

ABUSE IN A NEW COUNTRY

***“I moved to Canada from South Asia with my husband. When I arrived, I found myself being totally financially dependent on him. I was **emotionally abused** and feeling **degraded, isolated, and humiliated**. I had a degree in Fine Arts in my home country, but my English was broken, making day to day life difficult. In my culture, it is a great sin for a wife to leave her husband and to ask for divorce. But when **he started hitting our children**, I took the decision to **protect my family and flee**.”** - S*

S.’s story is one of the many we hear everyday from immigrant and refugee women at Discovery House. Cultural differences, language barriers and isolation place many immigrant women at risk of domestic violence in a situation where it is not easy to get help.

“Half of our residential clients are immigrant and refugee women,” said Aliya Manji, Immigrant and Refugee Counsellor at Discovery House. “Their isolation and cultural background makes the process of educating them about abuse more difficult.”

Language represents one of the most important factors in the isolation of these women. Without language skills in either English or French, even a very educated person coming from another country is not able to find a job. We know that women with limited financial resources tend to stay in an abusive relationship longer.

One of the first things that the counsellors do when an immigrant client arrives at Discovery House is to enrol her in an ESL course. When a woman cannot speak English, the feeling of isolation can be overwhelming. The hardship of learning where to go for help is compounded by the difficulty of being understood by the workers of helping organizations.

“We really encourage ESL courses,” said Manji. “Knowledge of the English language is the first step in working toward the client’s short and long-term goals.”

It is important for the client to understand her own legal rights in Canada in her own language. At Discovery House, interpreters are used during counselling sessions and documents from the native country are translated into English whenever needed.

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Community social pressure can be another strain on immigrant women dealing with domestic violence. Many cultures embrace the concept that it is shameful for a woman to leave her partner. An immigrant woman that decides to flee an abusive relationship may be shunned by her local community and find herself in a situation of even more extreme isolation.

"I'd like to mention the case of one of our residential clients," said Manji. "She comes from West Africa and her abuser and her own family are related. Both families got very involved after she left her partner. What she receives from her family is a very contradictory message. She hears that abuse is wrong but also that she shouldn't have left her abuser."

The issues of language, isolation and cultural diversity are also compounded by the fear that leaving their abuser may cause them to lose status in Canada. If the children are born in Canada, and the mother has been sponsored by the abuser to become a landed

immigrant, the fear of being deported back to the country of origin without the children is very real.

"One of our clients is still facing this reality. She could be deported any day, and may have to leave her children behind," said Manji. "It's hard to make the decision to leave your partner when you know that more hardship is waiting for you."

But many immigrant women do take the step to leave an abusive situation, and don't look back. "I had nobody here in Canada. I had a young baby. In my country you have to stay with your husband, even if he plans to kill you. I used to cry everyday. Now I am happy," said a client from Sudan. "Discovery House helped me and my daughter feel safe. They helped me go to school. I am going to school for English. My daughter is in day-care. I have a house. I feel better. Every day I get good news with school, day-care, or housing. I like Canada and Discovery House."

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for your generous donations.

YOUR TIME IS VALUABLE TO US

At Discovery House we strive to provide you with a valuable and enriching volunteering experience, while enhancing the overall provision of services to our clients. Your time and talent is very much appreciated. We are currently looking for volunteers for the following activity:

Discovery House Casino - September 10 and 11, 2009 at Cash Casino

We are thrilled to once again have the opportunity to host a casino and raise funds for operating costs. Casinos require a large amount of volunteers able to commit to 6 hours shifts. Shifts start in the morning and run until the wee hours of the night. With your help we can make it happen! Spread the word, organize a group of friends or co-workers to come and spend the evening with us at Cash Casino and meet other like-minded people who generously donate their time to Discovery House.

Please contact communityrelations@discoveryhouse.ca or call 403.204.6836



CREATING OPTIONS FOR HOMELESS WOMEN WITH CHILDREN

It well known that issues of homelessness and family violence are intertwined. In a recent Canadian study of 59 homeless families, 40 per cent reported family violence as a factor in having to leave their homes.

Discovery House, on behalf of the Calgary Women's Shelter Directors Network, has partnered with CUPS Rapid Exit Program in a project aimed at ending homelessness for abused women and children. The project is part of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness and is funded by the Calgary Homeless Foundation.

The Family Violence Housing First Project (FVHFP) is based on the Housing First model of service delivery currently very successful in the United States. It is based on the principle that the first priority for people experiencing homelessness is permanent housing with the support necessary to sustain that housing.

"Discovery House has taken a lead role in the project, providing management, staff expertise and physical space for the project's offices," said Heather Morley, Project Manager, FVHFP. "This project is giving women in abusive relationships more options to move forward in life, and to find safety and stability."

The first priority is the women's safety, then housing and services. A team of three case managers and two mental health specialists working through Discovery House provides services to women and children that are leaving abusive situations. Services include but are not limited to safety planning, life skills education, and helping clients build capacity to navigate legal, financial, immigration and other systems. Each client is connected to the resources available in her community to help promote integration and stability.

The team has encountered very difficult cases, including client issues with mental illness, substance abuse and with immigrant women as there is a different set of barriers to deal with. But the team is working hard at building capacity for these women, and connecting them to community resources.

"Our goal is to house 75 families by March 2010," said Morley. "At this point we have had an excellent rate of success. Twenty-four families are currently housed."

Whether in residence or the community, women and children in need are benefiting from services and supports that help them to live safer, happier lives.

MONTHLY GIVING

Help us provide shelter, hope and education to women and children fleeing domestic violence, for today and for tomorrow. Monthly giving is simple, efficient and reduces administrative and postage costs. The steady stream of income provides reliable and predictable income which ensures we can continue to provide the programs and services that our clients count on. Your monthly gift can be automatically deducted from your credit card once per month without any hassles. A single receipt will be issued in January or February for tax purposes.

It's easy to join. Simply contact us at:
(403) 204-2641 or e-mail funddev@discoveryhouse.ca.
You can enrol online, by mail, fax or phone.

No matter how small or large your monthly gift is, your support makes a big difference in the lives of the women and children that we serve.

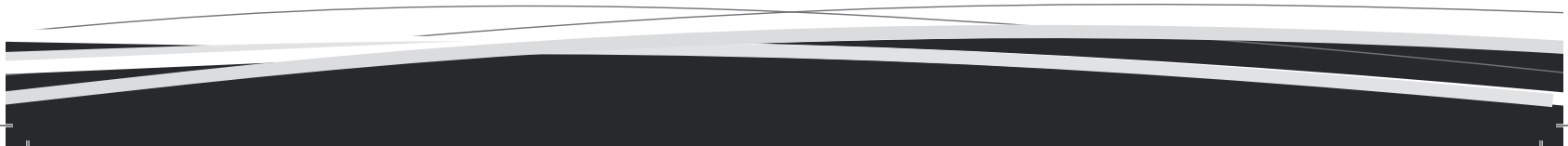
What's more 'special' than your special event?

Make it a fundraiser for Discovery House!

Discovery House has enjoyed the support of many successful events, like the recent *Cranky Boobs* hosted by Allison Sutton and featuring Dr. Patricia Brand. Small or large, your event can make a difference.

Be creative and do what you enjoy. Go for a hike, host a bocce tournament, a BBQ, or a fashion show. Invite your co-workers, friends and family. It is all in support of a great cause and you will have fun doing it.

Contact communityrelations@discoveryhouse.ca or call 403.204.6836. We would be happy to help you with ideas, planning tips, organization, and support.



ANNOUNCING... OUR NEW LOGO!

Discovery House has come along way in the past 29 years. Over the years our knowledge and understanding of domestic violence has increased and we are able to educate and engage the community more actively. Our services have evolved to become individualized for each client, woman and child. Our staff has significant, often specialized education and training.

We are adaptive and innovative in responding to the needs of our clients and the needs of the community. And now it's time to be innovative in our 'look'. We are very pleased to present our new logo – a teardrop, house, and heart which represent the transition that occurs for families from a life of violence to one of safety and happiness. It is the transition from sorrow to joy, fear to strength, poverty to security, and from isolation to belonging.



We can say with confidence this transition does occur for most of our clients. Results of exit surveys show that 94 per cent of clients indicated they were not returning to an abusive relationship. Eighty-nine per cent of clients agreed they knew more about community resources they could access to help provide for their families.

Watch for our new 'look' as we move forward in creating new communication materials and engaging the community in helping us meet our mission, and vision – Our communities are free of family violence.

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