

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2004

A "Tribute" to a Wonderful Evening A Volunteer's Perspective

It was hard to ignore the music that floated out in the night air that February evening. As I approached the front doors of The Boiler House – the venue for the Tenth Annual "Tribute" for the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic – I could already hear the live band and the buzz of excited conversation from the people inside. As I passed through the doors, I was greeted by a wonderful sight – a beautiful and stylish restaurant bathed in an orange-blue light, bursting with people from all walks of life, congregating together for an important and worthy cause.

Amid the laughter and the dancing, the clink of martini glasses and furious bidding at the auction tables, there was an underlying feeling of togetherness. I realized that the inspirational spirit of Barbra Schlifer, and the tireless efforts and good works of the staff at the Schlifer Clinic, was what brought all these guests together on this special night.

In my own small way, I was a part of this event – volunteering as a greeter and doing my best to keep an eye on the silent auction tables – but more importantly, I realized that I was part of a history of dedicated efforts, struggles and triumphs to stop violence against women in our community. I was a small member in a long chain of people who were initially inspired by Barbra's memory, injected with spirit and dedication by Clinic staff, energized by volunteers and sponsors, and made whole by the thousands of women who have been supported by the Clinic over the years.

I measure the success of this year's event, not by the number of people who passed through the doors or even by the amount of money raised, but by how important and more relevant the work of the Schlifer Clinic has come to mean to the community. If that one evening in February was any indication, the Clinic's work is now more important than ever.

- Susan Shin, Volunteer

Thanks to Everyone Who Made The Tribute A Success

The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

Thanks our 10th Annual Tribute Sponsors:

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Upcoming Events

Bowlathon 2004

Join us for our 3rd Annual Bowling Fundraiser at Thorncliffe Bowlarama 45 Overlea Blvd., on Saturday, September 11, 2004, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Reserve the date now for a great afternoon in support of the Clinic.

Please contact Meldina Smith at
416-323 9149 ext. 237.

Or e-mail her at: msmith@schliferclinic.com

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Volunteer Corner

Volunteers Make “Tribute” a Success

It was thanks to the hard work and many talents of our volunteers that our 10th Annual winter fundraising event, “Tribute”, was such a success.

For almost four months they gave us their time and skills, helping to plan and coordinate the event. They made marketing calls, wrote and distributed promotional materials, handled mailings, oversaw logistics, secured and picked up donations and priced items. They even labelled and wrapped gifts for the Silent Auction.

The day of the event, volunteers gathered in the morning, transporting items to the venue, setting-up, and arranging donations. Many people commented on the excellent display of items at the Silent Auction. Volunteers worked through the evening, making for a wonderful and successful event.

The Clinic would like to put these deserving volunteers into the spotlight: Joanna Lawrence, Araceli Navarrete, Andrea Cohen, Kate Love, Alison Ralph, Susan Shin, Vany Glavic, Tamara Roberts, Pat Coleman, Penny Akrivopoulos, Sharon Wilmot, Traci Folkings, Inga Prociwien, Mavreen David, Jose Sanchez, Linda Alvarado and Sandra Alley. The Clinic thanks you for your dedication.

And thanks to the Special Events Committee members – Amelia Golden, Sue Baker, Meldina Smith, Darlene Lawson, Julia Sanchez, Alice Cranker, Jean Somar, Julie Norton, Sarah Legault, Maia Onno, Brandee Marckmann, and Honorary Committee members Rovena Cooper and Ann Lamoureux, as well as to our wonderful Board of Directors who secured sponsorships and provided support and direction to the event.

BARBRA SCHLIFER CLINIC TURNS 20 IN 2005

Our 20th Anniversary is fast approaching. We are beginning to plan a number of fundraising, public education and Commemorative functions for what promises to be a memorable and important year in the history of the Clinic.

If you are interested in participating on the 20th Anniversary Planning Committee, please contact Julia Sanchez at:

416-323-9149 Ext.240.

or e-mail her at:

j.sanchez@schliferclinic.com

Saying Goodbye to Board Members:

The Clinic bids a fond farewell to Rhia Newton and Denise Doyle, both members of our Board of Directors. Rhia joined our Board in June 2003 and was an active and energetic member of the Board until her retirement in March, to take a job out of the country. Rhia lent her considerable skills to the Clinic and was an avid supporter of the Clinic's public and fundraising events. Denise joined our Board in October, 2003 and brought leadership in the areas of fundraising and strategic planning. Unfortunately, both Denise and Rhia have personal commitments that do not permit their continued volunteer work at the Clinic. We greatly appreciate Rhia and Denise's past and future contributions to our organization and its clients.

Welcome to a New Board Member

We are pleased to welcome Notisha Massaquoi to the Clinic's Board of Directors. Notisha is the Program Manager and past Acting Executive Director of Women's Health in Women's Hands, a Community Health Centre that specializes in serving women from the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America and South Asia. Notisha brings many years of experience volunteering on Boards in community based social service agencies. She has been part of successful fundraising efforts. Notisha brings a sophisticated analysis of working within anti-oppression and cross-cultural models of practice. Her personal experience as a woman of African descent as well as her academic and professional experiences working with immigrant and refugee women who have experienced violence will be a valuable assets to the Clinic's Board of Directors.

Calling For New Members!

The Clinic is looking for Board Members who bring a range of skills and talents to our organization, such as fundraising and program development and evaluation knowledge. In order to reflect our client population we invite women representing the diversity of our community to apply.

For more information about
Joining the Board
Contact:

Cherie Miller at 416-323-9149 Ext. 235 or
Julia Sanchez at 416-323-9149 Ext. 240

COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT

Staffing Changes



The Clinic said good-bye to two long-standing employees, with mixed feelings of excitement for their good fortune and new opportunities, and sadness and loss for us. Laurie Bryson, who was the Intake Counsellor / Advocate for the Clinic from its beginning in 1985, resigned in December 2003. Laurie is now happily living in her Nova Scotia home by the ocean! She did not even mind being snowed in and we are in regular contact through e-mail. Laurie sends her best wishes to all the "friends of the Clinic". We miss Laurie's attention to detail and her humor.

...We miss Laurie's attention to detail and her humor...

In February 2004, Claudia Lopez left the Clinic for a position in the Victim/Witness Assistance Program in the courts. Claudia created, developed, and ran the Specialized Program for Spanish-speaking women for 13 years. Claudia's compassion, commitment, creativity and capacity to advocate for her clients are greatly missed. Claudia continues as a contract group worker at the Clinic, and she will facilitate the Arpillera / Quilting group for Spanish-speaking women.

...Claudia's compassion, commitment and creativity are greatly missed...



New Faces

In November 2003, Debra Fine joined the Clinical Team on a part-time contract basis. Debra has a M.A. in Counselling Psychology from The California Institute of Integral Studies and worked in California for many years with clients with multiple problems, including mental health issues and addictions. Debra co-facilitates the group at Sistering for chronically homeless clients with mental health issues. She brings great patience and empathy to her work.

We are also pleased to welcome Patricia Arango to the Counselling Department as the new Spanish-speaking Counsellor. Patricia was a student at the Clinic and has been an individual and group Counsellor on contract since 2003. She worked with women in great poverty in Colombia and has her Masters of Clinical Psychology from the Adler Institute. We are very fortunate to have Patricia join our Department.

Quotes from a Self-Esteem Group Participant

"Attending the January-April 2004 Self Esteem Group at The Barbra Schifler Commemorative Clinic was an "A" –mazing experience."

"With professionalism, skill, patience and "a whole lot of understanding" the group was brought to a new height of positive self-awareness. We were helped to turn corners in our personal lives we never thought possible, to our great surprise, and appreciation."

Cudos to Tina Binder and Bernardette La Porte, a placement student from George Brown College, who facilitated the Self-esteem group.

Mindfulness Awareness Practice Groups for Women Who Have Experienced Childhood and Adult Sexual Abuse/ Assault and Trauma

Over the past few years, the Clinic has introduced an exciting and innovative program in our Counselling Department- Mindfulness Based Trauma Counselling groups, the integration of mindfulness philosophy (including meditation) and practice with well-informed trauma counselling. Feedback from women about their experiences and the impact of the groups has been extremely positive, as is reflected in these comments from participants:

"It has been a life saver. I can't imagine life before mindfulness and never want to return to where I am so caught in being afraid. I cannot articulate how life transformative this group has been in experiencing connection- most importantly with my body and with feelings that I've kept suppressed for so many years."

"It was the most helpful therapy work I have done around childhood incest. I was finally able to say to myself I am not crazy for thinking, doing and feeling my experiences. I finally gave it voice and own it. Now I have to use the tools to change the impact on my life to a more positive one."

"I often feel more calm and serene, able to meet life's challenges with strength and grace now that I'm practicing mindfulness. It saved me from being "overwhelmed" and now there is no way I will go back to that terror."

"Engaging in mindfulness practice enables me on a more regular and daily level to find a deeper clarity in making decisions, being able to discern what to say or do. Rather than reacting to stressful situations automatically, I can step back, watch the thoughts that come up and pay attention and then respond. I am extremely impressed with the very high quality of this program in particular and with the Barbra Schlifer Clinic in general for offering it."

"How do I begin to possibly capture just how helpful the group has been for me? Perhaps the best way to explain begins with hope. The group brought me to a sense of hope for the future that I had never, not in 32 years, experienced before."

Mindfulness is moment-to-moment, non-judgemental awareness. Its practice is about paying attention in the present moment to what is happening within us and around us from a non-judgemental, accepting and compassionate stance.

It is the process of observing body and mind intentionally and without judgement. Mindfulness is cultivated through meditation and through being present and aware with experience as it unfolding, accepting experiences for what they are.

Because the practice helps us to develop an increased awareness of ourselves, of how we relate to what is present in our lives and how we relate to the world, mindfulness opens a new way of relating to our internal and external environment as well.

Experiences of incest and childhood abuse may result in a woman feeling deeply disconnected and disempowered. Profound effects can persist into adulthood, but are often not understood from the context of the trauma and abuse. Women abused in childhood often unintentionally keep living the trauma story due to the childhood internalisation of the trauma, and have habituated emotional, cognitive and physical/bodily responses, including flashbacks, dissociation, depression, anxiety, and fear.

Mindfulness supports awareness. That awareness and its inherent stance of radical acceptance, of non-judgement and compassionate witnessing, reduce reactivity and cultivate calming, responsiveness and choice. The gentle cultivation of "being with" what arises in one's feelings and thoughts with compassion, not trying to change or fix anything, strengthens a woman's capacity to meet the trauma in a new way, opening her to the insights and connections which arise, supporting her to move beyond trauma by meeting her suffering and changing her relationship to it.

Women have expressed how important these groups are- both a place where women can speak of the unacceptable (the abuse they experienced that their family and community has never acknowledged) and a process of coming into acceptance and relationship with the trauma, paradoxically its hold diminishing as the compassionate witnessing of its wounding and impacts are more clearly seen.

Mindfulness Based Trauma Counselling Groups at the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, which address trauma with women who are survivors of violence, is groundbreaking work in North America. We are grateful for the expertise of Billee Laskin, Tina Bhinder and Susan Harris in bringing this approach into the Clinic's programs.

The Clinic provides almost 20 groups with varied purposes and content each year for women who are victims of violence, but requests from women for our services continually exceed our resources. To expand our services, we rely on the support of donors in the community to augment the financial contributions of our funding partners. If you would like to support the Mindfulness Based Trauma Counselling Groups (or any other groups or services) at the Clinic, please call Meldina Smith at (416) 323-9149 Ext. 237.

LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Nowhere to Turn?

Responding to Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women

A recent study by the Canadian Council on Social Development called *Nowhere to Turn*; reveals that immigrant and visible minority women are faced with unique circumstances and barriers that make them more vulnerable to partner abuse than non-immigrant women. Some of the factors identified were inability to speak English or French, unfamiliarity with Canadian laws, and fear of deportation due to false information given by their partners in regard to their rights and immigration status in Canada. Other factors cited include lack of adequate support systems, isolation, fear of being shunned by their cultural communities, and fear of living in poverty.

The study recommends changes be made to the law enforcement and justice systems, to make these services more accessible and less intimidating to immigrant women. Changes highlighted include rewriting Legal Aid eligibility, increased efforts to sensitize police and court personnel and proactive victim services to help women through the judicial system.

The report recognized the current lack of culturally sensitive services like shelters and counselling as well as the inadequacy and often inaccessibility of long-term assistance programs such as income support, affordable housing and job training.

Public education is key to preventing abuse, as it promotes conversation between people from various ethno-cultural communities. Community agencies, such as the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic work to assist women from diverse backgrounds by providing appropriate services and building trusting relationships.

To read the full report, please visit: <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2004/nowhere/es.htm>

Panel Discussion

The Law Society of Upper Canada, in partnership with the Clinic, hosted a public legal education forum that examined legal issues affecting women from ethno-racial communities who are survivors of abuse and violence on March 25, 2004 at the Law Society. The Panel discussion was chaired by Sudabeh Mashkuri, Staff Lawyer at the Clinic. There were speakers from Crown Law Office, Community Legal Clinics and Faculty of Law, Osgoode Hall Law School. Approximately 80 people attended the public forum. Issues relating to the criminal justice, family, civil and immigration law systems as well as service delivery models for the community, including the provision of legal services were discussed by the participants of the forum.

The public forum was followed by a reception to honour International Women's Rights. The key note speaker at the reception was Dr. Ekuwa Smith, the author of *Nowhere to Turn? Responding to Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women* of the Canadian Council on Social Development. The Clinic dispensed information on our services and outreach information on partner violence.

Parting Words From a Staff Member

"The Clinic is an astonishing resource. I marvel at this team of women who are experts in their work and revolutionaries in their hearts, each striving to provide excellent help to women against all odds.

The Clinic's unique role within the larger legal community to examine and challenge legislation and social policy that sets up barriers for abused women, is what we hang our hopes on for a future that values women's lives much more than the present does.

The temptation will always be to do it all, but human beings and organizations have limits, and the only indispensable piece is the willingness to try.

I am honoured to have had a year as a part of this unique organization and as a part of this remarkable circle of woman, clients and colleagues alike. The learning this place offers is almost too rich to assimilate, but I will take away a piece of learning from each and everyone of you I had the opportunity to work with, and I leave behind a piece of myself, a piece of my own life's work that feels like it could not have been more well spent."

INTERPRETER SERVICES DEPARTMENT

According to the City of Toronto's immigration statistics, there has been a steady increase of immigrants settling in Toronto in the last 40 or so years. Toronto's total population indicates that the number of immigrants who came in 1991-1995 increased by 5% for the period 1996-2001. China, India, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Iran and Hong Kong were mentioned in both lists as sources of these immigrants.

The BSCC figures below, show the number of assignments provided by language. Although not the only factor, these figures partially provide a ranking of service demand for specific Language Interpreters. The high demand for Farsi, Mandarin, and Tamil, could be partially explained by the fact that these languages are from the countries mentioned as the top sources of immigration. This includes Russia, which was ranked 7th as a source of immigrants for the City of Toronto, in the period 1996-2001.

TOP 10 LANGUAGES SERVED BY BSCC Interpreter Services - April 03- March 04

1	713	Spanish
2	494	Mandarin
3	280	Farsi
4	230	Portuguese
5	227	Somali
6	217	Vietnamese
7	188	Korean
8	166	Amharic
9	146	Russian
10	130	Tamil

Our experience at Interpreter Services tells us that there are other factors that affect the demand for Language Interpretation services, in addition to immigration flow. Some of these are: the total number of immigrants from a given country; lack of ethno specific organizations serving the community; and the ability of immigrants from the communities mentioned to speak English or French. Also in some communities, there is frequent use of relatives and volunteers for interpretation.

Barbra Schlifer Interpreter Services continues to monitor City of Toronto demographics, as well as to network and listen to other organizations' input and experiences, to guide and assist us in determining whom we recruit as Language Interpreters. Interpretation is a service that will undoubtedly be a part of Toronto life for quite a long time.

In the fiscal year 2003-2004, BSCC IS continued to serve 44 service agencies and organizations, providing close to 5000 assignments and 10,000 hours of Language Interpreter Services.

Thanking Our Funding Partners

Ministry of the Attorney General
 Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
 Ministry of Community and Social Services
 Ministry of Health and Long -Term Care
 Legal Aid Ontario
 City of Toronto
 United Way of Greater Toronto
 Toronto Community Foundation

YOUR DONATIONS ARE APPRECIATED

Although the Clinic receives funding from our partners listed above, we also greatly rely on the generosity of individual donors. If you wish to make a contribution in support of our Counselling, Interpretation and/or Legal Services for female survivors of violence, please send a cheque to the address below. Your donation, large or small, is vital to the operation of the Clinic and is sincerely appreciated. Income tax receipts will be provided.

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
489 College Street, Suite 503
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 1A5

You can also call us at (416) 323-9149 x 237 or e-mail
 us at: fundraising@schliferclinic.com
 with your Visa, MasterCard or
 Amex number.



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