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Justice Institute of BC research examines Violence in the Lives of Sexually Exploited Youth and Adult Sex Workers in BC

NEW WESTMINSTER – Ensuring a brighter future for sexually exploited youth and adult sex workers across the province is one of the outcomes that Justice Institute of BC (JIBC) community-based researcher Sarah Hunt is hoping a groundbreaking study will generate.

Hunt, and study co-researchers Natalie Clark and Melanie Mark, interviewed more than 110 people in Victoria, Campbell River, Kamloops, Terrace, Prince George and surrounding communities in 2005, talking to people about violence in their communities. “The study,” says Hunt, “is intended to provide a provincial overview of violence in the lives of sexually exploited youth and adult sex workers in BC; to review the informal and formal supports that are available; and to identify what communities can do to better respond to this violence.”

The study, initiated by the JIBC’s Centre for Leadership and Community Learning and funded by the Assistant Deputy Ministers’ Committee on Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation (Chaired by the Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General), provides a unique perspective with its focus on rural communities and the active participation of community members in the research process. The release of the research findings coincides with National Crime Prevention Week, highlighting the need to prevent violent crimes against sexually exploited youth and other vulnerable people in BC communities.

The study emphasizes the need to acknowledge that youth sexual exploitation happens in every community, both rural and urban, even those areas in which there is no visible street-level sex trade. It also outlines key components of a successful coordinated response to violence against these vulnerable populations, including changes in policies and procedures, and multi-level education within the justice system.

“This study underscores our commitment to conducting applied research that will enhance knowledge and understanding of public safety and security issues but perhaps more importantly, also identify practical, proactive steps that can be taken to address them,” says JIBC President Jack McGee.

Every day everyone in BC benefits from the graduates of the JIBC who keep communities, businesses and homes safe. The JIBC is a dynamic, post-secondary learning organization recognized nationally and internationally for continuous improvement and innovative education in the areas of justice, public safety and human services. Each year, from a base of ten disciplines, we deliver programming in over 190 communities throughout the province, as well as across Canada and to students in or from 10 countries. Over 30,000 students enroll in our programs annually, with ten percent taking courses on-line.



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