

Project Report

Phase 1

*Empowerment and Future Partnerships for Seasonally Employed
Women and Rural Immigrant Women involved in the Agricultural
Industry in the South Okanagan-Similkameen*

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A Safer Future for BC Women

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Executive Summary

Purpose and Scope of the Research

In the last five years, the South Okanagan-Similkameen has seen unprecedented shifts in the cultural and ethnic make-up of the agricultural workforce. This participatory action-oriented research project arose in response to these shifts and out of concern over the lack of regional resources to support and ensure the well being and empowerment of rural immigrant women and seasonally employed women. In order to address the prevention needs of these populations, the project focused on identifying gaps in the regional resources available to them. Participants included immigrant women and seasonally employed women, services providers, community organizations, church groups, municipal governments and other interested community members.

The project gave us the opportunity to explore chosen themes with participants. This exploration uncovered prevalent issues relating to:

- working conditions;
- experiences of violence;
- experiences of racism and discrimination;
- knowledge and barriers to available services;
- solutions to enhance accessibility to existing services; and
- solutions to limit violence, discrimination and racism.

In total one hundred women from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, fourteen service providers and forty-one community members representing different community organizations, church group and municipal governments participated in the project. Interviews and focus groups were held in the summer and fall of 1998 and the winter of 1999. All interviews and focus groups with women and community members were held in the communities of Osoyoos, Keremeos and Oliver, while a few service providers were interviewed in Penticton.

From these endeavours participants forwarded various recommendations and a tentative action plan was proposed for a Phase II of the project.

Findings

Through the research we determined that rural immigrant women face many barriers which increase their vulnerability to violence against women. Many immigrant women in the region are seasonally employed in the agricultural sector impeding their opportunity for economic security. Racial discrimination in the work place and in the community, however, hinders their ability to sustain full-time employment. Various social systems, and cultural and linguistic barriers limit their ability to access services in situations of violence against them.

The research also identified a high incidence of sexual harassment and assault against seasonally employed women involved in the agricultural sector. Very few culturally sensitive services exist in the region to prevent and reduce these incidences. Participants in the research believed that the lack of prevention services and awareness of available resources resulted in an increased risk of violence for

these women. Project participants also suggested various preventative measures be implemented in order to reduce the incidence of violence against women.

Recommendations

Women, service providers, community members, service and church groups and municipal governments participated in the project. Their recommendations are divided into three sections. The first pertains to programs and services needed in the region, the second identifies ways to improve access to already existing and future community programs, and the third focuses on educational and information programs needed to prevent violence against rural immigrant and seasonally employed women.

I. Recommendations to meet the service needs of rural immigrant women and seasonally employed women:

- Provide the services of outreach workers who can offer support, referral, advocacy and information.
- Offer support groups for rural immigrant women to discuss issues of common concern.
- Provide multicultural mental health counselling services in various languages.
- Offer professional interpretation and translation services to linguistically isolated women.
- Establish family centres in Oliver and Osoyoos to offer support services and family programs.
- Establish anger management programs in various languages in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.
- Increase funding for organizations to implement prevention programs limiting the incidence of violence against women.
- Create culturally sensitive employment programs to assist rural immigrant women and seasonal workers in obtaining full-time employment.
- Provide culturally sensitive self-defence courses for women who are seasonally employed in the agricultural industry.
- Create a sexual assault centre for women victims of abuse, assault and harassment.
- Establish drop-in women's centres in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos where women can access support services and information.
- Create additional support services for migrant seasonally employed women.

II. Recommendations to improve access to service for rural immigrant women and seasonally employed women:

- Provide cultural sensitivity training to service providers in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.

- Promote organizational change in the South Okanagan-Similkameen agencies to foster the hiring of more ethnically and culturally diverse service providers.
- Promote existing and future programs in various languages and locations where ethnocultural groups convene in order for seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women to participate in community programs and gain awareness of services available in the community.

III. Recommendations to create educational programs to limit the incidences of violence against women and racial discrimination:

- Work with the local agricultural industry to instigate sexual harassment policies in the workplace.
- Develop educational strategies about prevention of sexual assault, harassment and violence against women to take place where immigrant and seasonal employees convene.
- Implement an awareness campaign in the communities of Oliver, Keremeos and Osoyoos regarding violence against women and anti-racism. This campaign would include the distribution of posters, multicultural mass media information and special events to encourage interaction of multicultural groups.
- Develop educational strategies to educate the general population regarding multicultural and diversity issues.
- Form an advisory committee to increase collaboration between local agencies, lay organisations and community members to enhance community response and ensure that the proposed recommendations are implemented.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Ministry of Women’s Equality for providing resources through the *Safer Futures* program for us to undertake this project. I would also like to thank Wendy Rogers, coordinator of the Penticton & Area Women’s Centre for her constant support and input throughout project. Finally, I would like to convey my gratitude to all respondents - women, service providers, community members, service and church groups and municipal governments – for taking time to share their experiences and insights to “Build a Safer Future” for women living and working in the region.

1.0 Introduction

Violence against women including sexual assault and harassment and women abuse transcends cultural, racial and socio-economic groups. Therefore, it is wrong to assume that certain women from certain ethnocultural groups are victimized at a higher rate. Violence against women has no class, age, socio-economic status or cultural and ethnic background. However, despite the fact that Canada remains a patriarchal society, women here have made great progress in the last thirty years to break systemic structural barriers that engender inequality. Women who have emigrated from many parts of the world do not come from this advantage. As Shashi Assanand, Executive Director of the Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Support Service Society points out, immigrant women often face additional challenges such as language barriers, fear of losing ties with family and community, and lack of knowledge of Canadian laws and norms which make them three times more likely than women from the dominant culture to stay in violent relationships. Many immigrant women are unaware of Canadian laws which protect them from abuse in this country, as similar laws may not have existed in their native countries. As well, immigrant women face the threat of complete isolation from family, friends and the community who may believe that the women's role of wife and mother are pivotal to the entire extended family and of society itself. These factors are combined with language barriers and the cultural trap that exposing violence will bring shame to their family and community. As well, many immigrant women come from cultures which do not encourage self-reliance making it extremely difficult for women to face the challenges in Canadian Society alone. (Lindenberger, 1998).

In Canada, services are in place to assist women. Nonetheless, current services supporting women victims of violence are not always sensitive to the specific needs of diverse groups. This is due in part to the traditional lack of awareness of cultural diversity which has contributed to institutionalized racism and has strongly influenced social policy at all levels. In the last decade, however, great initiatives have been undertaken to begin addressing issues surrounding the lack of representation of visible minority and immigrant women. Agencies are becoming more aware of the pressing need to become more inclusive in their service delivery which includes reflecting community diversity in their staff. This is true of many South Okanagan-Similkameen agencies who participated in this project. They recognize that their organizations need to become more inclusive. However, government policy basing resource allocation on demographics has already required that agencies stretch existing resources to meet the most basic community needs. There is rarely the financial means to effectively meet the specific needs of diverse groups.

This study will shed light on the shared wisdom of women, service providers and community members' experiences to gain new insights into how to create sensitive and useful community responses to prevent violence against women. Furthermore, the project will address issues of service gaps in the region while acknowledging the specific demands, needs, hopes and fears of women involved in the project.

The following are questions that the researchers wanted to explore in order to draw a clearer picture of the realities and barriers of seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women involved in the agricultural sector:

- What are the issues in regards to violence in the community and in the workplace for women who are employed in the agricultural sector?
- What are the barriers immigrant women and women from minority groups face when trying to access the local services?
- What are the barriers rural service providers face when supporting women who are cultural and linguistically isolated?

- What are the perceptions of participants in regards to violence against women and what do they suggest should be done to prevent the violence?

1.1 Project Coordinator/Researcher

Marie-France Ménard was retained to assume overall responsibilities for the planning and the conducting of the action-oriented research. Her duties included the design of questionnaires, the recruitment of respondents, data analysis of the findings, and the design of a strategic action plan based on the results of the analysis. She also oversaw the work of the outreach worker and the co-researcher.

The project coordinator is a culturally sensitive professional who possesses six years of experience managing and coordinating projects that relate to minority women's experiences and has undertaken qualitative participatory action-oriented research for various non-profit community level agencies. The coordinator has obtained a Bachelor of Arts and is presently completing a Bachelor of Social Work.

1.2 Project Outreach Worker and Co-Researcher

Narinder Bansal was employed to undertake various activities to outreach to women from the South Asian community. Her duties included recruiting women from this community to host individual and focus group interviews and implementing workshops regarding violence against women in local English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Narinder possesses eleven years of experience working with multicultural and refugee groups, immigrant settlement and issues of violence against women.

Marcela Toro employed by the Penticton & District Multicultural Society was sub-contracted to undertake interviews with immigrant women of various ethnocultural backgrounds in the area of Osoyoos, Keremeos and Oliver.

Valérie Bienvenue, was sub-contracted to undertake interviews with women seasonally employed in the Similkameen region. Valerie is experienced working with women's issues and was employed for many years in the agricultural sector.

2.0 Literature Review

There has been significant research conducted throughout Canada addressing the needs, experiences, barriers and solutions in regards to immigrant women who are victims of violence. As well, research has identified the specific needs of rural and farm women victims of violence. However, very little research has explored the specific needs of minority women living in rural communities and no specific studies have addressed the needs for prevention of violence against seasonally employed women.

This section will look at various studies which offer some insight into specific issues and solutions to prevent violence against immigrant and rural women. Furthermore, specific employment and demographics of the South Okanagan-Similkameen will be outlined to define the socio-economic realities of seasonally employed women.

Immigrant Women Victims of Abuse

Research focusing on the needs of immigrant women who have experienced violence has demonstrated that immigrant women experience numerous barriers when seeking support for assault and abuse. MacLeod and Shin (1990) in looking at the service delivery needs of immigrant and refugee women who are battered explained that the realities for these women are intertwined with multifaceted problems. They note:

For most immigrant and refugee women, the economic difficulties, political upheavals, physical hardships, loss of friends and families, and the racism they experience leaves them feeling vulnerable, confused, depressed and alone. Under these circumstances, women may come to depend strongly on their husband and find it difficult to contemplate leaving their partners, no matter how brutal the abuse.
(P.9)

They further their arguments by identifying the specific fears that women encounter when contemplating leaving their partners. Women interviewed in this study identified that they feared: the deportation of their husbands, children and themselves; losing custody of their children; tarnishing the reputation of their family; and, because they often possess very little employment experience and/or poor English skills, they fear that they will be unable to survive without their husbands.

These fears are real for immigrant women and are enhanced by structural inequalities that foster their socio-economic marginalisation (Miedema & Wachholz, 1998). They defined the primary structural inequalities as immigrant women's dependence on their sponsors (lack of accurate legal information thus fear of losing immigration status), and their low paying employment. These inequalities create barriers for women to access services.

In extensive research, MacLeod et al. (1993) interviewed immigrant women who were victims of abuse by their partner and/or a relative and whom spoke neither French nor English. These women shared valuable information regarding their experiences living with language barriers and abuse. They were also invited to seek solutions to limit the abuse and enhance services.

All of the women interviewed, a total 64 from, Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa, revealed that they felt extremely isolated and experienced great loss. In this study women also expressed many other forms of abuse such as disrespect; discrimination and exploitation which they explained are part of their daily life experiences. Therefore, because of the multitudes of oppression, both on a private level as well as in the community at large, women expressed that they were reluctant to seek help when abused by their husbands.

In response to finding solutions to enhancing services for immigrant women and ensuring that they are safe and free of violence, women participants from this research as well as service providers from the study undertaken by MacLeod and Shin (1990) suggested that:

1. information about legal rights regarding wife assault and immigration status should be provided to immigrant women;
2. support group discussions should be established for immigrant women;
3. more services should be culturally and multilingual sensitive which would include job training and employment programs to increase refugee and immigrant women socio-economic status;
4. service providers from mainstream agencies need to receive training regarding cultural sensitivity; and
5. abused immigrant women need to be involved in program planning.

The lack of available, accessible and appropriate information about programs and services that meet the specific needs of immigrant women who are victims of violence is also a barrier that affects immigrant women's access to services (Currie, 1995). This is especially valid for immigrant women who live in rural communities because most of the programs to support victims of violence are located in major cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver (MacLeod & Shin, 1990).

Rural Communities and Violence Against Women

Immigrant women living in rural communities are doubly marginalised because they experience cultural and linguistic barriers to accessing services as well as being confronted with issues relevant to rural communities and programs. Authors Edleson & Frank (1991) in a study that shed light on rural interventions for abused women, explained that rural communities are often challenged with greater obstacles than urban areas. They identify these obstacles as:

1. fewer resources for programs to be innovative;
2. services are restricted because of geographic and social isolation;
3. fewer employment opportunities and childcare services;
4. less housing for women who leave their abusive partners; and
5. lack of anonymity.

Furthermore, in finding solutions to provide adequate services for rural women who are victims of abuse, authors identified that it is imperative to "maintain high visibility". Participants in the study identified that when starting a new program it is important to: use all media; advertise in public washrooms and at the offices of human service providers; and to send brochures to clergy, doctors, offices, police departments, and attorneys. They further expressed that for programs to be successful in rural communities it is critical to develop more cohesive cooperation between serving agencies.

Seasonal Employment and Violence

The agricultural and the tourism industries of the South Okanagan/Similkameen are the economic foundations of the region. However, the nature of these primary industries leaves many of its citizens with very little economic opportunity as seasonal and part-time employment account for much of the work in the region. It is also important to note that unemployment in the South Okanagan is among the highest in British Columbia.

A study undertaken by the BC Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1995) indicated that forty-two percent (42%) of farm workers in the Okanagan had incomes below the poverty line. This means that their family income was less than \$10,000/year.

Furthermore, numerous studies have found a correlation between low family income and low occupational status and assault by men on their female intimate partners. Research also indicates that poor financial situations often lead to stress, frustration and anxiety which in turn increases the rate of family violence and spousal assault.

The prevalence of low paying seasonal jobs in the South Okanagan and the resulting economic hardship can impede women's ability to achieve and sustain personal autonomy, resulting in their inability to leave abusive relationships. This, combined with other prevalent issues relevant to rural communities such as isolation, lack of available and accessible services, and lack of social support, contribute to seasonally employed women increased risk of violence.

The Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food study (1995) also identified that 62% of agricultural farm workers have a first language of either French or Punjabi. This research also indicates a trend in the changes in ethnic makeup over the last 5 years in the South Okanagan/ Similkameen. According to statistics from the 1996 Census data, the total population for the rural communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos and Okanagan Falls grew from 23,984 people in 1991 to 27,740 in 1996, which is an increase of 15.7%. Of these 27,740 people, 5,755 were immigrants, which amounts to 20.8% of the total population. Therefore, in addressing the issues of seasonally employed women, the project will consider the specific needs of seasonally employed immigrant women as their cultural and linguistic isolation put them at an increased risk of victimization.

3.0 The Project

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the project included:

- Encouraging seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women to acknowledge their own personal experience relating to inequality in employment and to assault and violence against women;
- encouraging informal and alternative groups to meet and acknowledge the needs of seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women;
- offering preventive and promotional strategies to limit violence against seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women;
- creating awareness, thus changing attitudes and behaviours, in the communities of the South Okanagan-Similkameen, with regard to issues of violence against women, sexism, and racism; especially as they affect seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women;
- involving service agencies in the South Okanagan-Similkameen to acknowledge the need to promote and sustain culturally sensitive services for seasonally employed women and immigrant women; and
- developing recommendations about specific strategies to use to prevent violence against immigrant and seasonally employed women. These strategies will be implemented in subsequent phases of the project.

3.2 Methodology

The project *Empowerment and Future Partnerships for Seasonally Employed Women and Rural Immigrant Women Involved in the Agricultural Industry in the South Okanagan-Similkameen* explored existing research on, and participant's perceptions and experiences of:

- working conditions;
- experiences of violence including understanding of power and domination;
- experiences of racism and discrimination;
- knowledge of services available in the community;
- need for new services;
- solutions to enhance accessibility to existing services; and
- solutions to limit violence, discrimination and racism.

In order to provide a more concise understanding of the process undertaken to promote participation of all parties involved in the research process, the following information identifies the strategies used to recruit and promote participation of each target group.

3.2.1 Women's participation

Women were encouraged through outreach strategies to review and analyze their personal experiences regarding the topics listed above. Promotion strategies included placing posters in various outlets in Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. Women were invited to participate in individual and/or small group interviews. The interviews allowed participants to talk openly about their experiences. To increase participants comfort, interviews were conducted in surroundings familiar to

the participants. For example, seasonally employed women were interviewed in parks, local campgrounds and orchard work settings.

To recruit rural immigrant women, presentations were made to ESL classes, in a work setting, and at a religious community event. Additionally, researchers used personal contacts within the community, and with local service providers. Researchers subsequently held three focus groups with rural immigrant women. The first group was facilitated at K&C nurseries where the management allowed women to participate in the focus group discussion during work hours. The second group included women who were approached at a religious community event with an invitation to participate in a focus group discussion.

From these efforts to recruit participants in the project, forty-eight seasonally employed women and fifty-two rural immigrant women were interviewed for a total sample of 100 women. It is important to note that twenty-eight of the fifty-five immigrant women interviewed were also seasonal workers.

Two interview guides for women were designed to gather information regarding the specific themes of the research. The first was developed specifically to reflect the socio-cultural experiences of seasonally employed women while the second was sensitive to rural immigrant women's experiences.

Because the action-oriented research was based on a qualitative model focusing on a feminist methodology, the interviews also served as guides to further enhance discussion. This approach encouraged an egalitarian relationship between the respondents and the interviewer, promoted self-disclosure, and enhanced unity and commonality. As well, this approach potentially reduced the burden of blame for victims of violence.

The interviews not only provided the researchers with information regarding specific themes of experiences, but also served to empower women by directly engaging them in identifying solutions to enhance their well-being and providing them with relevant information. Some interview questions were strictly designed to promote awareness regarding issues of gender equality and violence against women, and legal rights. The distribution of bookmakers developed for the project, provided women with information regarding community support services relating to violence against women.

The purpose and objectives of the project were carefully explained to all women interviewed. Confidentiality of personal information was ensured in order to safeguard their personal well being. This information is, thus not included in the final report.

Women solicited to participate in the project were never pressured to undertake the interviews. Once women agreed to participate, they were always given the option to skip questions and/or to end the interview. In total three women approached refused to participate in the interview and fifteen rural immigrant women chose to not disclose information regarding their experiences with violence.

3.2.2 Service providers' participation

Thirty-seven agencies working with women were approached to participate in the project. A questionnaire was designed to identify the need for prevention services in the South-Okanagan Similkameen region. A total of fourteen service providers were interviewed. The same agencies approached to participate in the research aspect of the project were invited to attend a diversity workshop. A total of twenty-two service providers from fifteen agencies participated in the workshop that was held on April 23, 1999, during Prevention of Violence Against Women Week.

The following agencies participated in the project:

- Penticton & District Multicultural Society (PDMS)
- RCMP Victim Assistance Programs in Oliver and Osoyoos
- Stopping the Violence Programs in Keremeos, Oliver and Penticton
- South Okanagan Women in Need Society (SOWINS)

The Ministry for Children and Family (MCF)
The Ministry of Human Resources (MHR)
Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC)
Okanagan University College in Oliver
RCMP Detachment in Oliver and Keremeos
Public Health Nurses of Oliver and Osoyoos
South Okanagan Integrated Community Services
South Okanagan Regional Hospital
Osoyoos Business and Community Development Centre (OBCDC)

3.2.3 Community members and organizations

Various endeavours encouraged community members to participate in the project. Presentations were made to Keremeos, Oliver and Osoyoos Town Councils and to various focus groups through community strategy sessions hosted by the Osoyoos Business and Community Development Centre (OBCDC). Ninety-seven invitation letters were sent to various organizations in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos and press invitations were published in various local newspapers. A questionnaire for focus group discussion was designed to incite community members to actively identify and seek solutions to reduce violence against women in the community. Through these promotional approaches a total of 110 individuals from 11 groups were involved in the process.

The following lay organizations, municipal governments and private businesses participated in the project:

- The South Okanagan Ministerial Group
- The Towns of Oliver and Osoyoos
- The Village of Keremeos
- The Oliver Women's Institute
- The Oliver Multicultural Organization
- The Oasis RV Campground
- The Farm and Ranch Safety and Health Association (FARSHA)

In addition, community consultations were held in Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos

4.0 Summary of Findings by themes

4.1 Seasonally employed women

4.1.1 Profile

In total forty-eight (48) seasonally employed women were interviewed.

The majority, eighty-three percent (83%) of seasonally employed women interviewed were between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five. Ten percent (10%) of women were between the ages of twenty-six and thirty and five percent (5%) of women were over thirty years old. One woman interviewed was sixty years old.

Twenty-seven percent (27%) of women interviewed lived in the region permanently while seventy-three percent (73%) of women were non-permanent residents from the provinces of Quebec, Alberta and Ontario. One woman was First Nations.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the women interviewed indicated that their first language was French of those, thirteen percent (13%) identified great difficulties expressing themselves in English. Seventeen percent (17%) explained that they often needed help when communicating in English, sixteen percent (16%) identified that they felt confident most of the time with their English abilities and twenty-one percent (21%) were confident with their ability to communicate in this second language.

Ninety-two percent (92%) of women had completed their secondary education, sixty percent (60%) had completed or were completing college or CEGEP, and thirteen percent (13%) were attending university.

4.1.2 Employment and Working Conditions

All women interviewed worked in orchards in the surrounding communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. Some also worked in packinghouses. Forty-six percent (46%) women had been working for less than one month, twenty-seven percent (27%) had worked more than one month but less than three months and twenty-seven percent (27%) had worked in the agricultural sector of the region in previous years.

When asked about their working conditions, half the women interviewed felt that they were good, eight percent (8%) said that they were fair and forty-two percent (42%) explained that conditions were not good. Seventeen percent (17%) of women who felt their working conditions were not good because of the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in the workplace. Other causes cited were: poor salaries, difficulties getting paid, disrespect from employers, poor accommodations (no water, no showers, no toilets, no cabins), unsafe equipment and misuse of pesticides. Women who stated that their working conditions were good described their appreciation of decent salaries, good living accommodations provided by the employers and no sexual assault and harassment occurring.

Sixty-five percent (65%) of women interviewed felt safe in their workplaces, while thirty-one percent (31%) felt unsafe. Women who felt unsafe attributed this to persistent sexual assault and harassment, misuse of pesticides and unsafe working equipment. One of the woman who felt safe in the workplace explained: *"I do feel safe at work because I always make sure that a male friend is with me at all times."*

4.1.3 Violence

Of the women interviewed, thirty-seven percent (37%) had been sexually assaulted and harassed while working in the agricultural industry of the region.

The most common forms of sexual assault identified by women included, fondling, touching and kissing. Some women said that they were brought to remote areas at the end of orchards and were sexually propositioned, fondled, touched and kissed.

The most common type of sexual harassment described by women was employers promise of work in exchange for sexual favours. Women were also offered alcohol and drugs in exchange for sexual favours. The majority of women interviewed, eighty-eight percent (88%) knew that this was occurring and that they were at risk of assault and harassment.

One woman interviewed virtually lived in fear since she had arrived. Below are her comments on her experience with assault:

I feel so vulnerable. The second orchard I worked in was unbearable, I couldn't sleep at night because I was scared that someone would come in my cabin, lock the door, and rape me. They have tried you know, but I shouted at them to leave me alone. I was the only woman working there and I had no choice to stay because it was very difficult to find work anywhere else. I was broke. They didn't physically hurt me, but emotionally they did and I am very resentful of them. They knew that they could abuse their power because they held a stronger cord, they had the money.

Another woman shared a similar story:

I was hired earlier this summer by an orchardist who had great accommodation. I was so excited because it was hard to find work and the cabin was great. But I quickly realized, when I saw that I was alone there, that no other workers were hired and that he was expecting more of me than to pick fruit. He made advances and I quit the very same day. I really worry for younger women who are not as assertive and have less experience than me. They really could get in trouble, if they are not careful.

4.1.4 Discrimination

Many women interviewed related experiences of discrimination in the community and in the workplace. Many felt that they were being treated poorly by community members and employers because they were young, women and from Quebec. Many women said that employers would take advantage of them because employment was scarce.

Thirty-five percent (35%) explained that they felt unsafe in the community and thirty-three percent (33%) of women stated that this was directly related to overt experiences of gender and culture discrimination. One woman commented: *"The community is not supportive of us. We do not feel welcomed and appreciated for the work we do. Because we are women, young and travelling, they feel that we are their property, that they own us, and can abuse us."*

One woman shared a traumatic experience in which she said she could have been seriously injured.

I was walking on the side of the road when a car with two men was driving at high speed towards me. I had to jump in the gully on the side of the road to avoid the hit. If it wasn't for another vehicle honking to advise me of these people coming towards me, I would have been hit. I feel so unsafe, I feel like I am a target because I am a migrant woman worker.

Other women recalled having drivers throw food and rubbish at them while they walked along the road.

4.1.5 Access to Services

None of the women interviewed who had been assaulted and/or harassed had reported to the authorities nor had they sought help from community services. When asked why they would not report to authorities many responded that they were unaware that they could do so. Others did not trust that the police could offer them sensitive support. Some women said that they felt that the

assaults and/or harassment was not serious enough to report as they had not been physically nor felt emotionally injured. Some women also stated that they could not jeopardize their employment.

Nonetheless, when asked who they would seek help from in the case of further assault and harassment, fifty-two percent (52%) said a friend, thirty percent (30%) identified that they would go to the police and/or encourage a friend to do so, and eight percent (8%) said that they would seek help from the public health nurse, a counsellor or the hospital. Four percent (4%) identified that they would turn to their families while one woman explained that she would reach out to members of her religious community.

Very few women were aware of the existing community services. When asked what barriers would limit them from accessing services, the majority identified lack of awareness of services and lack of English language skills. One woman explained:

I don't think the police would be the right people I would want to turn to for help in case I was assaulted. I don't see them as supportive. I think they would probably not believe me. You know I am a fruit picker! Nothing would really change, plus I would have to go through the whole legal system. I know it's a long process and I don't live in this province. Something else needs to be done to educate these men that they can't do this; that it is not legal to touch women without their consent. Its really awful what is happening here.

4.1.6 Solutions and Suggestions

Women suggested that to improve working conditions and workplace safety, the labour board should enforce and monitor policies that encourage decent health and safety standards, which should include policies on sexual assault and harassment. Women explained that men, employers and community members should be educated about the legal consequences of assault and harassment on women and that the authorities should arrest men who are perpetrators.

The following statements represent various suggestions by seasonally employed women to reduce the incidence of violence in the community and in the workplaces:

1. Provide affordable housing and/or accommodations that are accessible within the communities they work and have 24-hour security.
2. Enforce labour standard policies which require employers to provide toilets, accommodations and water facilities for workers.
3. Provide, in the three communities, labour offices which provide job postings and access to telephones.
4. Initiate an awareness campaign in the community and in different workplaces to abolish violence against women.
5. Promote awareness of community services available to victims of violence against women, and prevention strategies which limit assault and/or harassment against women. (e.g. posters in public washrooms, packinghouses and local libraries translated into Punjabi and French.)
6. Educate children in schools about violence against women.
7. Decrease discrimination by educating the population about multicultural issues and positively portraying minority groups in the local newspapers.
8. Educate immigrant men about sexual assault and harassment issues.
9. Implement support groups for women who are abused and mistreated.
10. Organize transportation services.
11. Make the food bank services more accessible.

12. Provide grassroots support services to women who are victims of violence.
“An outreach worker should be hired to advocate for women who want to report the assaults.”
13. Provide space for workers to make telephone calls, and wash their clothes.
14. Provide information about available services and women’s issues in the local libraries.
15. Establish a women’s shelter in the community for women who are in danger.
16. Promote more contact between local populations and seasonal migrant workers.
17. Offer culturally sensitive self-defence courses to seasonally employed women.
18. Promote and enforce laws to protect women from assault and to punish men.
19. Provide 1-800 telephone numbers for services offered in Penticton.
20. Educate employers about the labour rights of workers.
21. Encourage women to become policy makers.
22. Enhance coordination of services between police and other services providers including doctors, when supporting women who are abused and assaulted.
23. Offer services in French and Punjabi in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.
24. Promote proper sentencing for men who assault and abuse.
“Authorities need to believe women’s statements.”
25. Educate service providers for them to offer culturally sensitive services, thus reducing stereotypes.

4.2 Immigrant Women

4.2.1 Profile

In total fifty-two immigrant women were interviewed. Women interviewed immigrated from a wide range of countries including India, Poland, Chile, Russia, Austria, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

The women interviewed had been living in Canada for an average of eight years. One woman had immigrated less than one-year ago while another had been living in Canada for twenty-three years. Twenty-five percent (25%) of women had moved from the Fraser Valley to the South Okanagan within the last five years. One woman relates her experience moving from the Lower Mainland: *“My family has moved here from the Fraser Valley five years ago. There we worked on a farm for an employer. Here my husband and his family bought an orchard and we live and work with my in-laws.”*

Seventy-three percent (73%) of immigrant women interviewed were between the ages of twenty and thirty-nine, and seventeen percent (17%) between the ages of forty and fifty-nine, while one was over the age sixty.

The majority of women interviewed, seventy-seven percent (77%), were common-law or married while twelve percent (12%) were single. Eight percent (8%) of women were divorced or widowed.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of women had children under the age of eighteen with an average of two children each.

Fifty-four percent (54%) of women interviewed lived with their extended families while thirty-one percent (31%) lived in nuclear families. Twelve percent (12%) lived alone.

When asked about their language skills, seventeen percent (17%) of women identified that they had great difficulties expressing themselves in English. Thirty-three percent (33%) explained that they

often needed help communicating in English, fourteen percent (14%) identified that they felt confident most of the time with their English abilities and thirty-three percent (33%) were confident with their ability to communicate in this second language.

4.2.2 Employment and Working Conditions

When asked about their employment status, eighty-three percent (83%) of women identified that they were employed while fourteen percent (14%) were unemployed. Fifteen percent (15%) of women had full-time employment, ten percent (10%) had part-time employment and sixty percent (60%) were seasonally employed in the agricultural sector. One woman interviewed was living with physical disabilities and was unemployed. Women stated that they would like to find permanent and full-time employment. In fact, all seasonally employed immigrant women interviewed clearly indicated that they would like full-time employment to reach a certain level of financial security. They identified that they needed to gain new skills in order to secure such employment. One woman stated: *“I would like to have a full-time job but I think that I need new skills to do that. I would like to learn about computers so that can work in an office.”*

Half of the women interviewed were employed in private industry and were satisfied with their working conditions. The other half worked in the family owned orchard. Few women complained about their working conditions, however, one woman explained that she was always cold in her workplace, and another commented that the communication barriers that she faced made her working conditions difficult. One woman commented about her experience working in orchards: *“I have worked in the orchards for 10 years. Generally the working conditions are good, but there is a lot of neglect. There is a need for better cabins, bathrooms and shower facilities.”*

4.2.3 Discrimination

Discrimination and stereotyping affected the daily experiences of women and their children. Women interviewed stated that the media had a great influence in portraying their cultural community in a negative light and that this had detrimental affects on their children who were often victims of racial slander, bullying and name-calling. Women commented that they did not know how to deal with these issues and felt vulnerable and powerless in trying to protect their children. Some women felt unwelcome in the community. One woman told of store clerks making an effort not to touch her hand when exchanging money. Another felt that community members often stared at them with disgust.

When asked about feeling safe in the community, forty-six percent (46%) of women replied that they felt safe while twenty-four percent (24%) felt unsafe. The later group said that racial and sexual discrimination enhanced their feelings of not being safe in the community.

- *“I don’t feel safe because there is racial tension in the community, I think that my children are very vulnerable to other children’s comments in the schools. The schools have to be more pro-active and educate children about negative racial behaviours and attitudes.”*
- *“We need to educate people who were born in Canada to accept us and help us, and to be friendly.”*
- *“I don’t feel safe walking at night. I live in the country and there are no lights on the road.”*

Other women explained that they felt the effect of discrimination through their lack of employment. They felt that they were discriminated against because of their ethnicity. Twenty-one percent (21%) of women interviewed identified that they had experienced discrimination in the workplace. They explained that unfair treatment and racist comments were common and undesirable.

- *“Often my co-workers make rude comments about East-Indians, I think they think it does not affect me, but it does.”*

- *“I had an employer who would always avoid talking to me, he would imply that I didn’t understand what he was saying. I sometimes have difficulty expressing myself that is true, but I can understand English.”*
- *“When one worker spoke with an accent, employers would take them for a fool and sometimes they would pay you less.”*
- *“I feel discriminated against because of my accent, my skin colour and also because we work hard. People take advantage of us.”*

4.2.4 Violence

Some women, in total fifteen, did not answer the questions regarding violence against women. These fifteen women were interviewed in a focus setting and researchers decided to slightly modify the questionnaire. Researchers believed that individual interviews were more conducive to women sharing their personal experiences of violence, thus questions that directly emphasised experiences of violence were eliminated in order to promote the participants safety.

It was also noted that women from the South-Asian Community had difficulties understanding the language and the terms used to describe situations of violence against women. In some cases women would use different words to convey one meaning. The most commonly used words to describe family violence were: assault, abuse, violence, wife abuse, wife battering, wife assault, and domestic violence.

Of the women who answered questions regarding violence against women, seventy-three percent (73%) identified that they knew of women who had been victims of violence, forty-three percent (43%) identified that they had never experienced violence and twenty-four percent (24%) explained that they had been victims of violence at the hands of their husbands or in-laws. Women from the Indo-Canadian community commented that abuse was not exclusive to husband versus wife, but included abuse of family elders, abuse to woman by her in-laws and abuse by fathers, brothers and intended in-laws of women who they feel have damaged their family’s name and reputation by refusing an arranged marriage

When asked what causes the violence, forty-three percent (43%) said drugs and alcohol contributed to wife battering; sixteen percent (16%) identified that violence occurred when wives were not compliant to husbands’ demands; and fourteen percent (14%) explained that financial and family problems were associated with violence. Other women commented that their cultural and religious traditions are deeply rooted in patriarchal structures which foster power imbalances between men and women. Finally, one woman explained that lack of education and the misinformation regarding the legal rights of immigrant women enhanced their vulnerability.

The majority of immigrant women had clear and concise definitions of what constituted abuse. The majority stated that abuse took various forms stemming from physical abuse to verbal to emotional and to financial abuse. Nonetheless fewer women described the last three forms of abuse.

Women interviewed who predominantly immigrated from Central America, identified that violence was connected to a larger social context. This is due, a woman explained, to the fact that Latinos have suffered the consequences of prolonged internal wars which impact on the men who latter carried the effect of this trauma into their families.

Because family unity is highly valued, service providers need to be aware that many immigrant women may prefer to stay in the abusive relationship. Some immigrant women interviewed also believed that it was preferable for the whole family to get support when violence was occurring. In fact, for most Latino women (South and Central American), the issue of violence against women is not an issue solely of women but for the whole family to explore together. Women indicated that in order for service providers to offer sensitive support, they need to provide programs that are also modeled around value systems that foster the development of family unity. The study identified that

immigrant women as well as service providers recognize the need to offer anger management in various languages for men who are abusive. They also stated that the Children Who Witness Abuse program should be initiated in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.

One woman explained that the whole family including the husband should get support.

In my culture we value the family unit. When I experienced domestic violence there was nowhere to turn to but the women's shelter. But I did not want to leave my husband. I don't think it was fair for him and the kids. What I would have liked is for all of us to get help to deal with his problems as opposed to me and the kids going away or only me seeing a counsellor. To me that is not the solution, I want to keep my family together.

Women were also encouraged to share experiences regarding their influence in decision making. Fifty-five percent (55%) of women interviewed identified that they had influence over decisions that affected their families, while twenty-four percent (24%) said that they had no powers. However, when women were asked who held the power to make decisions that affected their lives, forty-nine percent (49%) identified their husbands, fourteen percent (14%) their in-laws, eleven percent (11%) their fathers and five percent (5%) their brothers. Forty-one percent (41%) of women explained that they accepted this, while eleven percent (11%) felt frustrated and upset by the unequal treatment. One woman explained that her lack of power affected her daily life. *"This is a terrible thing. There is no respect for me and I live with a lot of fear. It is affecting me a lot, especially my health and nervous system."*

4.2.4 Access to Services

This section identifies barriers limiting access to community services for the women interviewed in the study. One of the key barriers is isolation which manifests in many ways including physical, cultural and linguistic isolation or a combination of all three.

Many of the women involved in the study work for their family enterprise and are physically isolated from people outside of their families. This limits their sphere of external support and impacts on their awareness of available services. For the majority of the women in this situation who were interviewed, community services were rarely accessed. Support usually came from relatives who would often pressure women to endure abusive situations and were sometimes abusive themselves. Sixty-eight percent (68 %) of immigrant women interviewed clearly identified that they would be reluctant to seek outside help because of family pressures. Family pressure was ranked the highest amongst all barriers identified, followed by shame. Because of these two barriers women feel they have very few options available when wanting to leave an abusive spouse. This is especially true for South-Asian women who have strong traditional values and religious beliefs which place high value on community recognition and validation. This means that women from this group often face the burden of shame and ostracization for both themselves and their family if they seek help.

Lack of English language skills often further contributes to isolation presenting another barrier. Although some private industries who employ immigrant women have initiated on site ESL courses and despite ESL classes designed to accommodate seasonal agricultural employees, some women interviewed were sufficiently lacking in English skills to impede their ability to seek help. This lack of English literacy is exaggerated for women who work in the family orchard and have few opportunities to interact with the mainstream community. Sixty percent (60%) of women interviewed identified lack of English language skills as a barrier to accessing community services.

Lack of mobility was identified by thirty-three percent (33%) of women as a barrier to accessing community services. There is no public transportation in any of the communities within the study area. Because of this, when violence and abuse occurs, women can be left stranded; unable to quickly leave an abusive situation. Although the women's shelter in Penticton will pick women up from within the region, women cannot expect a fast response as the shelter is a thirty to forty-five minutes drive. A shelter worker explained that in emergencies situations they collaborate with the local RCMP detachment and its victim assistance workers. This approach, although helpful, can also be very

intimidating and frightening, especially for immigrant women who have been victimized or have witnessed injustices from the authorities of their country of origin.

Twenty-three percent (23%) of women interviewed identified lack of knowledge of available community services as hindering their ability to access them. Women explained that many of the services available in Canada do not exist in their countries of origin. It is impossible for women to access services if they have no knowledge of their existence and purpose. Women suggested that agencies should better promote their services.

Women also lack access to police services. Twenty-one percent (21%) of women explained that they feared being deported and losing their residency status if they reported their husbands to police and four percent (4%) feared losing their children. Abusive immigrant men who are their wives sponsors commonly threaten to abandon sponsorship responsibility if their wives report. Because women lack information or are misinformed about their legal rights and responsibilities, fewer report abuse. All studies we found exploring barriers limiting immigrant women's access to the justice system revealed that immigrant women lack information regarding the laws that can protect them in cases of assault and abuse. Many studies determined that information about individual rights and freedoms needs to be made available in translation, at the point of entry into Canada. Information must be demystified to ensure women's safety. It is also important that service providers in rural communities understand immigration laws. The scarcity of settlement services and specific ethnocultural services in rural areas cause immigrant women to rely exclusively on assistance from mainstream agencies who cannot always provide accurate, up to date information.

Fear of confidentiality due to the small size of their ethnic community was given as another cause of isolation. Women are often unable to share experiences with community members because of fear that others might divulge information that would jeopardize the family reputation. They explained that in specific cases they would value the services of mainstream workers as long as they were culturally sensitive and understood the importance of family name and family unity. Nonetheless, ten percent (10%) of women stated that they would not seek support from local agencies because they believed workers would not understand their culture.

In order to better understand the issues of access to services it was also important to discern where women found or would find support in the case of violence and abuse. When asked this question more than half of the women identified that they would seek help from their family and from the police. Six percent (6%) of women identified that they would call the transition house, and another six percent (6%), explained that they would contact the local victim assistance worker, community resources or a counsellor. Four percent (4%) of women explained that they would rely on their religious community and leader. One woman said she would contact her doctor.

One woman commented on how family and belonging to a community is an important element of finding support. *“It is very different here. There are different kinds of services for women, there is none in my country, but we can count most of the time on our family, friends and even neighbours when we need help. Not here. I really miss my neighbourhood, my community. It's hard to go to strangers for help.”*

One woman in sharing her experience of violence captured the essence of the issues that rural immigrant women are confronted with when living with abuse:

I left my husband because he was abusive, we are no longer together. But it was really hard because I did not know where to go. There are no services here in the South so my mother and I had to stay in a motel for a few days until I got myself organized. It was really stressful, but I did not want to go to Penticton it was too far, and I did not want anyone's charity. I am strong I know that, but there are other women who struggle with other problems, like language and assertiveness and self-esteem. It is difficult for them to leave their husbands and find the courage to start over again, but this time all alone.

4.2.5 Suggestions and Solutions

To reduce violence, women participants identified that information and education needed to be provided to all community members and should be offered in their native language. They explained that translated brochures identifying the services available in the community as well as information on violence issues should be distributed throughout the communities. Women also explained that in order to promote inclusivity and accessibility to services, current social agencies should advertise their services in schools and ESL classes and in various ethnocultural outlets.

Immigrant women suggested the following services and programs to support women in situations of spousal abuse:

1. Hire Punjabi and Spanish speaking social workers and counsellors to work full-time in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.
2. Offer employment services in various languages in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.
3. Provide support groups for immigrant women.
4. Offer culturally sensitive parenting education.
5. Establish women's shelters in the communities of the South Okanagan-Similkameen that are sensitive to immigrant women's experiences and employ workers who speak Punjabi and Spanish.
6. Provide education and information regarding legal issues.
7. Establish a family centre in Oliver and Osoyoos with resources in various languages and workers who speak Punjabi.
8. Provide education and information on violence against women in the Sikh Temple in Oliver.
9. Hire professional interpreters to help with service delivery in mainstream agencies.
10. Provide anger management workshops and counselling for men in their native language.
11. Establish a women's centre in the South that offers services which are friendly and sensitive to women.
12. Translate brochures and materials about violence against women into various languages.

Here is the view of one woman who believed that existing services in the community should better address the needs of immigrant women who are victims of violence. *"Here in Canada we recognize the existence of violence, and many services are available for women. Therefore, there is no reason why violence should exist. Immigrant women need more services and information in their own language."*

4.3 Service providers

In total fourteen (14) service providers were interviewed from thirteen (13) different agencies offering services in the communities of Oliver, Keremeos, Osoyoos and Penticton.

4.3.1 Profile of clientele

All service providers interviewed were mandated to offer services to women. Some agencies specifically provide services for women victims of violence while others concentrate on issues surrounding family conflict, education and training, and health.

One service provider working as a settlement worker for a local multicultural agency had immigrant men and women within her caseload. The majority of service providers were unable to establish how many women in general and immigrant women in particular access their services. However, most

recalled offering services to individuals from various ethnic backgrounds within the past year. Immigrant women, however, constituted a very small minority of their client base. Four (4) service providers stated that they had not offered services to immigrant women in the last year.

One service provider stated:

We do not keep data of this relevance. It's too bad. It would be great way to effectively demonstrate to our funding agencies that we are not fully inclusive, that we are leaving out certain groups in the community. On an other hand if we were to keep this data and had no representation of minority groups, then one could interpret that these communities have no need and no problems. This data would need to be analyzed in a very critical way, because how could these marginalised and isolated groups be using our services when they do not know of our existence and/ or have misconceptions of what we do. We would need to hire individuals who speak different languages in order to be able to outreach to these groups. Yet we have no financial means to do outreach.

One counsellor explained that she would like to service immigrant women because she is convinced that there is a need in this community. She explained:

Immigrant women from my knowledge especially Punjabi speaking women live in very patriarchal community. They are isolated and do not always have the means to make choices that can enable them to be safe. I would like to offer services to these women but I do not know how to effectively outreach them. I think that language and cultural barriers can be overcome as long as we are very sensitive to their needs. Our services need to be better promoted in their respective community. I want to find ways to overcome these barriers.

4.3.2 Violence

Some service providers were able to determine what percentage of immigrant women they serve have been victims of violence. The immigrant settlement worker interviewed stated that sixty percent (60%) of her female clients have been victims of violence by their spouse. She explained that these women have shared openly with her the issues that affecting them. She believes that there is a definite need to educate women about violence and about their legal rights. Specifically the immigrant settlement worker stated:

These women fear being deported. They need to be informed about their legal rights and obligations. They also need to know that there are options available to them, that they can go to the transition house and/ or see a counsellor if they need support. I refer women everywhere, but the problem is that I can't offer them services that do not exist! That is the problem, the services in the community are somewhat inadequate because they often don't consider the specific needs of immigrant women. There is a definite need to make services more accessible and more sensitive to immigrant women. Women grieve the loss of their country and everything that is familiar to them when they immigrate. We need to be able to train interpreters to work with social service agencies. These women need a support system, they are very isolated.

A service provider who runs a family centre explained that at least twenty (20) immigrant women, mainly of South Asian decent, attend the various programs at her centre. She estimated that about ten percent (10%) of her clients had been abused by their spouse. The worker explained that these women open up to her for support. She is initially supportive, reassuring them, informing them about their rights and referring them to the appropriate services in the community. She refers these women to the police and the Stopping the Violence counsellor. Unfortunately the women often do not follow up with the referrals. The family worker sees language, lack of financial means, absence of family and friends, and fear of ostracization as contributing factors. She also sees her own lack of perspective on the issues South Asian women clients face as a barrier.

It is difficult for me to determine the issues that these women face because I can only talk from my own experiences and mine are very different because I come from a different culture with different

values. I have not experienced immigration and all the challenges that this means. I think we have to be aware of this before we make any assumptions of what immigrant need and want. When working with women we need to acknowledge their own growth and development.

The public health nurses interviewed identified twenty-five percent (25%) of their clientele as immigrant women. On average thirty percent (30%) of new-borns a year come from Indo-Canadian families. Both public health nurses interviewed identified lack of time to develop positive relationships with women as impacting negatively on a woman's likelihood to share her experience of violence. *"We are in a great position to do prevention work, because we meet women who are highly isolated and who are at risk. But again our lack of resources limits us to fully develop relationships with women, to do regular follow-up visit with those who are at risk."*

4.3.3 Access to Services

Women's inability to access services due to language and cultural barriers was an obstacle which most service providers identified. Most often the solutions required additional resources which are difficult for rural agencies to secure.

The family centre worker attributed the success of representation of immigrant women in her program to the centre's efforts to post throughout the community translated.

The family worker further explained, *"I think that our high participation of immigrant women can also be attributed to the fact that the programs are benefiting their children. Women will attend programs that enhance the lives of their children."*

The majority of service providers interviewed were unsatisfied with the level of service they offered to immigrant women. As one counsellor explained,

We are faced with multitudes of barriers to become more inclusive. We do not have the resources to offer sensitive services to immigrant women. We do not speak the language. We cannot do outreach or do prevention work because we do not have the resources, time and money to do this. On top of things, I have already a long waiting list and without the hiring of a worker, I would not be able to offer services to these women. We have tried to apply for more moneys but so far we have been unsuccessful.

Service providers identified multitudes of barriers limiting immigrant women and rural women from accessing their services. These barriers lack of mobility, poor English skills, and lack of knowledge and awareness of services in the community. As well, women feared being deported and loosing their children if they reported the abuse. The transition house coordinator explained:

Imagine a woman who is faced with all the issues of leaving of abusive relationship – fear for life, financial insecurity etc- and multiplying this with language barriers that limiting her ability to say what she wants and needs and fears. With no social support in the community, or in the country. These women face a lot of difficulties when they come for help. We have no staff who speak the language and interpretation is a problem. Women often don't understand the services because services of this type do not exist in their country. They are very isolated and feel alienated. However, I do believe that we try to do our best with the resources that we possess and we will accommodate extended families for support.

Service providers also identified lack of resources as limiting their effectiveness outreaching to this group. One worker blames the lack of resources from governments and their inefficiency in determining rural intervention and prevention needs.

She also talked about institutionalized racism and prejudice at the service delivery level. *"Our organization's services are modeled around a middle class mainstream value system. How can we expect to sensitively service individuals who have different experiences? This needs to change in order for us to be inclusive and respectful of others."*

4.3.4 Solutions and Suggestions

Service providers provided many solutions for more effectively addressing the needs of women victims of violence who are isolated in the community because of cultural and language barriers. As a suggestion for preventing prevalent assault and harassment one RCMP officer stated that leaders and elders of the South-Asian community be approached with the problems of assault and harassment that are occurring. *“I believe that they are in a position to know what needs to be done in order to educate the men in their community. As for women who are being assaulted, they need to be educated that they can trust us that we are going to believe their stories and we are going to act on them.”*

One service provider concerned with providing more culturally sensitive services stated: *“We need to become more sensitive to other cultures and recognize the complexity and implications of their traditions; our programs need to recognize these cultural differences. We need to implement services that can empower women.”*

The following represents the multitude of suggestions and solutions that service providers identified to prevent and reduce violence against women and make services more accessible for immigrant and rural women who are victims of violence.

1. Provide more outreach and prevention services so women can feel safe to share their experiences.
2. Hire immigrant workers who are fluent in various languages to offer services in this region.
3. Offer a comfortable, non-threatening drop-in centre where women can meet and network with other women to develop support systems. *“Programs at this drop-in women centre should revolve around childcare and nutrition”.*
4. Provide culturally sensitive multilingual counselling.
5. Provide mental health services in different languages.
6. Provide multilingual opportunities for immigrant women to become more financially secure, to find better employment and to access education and training.
7. Provide professional interpretation services to clients.
8. Create awareness to immigrant women and men for what constitute wife abuse, sexual assault and harassment.
9. Provide transportation to services in Penticton.
10. Open a family centre in the communities of Oliver and Osoyoos.
11. Offer childcare services for all educational sessions.
12. Advertise services offered in the community in different languages and at culturally sensitive venues.
13. Provide education opportunities for RCMP officers around belief systems, power and control, and how these affect their service delivery to women.
14. Provide opportunities for multicultural integration. (e.g. multicultural events and dinners).
15. Offer non-mandatory anger management programs to non-English speaking men.
16. Provide advocacy services to women.
17. Provide a “children who witness abuse” program in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.
18. Educate the population to dismantle stigmas around violence against women.

19. Implement the Hawaiian model (Healthy Start)¹ of prevention for high-risk families in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.
20. Provide safe homes and/or a transition house in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.
21. Provide opportunities for more interactions between women for them to broaden their vision and be enlightened by other women. This will promote different ideas and cultural exchanges.
22. Provide education in the school system regarding violence against women.
23. Provide parenting sessions in Punjabi.
24. Encourage agencies to keep cultural and gender statistics of clients.
25. Provide sexual harassment workshops to the general public in the South Okanagan and Similkameen.
26. Educate doctors, nurses and hospital staff around issues of violence against women.
27. Encourage local libraries to donate space where women could access videos, books and materials about women's issues.
28. Offer education workshops to immigrant communities surrounding their legal rights and obligations.
29. Offer support groups for immigrant women.
30. Offer training for interpreters.
31. Offer multicultural awareness training to service providers.
32. Provide low-income housing in the community.
33. Offer translated materials and brochures about issues of interest to women.
34. Open a sexual assault crisis centre in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.
35. Offer second stage housing programs for women victim of abuse.
36. Form an advisory committee that will develop a protocol manual to address issues of violence against women in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

4.4 Community Members

Forty-one community members from organizations involved in the project identified various issues to be addressed to reduce violence against women and to provide better services for women in the community.

¹ Healthy Start was developed in response to an alarming increase in confirmed child abuse and parent neglect cases from the mid-1970's to the mid-1980's. The program begins by screening families at the time of birth for factors associated with child abuse or neglect, such as poverty, single-parent status, substance abuse, inadequate housing, and inability to cope with parenting problems.

Once a family is identified as needing support, paraprofessional staff begin visiting weekly for about a year. After a year, visits are monthly and then quarterly until the child is 5. Staff work with families to obtain adequate nutrition, clothing, and shelter and to teach young parents about infant care and development. Most important, the home visitors become friends, advocates, and partners with families to improve their lives. Participating in parent education classes and support groups bolsters parents' morale and helps them learn effective parenting skills.

4.4.1 Working Conditions

Many community members interviewed understood that, in many cases, the working conditions for women involved in the agricultural sector were poor. Some identified that women, because of their gender, were discriminated against. One community member explained: *“Women in the packinghouse where I used to work are overworked, underpaid and this, I believe, is because women are more vulnerable. They are poorly treated and there is no easy solution to this problem because if they complain they risk losing their job. I did.”*

The majority of community members interviewed explained that appropriate accommodation is needed for seasonal migrant workers. Some orchardists do not provide accommodation, and will not allow workers to camp in their orchards. Some orchardists do not provide showers, toilets or even drinking water. Community members felt that it was the employer’s responsibility to offer these services. *“Those who do should be rewarded while those who do not should be fined”* stated one community member. Another commented: *“There would be less community tension in Oliver if all orchardists provided decent accommodations to their employees. The community and the police are held responsible for the problems that are occurring when in fact it should be orchardists who should be providing accommodations to their workers.”*

Another community member explained that institutionalized racism supports the low wages for fruit pickers in the region. Legislation to regulate prices was instated in the early twenties when Chinese newcomers were employed on the farms. *“Nothing has changed really, workers are still underpaid and this is supported by laws, I believe that it is because minority groups are doing this work.”*

4.4.2 Violence

Although most community members were not aware of the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment within the agricultural sector of the region, one community member noted that it had been an issue since at least the late seventies when she worked in the orchards. *“This is not new. I came to the Okanagan from Ontario 18 years ago with my husband to pick fruits. I recall women telling stories about being sexually harassed by their employers. It was also common then.”*

4.4.3 Solutions and Suggestions

Community members from local organizations put forward many solutions to prevent violence against seasonally employed women and to provide them with better services and working conditions. The following statements represent various suggestions to promote positive change in the regions:

1. Provide education to orchardists about the legal consequences of sexual assault and harassment.
2. Involve leaders, elders and women of various ethnocultural groups in the process of educating the communities about violence against women.
3. Utilize the future temple in Oliver as a venue to educate the Sikh community about issues of violence against women.
4. Provide free shower and washrooms facilities in the towns of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.
5. Initiate a youth hostel in one of the three communities in the study area.
6. Provide more accessible Food Bank services.
7. Provide affordable and convenient accommodation near the town of Osoyoos, Keremeos and Oliver. (Loose Bay outside Oliver is too far for those who do not have a vehicle).
8. Provide education to the population regarding prejudice and racism
9. Distribute multilingual information packages to orchardists with legal information about sexual assault and harassment.

10. Distribute multilingual information about prevention of violence against women to women who are seasonally employed.
11. Offer support services in the South Okanagan-Similkameen for women who have been assaulted.
12. Organize a committee that will find solutions to limit violence against women.
13. Use the media to educate the population about issues of violence against women and to provide information about available services in the community.
14. Include information about sexual assault and harassment in the information package designed by the French Multicultural Centre of Kelowna for agricultural workers.
15. Develop educational strategies to prevent sexual assault and harassment.
16. Send information about the agricultural work in the South Okanagan to educational institutions and governmental offices in Quebec.
17. Establish local labour offices where seasonal workers can register for work and get information about labour standards and assault issues.
18. Provide comfort stations downtown where migrant seasonal workers can shower and leave their personal belongings while they look for work.
19. Collaborate with the police and victim assistance workers to provide services that are more accessible to young women.
20. Provide brochures in French regarding health and safety and other relevant information about the community to seasonally employed women.
21. Educate boys and girls in school settings about gender biases, sexism, and violence against women.
22. Encourage local youth to work in orchards.
23. Teach agricultural safety in the schools.
24. Continue to offer day-care services for seasonal workers.
25. Offer transportation services.
26. Organize church groups activities to alleviate abuse and domestic violence.
27. Provide bilingual signage for seasonal workers to identify work availability.
28. Educate the population via a regular column in the local media about issues affecting women.
29. Display information about services available in the community.
30. Provide information about violence against women in packinghouses.
31. Provide a farm and business directory (if supported by farmers).
32. Distribute information about sexual harassment and assault to packinghouses and tree nurseries.
33. Distribute and post BC Labour Standards posters in all orchards.
34. Offer self-defence classes to women who are seasonally employed.
35. Facilitate workshops regarding sexual harassment in pre-employment programs offered at the local community college.
36. Distribute information packages regarding sexual assault at the Chamber of Commerce.

37. Provide a community women's shelter to support women.
38. Post information about sexual assault and harassment in different location which ethnocultural groups frequent. (i.e. local restaurant, food markets and news outlets- radio and television).
39. Include information on violence against women with orchardists cheques from the packinghouses.
40. Inform women about their legal rights.
41. Establish a women's centre within the study area where women can find the support and information.
42. Form an advisory committee to address issues of violence against women in the community.

5.0 Conclusion

Before drawing conclusion as a result of this research an important element of the methodology must explained. Due to sampling procedures and small sample size, the data collected cannot be extrapolated to represent the views of all women, services providers, community members, services clubs and church groups and municipals government from the South Okanagan-Similkameen. However, because this is qualitative research based on a feminist methodology, which value narration of experiences, the information collected is important and valid.

The results of the study identify information gathered from interviews with seasonally employed women, rural immigrant women, services providers, municipal and regional governments and other interested community members. The analysis of the information gathered can be categorized into four distinct sections. The first and the second sections summarize the experiences of seasonally employed women and of immigrant women regarding working conditions, discrimination, violence, and suggestions to enhance available service and reduce levels of assault, and harassment and wife abuse. The third and fourth sections focus on information gathered from service providers and community members who shared their insights on how to better offer programs to women by reducing existing barriers.

Seasonally employed women

The majority of women employed in the agricultural sector of the South Okanagan–Similkameen are seasonally employed. Although the majority of women interviewed for the study worked in orchards throughout the region, some were employed in packinghouses and in the silviculture industry. For those who live in the region permanently, work is secure, and on average lasts at least four months out of the year. For those who are non-permanent residents, employment usually lasts for the two and a half months of the fruit harvest season.

Many of the seasonally employed women who were interviewed for the study were under twenty-four years of age, spoke French as a first language, and were limited in their ability to communicate in English. The vast majority possessed some post-secondary education.

Many women indicated that their working conditions were poor due to the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in the workplace. Other women identified that low salaries and lack of amenities (drinking water, toilets and showers) as influencing the quality of their working conditions. Many seasonally employed women identified that they had been victims of assault and harassment by employers and other community members. All women explained that they were very assertive in their refusal when propositioned for sexual favours. Many women were forced to leave their jobs to ensure their personal safety, while others had to endure daily threats because high unemployment rates made it difficult for them to attain alternate employment.

It is important to note that the occurrence sexual assault and harassment was common knowledge to women employed in the agricultural sector and not a new problem. One respondent testified to its predominance twenty years ago. Many women suggested that sexual assault and harassment continue to occur because of the male dominated workforce. Most believed that men were abusing their financial power as a method of controlling their female employees.

The migrant seasonally employed women are typically young women who are also travelling and looking for new experiences and adventures. Some have easily been misled by employers who appeared to be generous by offering alcohol, drugs and work in exchange for sexual favours. Many women are desperate for work, and therefore may endure and tolerate the harassment and assaults in order to secure money to return home.

It is important to note that none of the seasonally employed women who had been harassed and assaulted reported these incidents to authorities. Their reluctance to seek help from the police was based on:

- unawareness of their right to report specially when incidences were not physically threatening;
- lack of trust in the police;
- belief that the police do not offer sensitive support to women;

- risk of losing employment; and
- non-permanent residency.

Many participants experienced cultural discrimination which included being victimized daily by community members. Because of this migrant seasonally employed women are faced with additional challenges, underlined by community's discriminatory.

To address these issues, some women suggested that an individual, preferably a woman, should be hired to support women who experience assault and harassment in the community. Others saw a need to provide prevention information about sexual assault and harassment to both women workers and the community at large. Some women suggested that authorities be involved in educating men who assault. The vast majority of women interviewed indicated that affordable housing within town limits and with 24-hour security should be provided to ensure women's safety and that labour standard policies should be enforced such as providing toilets, accommodations and water facilities for agricultural workers.

Rural Immigrant Women

Rural immigrant women interviewed had emigrated from a diverse array of countries. Many had moved to the South Okanagan-Similkameen in the last five years, with their families, to work in the region's agricultural industry. Some worked on their family owned orchard while others worked in private agricultural industries and many were seasonally employed.

The vast majority of women talked about wanted to sustain full-time employment to achieve reach financial security. They identified that they needed new skills to adapt to the changing market economy. They suggested that culturally sensitive job search and employment training should be initiated in order to enhance their socio-economic status. Some women interviewed in the study explained that they have tried to find better employment and felt that they were overlooked because of their skin colour. However, it is even more difficult for immigrant women to sustain full-time employment because they are doubly marginalized due to racial and gender discrimination. Thus, it is primordial that specific programs be initiated in the community to enhance the chance of employability for rural immigrant women. Programs specifically encouraging the development of economic endeavours would ensure and promote more egalitarian representation of minorities in the labour market, thus enhancing women's socio-economic status.

Some women interviewed said that their lack of financial security limited them from accessing community services designed for women in situations of abuse. Financial security is a source of empowerment, as well as a means for women in violent relationships to leave an abusive spouse.

A high percentage of women identified that family pressure would limit them from accessing services in the community. Many of the women who made this statement were living with extended families. For these women, the pressure can be so great that they endure the hardship without outside sources of support. Fear of tarnishing the family name and shame create additional barriers limiting participants from accessing services which may help them to end an abusive relationship. The impact of shame is often increased in rural communities where the small size of the community can promote more social interaction between its members, thus hindering confidentiality and anonymity. It is even more difficult for rural immigrant women who live in small communities because they are often restricted by the small size of their ethnocultural group and this can be intensified if these groups possesses strong cultural and religious beliefs. This rural specificity increases the likelihood of women feeling stranded and hopeless in cases of abuse.

The following represent the barriers which participants identified as limiting them from accessing services in the community. In order of most prominent response to least:

1. family pressure,

2. shame,
3. lack of English language skills,
4. lack of transportation,
5. lack of knowledge of services,
6. fear of losing financial security,
7. fear of losing residence status,
8. fear losing custody of their children,
9. lack of confidentiality, and
10. belief that service providers will not understand their problems.

It is clear that service providers need to understand specific cultural barriers in order to limit stereotyping and promote culturally sensitive services for rural immigrant women who are victims of abuse. Participants indicated that in addressing the need for programs in this region, service providers have to create multilingual strategies for service delivery in order to accommodate women who are linguistically isolated. Women also indicated that service providers, when working with women and men who have immigrated from war torn countries, need to recognize that service delivery must be sensitive to individuals who have experienced trauma.

Many participants from the study indicated that they would initially seek support from their families in cases of abuse. This is consistent with previous studies conducted to understand the violence prevention needs of immigrant women. However, our examination contradicts other research showing that respondents do not seek help from the RCMP. Interestingly, in this research project half of the women interviewed identified that they would seek help from those of police. This contradiction in findings with other research may be attributed to the fact that this study was undertaken in a rural area where immigrant women are unaware of the services available to them other than the police. This suggests that agencies providing service to women need to find strategies to better promote their services in order to reach immigrant women.

Women participants suggested various solutions which would enable them to better access community services as well as prevent violence against women. Women highly recommended that services better meet their experiences. They would like to participate in employment programs in order to sustain full-time employment; and participate in educational support groups to reduce their sense of isolation. They believe that an outreach worker who is culturally sensitive, speaks their first language, and understands immigration laws be hired to support the immigrant community. Participants also felt that anger management programs should be offered to men in the community. They also suggested that multilingual educational brochures about the laws regulating violence against women and educational prevention of violence against women should be provided in various settings frequented by members of their communities.

Service Providers

Fourteen service providers from different social agencies and police detachments were interviewed for the research. All agencies had a mandate to offer services and programs to women living in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

The vast majority of service providers had very few representations of minority and immigrant women participating in their programs. As well, the majority of service providers indicated that often the solutions to reduce agency barriers to promote participation of minority and immigrant women required additional resources that are extremely difficult to secure. Funding policies often do not consider the specific needs of rural communities as they are primarily designed to address urban

issues. The following are suggestions made by service providers interviewed underscores the need for more resources to promote accessibility for women who are culturally and linguistically isolated:

1. hire staff who can offer services in different languages;
2. provide effective outreach services to immigrant women;
3. undertake prevention programs to reduce family violence;
4. offer clients the services of trained interpreters;
5. promote programs in a culturally sensitive manner;
6. offer transportation services to allow women to participate in community programs; and
7. offer information on cultural awareness and diversity issues to staff members;

It is important to note that all service providers interviewed understood the numerous barriers that rural immigrant women face when trying to access their services. This awareness will enable service providers to encourage positive change within their organizations and to foster and nurture in a culturally sensitive way, relationships with marginalized women who are victims of violence.

Community Members

Community members interviewed were primarily concerned with issues surrounding migrant seasonal workers. This is principally due to conflicts and community tensions that arise when seasonal workers arrive in the small communities to find employment. Many community members interviewed understood that coordinated initiatives need to be established in the community to accommodate the workers and to reduce persistent community tension. Some projects have already been implemented and have demonstrated community determination to accommodate the workers (e.g. free campsites outside of Oliver). Nonetheless, specific projects to reduce the incidence of assault and harassment that persevere need to be implemented as well as anti-racism initiatives, which will promote cultural awareness.

Community members suggested numerous ideas that could benefit the entire community. These ranged from working with specific cultural groups to educate its members about issues of violence against women, and using the media to inform community members about cross-cultural and racism issues. Many participants also suggested forming an advisory group for the South Okanagan-Similkameen to ensure the many recommendations in this report are implemented.

Many issues and insights have arisen from this study which enable us to better understand the various issues that affect rural immigrant women and women who are seasonally employed in this region. The research also offered a group of women who are often marginalised the opportunity to share their insights and voice their opinions on how to improve, modify and enhance the existing services that are available in the community. The research opens doors to future community initiatives, increasing safety and promoting equality for rural immigrant women and seasonally employed women from this region.

6.0 Recommendations

The recommendations below are formulated from a review of all participants' suggestions to reduce and prevent the incidence of violence against women occurring in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. Consultation with women, agency representatives and community members also identified limitations for accessing and/or providing services to women who are culturally and linguistically marginalized. The following recommendations may help to eliminate some of the major barriers that prevail in the delivery of services as well as help promote the implementation of new programs to ensure the safety of all women within the study area.

6.1 Programs and Services

Recommendation 1: Outreach services for immigrant women and seasonally employed women

- ❑ An outreach worker should be employed on a full-time base to offer support services to immigrant women from the communities of Oliver, Keremeos and Osoyoos. The outreach worker would provide support, referral, and information for immigrant women. The hired worker should be of South Asian heritage and fluent in Punjabi to enable women from this community to discuss openly and freely issues that prevail in their lives.
- ❑ A second outreach worker should be employed on a part-time base during the summer months to offer educational, advocacy and support services for women who are seasonally employed. The hired worker should be fluent in French.

Recommendation 2: Support groups for rural immigrant women

- ❑ The implementation of a support group for immigrant women is necessary in order to reduce their isolation. The support group would offer women a venue to discuss issues of common concerns that affect their full participation and integration in the community while acknowledging and addressing issues of violence, inequality and power imbalances in relationships. The support group could foster social recreational activities while including educational components (e.g. kitchen table conferences addressing legal rights and responsibilities). The outreach worker of South Asian decent would facilitate the support group.

Recommendation 3: Multicultural mental health counselling services

- ❑ The provision of multicultural mental health counselling services would enable immigrant women to seek help and support for mental health issues such as depression. The program would be offered in various languages and provided by a culturally sensitive professional. This program should be available to immigrant women living in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos.

Recommendation 4: Interpreters and translation services

- ❑ Immigrant women from the South Okanagan need the services of trained interpreters and translators to support them when dealing with community agencies such as the police, the victim assistance program, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry for Families and Children, the women's shelter, and justice system professionals. Translation and interpretation services would ensure that information is delivered properly in a non-biased and confidential manner. This service would encourage immigrant and minority women to access services and programs available in the community.

Recommendation 5: Family programs

- ❑ The establishment of a family centre in Oliver and Osoyoos should be undertaken to offer support services and family programs. The centre would be conducive to the specific needs of immigrant families and could offer parenting programs such as: the Nobody's Perfect, Teen Conflict and Inter-generation Conflict Resolution, and Raising Children in Two Cultures. A family worker from various cultural backgrounds should be hired to deliver programs to more effectively support immigrant families. The family centre would facilitate the development of better support networks, thus reducing isolation for women and their families.

Recommendation 6: Anger management programs

- ❑ A program for abusive individuals should be offered in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. This program should not only accommodate individuals who receive mandatory sentences but anyone who wishes to modify and change their abusive behaviour. This program should be offered in various languages.

Recommendation 7: Resources for prevention programs

- ❑ Further funding and resources should be allocated to organizations such as the Ministry for Children and Families, the Community Action Project for Children, the Regional Health District (Public Health Nurse), the stopping the violence programs and the specialized victim assistance programs to establish outreach prevention programs to reduce the risk of violence against women and children. Resources allocated to these prevention programs would allow workers to develop and build meaningful relationship with women and their families, thus fostering more trusting and egalitarian relationships between service providers and clients. Programs such as the successful Hawaiian model “Healthy Start” should be initiated and funded by the Regional Health District.

Recommendation 8: Employment program

- ❑ Pre-employment and self-employment programs should be offered to women in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. These programs would take into account the specific language needs of immigrant women and would help women to become more financially secure.

Recommendation 9: Culturally sensitive self-defence courses

- ❑ Self-defence classes should be provided to women who are seasonally employed. This training would provide women with the necessary skills and empowerment to prevent and/or minimize the effects of future assault and harassment. These classes should be free and available in informal settings such as in various parks and campgrounds.

Recommendation 10: Women's drop-in Centre and/or women's cooperative

- ❑ The establishment of a women's centre in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos would enable women to find support and access information about available services in the community. The centre could foster formal and informal educational programs that would be of specific interest to women. These programs could include such topics as health and nutrition issues and legal matters. The centre should hire women from diverse cultural backgrounds to promote inclusive services and encourage participation of minority women. The centre could host an immigrant women's advocate program.

Recommendation 11: Services for migrant seasonal workers

- ❑ Comfort stations should be provided for seasonal migrant workers in the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. These stations would provide free showers, toilets and storage spaces where individuals could leave their personal belongings while searching for employment.
- ❑ Labour offices in the communities of Osoyoos, Oliver and Keremeos should be established. This would facilitate seasonal workers finding available employment and orchardists finding employees. Seasonal workers could also be informed about labour standards and other services available in the community. Coordinators and employees of the labour offices will need to be culturally sensitive individuals in order to better serve diverse groups.

- ❑ Transportation services could be initiated from the labour office.
- ❑ Existing government policies in the United States address the specific needs of migrant seasonal workers, especially as they relate to accommodation. These policies should be analysed with the intent to adopt them in B.C. and the regional district of the South Okanagan Similkameen.

6.2 Access to services

Recommendation 12: Cultural sensitivity training

- ❑ Organizations must start addressing social systemic barriers affecting the participation of immigrant women and minority women. Orientation training should be offered to board members and service providers addressing issues such as gender and cultural awareness. This should provide the boards and the staff with an increased understanding of the diversity of the community and create culturally sensitive and non-threatening programs.

Recommendation 13: Organizational change

- ❑ Organizations should review and evaluate their hiring, appointment and service delivery policies to identify whether they promote equality for all women. From this evaluation organizations should develop a strategic action plan to change, if necessary, their hiring, appointment and service delivery policies to promote socio-economic equality for women from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Recommendation 14: Multilingual promotion of services and programs

- ❑ Organizations need to distribute posters, brochures and pamphlets, which provide information about their services in various locations throughout the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. These brochures should be distributed in locations which immigrant and minority women already attend. These are: Health Units; medical offices; schools and colleges; ESL classes; places of worship; work settings; food markets; and libraries. Furthermore, for linguistically isolated groups to become aware of the services and programs available in the communities, the posters, brochures and pamphlets should be translated. Community agencies should also be encouraged to make presentations about their services and programs to ESL classes and places of worship.

6.3 Education and Information

Recommendation 15: Sexual harassment policies

- ❑ Employers of industries who hire seasonal workers should be required to adopt sexual harassment policies to ensure the safety and protection of female workers. Advocacy training opportunities should be provided in the workplace for interested seasonally employed women so that they can be effective advocates and supporters of co-workers who have been victimized.

Recommendation 16: Sexual assault and harassment, and violence against women education

- ❑ Educational workshops regarding prevention of sexual assault and harassment, and violence against women should be offered in: various work settings devoted to the agricultural industry; pre-employment programs offered at the local community college; ESL classes; elementary and high schools; and places of worship.

Recommendation 17: Sexual assault and harassment, and violence against women information

- ❑ Posters regarding issues of violence against women and community services for victims should be posted in various locations in Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. Locations suggested are: food

markets, public washrooms, community bulletin boards, and work settings such as packinghouses. These posters should be translated in various languages, primarily French and Punjabi.

- ❑ The local media should be encouraged to publish regular columns to inform the population about issues of violence against women and to provide information about available community services in the community. The articles published would help reduce stigmas and prejudices and would promote changes in attitudes and behaviours which would allow violence against women to happen.
- ❑ Information packages and booklets designed by the French Multicultural Centre of Kelowna, which include prevention of sexual assault and harassment, and services available in the Okanagan, should be distributed to seasonally employed women from the communities of Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. These packages should be translated in various languages, primarily French and Punjabi.
- ❑ Information packages in various languages should be designed and distributed to orchardists regarding legal consequences of sexual assault and harassment. This information could be mailed to orchardists with payments from packinghouses, utility bills or tax notices.

Recommendation 18: Anti-racism education for general population

- ❑ The local newspapers should publish articles to educate the general population about multicultural issues. Articles portraying in a positive light, individuals from various ethnocultural backgrounds, would increase cross-cultural awareness and would help decrease discrimination and racism.
- ❑ Anti-racism workshops should be provided in educational institutions. These workshops should encompass experiential learning, which fosters and promotes changes in behaviours and attitudes. Plays by troupes focussing on violence against women and/or anti-racism and diversity issues should be offered both to youth and children in school settings, and to the general population.

Recommendation 19: Protocol Manual

- ❑ A protocol manual should be developed to enhance community responses to issues of violence against women. The protocol manual would foster a more coordinated community approach to service delivery and prevention for women who are victimized. This would enable service providers to identify and close gaps to access and services to seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women.

Recommendation 20: Formation of an Advisory committee

- ❑ An advisory committee comprised of different organizations, local government agencies, and interested community members who have a vested interest in limiting violence against seasonally employed women in the community should be formed to ensure that the recommendations within this document are implemented. The committee should develop further educational strategies to prevent sexual assault and harassment. The committee would also strive to develop a workable self-sustaining long-term framework to address issues of violence against women seasonally employed for the rural communities of the South-Okanagan and Similkameen.

7.0 Proposed Action Plan for Phase 2 – Process Steps

Phase two of this project, will examine the most effective response to regional coordination for multifaceted strategies to limit the incidence of violence against seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women living in the South Okanagan–Similkameen. Pending funding, a committee of various service organizations and stakeholders will be formed to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to enhance existing community resources and promote public understanding of issues of violence against women. As a result of this initiative, specific prevention projects will be implemented to enhance the quality of life for women seasonally employed and rural immigrant women.

Many organizations and community members from throughout the study area have demonstrated their support by forming the South Okanagan-Similkameen Prevention Advisory Group (SPAG). SPAG will be responsible for selecting the committee’s coordinator and overseeing the development and implementation of the specific prevention projects.

The following phases of the action plan represent the activities that will be undertaken by the South Okanagan-Similkameen Prevention Advisory Group and its coordinator.

Phase I: Orientation: Establish Relationships and Understanding

Activities	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Analyze and summarize the information from the report to the general public. ➤ Share information to educate communities and the general public, and develop and coordinate plans of action to prevent violence against seasonally employed women. ➤ Identify and encourage participation by key stakeholders and services providers in joining the South Okanagan-Similkameen Prevention Advisory Committee (SPAG) in addressing prevention strategies to limit and reduce violence against seasonally employed women in the identified rural communities. ➤ Schedule the orientation meeting of the expanded advisory group to discuss, review and modify its goals, objectives and responsibilities. 	6 months

Phase 2: Develop a framework: Working towards an agreement

Activities	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare a framework that considers long-term sustainability and organizational partnership issues. ➤ Build consensus among all members of SPAG to prioritize the prevention projects to be implemented for the next two years. The group may suggest prevention projects in addition to the ones already identified in this report. ➤ Decide roles and responsibilities for members to implement specific projects. Common interest and complementary expertise may encourage partnerships between members to implement specific prevention projects. While some organizations will broaden their mandate to address issues of violence against women, others will promote more inclusive services. The collaboration between the organizations will demonstrate their commitment to enhance the quality of life for all individuals living in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. ➤ Identify strategies to implement the specific recommendations identified in Phase I. Specific recommendations will be identified as subprojects and may be administered by the most appropriate organization selected by the committee. The project coordinator would help secure funding for the selected organization. ➤ Develop a protocol manual to enhance community response to issues of violence against women. ➤ Research and review projects and materials that have been successfully implemented in other communities and regions in order to maximize chances of project success and to avoid duplication of resource materials. 	4 months

Phase 3: Develop innovations and implement the model: Solutions to create a favourable environment for women

This phase will identify examples of projects to be implemented by members of SPAG. These projects were recommended by participants involved in the participatory action-oriented research to reduce violence against seasonally employed women and rural immigrant women. Members of the committee will possess full discretion in identifying the service project deliverables. The coordinator

will be responsible for securing funding and resources for the following suggested projects and activities.

Activities	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Design and distribute multilingual information packages on violence against women and available community services to employers and employees involved in the agricultural sector. Packages should be available in English, Punjabi, Portuguese, Spanish and French. ➤ Design multilingual informational posters regarding violence against women and display them in various work settings and community settings. ➤ Provide educational sessions/workshops regarding violence against women to employers and employees in various agricultural work settings. These workshops will enhance participants' experiential understanding of the issues. ➤ Provide employers involved in the agricultural industry with information about community services available to women victims of violence. ➤ Work with the Farm and Ranch Health and Safety Association and employers involved in the agricultural sector to develop protocols on how to respond to violence against women and support their female employees who have been victimized. ➤ Work with employers involved in the agricultural industry to develop, implement and enforce sexual harassment policies in the workplace. ➤ Provide opportunities for interested seasonally employed women in various workplaces to become advocates and supporters of co-workers who have been victimized. ➤ Work to initiate anger management programs in the region for abusive men. Programs should accommodate men with mandatory sentences as well as others who wish to modify and change their abusive behaviour. The programs should be offered in Punjabi. ➤ Provide educational workshops in support group settings for immigrant women who are seasonally employed regarding violence against women, self-esteem, assertiveness and leadership skills, as well as legal and human rights information. These workshops should be available in English and Punjabi. The workshops will enable these women to acknowledge their own personal experience relating to inequality, assault and violence against women. ➤ Provide educational sessions regarding violence against women issues to ESL classes and to the Sikh community through their temples. ➤ Provide an informal educational series on prevention against sexual assault and harassment and community support services to women seasonal migrant workers. ➤ Collaborate with employment agencies to design culturally sensitive employment programs that will alleviate economic burden for women who are seasonally employed. Self-employment and value-added project initiatives should be assessed. ➤ Research and review curriculums to identify gaps in gender and violence education for post secondary programs that focus on seasonal employment. These include the viticulture and tourism management programs, offered through the Okanagan University College. ➤ Work with local RCMP detachments to provide preventative educational outreach services to high-risk assaulters and to ensuring gender and cultural sensitivity for 	<p>12 months</p>

<p>seasonally employed women who have been assaulted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Organize activities and events around Prevention of Violence against Women Week in the communities of Keremeos, Osoyoos and Oliver. Encourage municipal and regional governments to become actively involved in the events. For example local government could declare zero-tolerance for violence against women in their respective communities. ➤ Fundraising activities will be developed such as hosting special events, private sector investment, etc. to ensure the viability of this project beyond the current funding commitment. 	
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Phase 4: Disseminate information

Activities	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Publish monthly columns on issues of equality for women and available community services for victims of violence against women in the local media. ➤ Disseminate information on violence against women and SPAG’s activities from the coordinator's quarterly report, through regular media releases. ➤ Make presentations on violence against women to local and regional governments. ➤ Share quarterly reports and other published materials with other provincial groups working to enhance the lives of seasonal workers (e.g. Abbotsford Community Services Seasonal Worker’s Project). ➤ Develop a Web Page, constructed by the coordinator, to share information with other regions throughout the country and internationally. ➤ Have the coordinator undertake a speaker’s tour to discuss how similar projects could be organized in other communities in Canada. ➤ Design and host a province-wide seminar to bring together members from various sectors that work with individuals who are seasonally employed. This seminar would endeavour to share information about current initiatives dealing with issues of seasonal employment and to build provincial and cross-sectoral partnerships for addressing the issue of violence for seasonally employed women. 	<p>12 months and beyond</p>

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Appendices - Interview Guides