



Living in
Community

Report from

A SAFER PROVINCE FOR EVERYONE:

Responding to Violence Against Sex Workers

May 28-29, 2019

Vancouver, BC
(Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh territories)

CONFERENCE PARTNERS



FUNDED BY



Table of Contents

Overview of Conference.....	3
Summary of Themes & Focus Areas for Action	4
Provincial Action Plan Towards Sex Worker Safety in BC.....	5
Overview of plenary sessions, keynote speakers and breakout workshops.....	9
Keynote Session 1 - Hailey Heartless	11
Keynote Session 2 - Carly Teillet and Sekani Dekalth	13
Keynote Session 3 - Inspector Tyler Svendsen	15
Workshop 1 - Understanding Sex Work Across the Province: Context, Supports + Gaps	19
Workshop 2 - Police Reporting Options: Third Party Reporting of Sexual Assault	20
Workshop 3 - Connecting with Hard to Reach Populations	21
Workshop 4 - Municipal and Collaborative Approaches to Sex Work in Vancouver & Victoria	23
Workshop 5 - Bad Date Reporting: Moving Forward Together	24
Workshop 6 - Anti-Violence Organizations Working in Solidarity with Sex Workers	25
Workshop 7 - Exiting Realities & Reframing Transitioning	27
Workshop 8 - Racialized Sex Workers: Empowerment and Experiences	28
Workshop 9 - Best Practices in Low Barrier and Sex Worker Shelter & Housing.....	29
Open Space Conversations Summaries	30
Closing	33

Overview of Conference



On May 28-29, 2019, a diverse group of stakeholders from across BC came together in Vancouver on the unceded Coast Salish territories of the Xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7meshsi (Squamish), and əsəlilwətaɣ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations to discuss best practices in responding to violence in the context of sex work. The first of its kind, the Safer Province for Everyone Conference: Responding to Violence Against Sex Workers hosted sex workers, sex worker organizations, Indigenous organizations, anti-violence organizations, police, three levels of government, health authorities, social service providers, legal organizations and others from across the province. Participants heard from keynote speakers and participated in a series of workshops throughout the two days with the goal of developing a provincial network of stakeholders who are supporting sex worker health and safety as well as developing a provincial action plan with recommendations to target the violence that continues towards sex workers. This action plan will continue to move forward the recommendations in the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

The conference built on past regional conferences hosted by Living in Community (June 2016 and May 2018) and Peers Victoria (May 2018) that have explored best practices, emerging issues and trends, and ways to work collaboratively to improve the health and safety of sex workers. The conference was co-sponsored and

co-organized by Health Initiative for Men (HIM), Ending Violence Association of BC, PACE Society, Peers Victoria, the Metro Vancouver Consortium, SWAN Vancouver, Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre and WISH Drop-In Centre Society. Funding for the conference came from the Canadian Department of Justice, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the City of Vancouver, Province of BC Civil Forfeiture Fund, Vancity Community Foundation, the Vancouver Foundation and the co-sponsoring organizations.

Over 130 people attended the conference from a diversity of sectors. Importantly, there were many people with lived experience in sex work in attendance who informed the dialogue in powerful and important ways. 24 volunteers from a variety of backgrounds also supported the conference.

This report highlights the content and outcomes of the conference, with the intention of continuing to move forward the recommendations that were identified. The following section details the summary of themes followed by the key recommendations that came out of the conference. The report then details the 29 recommendations that came out of the conference and provides a summary of each plenary session, keynote speaker and breakout workshops. The last section looks to next steps to bring the plan into action.



Summary of Themes Action Areas

During the two-day conference, participants explored a variety of topics from bad date and Third Party Reporting to the Provincial Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines to the unique experiences of racialized sex workers. There were many themes that were addressed, including:

- The history of police-sex worker relationships is fraught with lack of trust and fear. There was agreement that there is an urgent need to heal this relationship before moving many actions forward.
- The lack of trust between sex workers and the police impacts sex workers' comfort with Third Party Reporting, and any type of reporting of violence.
- Stigma is at the root of many of the issues that sex workers face, not sex work itself. It is critical for all stakeholders to actively challenge stigma and racism, take explicit stances, and most importantly, to take direction from sex workers.
- Sex workers are experts in their own experiences. Different sex workers have very different experiences, and these differing experiences and needs must be taken into account, in particular the experiences of racialized sex workers.
- Collaboration and partnerships among organizations providing services to sex workers is needed to ensure that the health and safety of all sex workers, including those in more rural areas and those working at the intersection of race, gender expression, sexual orientation and poverty, is enhanced.
- Better data collection and management is required to fully understand the nature and scope of violence against sex workers. Sex workers need a searchable bad date database to better protect themselves against those who would harm them.
- Lack of affordable housing is creating vulnerability to exploitation. Appropriate housing that provides for the needs of sex workers, including those with children, needs to be developed.

Out of these themes, came a series of 29 recommendations that fall under a series of different focus areas as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Collaboration & Multisectoral Approaches | 5. Funding |
| 2. Networking & Mentoring Among Sex Work Organizations | 6. Policing |
| 3. Bad Date Reporting | 7. Public Education & Advocacy |
| 4. Organizational Culture & Accountability | 8. Housing |

Living in Community and the co-sponsors of the conference are committed to these actions in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. The following section details the recommendations from each of these focus areas.

Provincial Action Plan Towards Sex Worker Safety in BC

There were many recommendations for actions that need to be taken. The 29 key actions within a series of focus areas are detailed below, and form the foundation of a draft **Provincial Action Plan Towards Sex Worker Safety in BC**.

	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE
1	COLLABORATION & MULTISECTORAL APPROACHES	
1.1	Engage municipal actors and City councillors around sex work issues, particularly around elections given that municipalities and city councils are well-positioned to educate and enact change	Municipalities, community organizations
1.2	Develop more partnerships and collaboration between anti-violence organizations and sex work organizations on funding and initiatives throughout BC	Anti-violence organizations, sex work organizations
1.3	Non-sex worker organizations ally with relevant orgs who can provide services	Non-sex work service providers
1.4	Develop regional alliances of rural organizations to support sex workers	Living in Community in collaboration with rural support organizations
2	NETWORKING & MENTORING AMONG SEX WORK ORGANIZATIONS	
2.1	Develop mentorship and networking relationships between urban sex worker organizations and rural women's, health and anti-violence organizations to improve services to rural sex workers	Anti-violence & sex work support organizations
2.2	Create list of sex worker friendly spaces and services to distribute to travelling sex workers	Living in Community in collaboration with sex work organizations
3	BAD DATE REPORTING	
3.1	Develop provincial bad date reporting process in collaboration with organizations serving sex workers. This process must meet the needs of sex workers who travel and work in different environments at different times.	Sex work support organizations
3.2	Develop reporting mechanism with specific information that is relevant to sex workers - comprehensive but can be tailored (i.e. description of vehicle not necessary for indoor workers)	Sex workers and sex work support organizations
3.3	Provide comprehensive funding to develop databases that are functional and protected	Funders
3.4	Pool efforts to lobby for large scale systemic change at policy and legislative level	All stakeholders
4	ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE & ACCOUNTABILITY	
4.1	All support organizations need to have diversified staff, board and volunteers	Support organizations
4.2	Create spaces and resources led by and for racialized sex workers	Sex work support organizations

Key Conference Recommendations



	RECOMMENDATIONS	RESPONSIBLE
4.3	Redistribute funding and power so that racialized sex workers are hired and properly compensated for their expertise in organizations and not used in tokenized positions	Sex work support organizations
4.4	Anti-violence orgs need to center sex workers' voices and do their own internal work	Anti-violence organizations
4.5	Evaluate accessibility of organizations and services for sex workers	All community organizations
4.6	Increase accountability regarding whiteness and power hierarchies among non-profits who work with racialized sex workers	All community organizations
4.7	Be aware of the stigmatizing nature of the term exiting. Instead, use ' <i>transitioning</i> ', ' <i>retirement</i> ' or ' <i>career change</i> '	All stakeholders
4.8	Reframe the term 'hard-to-reach' populations. Services are inaccessible, unsafe and there is often no accountability	All stakeholders
5	FUNDING	
5.1	Commit strong funding for sex work organizations across the province including anti-violence and women's organizations who support sex workers	Funding Bodies
6	POLICING	
6.1	Build more trust and respect of the community, including the use of respectful language	Police
6.2	In-person, mandatory, experiential training for police with trauma-informed practices which should also be built into basic officer training	Police agencies throughout BC
6.3	All police organizations should have sex work liaisons including Indigenous liaisons	Police agencies throughout BC
6.4	Develop accountability mechanisms for guidelines, policies and protocols	Police agencies throughout BC
6.5	Develop a process to bring together police, anti-violence organizations, sex workers and sex work support organizations to better understand problems and address concerns with Third Party Reporting	Police and anti-violence organizations
6.6	Develop plan to review and implement Provincial Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines, with guidance from sex workers across BC, that ensures guidelines support safety and relationship building	Police agencies throughout BC
7	PUBLIC EDUCATION & ADVOCACY	
7.1	Engage community around a campaign to address the shortcomings of the Ministry of Child and Family Development to ensure child apprehension doesn't happen simply because the parent is a sex worker and to speed up family reunification processes	Sex work support organizations
7.2	Develop public education campaigns to prevent and address sex work stigma	Living in Community and sex work support organizations
8	HOUSING	
8.1	Develop full-security housing options for female sex workers including family housing	BC Housing
8.2	Ensure all housing staff are in 'ethical alignment' including strengths-based, non-judgmental services	Housing providers

The image on the opposite page captures the key recommendations that came out of the conference in a visual format.



A SAFER PROVINCE FOR EVERYONE
*Responding to violence
against Sex workers*

Overview of plenary sessions, keynote speakers and breakout workshops

A. Opening

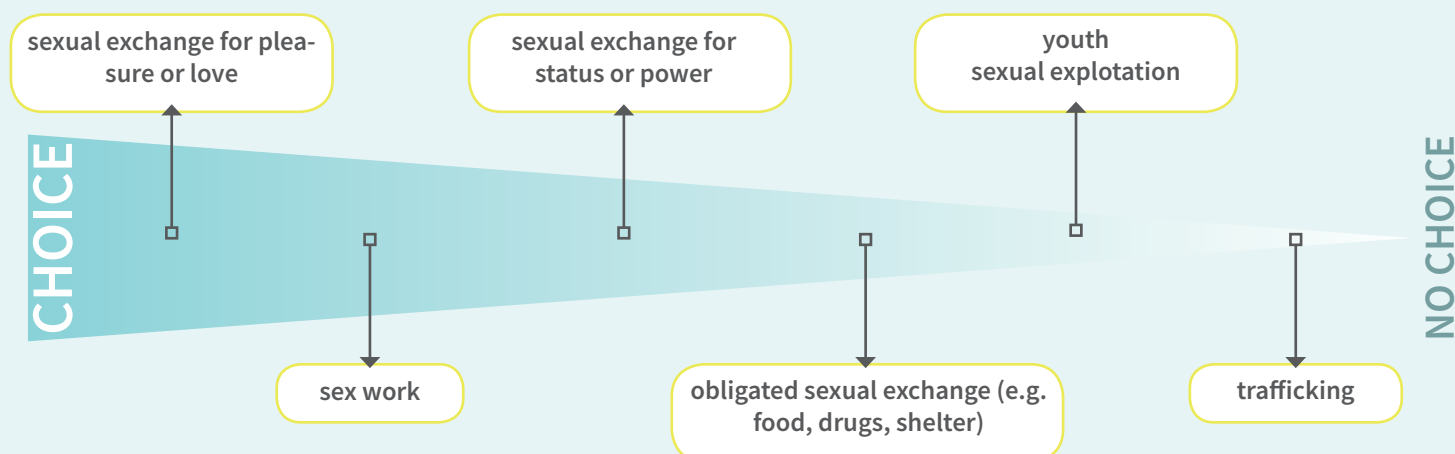
The conference started with an opening from Elder Ruth Alfred of the Namgis Nation, followed by a welcome to all participants, and some introductory activities.



B. Sex work 101:

Kerry Porth provided a brief overview of sex work including the various types of sex work (such as escorting, cam work, phone sex, exotic dancing, erotic massage) and locales where sex takes place (indoors and outdoors), the diverse populations who engage in sex work (men, women, transgender, LGBT2SQIA), as well as basic concepts to help disentangle sex work from human trafficking. The issue of choice in the sex industry was addressed through a visual aid, the “Spectrum of Sexual Exchange”.

SPECTRUM OF SEXUAL EXCHANGE



Hailey Heartless: From Blue Collar to Leather Collar: Towards a Safer Province for Sex Workers

Before Hailey was a sex worker organizer, she was an activist and internal organizer in the Canadian labour movement. In her keynote speech, Hailey shared her story of moving from blue collar activist to sex worker organizer. Hailey shared some of the reasons why people choose sex work as a profession, talked about the organizing happening in the sex work community, outlined the struggles that sex workers face and highlighted the need for solidarity between sex workers, police, nonprofits, government agencies, and all other working Canadians.

Hailey Heartless is a transgender professional dominatrix, sex worker organizer, and consultant. She is a white settler who lives and works in the traditional unceded Qayqayt territory. She has over a decade of organizing experience in the labour and sex worker rights movements. Her recent activism centers an approach of community building, harm reduction, and meeting potential allies where they're at in their understanding.





KEYNOTE

CARLY TEILLET + SEKANI DAKELTH

Vancouver Sex Worker Rights Collective
 Recommendations for the National Inquiry
 on Missing + Murdered Indigenous Women
 and Girls

WE CALL FOR IMMEDIATE
Action

ESPECIALLY
 AS INDIGENOUS WOMEN
 WE ASKED FOR
 DELIBERATE +
 SPECIFIC
 LANGUAGE
 that acknowledge
 multiple genders
 + sexual identities

WE HAD
 TO REMAIN
 TO REMAIN
 SAFE

YOU CANNOT
 INVITE VIOLENCE
 BY DOING SEX WORK

**COLONIZATION
 IS THE RISK FACTOR**

NO ONE PERSON
 CAN BE REDUCED
 TO ONE ASPECT OF
 THEIR IDENTITY
 WHO
 PEOPLE
 DO NOT ERASE US
 PERPETUATE COLONIALISM

WE ARE
 EXCLUDED FROM
 JUSTICE

ADDITION...
 -POVERTY...

DO NOT
 INCREASE STIGMA
 BY CALLING US VICTIMS

SILENCE
 INCREASES
 STIGMA...
 AND VIOLENCE

IT WON'T BE SAFE TO
 TALK TO US UNLESS...
 AND IT CAUSES
 PERSONAL HARM

HOW CAN WE
 GO AGAINST
 INSTITUTIONAL
 VIOLENCE...

WE NEED
 ENFORCEABLE
 POLICIES BASED
 ON RESPECTFUL
 TREATMENT

WE CAN WE
 GO AGAINST
 INSTITUTIONAL
 VIOLENCE...

HEALING CENTRES...
 LOW BARRIER MEDICAL CARE

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION - FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES
 + SUPPORTS FOR INDIGENOUS FAMILIES TO THRIVE

LISTEN TO OUR TEACHINGS!
 . education on consent, colonization,
 . sexual health - and HOPE
 . education of police
 . in ethnic school
 . sex work mentors

THE LAW MUST NOT DEPRIVE US OF SAFETY

WE WILL NEVER
 STOP CALLING FOR
 OUR VOICES +
 INDIGENITY TO BE
 VALUED

WE'VE NEVER
 BEEN SILENCED...

WE ARE
 RESILIENT &
 SURVIVORS

WE MUST HAVE DECISIONMAKERS LISTEN TO US

ABOUT OUR
 ISSUES OF SEX WORK
 AND ALSO ABOUT
 HOUSING, HEALTH

HEALING CENTRES + SAFE HOUSING
 POLICE MUST RECOGNIZE OUR RIGHT TO BE SAFE
 WE ARE COMMITTED TO OUR COMMUNITY + THE POLICE

TECHNIQUES OF COMMUNITY MUST BE RESPECTED
 POLICIES THAT KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER

WE MUST NEVER
 STOP CALLING FOR
 OUR VOICES +
 INDIGENITY TO BE
 VALUED

VANCOUVER SEX WORKERS
 RIGHTS COLLECTIVE:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- MISSING recommendations must include Indigenous, trans + cis women, 2S, non-binary + LGB, asexual, pansexual + queer people
- GOVERNMENTS + DECISIONMAKERS must include Indigenous folks with diverse gender/sexual identities who do sex work
- VPD + RCMP + police must work with Indigenous women's orgs
- VPD must expand Sex Worker liaison position
- VPD + RCMP to create enforceable policies for 'victims' when reporting violence - victim receives respect
- 911 calls - independent review
- Independent civilian police accountability
- Long term victims funding
- Safe shelters/spaces run by Indigenous women's orgs
- Housing, and housing of many types
- Funding for sex worker orgs
- "meet them where they're at" policies - cell phones + transportation
- Healing centres, low barrier medical care
- Child protection legislation - fundamental changes + supports for Indigenous FAMILIES TO THRIVE
- LISTEN TO OUR TEACHINGS!
 . education on consent, colonization,
 . sexual health - and HOPE
 . education of police
 . in ethnic school
 . sex work mentors
- THE LAW MUST NOT DEPRIVE US OF SAFETY

Sex Worker Rights Collective: Carly Teillet and Sekani Dekalth

Recommendations for the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

The Vancouver Sex Worker Rights Collective is a group of Indigenous women who came together to have their perspectives, stories, and knowledge shared with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). Meeting regularly, they worked to dispel some of the myths and misconceptions about their lives and to provide critical information to the Inquiry to ensure their voices weren't forgotten.

Carly Teillet, one of the lawyers for the Collective, and Sekani Dekalth, one of the members of the Collective, shared the powerful and critical voices and recommendations of the Collective. Their important messages and recommendations are included below.

Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective Recommendations

- MMIWG recommendations must include Indigenous, trans and cis women, 2S, nonbinary, +LGB, asexual, pansexual and queer people
- Governments and decision-makers must include Indigenous folks with diverse gender/sexual identities who do sex work
- VPD, RCMP and all police must work with Indigenous women's organizations
- VPD must expand the sex work liaison position
- VPD and RCMP need to create enforceable policies for victims when reporting violence to ensure victim receives respect
- 911 calls need an independent review
- Independent civilian police accountability
- Long-term victims' funding
- Safe shelters and spaces run by Indigenous women's organizations
- Diverse housing to meet differing needs
- Funding for sex worker organizations
- "Meet them where they're at" policies
- Cell phones and transportation
- Healing centres; low barrier medical care
- Child protection legislation: fundamental changes and supports for Indigenous families to thrive
- Listen to Indigenous teachings
- Education on consent, colonization, sexual health and hope
- Education of police
- Matriarch school
- Sex work mentors
- The law must not deprive Indigenous sex workers of their safety



Inspector Tyler Svendsen: The Provincial Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines

In this session, Inspector Tyler Svendsen from the RCMP E Division discussed the Provincial Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines. Passed in November 2017 by the BC Association of Chiefs of Police, the guidelines aim to encourage consistent sex work enforcement practices and enhance the safety of persons involved in sex work across the province. The Guidelines were written to support BC police agencies to ensure the safety, dignity, and well-being of those involved in sex work and to enhance police response to violence against persons involved in sex work, and were one of the recommendations in the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Report.

Summary of discussions:

Provincial Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines Feedback

- Too victim and savior-like.
- Focus on women & youth. Male sex workers are excluded.
- Police need to recognize their historical role in creating the distrust, fear, suspicion, hatred in the community if they have any hope for reconciliation.
- Police need to focus on continuing to build solid, respectful relationships with young people. Despite being underage and having the 'exploited' tag, these will/may be the sex workers of the future. The way you treat underage sex workers will deem how they view police in the future.
- Access sensitivity training where needed.
- The need to overcome institutional stigma and racism in order for the Guidelines to be successful.
- Often focus is on risk to greater community than for sex workers. need further definition of risk. Who is at risk?
- Huge concern how it's intentionally vague and decontextualized.
- Interagency collaboration is concerning, e.g. police & Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) targeting of people with intersecting identities that face oppression like migrant sex workers.
- Police investigate police. No valid accountability mechanism.
- If Guidelines are not supported by communities and cities, they are useless.
- Remove 'enforcement' from the title as enforcement often means arrest for sex workers. Change Enforcement Guidelines to Response Guidelines.

What do we need to implement?

- Experiential training including stigma, implicit bias, cultural competency training, and the differences between exploitation, sex work and trafficking.
- Separation of criminal behavior from sex work.
- Training and a plan to implement Guidelines to ensure consistency. There needs to be clarification of 'discretion' of individual officers. What does 'discretion' actually mean?
- Prove this is a priority.

Who needs to be involved?

- All RCMP.
- Local police.
- Local advocacy groups.
- People with lived experience.
- Groups like SWAN. Police are not safe for migrant sex workers.



KEY ACTIONS

- Contact all RCMP in region re: implementation of Guidelines.
- Adapt Guidelines to region.
- Smaller communities need a liaison position, someone they feel safe with.
- Build more trust and respect of the community.
- More funding.
- Police take responsibility to implement guidelines. Community can support implementation but leadership needs to be from police.



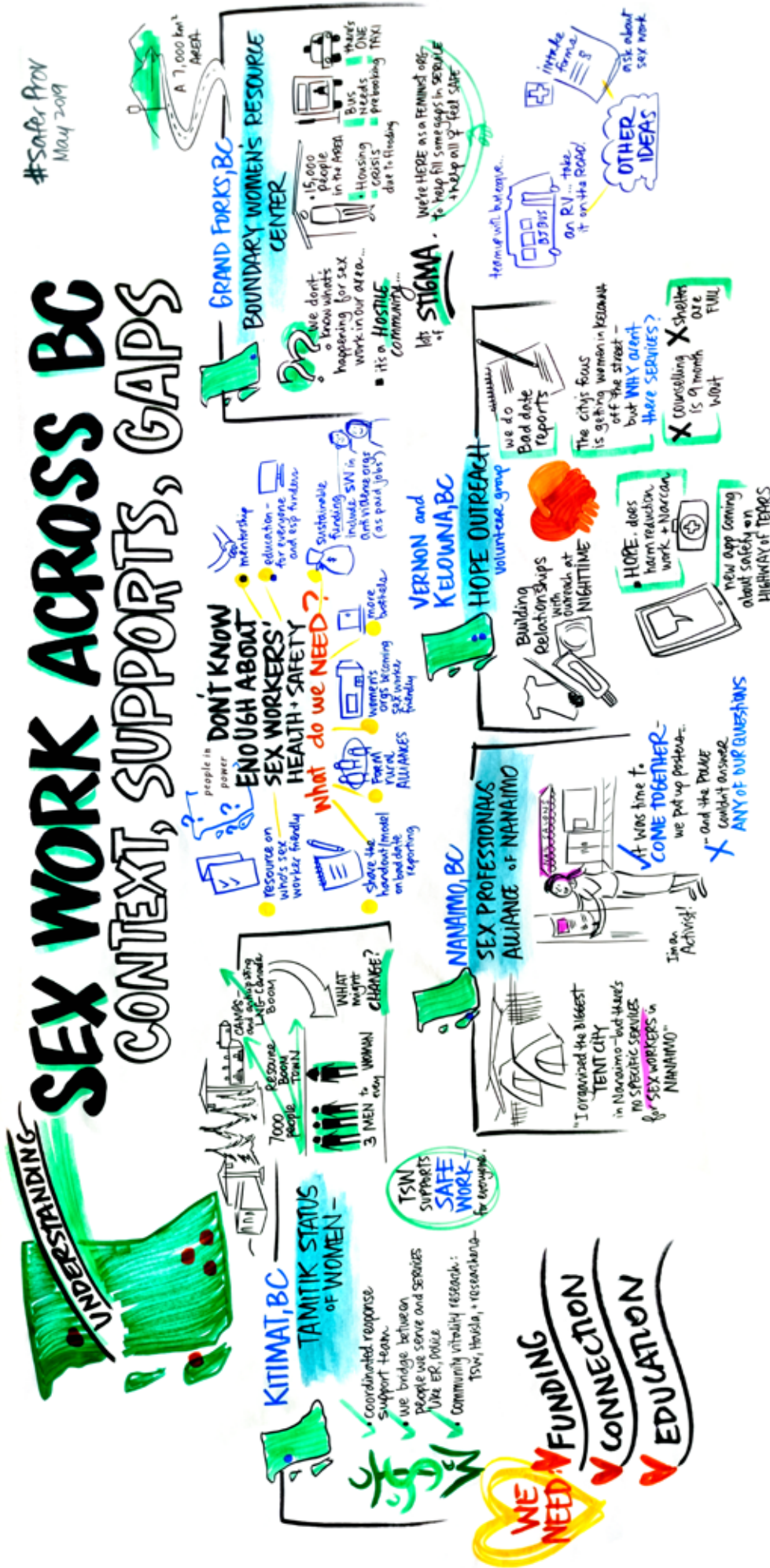
WINNIE FOR EVERYONE
Violence to sex workers
not sex workers

MUNICIPAL and PROVINCIAL
APPROACHES
VARI

Violence
Reporting
Protocol

Breakout session summaries

There were 9 workshops that took place throughout the conference, in addition to a series of open space conversations on the second day. The following pages provide a detailed overview of each workshop and open space conversations, along with the recommended actions.



Understanding Sex Work Across the Province: Context, Supports + Gaps

OVERVIEW

Sex workers across British Columbia experience significantly high levels of violence, discrimination and stigmatization. However, in many communities, particularly northern and rural communities, there is little known about sex work and the specific health and safety needs of sex workers in these areas. This workshop looked at what we know and what we don't know about sex work in different communities, and began to map the most pressing issues for sex workers in rural and more remote communities.

Facilitator: Rachel Phillips, *Peers Victoria*

Presenters:

- Amber McGrath, *Sex Professionals Alliance of Nanaimo*
- Angie Lohr, *Hope Outreach*
- Michelle Martins, *Tamitik Status of Women*
- Stephanie Korbatoff, *Boundary Women's Resource Centre*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Kamloops bad date reporting system should be spread to other small rural communities
- Regional alliances across multiple small towns would be good
- Where there is no specific sex work organization, local women's organizations need to step up; big city sex work organizations should mentor these women's organizations
- Better public transportation is desperately needed; trading sex for a ride can be very dangerous
- More brothels are needed to create safe indoor spaces for sex workers to work
- Art, such as burlesque could be used to improve understanding and reduce stigma
- Sex work liaison positions are needed in anti-violence orgs
- It is hard to establish relationships with transient sex workers



KEY ACTIONS

1. Develop mentorship/networking relationships between urban sex worker organizations and rural women's and anti-violence organizations to improve services to rural sex workers.
2. Develop regional alliances of rural organizations to support sex workers.
3. Create list of sex worker friendly spaces and services to distribute to travelling sex workers.

Police Reporting Options: Third Party Reporting of Sexual Assault

OVERVIEW

Third Party Reporting of sexual assault is a process which allows adult victims (19 and over) to report details of a sexual offence/assault to police anonymously. Although it is a process that is designed to support those who do not feel safe or comfortable to report a crime directly to police, sex workers and sex work organizations have expressed concerns about the safety of the process. This session unpacked the different perspectives around Third Party Reporting and looked at ways forward to increase sex workers' reporting of violence.

Facilitator: Lisa Gibson, *Living in Community*

Presenters:

- Alison Clancey, *SWAN Vancouver*
- Kit Rothschild, *PACE Society*
- Morgen Baldwin, *Ending Violence Association of BC*
- Stephanie Ashton, *RCMP*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Anti-violence organizations and police have been working for a long time to develop Third Party Reporting (TPR) standards and see the strong potential of TPR to support individuals who experience violence who do not want to go directly to police, including sex workers. TPR is an important option on a spectrum of reporting options, from a full report to information only report to TPR to no report.
- Sex work organizations still have many concerns about TPR.
- PACE has been piloting TPR for the past year but has only taken two reports. Most members don't report to police and there remains a lack of trust, safety and access to justice. There are also concerns about the limits to confidentiality, including a child in need of protection and imminent risk of serious harm.
- SWAN Vancouver has many concerns about TPR for migrant sex workers because of criminalization via immigration and criminal laws, especially arrest, detention and deportation, and sex work being conflated with trafficking. Because TPR relies on a trusting relationship with police, there is still much work that needs to be done in building trust with the sex work community.
- TPR needs to be piloted with sex work organizations and there needs to be a culture shift and trust building between police and community. Sex workers need to know more about what happens after a TPR is submitted to police in order to build trust.



KEY ACTIONS

1. Training and education to police about the sex industry, developed and delivered in partnership with people with lived experience.
2. Develop accountability mechanisms for guidelines, policies and protocols.
3. Develop a process to bring together police, anti-violence organizations, sex workers and sex work support organizations to better understand problems and address concerns with Third Party Reporting.

Connecting with Hard to Reach Populations

OVERVIEW

Due to stigma, criminalization and other factors, many sex workers are invisible to the public, and work in isolated contexts with little access to supports. In this workshop, panelists shared their expertise in reaching out to migrant and immigrant (im/migrant) indoor sex workers, male sex workers working online, and trans sex workers.

Facilitator: Mebrat Beyene, *WISH Drop In Centre Society*

Presenters:

- Kelly Go, *SWAN Vancouver*
- Christian Felice, *Health Initiative for Men*
- Sophia Ciavarella, *Peers Victoria*

Summary of discussion/insights:

Im/migrant sex workers

- Culturally-specific, in-person and online services in sex workers' first language are needed
- Can maintain contact and offer support even after women are deported

Trans sex workers

- Why are folks "hard to reach" rather than folks not reaching out? This idea needs reframing.
- Transphobic service providers impede access and existing discrimination needs to be addressed
- Know the services you are referring people to in order to ensure safety
- Stop separating materials 'men' vs 'women' to increase inclusivity

Male sex workers

- Stigma may prevent disclosure
- Have been greatly affected by the shutting down of online platforms which were used to connect with male sex workers

Summary:

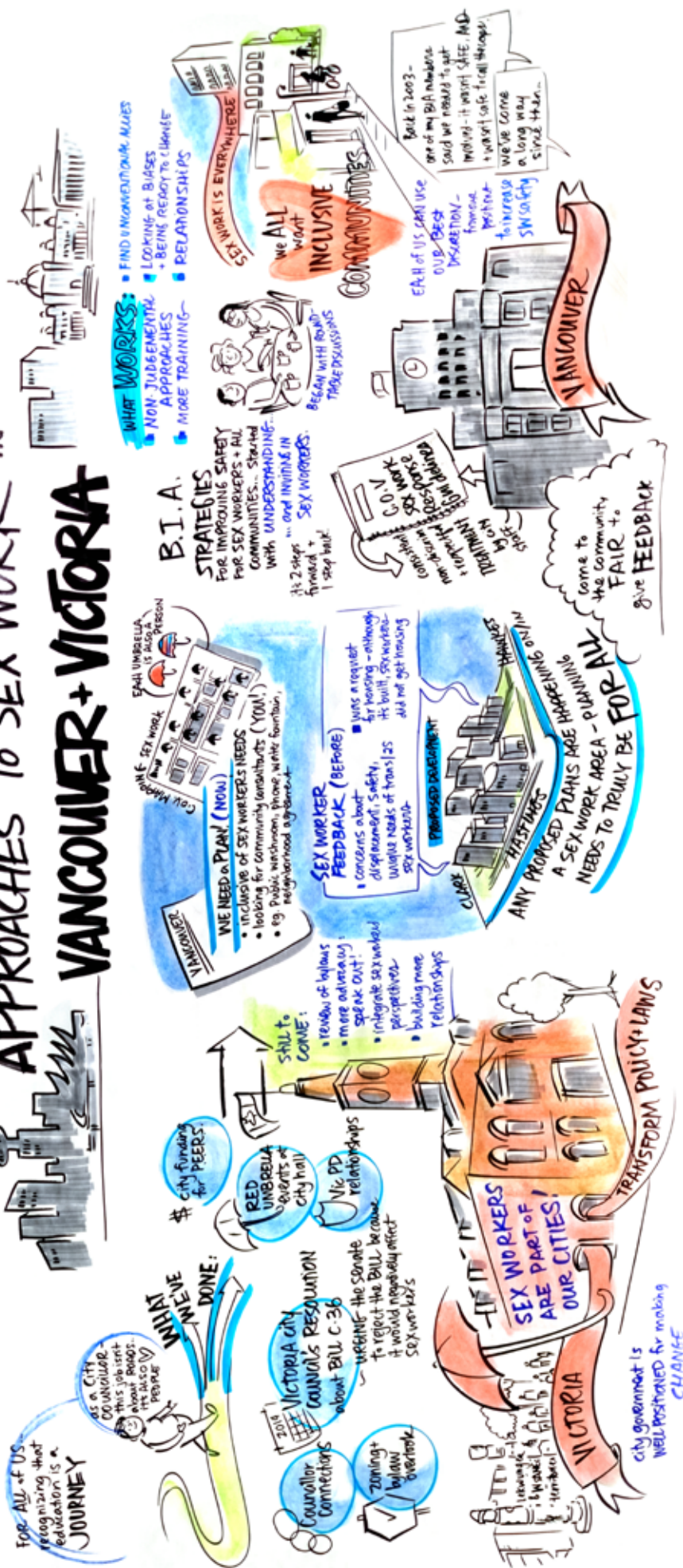
- Let the sex worker lead the interaction including whether they want to disclose
- Be mindful of how much personal information is required
- Use language of sex worker's choice. Some may not self-identify as 'sex workers'
- Adapt to the platforms sex workers are using
- Demonstrate you are safe including facilitating a safe, comfortable space. Respond to mistakes.



KEY ACTIONS

1. Organizations need to have diversified staff, board and volunteers.
2. Reframe 'hard-to-reach'. Services are inaccessible, unsafe and there is often no accountability.
3. Challenge stigma and racism. Take explicit stances. Take direction from sex workers.
4. Ally with relevant organizations who can provide services.

MUNICIPAL and COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO SEX WORK IN VANCOUVER + VICTORIA



Municipal and Collaborative Approaches to Sex Work in Vancouver & Victoria

OVERVIEW

Sex work is often a polarized issue with many conflicting perspectives. When conflict around sex work happens, sex workers and other community members can both be impacted in negative ways. This workshop explored some promising approaches that bring together different stakeholders to focus on health and safety for everyone and move beyond moral debates. Representatives from the Cities of Victoria and Vancouver, as well as Living in Community, shared strategies they have engaged to improve safety for sex workers and all community members, and to increase the inclusion of sex workers in these processes.

Facilitator: Norm Leech, *Vancouver Aboriginal Policing Society*

Presenters:

- April Sumter-Freitag, *City of Vancouver*
- Marianne Alto, *City of Victoria*
- Patricia Barnes, *Hastings North Business Improvement Association & Living in Community*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Victoria is only one of only three cities to pass a motion in opposition to Bill C-36. This catalyzed a lot of community and municipal action around sex work issues.
- Vancouver has two social policy staff who have a specific focus on sex work issues. This allows an important lens in all municipal work. An example is the Hastings Corridor Sex Worker Safety Plan in Vancouver which seeks to ensure that development doesn't endanger sex workers.
- Consensual sex work is not a police matter and needs to be addressed in multisectoral way.
- City of Vancouver's work including Response Guidelines and social planners are successes.
- Consider unconventional allies such as Business Improvement Associations. They can be useful advocates.
- Allied politicians and municipal councillors are very helpful and can be proactive.
- Training must be informed and community-driven.



KEY ACTIONS

1. Engage municipal actors and City councillors around sex work issues, particularly around elections. Municipalities and city councils are well positioned to educate and enact change.
2. Encourage municipal law enforcement to use discretion.
3. Public education to prevent and address sex work stigma is important.

Bad Date Reporting: Moving Forward Together

OVERVIEW

Bad date reporting is a critical safety tool that sex workers use to communicate with other sex workers about predatory violence. There are many different formal and informal bad date reporting systems throughout BC but there is limited ability for regions to share with each other. This workshop continued the conversation about how there can be better collaboration across the province around bad date reporting, a conversation that was started at a conference hosted by Peers Victoria in May 2018.

Facilitator: Mebrat Beyene, *WISH Drop In Centre Society*

Presenters:

- Dana Krementz, *WISH Drop In Centre Society (MAP Van)*
- Danielle Cooley & Sophia Ciavarella, *Peers Victoria*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- WISH's Red Light Alert is a communication system to increase visibility of perpetrators.
- System is by and for sex workers and not for police; there are many reasons why sex workers don't report to police. Many just want to warn other sex workers.
- Peers Victoria is piloting an online reporting system; funding for 3 years; promotes sex worker agency, ownership and empowerment through reporting which may be their only connection to community.
- There are concerns around police involvement in bad date reporting as they can sometimes be perpetrators.
- Bad date reporting is reactive and doesn't address causes of violence.
- Concerns around confidentiality and lawsuits.
- Numerous online blacklists exist; currently, there is no collation between bad date reporting systems.



KEY ACTIONS

1. Develop provincial bad date reporting process in collaboration between organizations serving sex workers. The process must meet the needs of workers who travel and work in different environments at different times.
2. Develop reporting mechanism with specific information that is relevant to sex workers - comprehensive but can be tailored (e.g. description of vehicle not necessary for indoor workers).
3. Provide comprehensive funding to develop databases that are functional and protected.
4. Pool efforts to lobby for large scale systemic change at policy and legislative level.

Anti-violence Organizations Working in Solidarity with Sex Workers

OVERVIEW

In recent years, anti-violence organizations have begun reflecting about how they can be more inclusive and supportive of sex workers, a group who are often overlooked in the work of ending violence. This has led to some organizations taking an active stance to work in solidarity with sex workers to stop violence and to recognize the particular forms of violence that sex workers experience. In this engaging dialogue, WAVAW, Ending Violence Association of BC and Victoria Sexual Assault Centre shared their journeys, the challenges and the successes, and looked at steps to embed sex work inclusivity within organizations.

Facilitator: Kate Rossiter, *Ending Violence Association of BC*

Presenters:

- Felix Gilliland, *WAVAW*
- Lane Foster & Shannon Raison, *Victoria Sexual Assault Centre*
- Tracy Porteous, *Ending Violence Association of BC*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Anti-violence organizations must develop an understanding of the spectrum of sexual exchange, from empowerment (choice) to exploitation (no choice).
- Anti-violence organizations must recognize the diversity of the sex work community, and understand the diverse experiences and needs of sex workers who may be more stigmatized by society (e.g., racialized sex workers, migrant sex workers, trans sex workers, and sex workers with mental health and substance use concerns).
- It is important for anti-violence organizations to build relationships with sex work organizations, and acknowledge and take accountability for the ways in which anti-violence organizations may have caused harm to sex worker communities in the past.
- Anti-violence organizations should advocate for sex worker communities, and amplify the voices of sex worker advocates and organizations.
- Anti-violence organizations should focus not only on sexual violence prevention but also on sexual health using sex positive approaches, and safety planning specific to sex workers.
- Anti-violence organizations must work to shift organizational culture to create safer spaces for staff and volunteers to share their expertise and insights from doing sex work, should they choose to.



KEY ACTIONS

1. Anti-violence organizations need to center sex workers' voices and do their own internal work.
2. Partner and collaborate with sex work orgs on funding and initiatives.
3. Evaluate accessibility.

EXITING REALITIES: LESSONS FROM THE METRO VANCOUVER CONSORTIUM

TRANSITIONS

TRANSITIONS:
WHO WE ARE:

- HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR MEN
- ABORIGINAL FRONT DOOR SOCIETY
- PACE SOCIETY
- WISH DROP IN BWS

WE BELIEVE:

- "SEX WORK AS WORK"
- RIGHTS BASED - NOT RESCUE
- OPTIONS + SUPPORT those OPTIONS
- ACCESS TO NETWORK OF SERVICES
- COLLABORATION between service providers

STRENGTHS-BASED:

HOW WE WORK:

SHORT-TERM INTERMEDIATE

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS

PHASE 1: INITIAL ASSESSMENT

PHASE 2: STABILIZATION

PHASE 3: SUSTAINMENT

PHASE 4: TRANSITION

PHASE 5: POST-TRANSITION

PHASE 6: LONG-TERM FOLLOW-UP

PHASE 7: EVALUATION

PHASE 8: REVISION

PHASE 9: RE-EVALUATION

PHASE 10: REVISION

PHASE 11: RE-EVALUATION

PHASE 12: REVISION

THE REALITIES ARE COMPLEX:

CASE STUDIES

FEAR OF CHILD ABUSE/SEXUAL ASSAULT
PTSD
SEX REFUSE
WOMEN'S STATUS
NONE
Tactical/Indigenous

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT THEM?

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

NEEDS ARE LONG

EXITING REALITIES + REFRAMING TRANSITION

TRANSITION INTO SAFER SEX WORK

OR INTO OTHER WORK NOT IN THE SEX WORK SECTOR

OR LESS RELIANCE ON SW

OR INTO OTHER WORK NOT IN THE SEX WORK SECTOR

OR LESS RELIANCE ON SW

OR INTO OTHER WORK NOT IN THE SEX WORK SECTOR

OR LESS RELIANCE ON SW

Exiting realities & reframing transitioning: Lessons from The Metro Vancouver Consortium

OVERVIEW

Funded by Public Safety Canada with contributions from the City of Vancouver, Transitions collaboratively supports sex workers who wish to transition into safer sex work, and/or reduce their reliance on, transition out of, retire from or exit sex work altogether. Transitions is a 5-tiered model that aims to connect participants to programs and supportive employment opportunities, decrease systemic barriers, and actively reduce the stigma of sex work in Metro Vancouver. The program was launched in December 2016 with lofty ideals; however, the reality of delivering such a program is very different on the ground. This breakout session explored these challenges and the changes required to better support program participants.

Facilitator: Sam Stiegler, *Health Initiative for Men*

Presenters:

- Alvaro Luna, *Health Initiative for Men*
- Candace Parnell, *Aboriginal Front Door Society*
- Kit Rothschild, *PACE Society*
- Nivedha Raveinthiranathan, *WISH Drop-In Centre Society*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Rights not rescue is a core principal to the work and allows sex workers to feel respected and valued in accessing the program.
- Meaningful relationships with sex workers, the low barrier approach and a responsive program have been some of the major successes. Challenges include funding, safe and affordable housing, lack of access to justice, lack of mental health, trauma and substance use support, and ongoing discrimination and stigma.
- The stigma surrounding sex work remains significant within society and organizations that sex workers may access. Accompaniment to services and institutions has helped to mitigate the discrimination marginalized folks face in those spaces.
- Emphasize and work with the strengths of marginalized clients.



KEY ACTIONS

1. Engage community around a campaign to address the shortcomings of the Ministry of Child and Family Development.
2. Stop saying 'exiting'. Instead say 'retirement' or 'career change'.

Racialized Sex Workers: Empowerment and Experiences

OVERVIEW

Race is not usually foregrounded when talking about sex work issues, but for many racialized sex workers, race is the defining experience for their involvement in sex work. In this conversation, panelists explored how race shapes not only experiences and interactions with police and other service providers, but also interactions within the sex work community itself. The discussion focused on how racism can be addressed in more effective and empowering ways to create greater justice for all sex workers of colour.

Facilitator: Mebrat Beyene, *WISH Drop In Centre Society*

Presenters:

- Shelda Kastor & Irene Mountain, *Sex Workers United Against Violence (SWUAV)*
- Danielle Cooley, *SACRED*
- Kelly Go & Margaret Wang, *SWAN Vancouver*
- Kayla Hogen & Shafaye Baylis, *WISH Drop In Centre Society*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Racialized sex workers have constant experiences of intersecting state violence, fetishization and stigma, which is shaped by a trajectory of historic and ongoing racist and gendered colonial violence. Criminalization from various fronts diminishes racialized sex workers' options for seeking justice, support and safety.
- There is a lack of services for Black sex workers and when they do access services, they experience tokenism.
- Indigenous sex workers' experiences are widely diverse yet are treated as singular and one-dimensional.
- There is gendered colonial violence that targets Indigenous sex workers within and beyond the context of sex work.
- Police dismiss reports from racialized sex workers about the violence they face. They are not believed and are sidelined.
- Migrant sex workers are further marginalized in Canada. They are denied dignity and face constant threats of arrest, detention and deportation. The fear of deportation prevents access to resources and services.
- Migrant sex work is conflated with human trafficking. Trafficking and immigration laws have racist underpinnings created on stereotypes and racist understandings of migrant sex workers.
- Community relations among racialized sex workers is an integral part of support and survival.



KEY ACTIONS

1. Create spaces and resources led by and for racialized sex workers.
2. Redistribute funding and power so that racialized sex workers are hired and properly compensated for their expertise in organizations and not used in tokenized positions.
3. Increase accountability regarding whiteness and power hierarchies among non-profits who work with racialized sex workers.



Best Practices in Low Barrier and Sex Worker Shelter & Housing

OVERVIEW

The housing crisis throughout BC has meant that there is growing homelessness, and less access to safe and affordable housing options for marginalized individuals, including sex workers. In this workshop, participants explored the housing spectrum that is needed to best support sex workers' diverse needs, from drop-ins to shelters to temporary and permanent housing. With a particular focus on the opportunities and barriers in rural and remote regions, the workshop looked at innovative ways to support the housing needs of sex workers, and to increase housing accessibility and affordability for individuals engaged in sex work.

Facilitator: Kerry Porth, *Living in Community*

Presenters:

- Lana Fox & Nikkolina Olynick, *Raincity Housing (The Vivian)*
- Michelle Powell & Rachel Phillips, *Peers Victoria*
- Shannon Skilton & Emily Henry, *Chrysalis Society*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Need for low barrier, non-judgmental housing where guest policies allow sex workers to bring clients (i.e. no IDing guests).
- Need for intensive case management and linking sex workers to other services, including housing first models that are in ethical alignment with sex work continuum.
- Over regulation and surveillance in supportive housing makes it unworkable for many women in sex work.
- Continuum of housing and support should include support recovery for those wishing to address problematic substance misuse.
- There is an immense shortage of full spectrum housing —women-focused. Gender and sex work lenses are not applied to social housing development.
- Critical to take a strengths-based approach, recognizing women's resiliency, survival skills and intelligence.
- Housing options for sex workers does not mean only dealing with issues of safety and violence.



KEY ACTIONS

1. Develop full-security housing options for female sex workers including family housing.
2. Ensure staff are in 'ethical alignment' including strengths-based, non-judgmental services.

Open Space Conversations Summaries

OPEN SPACE TOPIC 1: How do non-profits grow to be sustainable?

Facilitator: Angie Lohr, *Hope Outread*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Partner with established orgs
- Connect with BC Housing, Status of Women, and health authorities to explore funding options

OPEN SPACE TOPIC 2: Restorative Justice & Community Conflict

Facilitator: Kit Rothschild, *PACE Society*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Create a response to a broken criminal justice system. What are the alternatives to the current framework? How do we work outside these systems?
- Who defines safety and risk?
- Police training informed by community is needed
- Trauma-informed care needs to be mandated and automatic, which includes basic social work skills
- Involve community at the outset as opposed to bringing community in later to address problems
- Provide funding and training for folks who want to do restorative justice
- Look at existing models in Black communities in the US
- There needs to be community accountability circles
- Staff available at all times who are trained in de-escalation

OPEN SPACE TOPIC 3: Non-Binary Sex Workers

Facilitator: Marlena Boyle, *Health Initiative for Men*

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Sex work narratives and activism centers particular sex workers. 'Sex work' language defaults to women.
- There's judgment for trans sex workers, and male sex workers are conflated with the gay community.
- There is invisible violence and invisibility of these sex workers more generally.
- Power dynamics are different from what female sex workers experience. There is toxic masculinity, 'you can handle it'.
- Some do not self-identify as sex workers.
- Some distance themselves from sex workers as there is different language, transactional process and stigma.
- Law enforcement dismisses experiences (more invisibility). There is homophobia and toxic masculinity.
- Culture and struggles are specific and overlooked. e.g., navigating confidentiality, relationships in small communities, queer culture, consent, and relationships.



OPEN SPACE TOPIC 4: Union Organizing

Facilitator: Hailey Heartless

Summary of discussion/insights:

- There are lots of ways that union organizing can support safer and healthier work spaces for sex workers.
- Sex workers want to improve bad work environments and ensure good work places keep operating.
- Canadian Adult Entertainment Council (CAEC) that has exotic dancers, escorts, drivers etc. could widen to include other forms of sex work.
- There is a question of how to advocate efficiently - there are the same people on multiple committees; use platforms like Google docs or Dropbox to work better together; be careful not to burn people out.
- Unions are usually organized by worksite but a cross-section of the industry could be a way to represent individuals; need approx 10 employers to buy in but don't necessarily need large numbers of workers
- An alternate would be to organize a group of people that don't adhere to labour code - house of labour will do what workers want
- Smaller unions are scared to think about sex workers because of RCMP investigation or being sued but RCMP less likely to raid unionized workplaces
- Union dues are determined by members - don't have to collect dues. Can set own benefits - e.g. photography, cosmetics, and procedures
- Sex workers don't want mandated price sets, they want to set own prices
- Would it make more sense to become a nonprofit/association over unionizing?
- In Spain, government certified sex worker union then took it away
- In India, sex workers created own credit union - can grant mortgages, loans, etc.

OPEN SPACE TOPIC 5: Considerations for a provincial bad date reporting system

Facilitators: Mebrat Beyene and Kenzie Gerrand

Summary of discussion/insights:

NEXT STEPS

- There must be various versions/types of reporting to ensure accessibility
- How do we address the problems that come with increased access? Who should have access?
- What is warrantable and at risk of being subpoenaed?
- The needs of smaller communities must be considered, as well as different types of sex work
- Enforcement practices vary from region to region
- Must be sexworker-led as much as possible, understanding that in smaller communities, this will take some support and time, and may look different
- Who will analyze and look for trends?

Interim Solution | Expanded Red Light Alert

- Organizations can forward their bad date reports to WISH to be added to the Red Light Alert (email info@wishdropincentre.org to either send Bad Date Reports or be added to the weekly Red Light Alert distribution list)
 - ◊ Possibly include youth reports from youth organizations
 - ◊ Possibly include SWAN's bad date reporting

LARGER SCALE PLANS

1. Funding: We need substantial support and recognition that this work has been done off the sides of desks for far too long, when this is an essential service keeping sex workers alive.

- Provincial - Provide a briefing note to provincial contacts
- Federal – Explore federal funding options
- Research - A potential option for funding community consultations

2. Working Group

- Sex worker-led as much as possible
- Sex work support organizations, provincial anti-violence organizations and others?
- Develop an online information sharing platform for working group members

3. Community consultations

- Broad consultations with different communities, ensuring representation from various areas of the industry, to ensure all perspectives are considered
- Develop best practices around bad date reporting
- Review current databases, e.g., Ugly Mugs (UK), Maggie's, Shift, Sex Workers of Winnipeg Action Coalition, Peers Victoria

OPEN SPACE TOPIC 6: Sex Worker Closed Session

Summary of discussion/insights:

- Sex workers took the opportunity for a closed door session to discuss topics that weren't covered at the conference, and for networking and support.

Closing

The conference closed with a song and sharing from Glida Morgan an elder with the Tla'amin Nation, and with a commitment by participants to continue to educate themselves about sex work issues and to move forward the actions identified.

Living in Community heard much feedback about the need for regular provincial conferences, and there is ongoing interest in building the networks of communication, mentoring and action at a provincial scale. Work has already begun with a group of attendees who are working towards a provincial bad date reporting system. All attendees were interested in the development of a provincial network of organizations providing services to sex workers to learn best practices, share important information, and to create greater safety for sex workers who may be travelling by providing them with a list of safe organizations for them to turn to if needed.

Living in Community has worked for years to find ways to support sex workers and community at the local level and it is encouraging to see that this can work at a provincial level as well.

The organizing committee of Living in Community, Ending Violence Association (EVA) of BC, Health Initiative for Men (HIM), PACE Society, Peers Victoria, the Metro Vancouver Consortium, SWAN Vancouver, Sex Workers United Against Violence (SWUAV), Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre and WISH Drop-In Centre Society would like to thank everyone who attended, everyone who shared, all speakers and everyone who stepped in to discuss challenging topics in a meaningful, collaborative effort to create a safer province for everyone.

