

The Rape Relief Files

1986

254

THIS YEAR, WOMEN REPORTED TO THIS CRISIS LINE...

- 994 separate incidents of sexual assault by a man or men on a woman or child
- 720 of these assaults took place during 1986
- 572 of the 1986 incidents (80%) were attacks on adult women
- 1/3 of the 1986 attacks were rapes -- 21 of 73 assaults on girls under 13 were rape
- 80% of the time the victim knew her attacker

The police were notified without the woman's consent 22 times this year that we know about. Police threatened or actually charged the woman 13 times.

In the end, about 1% of the calls we have heard about resulted in a conviction for the man or men who perpetrated them.

Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter

77 E. 20th Avenue,
Vancouver, B.C., V5V 1L7
872-8212

THIS YEAR AT OUR HOUSE

** 112 women and children stayed in our shelter -- the average length of stay was half a month

** over 10,000 meals were served by/for women residents and volunteers, their children and the occasional visitor each year.

** organised childcare has been provided twice a week, every week, all year long, since the shelter opened -- almost 500 hours per year.

THIS YEAR, WOMEN REPORTED TO THE VANCOUVER CITY POLICE...

- 499 sexual offenses -- 391 were female victims
- 323 of the victims were adults
- 139 of these resulted in a conviction

The Vancouver City Police also charged 483 husbands with common assault; 119 with using weapons/ causing bodily harm; 54 with threatening; 6 with aggravated assault; 3 with attempted murder and 1 with murder.

We know that women reported both to this rape crisis centre and to the police only 113 times this year -- about 15% of the total incidents we heard about. It has been our experience over many years that women do not report to the police.

Every Time the Phone Rings It's Not a Crisis Call

At Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter the phone rings an average of 30 times in 24 hours. About 3 calls are what we call crisis calls (reporting an attack, or a woman in some emotional distress due to at least the fear of attack). So what else do we talk about all day on that phone. We monitored some sample weeks and came up with some interesting projections for what a year's worth of ringing telephones is all about:

- 11,000 calls answered, 24 hrs. a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year
- 3,900 of these are follow-up (ongoing contact with women who originally called in crisis)
- 550 calls for referral to another agency, service or feminist group that someone couldn't find on their own
- 400 calls offering donations of money, food, or cheap housing for R.R. or for women living in our transition house
- 350 calls from other feminist groups about their work, our work or joint actions
- 330 calls about public speaking engagements to schools, clubs, community groups or professionals on violence against women
- 110 calls from the media asking us to comment, mostly about violence against women issues
- 3,500 calls where collective women, and other volunteers, were talking to each other in order to organise all of the above
- 100 plus calls from cranks, masturbators, and angry young men out to save civilisation from us



ACROSS CANADA AND QUEBEC ...

- 1 WOMAN IS RAPED EVERY 17 MINUTES (Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, 1981)
- 1 WOMAN IN 4 WILL BE RAPED AT SOME TIME IN HER LIFE, MOST OFTEN BY SOMEONE SHE KNOWS (Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, 1981)
- 1 IN 10 WOMEN WHO ARE MARRIED OR LIVING WITH A MALE LOVER WILL BE HIT BY HIM (Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1978)
- 90% OF WORKING WOMEN ARE SEXUALLY HARASSED ON THE JOB AT SOMETIME (Canadian Union of Public Employees, 1980)
- 1 IN 4 GIRLS, AND 1 IN 10 BOYS, ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED BEFORE THE AGE OF 18 YEARS (United Way Study, 1984)

VANCOUVER RAPE RELIEF Number of Sexual Assault Calls: 1974-86

1974	112	1980	500
1975	185	1981	600
1976	300	1982	630
1977	314	1983	652
1978	398	1984	705
1979	475	1985	778
		1986	-- 994



Violence Against Women: The 3

The relative power of men compared to that of women is profoundly affected by sexist violence against women. Men have, and do, use this violence to get or keep control over women or to display power. More than the power difference between an individual man and an individual woman is affected in this exchange -- the power of all men over women is in play. Virtually every woman fears male violence at some time.

Because we know to fear sexist attack, the other tactics that men use to get what they want are more forceful than they would otherwise be. When a man puts his fist through the wall when he is angry, the woman he is angry at is anxious that he not get that angry -- she could be the next target. The verbal abuse or angry silence of a lover may be motivation for her to comply with what he wants. How far will he go if she doesn't? Even when she thinks he won't be physically violent, we know it is because he is choosing not to -- and we can only be sure of this time.

When a man is walking behind a woman on the street, the woman must find a way to assess whether or not she is being followed and plan how to fight back or escape. Usually it is a man walking too close and simply oblivious to her fear. But sometimes it's not, and there are no guarantees.

When women call the crisis line after an assault, their reaction is frequently, "What did I do wrong? How can I ensure that it won't happen again?" Women weigh and measure what they will do to protect themselves and are left with the knowledge that it is possible to decrease the chance of further assault with some common sense measures -- but, ultimately, we women cannot control whether or not we are safe.

The reality of male violence against women is too disturbing for many people to believe. No woman wants the fear of rape to interfere with her life or that of her daughters and friends. Many women hold fiercely to the belief that we can, and will, have control of our safety.

"As long as I (fill in any behaviour), I will be safe." This system has advantages -- for instance, it reduces fear and increases the determination to win against sexist attack. Some of the behaviours really do decrease the opportunity for assault. However, if a woman is raped while operating outside this system, it becomes her fault. Male responsibility is taken for granted, minimised or excused. "Men will be men" and, given the opportunity, this is what they do.

It is more frightening and difficult, but in the long run more effective, to recognize that all our systems are only half measures. Rape will stop when men stop raping. If men did not rape, women's responses would never be in question.

Men, too, want to believe that women control whether or not we are raped and battered. It absolves them of responsibility for their own actions and those of other men; it protects some men from owning up to their own violent acts. It protects other men from the knowledge that they have sometimes pushed too hard for sex and that this really means they are, in fact, guilty of rape. Kinsey reports a study in which 85% of his male subjects admitted this kind of 'soft' rape.

Virtually all men want to be treated by women as if they were in the category of men who protect us from 'other' men. They expect us to begin with an assumption of trust. In a media interview some years ago, Lee Lakeman from Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter stated, "Every man is a potential rapist." There were several letters to the editor in response -- all from men disclaiming their responsibility for rape, insisting that they be trusted, calling for the liberation of men, and declaring Lee a "menace to her own cause". Whenever this statement has been made, the response has been similar.



Women take the responsibility of evading attack seriously. It is a difficult job. The dangerous men aren't visibly identifiable, have no distinguishable traits, fit no particular group. We know they can be fathers, brothers, husbands, bosses, teachers, doctors. They can be small, large, rich, poor, black or white. The only thing they have in common is that they are men and they rape and batter women.

To say every man is a potential rapist is not to say that every man rapes. It is a caution against falsely categorising men and taking unwitting risks as a result.

It is overwhelmingly white men, born into rich families, who hold the positions of most power in this society. They make the rules and social policy for the rest of us, including large numbers of the poor, women, and people of colour. There is overwhelming evidence that men rape within their class or race and down. Although we know that violence against women is perpetrated by men of every class and race, the jails are disproportionately filled with native men and poor and working class men.

"Racism has always drawn strength from its ability to encourage sexual coercion. While black women and their sisters of colour have been the main targets of these racist-inspired attacks, white women have suffered as well. For, once white men were persuaded that they could commit sexual assaults against black women with impunity, their conduct towards women of their own race could not remain unmarred. Racism has always served as a provocation to rape, and white women in the U.S. have necessarily suffered the ricochet fire from these attacks." (Angela Davis).



In Canada, the effect of the black experience reverberates and we have our own as well. The Indian Act of 1880 proclaims that all but Indians will be defined as persons, at a time when the rape of native women went unchecked and native land was usurped, forcing native people into a dependency on the government. The implications for a native person leaving the reserve, as defined by the Indian Act, is to effectively deny that they are native. Native women are at increased risk of sexist violence by white men as a racist/sexist attack. They are less likely to report to a court that has a long history of working against native people. When native women are attacked by native men, they may want to protect him from the racist "injustice" system that is likely to punish him, not just for the assault, but for being native.

"In the Lemieux agreement of 1908 between Canada and Japan, the immigration of adult males was severely curtailed but placed no limit on the number of wives entering Canada. Through the exchange of photos, men arranged for brides to be sent from Japan. In 1913, a peak period, some 300 or 400 women arrived via this arrangement. The practise continued until 1928. Other less fortunate women were brought over to serve in brothels which existed as early as 1890 in Victoria, Nelson, Cranbrook and other mining and railroading towns. They were usually young, illiterate women from poverty stricken villages sent to earn whatever they could to support their families in Japan."

At the advent of the Second World War, Japanese Canadians were deemed a threat to national security, and placed in labour camps. Their homes and businesses were taken over by the government and never returned. The fight for retribution by Japanese people remains outstanding.

The Rape Relief Files

Truth As We Know It



Canada continues its racist and sexist immigration practice of importing women for the purposes of domestic labour. This year, the women are mostly from Central and South America. Combined with unfair labour practises in this kind of work, these women too have little opportunity to learn about the language and their few rights. They too continue to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation and work under conditions that sometimes amount to slave labour and even sexual slavery.

* * * * *

Besides committing direct violence, men, and to a lesser extent women, have the power to collude in building a version of this violence that holds women responsible. Collusory power is exercised by what is done to enable the violence to take place, by making escape or recovery more difficult or using powerful positions in the community to lie about the women who are attacked.

In a 1984 Vancouver divorce case, Joanne describes being hit by her husband, having her car sabotaged by him so that she couldn't escape, and having her clothes burned in a fire that would have burned down the house if the police hadn't intervened. The judge commented that it was understandable that she was hit because she hadn't made her husband dinner. He didn't comment on the other acts.

Diana came to Canada sponsored by her husband of six months. She arrived to find out that he was violent and expected her to stay home alone, be there when he returned, and to be sexually available to him at all times. He raped her many times in the first few months. She spoke little English, but found a way out with the help of a neighbour. But, when she visited a social worker to get money, she was lectured about it not being Canada's responsibility to support her. The worker wanted to know if Diana had spoken to her husband about his behaviour. The bottom line was that she could get a cheque if she went to a marriage counsellor with him. The husband had already set up some appointments and had talked to a psychologist already. This psychologist was particularly interested in how the wife behaved when she was with her husband. During the counselling sessions, the husband translated for the wife. The psychologist was to make a report to the financial aid worker.

Marianna was sexually abused by her father from age five to thirteen, and by her eighteen-year old brother when she was nine. When she went for counselling years later, she was told that she had an unusually intense need for love, and that her father and brother had discovered this need and responded to it in an unhealthy way. She was told to change how needy she was for affection.

Pornography, other media misrepresentation of women, insulting comments and jokes made to us, or about us, also contribute to this social set-up in which society fails to disapprove of violence against women.

* * * * *

Men can stop violence against women if they want to. They choose WHO to attack -- a male clerk does not choose the woman who is his executive director to sexually harass on the job; he chooses his coworker. They choose HOW to attack -- men are often careful to bruise their wives only on clothed parts of the body. They choose WHEN -- when women are isolated or in some other way vulnerable. Men can stop and they must be encouraged, taught, pressured or ultimately forced, to stop.

The reasons they give for violent behaviour are many. "I was jealous. She is an attractive woman and I'm not the only man who thinks so. I was afraid she'd leave me and I wanted to force her to stay. I wanted to teach her that she couldn't fool around. I was sure that she was, although I don't think so now, and I didn't want to be duped."

"I was insecure. I wasn't doing as well as I wanted to at work, or with my friends, and I just wanted to put her down, humiliate her and make her not as good as me. I could be better than someone if I did that. In hockey and other sports with men, that was how we solved things. The guy who won the fight was right -- you know!"

It didn't matter which woman I picked, just the one that was close at hand when I decided to rape. Just the one I could get away with it with -- alone, nobody around to stop me. And she would be afraid -- afraid of me."

"To get the kind of sex I wanted. I'd go drinking with the boys; they'd say their wives and girlfriends did those things. I feared that I was being 'pussywhipped'; that if I was man enough she'd want to -- so I made her do it."

"So I didn't have to do what she wanted me to."

"In war -- ransack the village, rape the women for fun as reward, emotional outlet, adrenalin rush; get at the men through the women."

"To shut her up."

"Because I didn't want to be a father; 'cause she paid more attention to the unborn kid than me."

"She's a lesbian. All she needs is a good fuck."

"I didn't believe I had any control over it."

"I wanted to be the first to 'have her', teach her about sex."

"She wanted it -- children are sexual beings and they have rights."

You have probably heard versions of these excuses and many others besides. One possibility has commanded little attention to date -- and that is child pornography for profit in Canada. Robert Willoughby, originally charged with 75 counts of sexual abuse of children, was convicted this past year in Terrace, B.C. of 25 sexual offences. One of the eight children reported having been photographed over 200 times, mostly with another child. While child pornography rings and networks are known about in the U.S. and other parts of the world, we do not know of anything on that scale in Canada.

* * * * *

There are many things that men can do to help put an end to violence against women. Do not rage at, harass, threaten or insult women. Challenge the men you know if you see or hear of them doing any of these things. Make sure that they know that it is not okay with you. Don't buy or use pornography or condone your friends' use of it. Sex with children is rape -- and adults sexualising children is promotion of rape.

Get and give emotional support to and from male friends. Talk seriously about your own sexuality. Woman-hating jokes are not okay; neither are racist remarks or comments made at the expense of poor people, gays, lesbians or disabled people. Listen carefully to what women have to say about their lives. Take them seriously as experts on sexism. Analyse your power position relative to woman friends. You almost always have more. Find ways to equalise this as much as possible.

Your sexual partners have the right to stop sexual activity at any point. So do you. Support your local rape crisis line and women's centres with donations of money.

Women can't afford to expect men to stop violence against women, take on their share of social responsibility and give over their excess share of power quietly. Sometimes we work long and hard to convince a man to do just that and it is worth it. But the tactic only works when he wants to and he moves fast enough to make it worth our while. Therefore, to add to our repertoire, women are:

- * exposing men and making them publicly accountable for their actions, sometimes through the court system, professional associations, rape crisis centres, postering or confronting him;
- * getting together to support each other in dreaming up ways to take him on and get what we need;
- * developing safety networks in our homes and places of work;
- * refusing sex with men as long as they read pornography;
- * withdrawing emotional support and labour when he isn't keeping his share of the responsibility;
- * forming on-going support groups or joining existing groups to fight for control over our reproduction, adequate childcare, enough money to live on, an end to violence against women and for free choice in our sexual partners.

Lyn

The Rape Relief Files

We're a rape crisis centre - and there are many others...

We at Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter are organised to fight for an end to violence against women. We work in the city of Vancouver, but are united in vision and shared work with many others doing the same.

There are more than 50 rape crisis lines in Canada and Quebec, the majority of which are members of the Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres. Please contact us for information on the centre nearest you.

In B.C. alone, there are more than 50 transition houses, of which the vast majority are members of the B.C. & Yukon Society of Transition Houses. You can usually find them through your local Women's Centre, Crisis Line or Family Services Centre.

It is also true that many communities have neither a rape crisis centre nor a transition house -- but still women resist the violence against us whenever and however we can individually, and they organise against it whenever 2 or 3 or more women can break through the isolation.

Often a woman staffing a drop-in child-care at a women's centre will pick up the phone and find herself in the middle of a "rape crisis call". We know of several northern communities where a network of "safe homes" harbour battered women, moving them from town to town to safety from another beating. This work goes on matter-of-factly because it needs to be done, and because any one of us can be an expert on violence through our direct experience of it, or through the pressing need of someone else.

We also know that our oppression takes many forms, and there are many reasons women organise to demand shared responsibility for child-care, reproductive and sexual rights, equal pay for work of equal value and so on.

This is why we belong to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, along with 500 other member groups representing 2 million women in our country. This is why we are joined with other women in B.C. to fight for an abortion clinic to be established in our province in the near future.

We're a transition house - and there are many others...

FOR SHELTER AND BEYOND

For battered women, battered by the fist of your keeper, by the nailed boots of the man drunk on the bottle or the booze of his will by the angry man, by the selfpitying man, by the man kicked by those who can afford to pass on rage.

For battered women, battered by hunger, by poverty, by bills coming in with the old bills unpaid and the phone turned off and the children with no shoes to wear to school.

For battered women, battered by the rapist in the street, by the rapist you thought your friend, by the rapist your uncle, the rapist in every man who uses women like something he can wipe himself on.

For battered women, battered by birthing methods invented for doctors' profits, with your baby yanked out of you strapped down, battered by social workers prying, battered by jail, battered by divorce court, battered by electroshock, battered with drugs that slow your body and snuff your mind.

For battered women, battered by insults on the corner and on the job, by the lack of love, by the loss of love, by the rancid garbage abuse that comes to the aged, by the death of children, by the death of respect for you and who you are battered but alive, woman ready to give birth again to hope, ready to midwife hope for other bleeding women.

Marge Piercy
Women's Day
August 26, 1976



Mid-Island Sexual Assault Centre,
101 - 285 Prideaux,
Nanaimo, B.C.
V9S 2N2

Women Against Violence Against Women,
204 - 636 West Broadway,
Vancouver, B.C.
V5Z 1G2
875-1328 / 875-6011

Kamloops Sexual Assault Counselling Centre,
387 - 4th Avenue,
Kamloops, B.C.
V2C 3P1
374-9600

Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre,
10247 - 100th Avenue,
Fort St. John, B.C.
V1J 1V8
785-8811 / 787-0468

Emergency Shelter & Crisis Line,
c/o Nelson Women's Centre,
307 Verno Street,
Nelson, B.C.
352-3504

South Peace Community Resources S.A. Centre,
P.O. Box 713,
Dawson Creek, B.C.
V1G 4H7
782-5009

Prince George Women's Resource Centre,
1306 - 7th Avenue,
Prince George, B.C.
V2L 3P1
564-4744

Cowichan W.A.V.A.W.,
P.O. Box 89,
Duncan, B.C.
V9L 3X1
748-7273

Sexual Assault Helpline,
2 - 3238 Kalum Street,
Terrace, B.C.
V8G 2N4
635-4042

Women's Sexual Assault Centre,
1045 Linden Avenue,
Victoria, B.C.
V8B 4H3
383-3232 / 383-5545

We're a feminist organizing centre - among others...

COME WORK WITH US
AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
FOR YOURSELF AND FOR OTHER WOMEN

For many women, our day-to-day lives include other fights as well -- poverty, racism, anti-lesbian attacks, to name a few. Come expecting to support each other in these battles.

CALL 872-8212

VANCOUVER RAPE RELIEF AND WOMEN'S SHELTER

ask about Support/Education/Action groups

**Childcare is provided by the groups to make it possible for mothers to participate.

