

The Power of Our Collective Voices: Changing the Conversation on Sexual Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
CRIMINAL LAW REFORM
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY



ENDING  VIOLENCE
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SUMMARY REPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Planning Committee would like to express its deep appreciation to all presenters, facilitators, participants for their important contributions to the conference and their incredible commitment to ending violence on post-secondary campuses and the community as a whole.

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Location: The Great Hall, AMS Student Nest - 6133 University Blvd, the University of British Columbia



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Executive Summary



AMS Student Nest

organizations in dialogue about sexual violence within Canadian university and college communities.

The International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy (ICCLR), the Alma Mater Society's Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) at UBC, and the Ending Violence Association of British Columbia (EVA BC) organized and hosted a two-day conference on September 30 – October 1, 2016 in Vancouver.

The conference, titled *The Power of our Collective Voices: Changing the Conversation on Sexual Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions* engaged over 250 students, staff, faculty, senior administrators, government and community

This conference built upon two earlier events co-hosted by the ICCLR, AMS SASC, and EVA BC: *The Inter-University Conversation on Sexual Assault Prevention* conference (April 2015) and *The Power of Our Collective Voices Pre-Conference Symposium* (May 2016). For this two-day event, we intended to provide tools to better respond to campus sexual violence, and inform and discuss the development and implementation of post-secondary policies, protocols, prevention strategies, and community collaboration, while providing a space to understand and incorporate the lived experiences of survivors.

DAY 1

Welcoming Remarks



Brian Tkachuk

The event began with a Musqueam Welcome from **Audrey Siegl**, who acknowledged the event as occurring on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people and explained how essential that was to the focus of the conference on anti-violence work.

Following Ms. Siegl's welcome were remarks from **Brian Tkachuk**, Executive Director at ICCLR, **Tracy Porteous**, Executive Director at EVA BC and **Ashley Bentley**, Manager at the AMS SASC. Together they expressed their sincere thanks to all attendees for their commitment to ending sexual violence on post-secondary campuses and the event organizers and sponsors for making the conference possible.

They also briefly shared the importance of anti-violence work to their respective organizations and touched on some past and ongoing initiatives they were involved in to support sexual violence victims and survivors on local, national and international levels.

After the welcoming remarks, the MC for the event, **Leah Horlick**, Coordinator at the SFU Women's Centre, explained the plan and program for the first day of the conference, covered a few housekeeping items and then introduced the first Keynote speaker, **Olga Trujillo**.

A Survivor's Story of Resilience | Keynote Address



Olga Trujillo

Olga Trujillo is a nationally renowned speaker, survivor, and attorney dedicated to enhancing the understanding of – and building effective responses to – violence. Olga worked in the U.S. Department of Justice as General Counsel to the Office of Justice Programs, and then joined the Department's Office for Victims of Crime as legal counsel.

In her presentation, Olga shared a very powerful and personal story of her experience watching her father abuse her mother for years, and then being drawn into further years of sexual abuse by her father and brothers. In recounting her story, she explained her journey to becoming a survivor, what she has learned so far, and how each person can and does make a difference in the lives of others.

Creating Caring Campus Communities: Intersectional Prevention and Education Strategies on Campus | Plenary Session

This session following the Keynote presentation was moderated by **Janet Mee**, Director of Access and Diversity at UBC and the University's lead on Sexual Assault Intervention and Prevention Education. The panel featured **Tamsyn Riddle** and **Ariel Sernick**, co-founders of Sayfe.u, **Farrah Khan**, Sexual Violence Support and Education Coordinator at Ryerson University and **Anna Soole**, senior trainer, speaker and educator.

Tamsyn Riddle and **Ariel Sernick** explained the utility of Sayfe.u as an innovative mobile platform developed to support survivors of sexual violence on campus, and deliver comprehensive, relatable consent education to students in an accessible format. Although currently based out of Toronto, Tamsyn and Ariel expressed that they had plans to expand to all schools across Canada and North America by bringing support to survivors throughout these areas with tools such as location- and school-specific information.

Farrah Khan's presentation gave the audience insight into her work as a counsellor, educator and artist working to support survivors both at Ryerson University and in wider communities. She argued for the importance of creating a culture of consent on campuses to prevent sexual violence, and how that was a shared responsibility between all. For example, her office at Ryerson created a "Consent Comes First Orientation Checklist" for all professional staff, Orientation Week Student Staff, students from various campus student societies and groups who would be planning orientation events. This effort was aimed at creating a culture of consent early in the academic year especially considering that two-thirds of all campus sexual assaults occur within the first 8 weeks of school.

Farrah also explained the influence of media reporting in shaping perceptions around sexual violence. She argued that the way stories are written often influences what gets researched and called for media to develop a more nuanced approach to their reporting, as opposed to resorting to spreading misinformation and victim-blaming. In closing, she encouraged all to always consider opportunities to affect change and support their own communities as much possible.

Anna Soole has practiced as a Social Justice Facilitator, Assertiveness Coach, and Forum Theatre Practitioner at provincial, national and international levels. Her practice is founded in experiential education and arts-based social and ecological justice with a focus on gender, sexuality, gender-based violence prevention and justice. As a facilitator and educator, her work has carried her to venues including: teacher staff trainings, teacher and counsellor conferences, as well as mainstream and alternative high schools, elementary schools, colleges and universities. In her presentation she discussed the importance of recognizing the colonial structures within which educational institutions are often situated, and how that makes them susceptible to developing inherently oppressive systems which result in violence. She also argued that, although people often do talk about consent culture, we need to admit that it has not been achieved so far.

Dr. Sarah Hunt is an Assistant Professor at UBC in the First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program and Department of Geography. Her research critically takes up questions of violence, justice, resistance, self-determination and decolonization. Her scholarship emerges from 15 years of work as a community-based researcher and educator, with a particular focus on issues facing girls, women and two-spirit people.

Sarah began her presentation by arguing that sexual violence conversations often limit how involved Indigenous people are. She explained that colonization is embedded into the sociopolitical structures through which settler nations continue to exist. Sexual violence and the many manifestations of rape culture have thus been resisted by Indigenous people for centuries and continue to be resisted today. This history of rape culture that Indigenous people have suffered has made them particularly vulnerable on campuses, as many Indigenous students have experienced sexual violence in their lifetimes.

Sarah highlighted the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as a case study. The Commission revealed that Indigenous children had suffered years of sexual violence in residential schools. Due to colonization, racialized gender roles were created and children were taught to be ashamed of their bodies. The forced embodiment of gender recognition through residential schools suppressed Indigenous spirituality and beliefs, fostering rape culture. The Indigenous experience also reveals that violence is not always restricted to the individual level, but can also be systemic.

Sarah also spoke about the recently passed Bill 23 (Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act), which mandates all BC public post-secondary institutions to establish and implement a stand-alone policy on sexual violence and misconduct. She explained that although better legislation can be useful, we must be careful not to mistake government policy as a panacea in of itself, especially in regard to Indigenous peoples. If we want to acquire different answers to provide support for Indigenous peoples, we must ask different questions; specifically:

1) How can anti-violence organizing on campus support Indigenous peoples right to self-determination?

In regards to this question, Sarah highlighted the importance of seeking Indigenous advice when engaging in efforts to end violence. At UBC for example, she called for university officials to consult with the Musqueam community as they develop a policy to help end sexual violence, especially given the fact that this is an issue of mutual interest.

2) Within the framework of self-determination, how can efforts to control sexual violence align with Indigenous terms of consent?

Sarah argued that we need to build up the ways that consent is discussed in terms of peoples' bodies, because we cannot effectively rebuild land relations without diminishing the effects and impacts of that form of violence.

3) How can we foster cultural safety in regard to sexual violence?

Responding to the question of fostering cultural safety in regards to sexual violence, Sarah asserted that cultural safety means that it is our birth right to feel safe and be our whole self in any space. She also asked that we consider how cultural practices can be woven into discussions of sexual health and violence on campus. Finally she encouraged all to recognize the history of colonial violence and residential schools when speaking of consent, as this is an important history that we can learn important lessons from.

4) How can anti-violence efforts work at colleges and universities with a consensual ally-ship with Indigenous peoples?

Sarah cautioned that we pay attention to the representation of Indigenous peoples on institutional boards and staff, as this has important implications for the effectiveness of antiviolence work.

5) How can we foster consent in our daily lives in accordance with Indigenous peoples?

In regards to this question, Sarah encouraged all to recognize our own bodies and differences, so we can establish connection. She also challenged us to see Indigenous peoples not only as higher risk groups but as self-determined people with deep roots in peaceful consent.

Reporting, Disclosing, and Due Process: An Intersectional Approach | Plenary Session

This panel was moderated by **Dr. Janine Benedet**, Professor of Law and Associate Dean, Academic Affairs at the Allard School of Law at UBC. The panel featured **Carol Bilson**, consultant, facilitator and former coordinator of the Anti-Violence Project (AVP) and the University of Victoria's Sexual Assault Centre, **Alex Zuur**, Restorative Justice Practitioner and **Chris Rogerson**, Student Judicial Affairs Officer at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT).

Carol Bilson focused her presentation on restorative justice approaches to sexual violence cases and how the process often worked for survivors and perpetrators. She began by highlighting four important questions to consider regarding the process:

- Who has been hurt?
- What do they need?
- What is the impetus?
- What are the obligations?

Carol also expressed that with any restorative justice process to sexual violence, it is important to look at the harm done, the obligations to place on the parties involved and the level of engagement between all involved in the process. These factors and questions provide the needed space to bring accountability forward in a meaningful way, as they involve engaging the right people, i.e. those who have been involved and impacted (survivors and perpetrators). Carol also stressed that it is essential for those involved, and particularly the survivor, to direct the process.

In further explaining the restorative justice process, Carol emphasized that accountability is an absolute requirement, meaning that the perpetrator has to actively take part in the steps involved. She explained that the reason for this level of engagement is the perpetrator needs to take responsibility for the harm they have caused, and the survivor has the opportunity to play a prominent role in determining what form

that responsibility will take. Carol thus made the point that every restorative justice process is different and must be different in order to be restorative.

In closing, Carol outlined five takeaways to consider for those interested in restorative justice:

- Be open
- Create a restorative environment that is specific to your community.
- Invite expertise in
- Generate more knowledge
- Make it relevant for your context.

Carol also emphasized the usefulness of restorative justice and the difference it makes to create a process for people where healing occurs following the survivors' definition or in accordance with their wishes. She concluded that restorative justice thus has a role to play in changing the conversation about sexual violence.

Alex Zuur in her presentation addressed the gaps present in current reporting practices and standards regarding sexual violence, as well as considerations that need to be made in developing sexual violence policies. She explained that during the policymaking process it is essential to recognize who is at the table, their ability, their gender, ethnicity, etc. A question to ask with these considerations is whether there is a diverse range of voices at the table when addressing sexual violence policies.

With regards to disclosure, Alex expressed that it is imperative for everyone to have a basic understanding of what to do when someone discloses. On campuses especially, all staff and faculty should at minimum have a basic training for responding to a disclosure of sexual violence.

On the matter of due process in sexual violence cases, she argued that there needs to be room for restorative practices in order to create appropriate spaces for people who cause harm or have been harmed. She explained that this is especially important because it creates room for us to become more responsive to survivors.

In closing, Alex admitted that taking the adequate steps to stop sexual violence will be an intergenerational struggle that will not be solved instantly. However, if our communities can start taking more innovative steps to address the issue, we will come closer to that goal.

Chris Rogerson reflected on his experience with the policy-making process at BCIT regarding sexual violence. He explained that, in developing effective campus policies, we need to consider the opinions of students who experienced sexual violence. The reason why this is important is because the policy-making process can often blind us from thoroughly assessing the issue. Chris also emphasized the point that we must distinguish between disclosure and reporting, as well as creating places of support, education, and protection for all. In closing, he encouraged the audience to recognize that, while aligning with the expectations of the legislation, we always have the right to support and advocate for the people who have been harmed and those who committed the harm. We therefore need to have the ability to learn and listen so that we can continue to evolve along with this issue.

DAY 2

Centering Survivors: An Intersectional Approach to Raising Student Voices in Violence Prevention | Keynote Address

The opening keynote presentation on the second day of the conference was given by **Annie Elizabeth Clark** and **Andrea Pino**.



Annie Clark (right) and Andrea Pino (left)

Annie Clark is a co-founder and executive director of the national non-profit End Rape on Campus (EROC), and a lead complainant in the Title IX and Clery complaints against the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Andrea Pino is also a fellow co-founder of EROC, and the former Director of Policy and Support. In addition to a federal complaint against the University of North Carolina (UNC) and founding EROC, they were both listed alongside President Barack Obama in 2013 as one of the most influential forces in higher education, and have co-authored the book *We Believe You*, a collection of 36 stories of campus sexual assault.

At the beginning of their joint keynote, Annie and Andrea gave an overview of their anti-violence work. When they first began, they were young students eager to change the conversation on sexual violence. Their efforts were eventually catalogued as a documentary called *The Hunting Ground*. It focused on their experience as former students of UNC who filed a Title IX complaint against the university in response to their assaults while enrolled. Annie and Andrea explained that since that experience, they have gone on to put together a book called *We Believe You*, where they wanted to raise the voices of survivors who were not represented in many mainstream stories about sexual assault, such as Indigenous peoples and Muslims.

Through their time at UNC, Annie and Andrea tried to build a reporting mechanism that was more inclusive and reflective of the needs of students. They reflected that one of the major challenges with developing an effective policy accounting for how much of a challenge it is for students to ask for help.

They discovered early on in their work that sexual violence is actually pervasive among their fellow students. Motivated by this finding and the prevalence of victim blaming they experienced and witnessed, they decided to do research to better understand sexual violence on campus. Their findings included: 1) Men are also sexually assaulted, largely from hazing and competition on campus. 2) Most sexual violence statistics in the United States do not include gender non-conforming individuals. 3) Black women are more likely to be adversely affected by going to police after being sexually assaulted rather than actually getting help. 4) Latina women are more likely to be affected by gender-based violence. 5) Indigenous women are most likely to be affected by all forms of violence, not just sexual violence.

Annie and Andrea argued that the current laws in place in the United States do not support the LGBTQ+ community. They highlighted the example of the “bathroom law” in North Carolina—which prescribes that people must use the bathroom associated with the gender that they were assigned at birth, even if it is inconsistent with their gender identity. They also made a point to emphasize the actual scale of sexual

violence incidents on campuses beyond what is reported, and criticized the lack of willingness by post-secondary institutions to acknowledge the fundamental, institutional problems which have contributed to this problem of underreporting.

Their challenges with institutions such as UNC are what led them to file a Title IX complaint against the university. Title IX has historically been applied to sports—specifically to ensure adequate funding of women’s sports to maintain gender equity. The law in part states that:

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Their argument in using Title IX was that, as female students, their learning was affected by sexual violence perpetrated by their male peers and male professors—their education was thus impeded when sexual violence became a component of their learning. This fit the standards of Title IX because their equal access to education as women was being denied by harassment, hostility, and administrative indifference.

Annie and Andrea next discussed the Clery Act, which states that if there is a crime on campus, students have the right to know about the crime. They highlighted the problem related to this law that if an institution reports that it has 0 sexual assaults, then students do not feel comfortable enough to come forward. This is also problematic because, as of now, it is statistically impossible for there to be 0 sexual assaults on any given campus.

Annie and Andrea next moved on to discussing how to improve support for students on campus. They first highlighted some common problems with the student resources that currently exist. For example, resources available for survivors of sexual assault are often siloed (i.e., separate on campus) and do not communicate, making them inaccessible to students who stand to benefit from using them. They explained that, therefore, it was important to make these resources as conspicuous as possible so they are not wasted.

Other problems they highlighted centred around the types of conversations that were being held regarding sexual violence reform on post-secondary campuses. Firstly, these conversations were not intersectional enough, which they identified as quite harmful as it leads institutions to fail at supporting students from varying disadvantaged communities. In addition, Annie and Andrea called for institutions to center their thinking around how to best support students, i.e. adopting a student-centred approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence. This means that students need to be supported as people first and not numbers, and the laws need to be written in an accessible way so students can understand them. They also made reference to the effect of “institutional betrayal,” a term coined by University of Oregon professor Jennifer Freyd. They argued that institutional betrayal can often bring up



an added layer of trauma, in addition to sexual violence trauma, from experiencing betrayal from post-secondary institutions. This is why it is important that institutions to develop effective policies and support survivors of sexual assault in order to prevent additional trauma and negative mental health outcomes.

The final component of their presentation involved a discussion on social media and mainstream media's coverage of sexual violence. They found that although media often focuses on a select number of cases, there is rarely ever a nuanced discussion of the bigger, systemic issue of sexual violence. In addition, popular shows such as the HBO fantasy drama television series *Game of Thrones* do not give an accurate representation of sexual assault, yet they are viewed as accurate by the majority of viewers.

In closing, Annie and Andrea encouraged all of us to engage in everyday activism. They emphasized that everyone can play a part in ending violence and oppression by resisting rape culture, supporting survivors and challenging our institutions. It also involves creating a culture of accountability that goes beyond just awareness.

The Impact of Speaking Out: Graduate Students and the Role of Faculty | Plenary Session

This panel featured **Lyra McKee**, a second-year Master's student with the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice (GRSJ) at UBC, Dr. **Johnathan Jenkins Ichikawa**, Associate Professor of Philosophy at UBC, and **Dr. Lucia Lorenzi**, Sexual Assault Expert Panel Member at UBC. The panel was also moderated by **Taq Bhandal**, PhD student at UBC.

Lyra McKee began the session by briefly presenting on the topic of "Considering the implications of transphobia and transmysogyny in relation to the graduate student experience and rape culture." She explained that transmysogyny is the combination of and sexism that is specifically weaponized against transfeminine people, including trans women and transfemme non-binary people who are not men or women. Its effects are exacerbated and convoluted by racism, ableism classism, and other structural oppressions. She also described rape culture as being inherently transmysogynistic, placing trans students at great risk of harm given its presence on campus. In terms of the graduate student experience, she described students as inhabiting an often uncomfortable limbo where they do not have access to many of the social support resources available to undergraduates, nor do they have steady employment benefits and networks. This again increases the vulnerability of trans students to harm as they already face more marginalization.

In closing, Lyra encouraged the audience to always keep considerations for trans students in mind and to try to understand the things that negatively affect their ability to thrive on campuses.

Dr. Jonathan Ichikawa began his presentation by reflecting on his prior involvement with campus sexual violence issues as a UBC faculty member. In January of 2016 he, along with more than 50 academics, organized [an open letter to the UBC community](#) acknowledging publicly that UBC procedures relating to sexual assault were inadequate. In the letter they also pledged to take an active role in improving the policies and procedures regarding sexual assault and related matters of safety and equity. Jonathan explained that the letter was a product of increased awareness of the various challenges student survivors were facing on campus, such as a common experience where reporting sexual assault was becoming more traumatic than the actual assault. He then posed the question of why more faculty members were not speaking out, and laid out three possible reasons why:

- 1) **Fear:** Jonathan posited that that many faculty members do not want to speak out for fear of being perceived as challenging or going against their institutions. He explained that these fears are often very tangible, as they relate to factors such as putting tenure at risk, little job security, poor annual reviews. Even for professors who do have tenure, they may fear that their professional advancement would be placed at risk. These fears are present even when faculty members protest as a group, and to a greater extent when in isolation.
- 2) **Faculty feel underqualified for these conversations:** Jonathan argued that people who are socially privileged have less understanding of sexual assault. In other words, professionally and socially secure people – the people who are in the best positions to speak are precisely those who do not know how to talk about the issue. Jonathan explained that despite the fact as a well-intentioned non-expert it is easier to err on the side of silence, you should instead be a human who cares to talk about these issues. He also asserted that faculty members should consider themselves qualified to speak on the basis that they care about student education, and therefore student safety (given that students cannot learn if they are not safe). If faculty remains silent, they are sending a signal that they do not care, and that is an oppressive message.
- 3) **They feel it does not matter:** Jonathan suggested that faculty members often feel that their participation would not matter as it would not make a difference. To counter this notion, he argued that they are actually very important actors in the campus community. He acknowledged that although moving from good intentions to good policies is a challenging endeavor, good intentions are a good start. He thus concluded that it is important for faculty members to actively support sexual assault survivors on campuses.

Dr. Lucia Lorenzi focused her presentation on the experiences of graduate students when dealing with issues related to sexual assault. She explained that graduate students often get left out of conversations around campus sexual violence due to the smaller sizes and siloed nature of graduate programs. She also did point out that graduate students often occupy a unique position on campuses due to the fact that even though they are students, they often work as Teaching Assistants. This means that they routinely have contact with undergraduate students and are thus in a position to receive disclosures.

Lucia also spoke on the fears graduate students experience in relation to their career prospects and how that fear becomes exacerbated when sexual violence occurs. This fear also deters speaking out, as students could be fearful of how that might affect their chances of getting a job. She thus concluded by calling for better supports for students who have the courage to disclose.

Breakout Panels & Workshops

There were a number of breakout panels & workshops which occurred throughout both days of the conference, and they covered a number of different issues relating to sexual violence policy and reform. Below is a full list of these sessions, including the presenters and topics that were addressed.

Friday, September 30th

Breakout Panel: Students, Sex Work, and Violence

Moderator: Brenda Belak; Lawyer, Pivot Legal Society
Presenters: **Brenna Bezanson**; Programs Coordinator, PACE Society
Laura Dilley; Executive Director, PACE Society
Kerry Porth; Sex Work Educator

Breakout Panel: Integrating International Student Perspectives into Violence Prevention and Response

Moderator: **Jennifer Walsh Marr**; Lecturer, UBC Vantage College
Presenters: **Stephanie Fung**; Community Engagement Coordinator, UBC Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies
Aida Mwanzia; Global Lounge Community Animator, Simon K.Y. Lee Global Lounge and Resource Centre
Samantha Truong; AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC)

Workshop: Use the Right Words: Media Reporting on Sexual Violence

Presenter: **Farah Khan**; Sexual Violence Support and Education Coordinator, Ryerson University

Workshop: Decolonizing Trauma

Presenter: **Natalie Clark**; Associate Professor, Thompson Rivers University

Workshop: Why Black Lives Matter in the Anti-Violence Work on Campus

Presenter: Cicely-Belle Blain; Youth Worker, Qmunity

Workshop: Changing the Conversation to Include Trans* Voices in Campus Violence Prevention Strategies

Presenter: **Cormac O'Dwyer**; Healthier Masculinities Program Coordinator, AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre

Saturday, October 1st

Workshop: Safe Choices: Supporting LGBT2SQ Survivors of Sexual Relationship Violence

Presenters: **Olivia Fisher**; Ending Violence Association of British Columbia (EVA BC)
Dr. Kate Rossiter; Research and Projects Manager, EVA BC

Breakout Panel: Shared Stories, Lived Experiences, and Community Art

Presenters: **Sherrie-Lee Petrie**; Gender Issues Centre Coordinator, Lakehead University Students' Union
Stephanie Simko; Graduate Student, Lakehead University

Workshop: Navigating Conflict in Social Justice Work

Presenter: **Josey Ross**; Anti-violence worker

Workshop: Holding Space for People who Cause harm

Presenter: **Carol Bilson**; Consultant