dignity and respect
- Engage in active listening
- Provide emotional support to the victim/survivor such as reassurance, belief, compassion and normalizing her experience
- Allow the victim/survivor to have control over her disclosure (e.g., what to disclose; how much to disclose)
- Be knowledgeable on what sexual violence is, its consequences for survivors, and what constitutes a supportive response
- Provide victims/survivors with information and links to resources
- Discuss confidentiality and any limitations
- Be culturally sensitive and aware of potential barriers to disclosure associated with difference

Key best practices for effective sexual violence public education campaigns

Dr. Lori Haskell's best practices report highlights what effective social marketing brings to sexual violence public education campaigns. An accompanying checklist identifies some key elements of effective sexual violence public education campaigns: framing the issue; effective social marketing; applying social norms theory; engaging bystanders; campaign message considerations; identifying a campaign messenger. Elements for consideration in identifying best practices and less effective approaches are included. The report and the checklist are available at www.sexualviolenceforum.ca

Innovative Public Education Campaigns

Sixteen sexual violence campaigns were presented at the June 2011 forum: Addressing Sexual Violence: Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives. To learn more about each campaign go to www.sexualviolenceforum.ca and click on presentations.



Draw-The-Line

Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF) and the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC) have produced a dynamic sexual violence prevention campaign: Draw-The-Line.ca. This interactive campaign aims to engage Ontarians in a dialogue about sexual violence. The campaign challenges common myths about sexual violence and equips bystanders with information on how to intervene safely and effectively.

Learn more: www.draw-the-line.ca



Who are you?

The video from the New Zealand public education campaign demonstrates how bystanders – including bartenders, door men and friends – can be involved in the prevention of sexual assault. Check it out! <http://www.whoareyou.co.nz/>

Emerging Directions

Learning from a Tragedy

On March 26, 2010, a domestic violence (DV) incident resulted in the death of OPP Constable Vu Pham and Mr. Fred Preston. These fatalities were the subject of a coroner's inquest held in London during the spring of 2012.

An overview of the tragedy follows: Barbara Preston, after suffering years of abuse, left her husband, Fred Preston. During the separation process, Ms. Preston informed Mr. Preston of her relationship with another man. Mr. Preston attacked her and threatened to kill her, himself or someone she loved, if she did not reconcile with him. Ms. Preston initially agreed to get back together and then sought refuge in a women's shelter. She told her family about Mr. Preston's threats. In an attempt to further threaten Ms. Preston and locate her whereabouts, Mr. Preston drove to the house of Ms. Preston's sister. A concerned family member called the police. OPP Constable Vu Pham and his partner Constable Dell Mercey responded to the call. They pulled Mr. Preston over while he was driving on a nearby highway. Mr. Preston got out of his truck and fatally shot Constable Pham. Subsequently, Constable Mercey shot Mr. Preston and he later died in the hospital.

On April 13, 2012, the jury in the coroner's inquest delivered 15 recommendations ranging from the importance of education/training to change in government policies. Recommendations to the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ontario Women's Directorate were as follows:

Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)

- Adopt or develop a standardized risk assessment/structured interview for intake processes for all interval and transition houses in Ontario offering services to abused women.
- Ensure domestic violence training is given to all full and part-time staff at interval and transition houses in Ontario offering services to abused women.
- Amend policy for interval and transition houses in Ontario offering services to abused women to release information to police in any instance of a threat to an individual. This would include any family member of the client, spouse, shelter employees, friends, or any other groups associated with the client.
- All interval and transition houses in Ontario offering services to abused women are strongly encouraged to share best-practices.

Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD)

- Continue to support and fund public education about domestic violence risks, including Public Service Announcements (PSA) with the intent of directing persons at risk to appropriate sources of help. An example of PSAs would be the elder abuse pieces.
- Research and investigate barriers which prevent non-victim members from reporting domestic abuse within families.

Province of Ontario has been a leader in addressing domestic violence for women and children.

This is what Ms. Turpel-Lafond concluded in her report examining the lives and deaths of three B.C. children killed by their father. In her analysis and recommendations, she wrote:

"The Ontario approach was proactive. It focused on preventing violence, and promoted broad-based interventions across sectors such as health care, education, justice, business, and faith groups. It emphasized improvements in both the justice and community services sector and targeted strategies to meet the diverse needs of the population. The principles governing the plan included safety, equality, public leadership, shared responsibility, personal accountability of the abuser, diversity and equity of access, holistic response, balanced approaches and measurable progress over time."

— Mary-Ellen Turpel-Lafond

Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon – Make Their Voices Heard Now, March 2012

Do you work in a violence against women organization and want to learn more about risk assessment and safety?

Visit the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) website and click on e-learning risk assessment. OAITH has developed an online Risk Assessment for VAW Organizations: An E-Learning Workshop. This e-learning opportunity contains four modules:

- Feminist Analysis of Risk and Risk Assessment – Module 1;
- A Justice System Perspective of Risk Assessment Tools – Module 2;
- Risk Assessment in Partnership with Women – Module 3; and
- Safety and Advocacy Plans – Module 4.

After you have completed all modules, you can print a certificate of completion.

<http://www.oaith.ca/resources/risk-assessment-e-learning.html>



Coming Soon

Threat Assessment/Risk Management training is being developed to meet the knowledge and skill development needs of professionals and service providers in the health, social services and education sectors. The new online curriculum will focus on

- collaborative relationships;
- addressing confidentiality issues;
- assessing risk and providing support to women from marginalized communities;
- monitoring and intervening in high risk cases.



Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children

Learning from Each Other

Lessons Learned from Knowledge Exchange Workshop on Domestic Violence training

In June 2011, the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children (CREVAWC) brought together the developers and deliverers of Domestic Violence Training initiatives in Ontario that had been funded through the Ontario Women's Directorate (OWD), as well as other key stakeholders.

The overall purpose for the meeting was to promote knowledge exchange and planning for domestic violence (DV) training. Participants shared best practices. Lessons learned included:

1. Domestic Violence training is being done by a diversity of groups to respond to specific audiences.
2. Principles of adult education should be used in the development and delivery of Domestic Violence training.
3. Develop the training with the trainee in mind so that the content is grounded and credible to the learners.
4. Identify core competencies/outcomes that inform the framework or knowledge base for the training.
5. Cultural competency is a core requirement.
6. The design of the training emerges out of the core competencies/outcomes.
7. The design of the training needs to be based on the audience/learners.
8. Develop strategies to get the maximum uptake on the training. Mandatory training or training that is incorporated into core curriculums not only legitimizes the training, it makes it more sustainable.
9. Develop a communication strategy for the training that will appeal and lend credibility to the training.
10. Prepare a number of strategies for delivering the training.
11. Sustainability is a weak area for many training initiatives.
12. Follow-up on training needs to be better developed.
13. Program developers should always respond to the unintended consequences of training.
14. Cross-sectoral collaboration is a highly effective way to develop and deliver training.

[Learn more.](#)



Access brief videos of the leads of 10 distinct training initiatives featured at the June 2011 Knowledge Exchange. You will hear what the training focused on and who it was designed to benefit, its impact, what was learned, and commentary about the sustainability of the training programs.

[Learn more.](#)

Cross-Sectoral Training enhances learning and challenges framework shaped by myths

“The Cross-Sectoral Training on Sexual Violence Prosecutions highlighted the importance of sharing knowledge amongst professionals involved with victims of sexual violence. The prosecution of these difficult cases is enhanced by a deeper appreciation of the complexity of these crimes; a better understanding of the behaviour of both victims and offenders assists in approaching these cases generally, and a more complete knowledge of the evidence available assists in putting forward individual cases. The Training session provided me with valuable information, in particular about non-stranger offences, that will allow me to take future cases out of the dominant framework shaped by the rape myths, into one more in line with the reality of these offences.”

— **Laurence Lustman**

Counsel, Criminal Law Policy Participant, Cross-Sectoral Training on Sexual Violence Prosecutions, March 29 and 30, 2012, Toronto, Ontario



In the Field

12 Regions in Ontario Implement Woman Abuse/Trauma-Informed Services and Screening for Abuse/Trauma in Multiple Sectors

“As someone who has been a service provider and leader within the mental health system for more than 25 years, I know from first-hand experience that the woman abuse screening protocol and practices are – bottom line – saving women’s lives.” Susan Macphail, My Sisters’ Place, WOTCH Community Mental Health Services, London.

Through the Ontario Woman Abuse Screening Project, in twelve regions across Ontario more than 150 woman abuse, sexual assault, mental health and addiction agencies, as well as women with lived experience, are collaborating to ensure that women receive woman abuse/sexual assault/trauma-informed services wherever they go in our sectors. Women accessing addiction and mental health services are being routinely screened for all forms of abuse and trauma.

“We are moving forward to change the way services think and act in our community in our work with women with complex, concurrent issues in their lives.” (Colleen Purdon, Grey Bruce Violence Prevention Coordinating Committee.) Breaking out of the ‘working in silos’ approach to providing services allows us to “treat the woman as a ‘whole person’ so there are no wrong doors, and women are supported and connected to the services they need. This promotes earlier interventions and

prevention.” This was the message from the women with lived experience from HER Grey Bruce (Hope-Equality-Respect) who have helped to guide the initiative. Our collaborative work is resulting in transformative systemic changes and supporting the development of innovative, coordinated services for abused women with mental health and/or addiction issues. We believe that abuse/trauma-informed services and screening are wise/best practices that should be adopted throughout Ontario.

Our cross-sectoral trainings are increasing capacity to provide services which address the interrelationship of abuse/trauma with mental health and /or substance use issues, and which are culturally sensitive to the needs and history of First Nations/Aboriginal and Francophone women. Those of us in the woman abuse sector are reaching and serving many marginalized women who were not accessing our services before, and increasing our capacity to serve women with mental health and substance use issues.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation funding for our project is in the process of being extended over an additional year due in part to the success of this initiative. So there is an opportunity for your region to join us! If you are interested in your region participating, you could attend our Video/Teleconference

on June 12, 2012 where we are sharing our successes and learnings. If you would like to join us, please contact the Provincial Coordinator at our lead agency, the London Abused Women’s Centre, slcoulter@womanabusescreening.ca and visit our website www.womanabusescreening.ca.

By **Sandra-Lynn Coulter**,
Provincial Coordinator, Ontario Woman Abuse Screening Project



“An amazing woman [with lived experience] described for us that “trauma leaves you raw”. Her powerful words will help each of the mental health, violence / trauma and addiction services in Hamilton better meet the needs of women.”

— **Debbie Bang**
Womankind Addiction Service,
St. Joseph’s Healthcare, Hamilton

New curriculum for women experiencing DV, mental health and substance abuse problems

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that domestic violence is often bound up with other complex and co-occurring issues, in particular mental health and substance use problems. Less is known about these interconnections and how to support women who experience them. With funding from the province of Ontario, Drs. Mason and Toner developed the Making Connections: When Domestic Violence, Mental Health, and Substance Use Problems Co-Occur curriculum to help frontline service providers address these intersections in women. The curriculum is grounded in research literature, informed by the expertise of those working in the field, and reflective of the wisdom of those with lived experience. The curriculum consists of a manual, an accompanying workshop and an online program that provides those working in these three areas with the background information

and concrete tools to help women who experience complex and interconnecting problems. Plans to begin implementation this year are currently under discussion with the province. For those interested in more information about this project, please contact Susan O’Rinn at susan.orinn@wchospital.ca.

Dr. Robin Mason is a researcher in the Violence and Health Research Program, Women’s College Research Institute, Women’s College Hospital and Assistant Professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto. Dr. Brenda Toner is the Co-Head, Social Equity & Health Research, Centre for Addiction & Mental Health and Professor and Head Women’s Mental Health Program, Director, Fellowship Program, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto.



Dr. Robin Mason Receives International Recognition

Dr. Mason was awarded the Excellence in Education Award at the 18th annual conference of the Nursing Network on Violence Against Women International in Charlottesville, Virginia. The recognition was in part the result of Dr. Mason’s work on the ‘Domestic Violence in Clinical Settings’ online curriculum. This award recognizes her many important contributions to educate health-care professionals about how to better support women who are experiencing violence.

From the Network

Meet our Team



Linda Baker

Linda started her full time position as Learning Director on November 21, 2011. She came to the Learning Network from the Centre for Children and Families in the Justices System (formerly the London Family Court Clinic), where she was the Executive Director for 10 years. She brings experience in direct service provision, collaborative project development, resource development—including online curriculum, and facilitation/training. [Learn more.](#)



Anna-Lee Straatman

Anna-Lee has worked for various Victim Services agencies in Southwestern Ontario as a project coordinator and is a volunteer with Victim Services Sarnia Lambton. She was a Community Research Associate with CREVAWC until she assumed the role of centre manager in December 2010. She has conducted more than two hundred interviews with adult survivors of child sexual abuse. [Learn more.](#)



Marcie Campbell

Marcie is a Research Associate at CREVAWC who is working part-time with the Learning Network. Since 2006, Marcie has been the research assistant for the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) of Ontario. Her experience includes working with statistical databases, conducting research reviews on pertinent issues related to domestic violence, and developing reports. [Learn more.](#)



Barbara MacQuarrie

Barb is Community Director at CREVAWC. In this role she consults to and supports the work of the Learning Network. Barb is the provincial coordinator for the Neighbours Friends and Families program and a new campaign regarding elder abuse entitled "It's not right!". She works diligently to educate and train as many as possible about domestic violence and harassment in the workplace. [Learn more.](#)



Peter Jaffe

Peter is the Academic Director at CREVAWC. In this role he consults to and supports the work of the Learning Network. He is the founding chairperson of the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, founding director of the Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System and a founding member of Canada's first Domestic Violence Death Review Committee through the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario. [Learn more.](#)

Resource Group to advise the work of the Learning Network

Resource Group members represent various programs/organizations/networks in Ontario. Together, they bring the wisdom of lived experience of VAW, research skills, and expertise related to public or professional education on VAW issues. Confirmed members include:

Dr. Tope Adefarakan, Womenatthecentre

Saman Ahsan, Girls Action Foundation

Margaret Alexander, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses

Gloria Alvernaz Mulcahy, Ontario Native Women's Association

Mohammed Baobaid, Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration

Sly Castaldi, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

Sandra Lynn Coulter, Ontario Woman Abuse Screening Project

Maureen Etkin, Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse

Esther Enyolu, Women's Multicultural Resource & Counselling Centre of Durham

Kim Gibson

Josée Guindon, French Language Training Institute on Violence Against Women

Wendy Komiotis, METRAC

Dr. Robin Mason, Women's College Hospital

Todd Minerson, White Ribbon Campaign

Lovesun Parent, OCASI

Louise Pitre, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

Marsha Sfeir, Springtide Resources

Nadine Wathen, Faculty of Information & Media Studies, Western University

Representative, My Sister's Place

Vicky Gibson, Ex-officio Member, Ontario Women's Directorate

Funded by:



Coming soon from the Learning Network

- Overcoming Barriers and Enhancing Supportive Responses: The Research on Sexual Violence Against Women. A Resource Document.
- VAW Lexicon
- Report on Evaluating Training Initiatives
- Report on Evaluating Public Education Campaigns

How did we do?

We want to learn from you. What did you think of our first newsletter (format, length, style, content)? What could we change in order to strengthen the newsletter's contribution to meeting the Learning Network's primary goal: to increase the effectiveness and reach of public education and professional training materials? What themes or topics would you like to see us cover in future issues? Please give us your input by completing the brief survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BX5WVZF>