

Healing Journey Project Winding Down in Prince Albert

It's been more than 4 years and 275 interviews since the first wave of participants in the Healing Journey project were recruited in Prince Albert, but with the last three interviews currently being scheduled, the project is now in the final stages of data collection. *The Healing Journey: A Longitudinal Study of Women Who Have Been Abused by Intimate Partners* is the first study of its kind in Canada, examining the experience of intimate partner violence and the consequences it has on the lives of women in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta over a four year period. The Saskatchewan portion of the study is led by Dr. Mary Hampton, a SPHERU researcher and Psychology professor at Luther College. SPHERU Director Dr. Bonnie Jeffery is also a member of the research team, overseeing the project in Prince Albert. Working with the academic researchers are community agencies, forming partnerships to create results that will help to understand the cycle of abuse and the intervention and prevention strategies implemented to address the cycle.

With the completion of project activity is an opportunity to reflect on what the study has meant to Prince Albert's community agency partner, The Prince Albert Safe Shelter for Women. The Shelter has been an invaluable contributor from the start, assisting with the creation of appropriate recruitment and data collection methods, and providing in-kind supports such as interview space and child care, as well as making staff time available for interviews. It has been a good experience for Shelter Director Carol Soles who was pleased with how the academic researchers viewed the community agencies, stating they "embraced us as equals."

The director of the 24 bed Shelter fully expects that the hard work and dedication of the provincial team of researchers, community agencies and interviewers will be worth the effort as findings from the study are translated into policy and service delivery adjustments and improvements. She has already seen an impact from involvement in the study at the Prince Albert Safe Shelter, where a new position was created to provide continuing support services to women who had received services and were

now back in the community. Although the analysis of study data has not yet been completed, Soles says that through informal contacts with study participants "we became aware that clients who maintained some connection to the Shelter after receiving services seemed to be experiencing increased success in managing their lives," reinforcing a need for follow up services that had been previously identified. This allowed the Shelter director to make a stronger case for allocating funds to the position.

Having veteran Shelter staff member Theresa Lanigan involved in project interviews was also beneficial, allowing the Shelter to play an important role in the research process. As a community agency partner, the Shelter was interested in facilitating the success of the interviews and accommodated Theresa's work schedule to allow her to conduct interviews at times that fit the needs of the participants.

This, in turn, allowed Theresa to stay with the project, when other interviewers with less flexible schedules were not able to do so. Of the seven interviewers hired in Prince Albert over the life of the project, Theresa is the only one to have been involved in all seven waves of interviews. She has found it rewarding that the interviews "helped them [participants] to reflect on their journey and be able to see the small successes which over the period of time added up to change." She added that many participants are interested in seeing the final report of the study and

believe that positive outcomes will be seen in how future services are delivered.

The project was funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council Community Researcher Alliance (SSHRC/CURA) and the Prairie Action Foundation (PAF). For more information on the project please contact the Prince Albert SPHERU office @ 306-953-5535 (located in Room 154 of the Woodland Academic Centre, 1500 -10th Avenue East, Prince Albert) or go to: <http://www.uregina.ca/resolve/RESOLVE/research.htm>

prepared by Colleen Hamilton
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Director Carol Soles (l) and Support Services Worker Theresa Lanigan (r) in the newly renovated kitchen at the Prince Albert Safe Shelter for Women.