



surrey
women's
centre

The Gift of Healing

ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

While Surrey Women's Centre acknowledges that gender based violence is experienced more by women and gender diverse folks, particularly those who identify as women, our services are open to all survivors. Where references are made to women, including our title, we do not serve women only. If gender based violence is impacting your life, please reach out to us at 604-589-1868.

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PRESIDENT REPORT

Navneet Mann

Dear friends,

On behalf of the board, I want to thank you for your ongoing support of the **Surrey Women's Centre**. Because of your support, SWC served over 17,000 women in the past year. Although this is a lot of women, there are still thousands of women that are in need of support and urgent care; however, due to high caseloads, wait lists, and lack of resources, SWC is unable to meet the growing demand of women in need.

A special thanks to **Christine LaLiberte**, for her generous donation of \$50,000 this year. Because of this donation and an accompanying matching-gift-campaign, SWC will provide legal services to help survivors get legal support through our very own Jane Doe Legal

Clinic. We are extremely grateful for all of your donations that made this service possible. Your support has been vital in helping SWC provide essential services to these women.

Finally, thank you to our remarkable staff who show up every single day with dedication and incredible energy; without you, our work would be impossible. Thank you also to the most compassionate and selfless leader I know, our ED, Shahnaz Rahman - you make us all want to be better and work harder to support women in need, thank you.

Sincerely,
Navneet Mann, LLB, BBA, PCC



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Shahnaz Rahman

Dear friends,

As the pandemic subsides, the one important word that comes to mind is Gratitude, Immense Gratitude for how the vulnerable survivors of violence we serve, and their families were patient, careful and kind to one another during the most stressful times. Gratitude for our amazing front line staff who remained steadfast in increasing safety for vulnerable survivors in the safest way possible. Gratitude to our incredibly dedicated Board members for being empathetic in many ways to support the organization- Gratitude to our amazing donors who stood in solidarity with us in supporting the work of our organization despite the financial uncertainties.

Heartfelt Gratitude and a huge shout out to Christine LaLiberte for her very generous transformational gift in making Legal Clinic at Surrey Women's Centre a reality. In the coming days, we will share updates on our website about the launch of the Jane Doe Legal Clinic.

Shahnaz Rahman, *Executive Director*



Christine: The *Butterfly* Effect



“For women to feel heard, worthy, supported” - this is what Christine LaLiberte envisions for the clients of the legal clinic at the Surrey Women’s Centre. “I want them to be able to see that they have another chance to rebuild, and they can hit a restart button”.

Christine knows first-hand the impact that domestic abuse can have on one woman’s life. She also knows through her own lived experience how much healing can come from counselling, family support, and legal advocacy. Sadly, not every woman has access to these types of life-altering services, something that Christine hopes to change: “I wanted to seek out a place that supports women regardless of

their background, or what their ‘degree in society’ is – whether mentally ill, poor, rich, no matter what – women need support and help regardless of where they’re from”.


Though she’d supported the centre for many years, she visited the space for the first time last year: “I was just amazed at every single facet of the centre”. But one program in particular stood out to her: “when we got into the room with the legal team, there were two lawyers there ...and they said this is the place with the highest turnover, there’s so

much work, and the burnout factor is huge”. In listening to the lawyers, Christine said she felt shivers and had tears in her eyes, and that this feeling never left her. The Centre’s legal team provides services to clients, which includes everything from informing women of their legal rights (as wives, mothers, workers etc.), to representing them in court as victims of domestic abuse, child custody hearings and anything else a client might need from a legal perspective. Christine felt

the legal program formed the core of the centre: “[legal aid] can prevent other things from happening... if a woman can’t afford legal representation, they end up on the streets, or abused more, or even dead...there’s a number of things that can happen to them”.

When asked what impact she thinks the legal program has on the larger community, she believes women pay it forward and it can create a butterfly effect in society. She says a lot of things can be solved if some of these issues - such as being homeless, abused and/or dependent on substances - are addressed through legal advocacy. When women are empowered, she says, maybe food banks won’t be so busy, clients to the centre that are mothers can provide their children consistent meals, and they can support their children in engaging in extracurricular activities. By focusing on the clients of the centre, Christine feels that many other downstream social issues are addressed, and in so doing, not only does the quality of life of the clients improve, but so too does that of the client’s friends and family, and all those whose lives a client touches.

Surrey’s rate of violent crime is higher than the Canadian average. Christine hopes that with the support of the community, the Surrey Women’s Centre becomes a larger force for women in Surrey, so that in time, the prevalence of violence not only lessens, but that Surrey becomes a model Canadian city for women’s safety and rights.



Jessie's story is one of strength and resilience. It is also one of collaboration, overcoming fear, and the power of faith.

Finding Her Tribe: A Survivor's Story

Although she lived with a man who was violent and abusive, Jessie had her reasons for staying in the relationship: having financial security, getting help with the kids, and simply having someone's company. She lived with the abuse until it extended not only from harming her, but to harming her daughter. At that point she knew that nothing could justify what was happening and she called 911. And it was not until she overcame her fear that she agreed to testify.

At SWC, Jessie says she felt safe enough to be able to tell her story without fear of judgement. With the collaboration between her Victims Service Worker, the police, the Crown and child protection services, Jessie was able to gain security and feel enough confidence to tell her story knowing she would be supported. Jessie says that the staff at SWC "see your potential, see you as an individual and not just what happened to you. They recognize your trauma." At SWC, Jessie says she has found "her tribe" and can always reach out and speak to her worker.

Like other victims of domestic violence, Jessie didn't realize how bad her situation was until after she left. Since leaving, she reports having increased confidence and the courage to take a leap of faith when it came

to making a decision about testifying against the abuser. She says that knowing she has a safety net from SWC that she never had before, she would be supported, safe and validated regardless of whether or not she testified. It was fortunate that her partner pled guilty, was sentenced to jail and Jessie was spared re-living the trauma through testifying during the trial.

Jessie reminds other victims that "your worst day alone with your kids is better than your best day with your abuser." Now Jessie speaks powerfully so that other victims of domestic violence hear her story and recognize they are not isolated and that there is a way to a better life. Jessie asserts that since accessing services at SWC, she has gone from being emotionally shut-down and feeling worthless to realizing her strengths and the power she holds as a woman. She now has found further purpose in her life by completing a Social Work program and aims to be a Victim Service Worker. She hopes to help other victims of abuse escape domestic violence and start their journey to recovery.

Jessie's encouragement to other women is that "There's hope and you're worthy of help, and of a beautiful life...and a beautiful life is absolutely possible."

FACES OF COURAGE

We stand with you!

We celebrate **National Victims and Survivors of Crime Awareness Week** by standing with Jesse and Gagan as they fight for justice, freedom, and equality. They want other survivors to know they are not alone. We stand with you, and we are here to help!

Gagan and Jessie are sharing their stories as part of our annual **Faces of Courage** campaign to commemorate National Victims and Survivors of Crime Week. **Faces of Courage: We Stand With You!** is a tribute to the voices of all survivors of gender-based violence. The stories for this year's campaign speak to the power of collaboration.

We hope that Gagan and Jessie's voices will encourage survivors to come forward by letting them know that they are not alone. Together we are building a better future for women and girls. Stand with Gagan and Jessie by sharing their videos with your family and friends!

Special thanks to Tugboat Group for their beautiful site design, Perspective Studios for capturing our faces of courage, and to the Department of Justice Canada for making this project possible.

Visit us online at facesofcourage.ca

IN CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Champions of Change: Honouring Change Leaders

The Champions of Change Awards are an important recognition of women in the community who are greatly advancing gender equality and human rights. The awards acknowledge visionary leaders who have worked tirelessly to create possibilities for a gender-equitable world.

Surrey Women's Centre first presented these awards in 2021. This year in celebration of International Women's Day, SWC and their community partners came together on March 17th, 2022, to commemorate their second annual Champions of Change Awards. Though the event was held virtually, there was a notable vibrancy in the air as this year's award recipients were acknowledged and celebrated. They took a moment to remember two remarkable women who passed away this year: **Shashi Assanand**, a fierce community leader, and **Naomi Onotera**, a wonderful mother and friend. Four formidable individuals who demonstrated strength and leadership in their communities were presented the awards, including one posthumously.

Champions of Change Award Recipients:



Marjorie White

A pioneering community builder, strengthening Indigenous Peoples. The founder of one of the first Indigenous services in Canada.



(Late) Shashi Assanand

Visionary founder of the Vancouver Lower Mainland Multicultural Support Services, reforming the landscape of culturally appropriate services for immigrant, refugee, and non-status women and children experiencing violence.



MLA Rachna Singh

Parliamentary Secretary for Antiracism Initiatives and a strong advocate for equality, political and social activism towards a discrimination-free society.



Andrea Bryson

Case Manager at RISE Women's Legal Centre and a powerful legal advocate for women, and supporting thousands of women experiencing violence.



Jessie S.

A survivor demonstrating resilience, strength and dignity in the face of high-risk violence.

This past October, the Surrey Women's Centre honoured and paid tribute to the life of Naomi Onotera, the forty year-old mother, teacher and librarian who was killed in October 2021.

Meghan: Carrying the Torch - A Tribute to ...

Naomi Onotera

Her husband was charged with manslaughter of his wife. Naomi's close friend, Meghan, spoke to me recently about Naomi with the recurring words 'kind', 'compassionate', 'poised', and 'graceful' in her descriptions.

Naomi and Meghan were initially acquaintances and then became close friends while going through their pregnancies together, then the birth of their respective daughters in 2019, sharing walks during the pandemic, parenting experiences, social events and family celebrations. Although they were close, Naomi did not share with Meghan anything alarming related to her marriage. Meghan said that "none of us knew what was going on (for Naomi with her husband)".

Naomi was a kindergarten teacher and librarian, and was described by parents and staff at the school as "sweet, caring and kind". She was involved in the Roots of Empathy program, teaching kindergarteners empathy by observing the progress of a baby over several months. Meghan respected Naomi's patience with all children, and particularly with the kids who had behavioral challenges, saying she herself could never remain so calm. "It wasn't just a job for Naomi – kids were her passion, and her biggest dream in life was to become a mom", says Meghan with tears in her eyes. Naomi was also a practicing Christian, and carried within her a strong sense of faith and trust, and always saw the good in others. Her solid family values were embodied in her strong relationships with her family, and especially her mother, and her deep love for her 3-year-old daughter. Naomi's sister is now raising the child.

I asked Meghan about the future, and how she thought one could carry Naomi's torch going forward. She responded, "With my own daughter, I would encourage her to be completely open once she's in relationships. If anything is wrong, to tell someone she trusts, being honest, communicating ... and the more we



do that, the more we reduce the stigma and shame that's associated with being in an abusive relationship".

Meghan was grateful for the association with the Surrey Women's Centre, that through the fundraising event, Naomi's friends and family were able to have a healing experience. "Just being able to do something... felt very helpful". Moving forward would mean that "we try to help as many as we can who are facing the same issues". Meghan's advice is to check in with people and see how things are going, even if they don't reach out themselves. "Staying silent is the worst thing we can do, because then the cycle of abuse continues," she adds, "and we can encourage people to reach out if they are struggling".

Meghan wipes away tears talking about her friend. She and her friends still get together at the same gathering place they always did for the socials and celebrations. But Naomi's presence is deeply missed, and always will be.

CASE FOR SUPPORT

When Your Home is No Longer Safe ... Where Can You Turn?

It takes courage to leave a violent relationship, and it takes support especially during the holidays. This holiday season, we are asking you to stand with women who are bravely rebuilding their lives by giving *The Gift of Healing*.



Women don't always reach out for help after an assault because they are afraid. Some women are afraid that no one will believe them, while others fear reprisals from their abuser, friends, and family.

Their fear is real, particularly during the holiday season, when violence against women tends to escalate. With safe spaces such as schools and work closed for the holidays, women and their children are more likely to be isolated at home with their abusive partners making it harder to reach out for help.

Surrey Women's Centre offers a safe haven where women and their children can access resources to meet their most basic needs and find support for taking steps to a better future. We are often the first-place women call for help, 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year—be it emergency assistance or ongoing emotional support. We assist women at any stage in their road to recovery and healing.

After experiencing an act of gender-based violence, women may need a safe place to turn for support – immediately. Your support means we can respond quickly during a critical window of opportunity. The moment we receive a call, our team of frontline workers will assess the level of risk and develop a plan to ensure the safety of the survivor and their loved ones. In these life-and-death situations, time is of the essence. The earlier we intervene the more likely we are to prevent serious injury or even death.

BUT SOMETIMES WOMEN ALSO NEED LONGER TERM SUPPORT.

Surrey Women's Centre offers counselling for women who need individual or group support rebuilding their lives. The impact of gender-based violence can have a long-term impact on the safety, health, and well-being. Our trauma-informed counselling services help women heal from the real impacts of trauma by respecting women's right to make their own choices and supporting their decisions every step of the way.

The problem is that women who need counselling often have to wait months and even years to see a counsellor.

With your help, **Surrey Women's Centre** can continue to offer these critical support services such as our trauma counselling program and be there for women and children when they need it most. We believe that women should be able to access the support services they need as quickly and easily as possible.

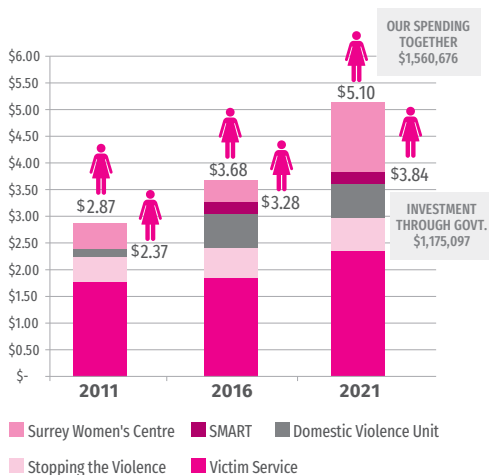
Our goal is to raise \$100,000 before December 31, 2022. Without these funds, Surrey Women's Centre cannot respond to the increasing demand for support and our counselling waitlist will continue to grow.

As a result abused women will have to wait longer in order to get the help that they need and the support they deserve.

Our counselling services can be the difference between life and death for women fleeing gender-based violence. Please help women on their road to recovery as they pursue a life free of harm for themselves and their families.

This holiday season, please give *The Gift of Healing*, the most important gift of all.

Our Investment in Every Woman in Surrey



The Gift of Healing

Surrey Women's Centre's counsellors have waitlists of 1 to 2 years. Give *The Gift of Healing* this holiday season and help us serve more women sooner.

We need your help today!

It's only November and already 150 survivors of violence are waiting for our free counselling services this year.

Your gift of \$100 provides an hour of trauma counselling. Help us meet our goal of \$100,000 and give immediate access to 6 hours of healing for every person waiting.

We care, you care, let's care and heal together through the holidays.

FINANCIALS 2021/2022

ASSETS

Cash and Receivables	\$636,000
Term Deposits	210,000
Prepaid Expenses	42,000
Capital Assets	99,000

Total Assets **\$987,000**

LIABILITIES

Bank Debt	\$0
Accounts Payable	53,000
Wages and Remittances	117,000
Deferred Contributions	315,000*

Total Liabilities **\$485,000**

* Contracts secured in 2021-22 for the 2022-23 fiscal year

NET ASSETS \$502,000

Dignity Counselling Services is a revenue generating social enterprise of the Surrey Women's Centre. Last year, our counselling team contributed \$173,000 to our operations and helped us to more than double our net assets!



REVENUE

Government Grants and Contracts	\$1,633,000
Donations	396,000
Fee for Service	173,000
Capital and Other Grants	469,000
Other	12,000

Total Revenue **\$2,683,000**

EXPENSES

Wages and Benefits	\$1,662,000
Management and Administration	224,000
Fundraising	1,000
Program and Operating	565,000

Total Expenses **\$2,452,000**

Surplus \$231,000

Thanks to our generous donors, the financial governance of our Board and members, and the commitment of our staff, we have spent the past 2 years building a healthy contingency for our organization.

These reserve funds allow 2022-23 to be an investment year. This year we are building capacity in our existing programs, will introduce a new legal advice and representation clinic in 2023 and are creating new ways to share stories with you about how your gift rebuilds lives.



PROVIDE
1250
SESSIONS



OF TRAUMA COUNSELLING TO
A SURVIVOR OF SEXUAL ABUSE.

Fund 2 years of SMART Van expenses

like fuel, insurance, repairs, food, and emergency supplies. The SMART van was frontline during the pandemic and opiate crisis providing life-saving prevention work to over 13,000 Surrey residents in one of BC's highest overdose cities.



Provide court orientation, witness preparation and court accompaniment

400
survivors
of violence.

How many lives does
\$100,000
impact?

Last year we received our most generous donation to date. Here are some of the life-changing ways a transformational gift of \$100,000 to Surrey Women's Centre can make a difference.

Partner with survivors, Surrey Police & child protection to design and execute safety plans for survivors whose partners pose a serious risk of death or serious bodily harm.



Invest in a range of **trauma-informed specialized responses** for more than
19,600 SURVIVORS
of gender based violence living in Surrey.

FLIGHT
Leave the situation as quickly as you can.

FIGHT
This is really just pure self-preservation.

FREEZE
Pause instead of running from the situation.

FAWN
Keeping someone happy to neutralize the threat.



surrey
women's
centre

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

A snapshot of our work in **2021/2022**

There is a story behind these numbers, and our dedicated staff day in and day out is out there to support these vulnerable survivors.

13,907

Surrey Mobile Assault Response Team - SMART Van



13,907 served through SMART Van and 284 hospital accompaniments for survivors of physical and sexual assault.

Through a harm reduction approach, this team provides low-barrier outreach services to women, youth, and other marginalized genders. The focus of this team is to establish trust and build relationships with those engaging in street-level sex work to increase their overall safety, their physical well-being, and their connection to SWC.

Community Based Victim Services

COURT TEAM & CRISIS TEAM

2701

We provide emotional support, systems navigation and advocacy for women, girls and gender diverse individuals involved with the criminal justice system. This team aims to empower survivors of gender-based violence by providing the necessary knowledge, tools, and resources to increase safety and achieve justice. The focus of the crisis team is to meet the diverse needs of clients as they navigate various systems including but not limited to police reporting, income assistance, family law system and other systems that will increase the survivor's access to safety and justice.

Stopping the Violence (STV) COUNSELLING TEAM

311

We provide one-on-one, trauma-informed counselling support to survivors of gender-based violence to alleviate the impact trauma from gender-based violence has on individuals and the community

27

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT

27 new files of victims at highest risk of harm

Through our partnership with Surrey RCMP, we provide safety-focused care to survivors of domestic violence whose offenders have been deemed a high-risk offender and to collaborate with services/stakeholders (RCMP, Probation, MCFD, Crown) to provide a high level of trauma-informed care that prioritizes victim safety.

Safety for Mothers and Children – Ministry of Children and Families

300 mothers & their children

Through trauma-informed, safety-focused support, this team works alongside survivors of intimate partner violence currently involved with MCFD. The focus of this team is to strengthen and reinforce the survivor’s capacity to navigate the child welfare system while also working collaboratively with social workers to enhance their ability to support survivors and their children.

58

VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT THAT REPORTED TO POLICE

Special Victims Unit – SVU

Through our partnership with Surrey RCMP, we provide trauma-informed, safety-focused care to survivors of sexualized violence. The focus of this team is to collaborate and coordinate with Surrey RCMP’s Special Victims Unit to ensure sexual assault survivors’ needs are being met but also to bridge the gap with services for other vulnerable victims who have chosen not to report.

Resource Drop In-Services

2090 women served at the centre



These services are the heart of Surrey Women's Centre that operates on a grassroots level to reduce as many barriers as possible for women/girls by offering a safe space, basic necessities, and reducing harm from a holistic trauma informed lens.

Is there light of justice at the end of the tunnel?

Legal Support to Survivors of Violence

BY SAMANTHA GREY - PROGRAM DIRECTOR



A single mother of two seeking a protection order, a newcomer in the midst of a sponsorship breakdown, a survivor of sexual violence preparing for her testimony in court. The women who come to **Surrey Women's Centre** can face difficult, complex legal situations. While our victim support workers are committed to increasing survivor's access to legal services, the road to justice is littered with significant barriers. For those unable to pay for a lawyer, women are left seeking legal representation through Legal Aid and other legal non-profits or to represent themselves.

The scope of legal aid coverage in family matters simply does not meet the diverse needs of survivors of violence. Due to the limited hours available on Family Law contracts, domestic violence survivors are more often than not needing to compromise on what they are truly entitled to in Family Court. This compromise may be related to their right to safety, access to their children or their right to financial stability following the breakdown of a relationship. Financial matters, such as property division & spousal support, are crucial legal matters that can ensure stability for survivors & their children. However, these matters are rarely covered by legal aid and when they are, are subject to severely restricted contracts. Without adequate legal representation, survivors are vulnerable to further harm by their abusers, who may use the family court system to continue their abusive behaviour.

Another systemic gap is legal assistance with immigration matters. When those with precarious status in Canada experience violence, they are often rightly apprehensive about coming forward. We often hear from survivors about their fears of compromising their legal status. Though our victim support workers strive to connect those with questions related to immigration to the right service, the fact is that this isn't enough. Legal Aid is only available when someone is seeking refugee status. The lack of immigration resources available to those dealing with violence leave survivors in a vulnerable position to choose between their own safety & their immigration status.

At Surrey Women's Centre, our workers are committed to building safety and resilience with all survivors regardless of what legal matters they are facing. Despite our enhanced knowledge of the legal resources available to survivors, we recognize that survivors deserve more. That is why in the coming year, Surrey Women's Centre will be launching a new legal clinic which will aim to enhance survivor's access to justice.

DONOR RECOGNITION

We're **Stronger** Together

Thank you to the generous support of:

- Ministry of Women and Gender Equality Canada
- Canada Summer Jobs, Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada
- Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Province of British Columbia
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Community Gaming Grants Branch, Province of British Columbia
- Ministry of Attorney General, Office of the Parliamentary Secretary for Anti-Racism Initiatives, Province of British Columbia
- Ministry of Children and Family Development, Province of British Columbia
- Ending Violence Association of BC
- Canadian Women's Foundation
- Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy and Lu'ma Native BCH Housing Society
- City of Surrey
- Vancouver Foundation
- Robert and Lisa Downs Foundation



Lorraine, Preeti, Amanda:

The Spectrum of Success

What does it take to work with victims in the Domestic Violence Unit?

An understanding of culture and religion, of family dynamics, the nature of abuse; an under-standing of the legal system and how to work with the RCMP; knowing the impact of reliving trauma ... all these, among many other factors that affect victims of domestic violence.

Lorraine and Preeti are well-versed in what it takes to work in the Intimate Partner Violence Unit. They know how to support the women and children of 'highest risk' offenders. Their roles are multifaceted: from securing safety measures from the RCMP, bringing the woman's voice to the table, advocating, providing support in court hearings, to securing housing, organizing a move, working with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), connecting clients to resources, and providing emotional support and counselling. Consent and confidentiality are at the core of their work. Above all, their broad



“She wasn’t just facing abuse, but also cultural barriers in her struggle to stand up for herself; every time she did that she felt like she was doing something wrong”.

roles have to be carried out with sensitivity and with an understanding of sociocultural, religious, and familial nuances.

Consider the complexity of a case as illustrated by a client with whom Preeti is currently working. A doctor in her home country, the client's husband prevented her from practicing medicine in Canada so she took a job instead in a care home. He cut off her hair and forcibly confined her, and set up cameras in the headboard of their bed. He would stab the headboard while telling her that he actually wanted to stab her. Their son, being a witness to his father's violence, had to testify against him. Yet this was a very difficult process for her to go through and thought it better to not have her kids testify, as her beliefs contradicted speaking against a father or husband. As Lorraine pointed out, "She wasn't just facing abuse, but also cultural barriers in her struggle to stand up for herself; every time she did that she felt like she was doing something wrong".

From Corporal Amanda Dodgson's perspective, defining 'success' can differ from one case to another. The cycle of abuse doesn't always allow for a victim to break away from a love relationship. Many times victims want to recant statements because of the complexity of intimate partner violence. Corporal Dodgson, who leads the Intimate Partner Violence Unit with the RCMP, gets a lot of personal satisfaction when she and her team can "build and maintain a trust relationship with the victim, and empower them to tell their story as it happens".

Corporal Dodgson is an integral part of the SWC's Domestic Violence Unit. She works side by side with Lorraine, Preeti and her colleagues at SWC, in their work to serve women and provide whatever support they can to keep their clients and their clients' children physically and emotionally safe. In the case described, Preeti stayed with the son when he had to take the courageous step to testify against his father, as well as support her client who was re-living the trauma as she provided evidence against her husband. After the trial, he was found

guilty on all counts: strangulation, confinement, and assault with a weapon. Corporal Dodgson recounts that as a frontline police officer, this was her ultimate definition of victory: justice and a conviction. As she's moved into the more sensitive and complex work of intimate partner violence, building trust with her clients is her priority, and success now looks different. In some cases, it could be defined as a client leaving an abusive relationship, or her being able to find a safe foster home for children witnessing violence at home.

“build and maintain a trust relationship with the victim, and empower them to tell their story as it happens”.

Once an offender has been charged however, it isn't automatic safety for the client and her family. Lorraine noted that in this case, the accused was roaming about in the community for weeks after being convicted, but before going to jail. She said that after he dropped contact with his family, a new safety plan had to be developed because they were afraid he could be planning something else. "This became a vulnerable time for her...and women are not very protected ... the judicial system is very much geared towards the offender". This client, with whom they were working since 2020, was receiving counselling, emotional support and safety planning. As time went on, she was more open to asking for and receiving help, and became more empowered. Eventually she was connected with a 'sister' in the community.

When asked what they find most gratifying about their work, Lorraine said that it is "to see the women are still alive and some are thriving". The women are safer because this team collaborates with other silos in the system and if she has advocates, there's a greater chance of staying alive. Preeti says she feels gratified from seeing the women grow, that "the impact of trauma is so intense ...they've been beaten down, so to see them ride back up and progress" is highly rewarding.



*Gratitude for how the
vulnerable survivors of violence
we serve, and their families
were patient, careful and kind
to one another during the
most stressful times.*

*Every survivor has the
right to a life free of violence.
Let us make this a reality.*



 **surreywomen'scentre**

To make a donation call us at 604-589-1868

surrey womenscentre.ca