

Inventory of Aboriginal Services, Issues and Initiatives in Vancouver

Sexual Exploitation

Relevant Details

- It is estimated that up to 40% of female and male sexually exploited youth and adults in Vancouver are Aboriginal.
- The ongoing effects of the residential school experience and its accompanying traumas have left Aboriginal people over-represented in areas such as homelessness, family violence, poverty, and alcohol & drug usage contribute to the over-representation in the sex trade.
- Youth as young as 11 are being directly recruited at or around schools by pimps or other youth who are already being exploited.
- Lenient laws and sentencing continue to leave predators on the street to continue to prey upon children and youth.

Who's Involved?

Urban Native Youth Association (1640 East Hastings Street)

- Created a community development manual that focuses on Aboriginal youth sexual exploitation in Vancouver. It can be found online at www.unya.bc.ca/pspubvid.htm.
- Worked with youth to create a video on recruitment into the sex trade (Urban Rez).
- Supporting Our Sisters Project.
- Outreach Workers come into contact and support sexually exploited Aboriginal youth.

Sacred Lives: Canadian Aboriginal Children and Youth Speak Out About Sexual Exploitation

- Research manual on Aboriginal child and youth sexual exploitation.
- Written by Cherry Kingsley and Melanie Mark for Save the Children Canada, 2000.

Aboriginal Mothers Centre (2019 Dundas Street)

- Offers drop-in space, free meals and clothing, advocacy.
- Hosts a talking circle for women involved in the sex trade.

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (302 Columbia Street)

- Services include laundry facilities, washrooms and showers, telephone, personal hygiene supplies, healing circles, one-to-one conversations.
- Accessed by local Aboriginal women.

PEERS Vancouver (119 West Pender Street)

- Dedicated to the empowerment, education and support of sex workers, offers a number of exiting programs, advocacy, skills training, and support programs for women in the sex trade.
- Accessed by local Aboriginal women.

PACE (119 West Pender Street)

- Offers exiting programs, skills training, and support programs for women in the sex trade
- Accessed by local Aboriginal women.

Boys R Us - Three Bridges Community Health Centre (1292 Hornby Street)

- A drop-in centre for male and transgendered sex trade workers, particularly in Downtown South and Yaletown areas.
- Offers exiting programs, skills training, support programs, and helps individuals access resources such as health care, housing, and other community services.
- Accessed by local Aboriginal men and transgendered people.

WISH Drop-in Centre (119 West Pender Street)

- Offers a number of exiting programs, skills training, and support programs for women in the sex trade, advocacy, community education, and relationship building.
- Accessed by local Aboriginal women.

Covenant House Vancouver (575 Drake Street)

- Services for youth aged 16 - 24.
- Crisis Shelter provides 24 hour crisis care, counselling, in-house addictions management, life skills training, referrals, help with identification, employment and housing search assistance, repatriation, recreational outings, shared or private room, 3 meals a day, laundry.
- Accessed by Aboriginal youth.

Dusk to Dawn (1056 Comox Street)

- Late night youth drop-in centre in Downtown Vancouver which offers food, laundry, showers, and some place safe to be from 8pm - 7:30am.
- Accessed by Aboriginal youth.

John Howard Society (763 Kingsway)

- Workshops for parents and/or teachers, presentation to youth 12-24, sensitivity training, one-to-one, and consultations with persons who have entered and exited the sex trade.
- Accessed by Aboriginal youth.

Partnerships

Living in Communities

- City-wide integrated approach in relation to the impacts of sex work on neighbourhoods.

- A collaboration of community, business, government.
- Through an extensive community consultation process, an action plan was developed that includes policy and practical strategies to address issues associated with sex work.

Committees

- None

Trends

- Use of internet and new information technologies for the production and exchange of child pornography. Children and youth are unknowingly exchanging still images of themselves or live images through web cams to complete strangers they meet online.

Gaps

- There are no exiting programs that help those exiting the sex trade to successfully reintegrate back into a healthy lifestyle through lifeskills, education, training and employment.
- Young people continue to be recruited into the sex trade with little consequence to those who recruit, pimp, sexually exploit, and abuse them.
- There are very few prevention activities that address the root contributing factors to a person being sexually exploited (abuse, poverty, addictions, family violence, racism, sexism).
- Written and visual resources that are being developed are not widely circulated due to poor networks or lack of funding to mass produce resources.
- A general lack of affordable housing contributes to homelessness and sexual exploitation, and there is a lack of transition and long-term housing for those exiting the sex trade.
- Transsexual and transgendered individuals are often marginalized within the marginalized. A continued lack of understanding of their lifestyles and support needs leaves them vulnerable.
- There is a lack of detox and treatment specific to sexually exploited youth and adults that can help to meaningfully address the issues that are unique to their situations without the shame and exclusion that may come in a mainstream detox facility.

Contact Information

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