



*We believe in a world free from  
violence and abuse.*



*Alberta*  
**Silent Witness**  
**PROJECT**  
An initiative of  
The Alberta Council  
of Women's Shelters



# SILENT WITNESS

They stand in silence  
They can't speak a word,  
Yet their voices need to be heard  
Wooden silhouettes  
of what they used to be.....

# SILENT WITNESS HISTORY



- US initiative to honour women killed by their partners in acts of domestic violence.
- Began in 1990 by the Arts Action Against Domestic Violence.
- Official launch was February 18, 1991. Today, all 50 states, and several countries are participating in this project.
- The first Silent Witness Project in Canada started in New Brunswick.
- Alberta is the second – and we hope that this spread across Canada.

# SILENT WITNESS PROJECT

## *Why?*

- To ensure victims murdered in acts of family violence are not forgotten.
- To understand the serious consequences of family violence in our communities.

# FAMILY VIOLENCE DEFINITIONS

***Family violence*** sometimes referred to as domestic violence, wife abuse or woman abuse, is the abuse and mistreatment of an individual in an intimate or family relationship. The abuser is typically a partner or ex-partner. In its most extreme form, family violence can result in severe injury and even homicide. Most of the victims are women.

- ***Partners*** include a husband, ex-husband, common-law partner or boyfriend, ex-common-law partner, ex-boyfriend, or same sex partner.

- ***Acquaintances*** might include co-workers, friends, or neighbours in circumstances where there has been an attempt to forcibly create an intimate relationship with the victim. This may involve stalking behaviour.

- ***Victims of triangulation*** are third party homicide victims whose deaths have been caused indirectly by a domestic dispute.

# SILENT WITNESS PROJECT CRITERIA

## *Who?*

- Women killed in Alberta by their partners, ex-partners or acquaintances where the perpetrator was charged and convicted,

or

- the women were killed in documented cases of murder/suicide.

&

- Third party homicide victims such as children and other relatives who have died as a result of family violence

# SILENT WITNESS PROJECT CRITERIA

## *Who?*

- Three unnamed silhouettes
  - Murders that have not been solved
  - Stories that have not been shared,
  - Deaths that have not been counted.



# ACWS – PROJECT APPROACH

- **RESOLVE**, the **Edmonton and Calgary Police Services** researched domestic homicides from the late 90's to 2004.
- Victims Services Units and social workers made personal calls to family members inviting them to participate.
- Only represent victims if their surviving family members choose to participate.

***To date we have gathered information on 31 victims of domestic homicide from 2000 – 2004. ACWS is currently in the process of reviewing each case and making contact with the families.***

# ROAD BLOCKS ALONG THE WAY

- Collecting information on the victims and their cases was difficult.
- Domestic homicides where there are charges and convictions are public knowledge, yet some agencies that have access to this information would not give us the details of those cases.
- Domestic homicide statistical collections are inconsistent and inaccurate across the Province.
- Murder suicides, victims of triangulation, and suspected cases of domestic homicide continue to be unaccounted for properly – sometimes it is depending on who does the research (local, rural, Provincial, National).
- The breakdown of many domestic homicides are misleading.

# GOVERNMENT STATISTICS

- In Alberta between 1974 and 2000 there were 223 female victims and 86 male victims of spousal homicide (Status of Women Canada, 2002).
- **Rate of Domestic Homicide in Alberta 1993-2002:** 8.8 per million couples (female), 3.8 per million couples (male) (Statistics Canada, 2004).
- **Issues:** Which victims were triangulated? Which crimes were filicide murders? Which of these victims committed suicide after the murder of their partner?

# SOLUTION

- Newspapers

## Problems...

- Difficult to identify domestic violence homicides
- Difficult to identify the nature of the couple's relationship.
- Rural areas and small towns with local newspapers.
- Deaths not reported to the media

# ALBERTA DOMESTIC HOMICIDES 2000-2004

- 23 female victims and 8 male victims.
- 29 male perpetrators and 2 female perpetrators.
- Ages of victims ranged from 2 years old to 51 years old.
- 5 victims were children or step-children of the perpetrator.

# SUICIDE

- 15 (48.4%) of the perpetrators committed suicide after the murder, all of these were male.
- Data analysis revealed a significant relationship between suicide of the perpetrator and the use of a firearm to commit the homicide.

# TRIANGULATION AND THE DANGER OF SEPARATION

- 3 victims were the new partners of the perpetrator's ex-partner.
- 74% of domestic homicides are committed by ex-partners. (Status of Women Canada, 2002).
  - Power and control as critical factors.
  - Systemic abuse and lack of knowledge.
- Intense rage at woman for leaving or threatening to leave is cited as motive by research, (Farr, 2002).

The most dangerous time for a woman in an abusive relationship is when she is leaving her abuser.

# OTHER RISK FACTORS

- Drug and alcohol use of perpetrator (At least 8 perpetrators were abusing drugs or alcohol)
- Stalking (At least 5 victims were stalked prior to their murder)
- Pregnancy of victim
- History of physical abuse which has escalated in severity (at least 12 of the cases had a documented history of police involvement because of abuse)

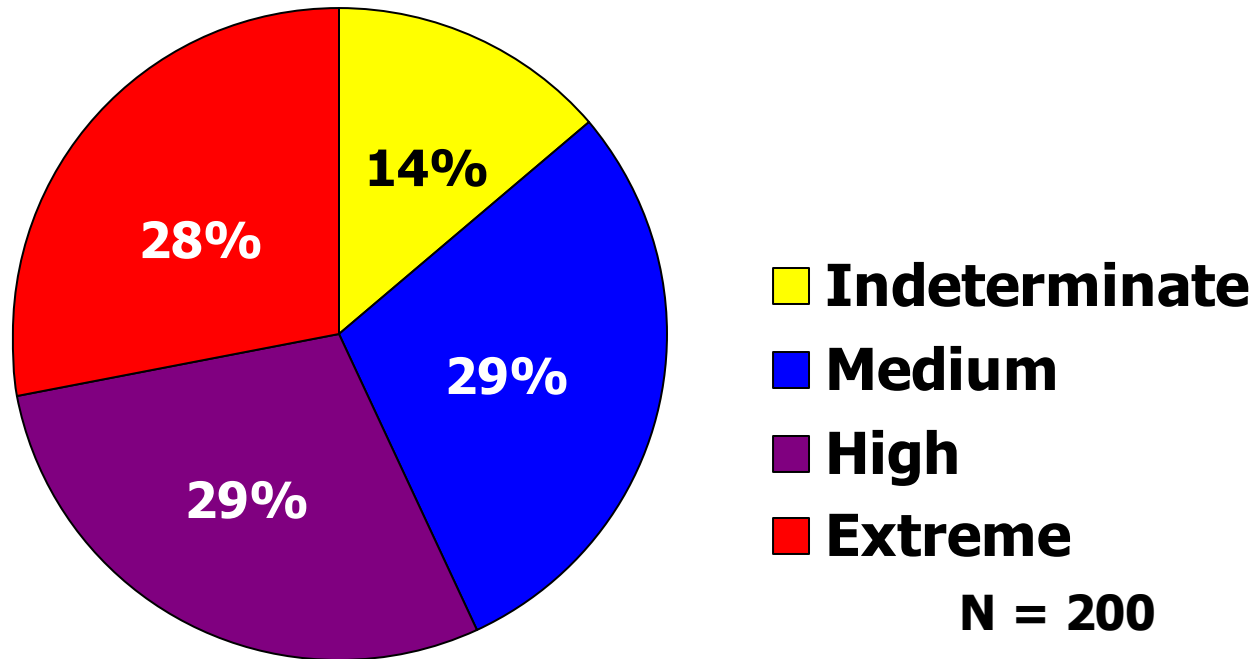
» *Danger Assessment: Jacquelyn Campbell, 1985.*



# High Risk Factors – Lethality

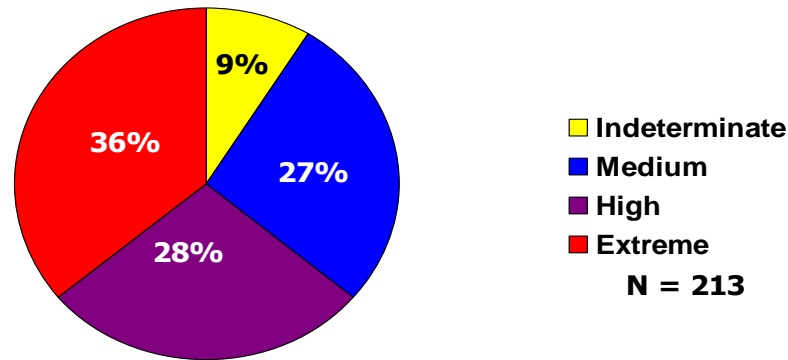
- Prior History of Domestic Violence
- Unemployment
- Access to Weapons
- Recent Separation
- Highly Controlling Perpetrator
- Threats of Homicide/Suicide
- Forced Sex
- Stepchild
- Serious Depression
- Drugs/Alcohol

# Danger Assessment YWCA Sheriff King Home

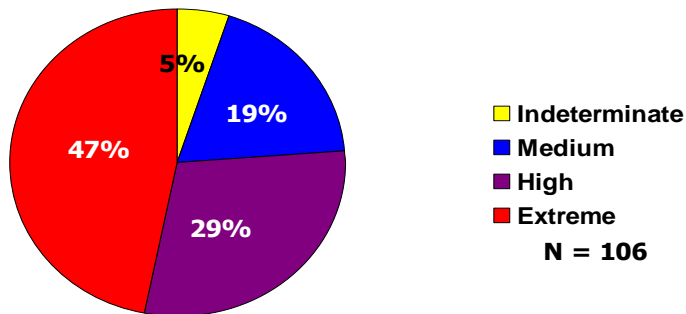


# Does He Threaten To Kill You &/or Do You Believe He Is Capable Of Killing You?

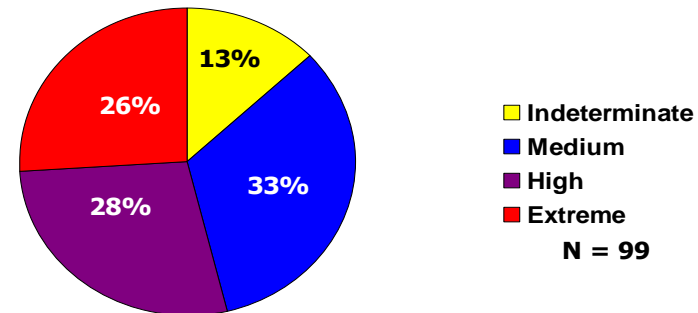
Overall Assessment Scores – Residential & Non-Residential



Residential Overall Assessment Scores

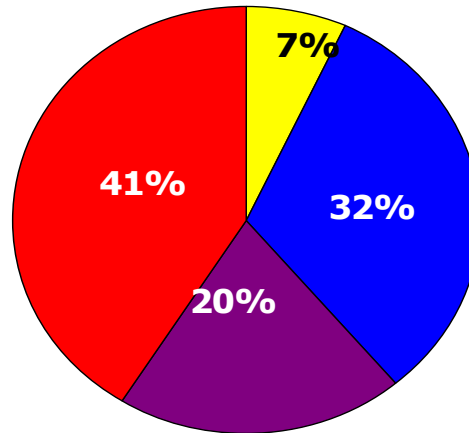


Non-Residential Overall Assessment Scores



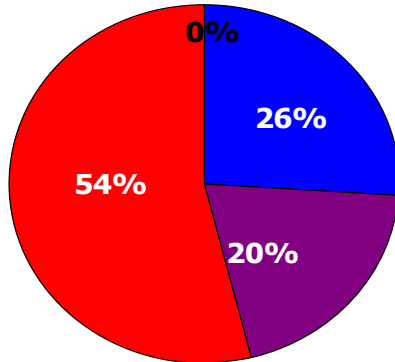
# Does he own a gun?

Overall Assessment Scores – Residential & Non-Residential



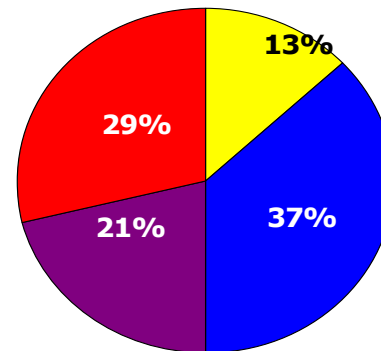
■ Indeterminate  
■ Medium  
■ High  
■ Extreme  
N = 75

Residential Overall Assessment Scores



■ Indeterminate  
■ Medium  
■ High  
■ Extreme  
N = 35

Non-Residential Overall Assessment Scores



■ Indeterminate  
■ Medium  
■ High  
■ Extreme  
N = 38

# Impact of Gun Control

	1989	1995	now
Total firearm deaths (homicide, suicide and accident)	1367	1125	842 <sup>ii</sup>
Homicides with firearms	218	176	149 <sup>iii</sup>
Homicides with rifles and shotguns	131	61	43 <sup>2</sup>
Homicides with other guns	87	115	106 <sup>2</sup>
Homicides without guns	439	412	433 <sup>2</sup>
Homicides of women with firearms	74	43	32 <sup>1</sup>
Robberies with firearms	6,442	6,692	3,472 <sup>2</sup>

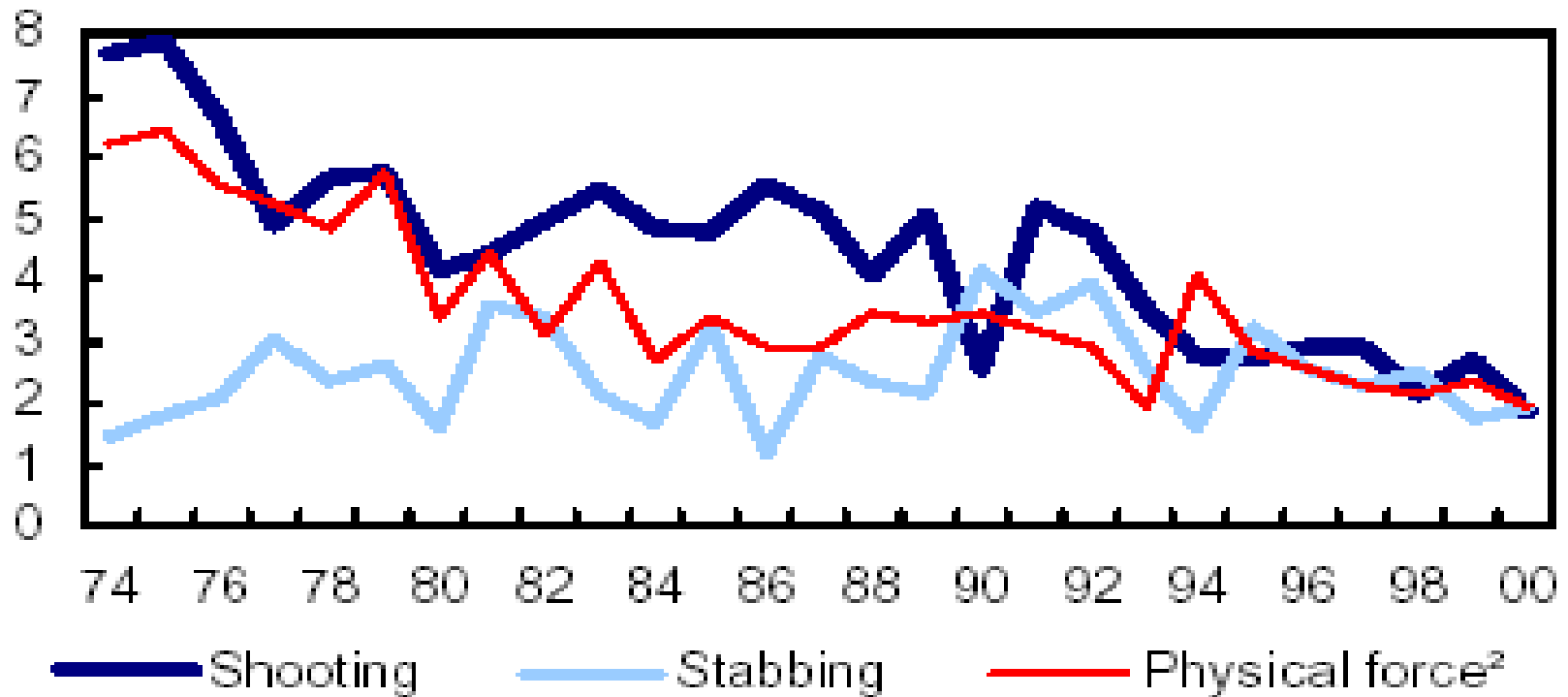
<sup>ii</sup> 2001 is the last year of data. K. Hung, "Firearm Statistics: Updated Tables", Department of Justice, March 2004

<sup>iii</sup> 2002 is the last year of data,

# Use of firearms in spousal homicide decreasing , 1974-2000

## Female victims

Rate per million couples



# **PARTNERS**

**Janet Hagberg**, Silent Witness National Initiative, Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Leslie Monaghan**, Family and Community Services, St. Stephen, New Brunswick

**Kim Lafreniere**, Detective, Edmonton Police Services, Spousal Violence Intervention Unit

**Bob Pagee**, Sergeant, Edmonton Police Services, Victim Services Unit

**Monty Sparrow**, Staff Sergeant, Calgary Police Service

**Dr. Leslie Tutty & Ashley Barlow**, RESOLVE

**Brent Connelly**, Store Manager, Rona, 9551 51 Street

**Elmer Warwa**, C.K. Equities LTD.,

**Susan Patenaude**

**Northgate Lions Senior Citizen Association**

Members of the association volunteered over 500 hours of their time to produce the silhouettes.

ACWS would like to acknowledge the following volunteers:

**Richard Daley, Ed Flathers, John Tucker, Ed Robege, Al Oakley, Mike Palichuk,  
Bill Klushin, Shirley Curle, Doreen Kristensen, Bill Baron, Clary Willis,  
Ercilia Comartin, Jay Metheral, Glen Talbot, Jackie Black, Albert Reule,  
Ed Schaaf, Nadia Schaaf**



**35 Silhouettes were  
Created by the  
Northgate Lions Senior Citizen  
Association.**



**Northgate Lions  
Senior Citizen Association  
*Volunteers Extraordinaire!***

**Volunteers put in over 500 hours to make  
the 35 silhouettes. Special thanks to  
Richard Daley who organized the crew  
and construction of the first silhouettes.**



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If you are interested in having the Alberta Silent Witness Project come to your community, sponsoring this project, Volunteering or know of a family who may want their loved one represented in this project please contact:

Patricia Poohachoff

Communications and Partnerships

ACWS

780-456-7000 or [ppoohachoff@acws.ca](mailto:ppoohachoff@acws.ca)



# WHAT YOU CAN DO.....

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- Support Phoenix Safe House.
- Learn about the dynamics of abuse and risk factors.
- Include family violence as part of any stress management program.
- Ensure support for women in the workplace: it is a workplace issue!
- End the silence that protects the perpetrator through workplace policies and community action
- Be vocal whenever you hear or see violent messages

# ACWS : Key Accomplishments

- Core Funding for Emergency Shelters
- Salary increases for Shelter Staff
- Amendment to the Child Welfare Act
- Development of the Ethical/Moral Framework
- \$1000 Escaping Family Violence Benefit
- Standardized Risk Assessment

# Key Updates to our Strategic Plan

- Design protocol regarding health care and family violence
- Develop a provincial strategy for public education including Family Violence Prevention Month
- Expand and define core services for emergency, second-stage, seniors' and on-reserve shelters
- Meeting with government to obtain funding to ensure support for On-Reserve shelters
- Develop a template for use by shelters in developing their Local Working Agreements with RCMP

**STANDING TOGETHER**

**Celebrate the lives and experiences  
of Alberta women**

# STANDING TOGETHER PROJECT: Sponsorship Opportunities



# WHAT'S NEXT.....

- Continue to gather names and stories of women whose lives are lost due to family violence.
- Explore the number of women who use suicide as their means of escaping family violence.
- Advocate for consistent reporting and definitions across the province.
- Shelter danger assessments
- Ensure that each woman whose life is lost is always more than a statistic...



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**Thank you for  
supporting Alberta's  
Women's Shelters!**