



Providing Alternatives Counselling & Education Society

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PACE

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UPDATE:

on missing women inquiry.

PACE Society is dismayed to report that along with our sister organizations, the WISH Drop In Centre and Sex Workers United Against Violence, we have been shut out of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

Established in September 2007, the Inquiry was set up to evaluate the failings of police in British Columbia to properly investigate the many women reported missing from the Downtown Eastside prior to and up to 2002. The police have been widely criticized for ignoring the warnings of female police officers who worked closely with sex workers and community members who claimed that a serial killer was at large. Commissioner, Wally Opal, has espoused the need to provide funding for the families of the victims and the organizations that support them as necessary to a proper inquiry. Unfortunately, this has not been the case.

In July, we were informed, in a letter from Deputy Attorney General David Loukidelis, that we had been denied funding to participate in the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry. We believe that the Inquiry has been completely compromised by this decision as the women directly impacted by this case and the organizations that support them have been denied the opportunity to speak.

We have been told that we can participate in an "information" hearing yet we are tired of providing information that has been consistently ignored in the past. Participation in the inquiry would have enabled us to question police and the criminal justice branch to get to the heart of what went wrong. We cannot do that without the assistance of counsel who deserve to be paid. There are up to 1 million documents to be reviewed and questions must be asked in a manner that elicits real answers and produces real solutions.

This community has waited 10 years for this historic opportunity to finally have their voices heard, to ask questions about the multiple failures of the police and criminal justice branch – to take some small steps towards healing the egregious wound this community has suffered. What will this inquiry be without the consultation, experience and expertise of the organizations who have served, and continue to serve these women?



photos by: Patrick Parenteau



TOGA TOGA TOGA !

A Party in Support of PACE

Organized by newly appointed board member Reive Doig and Chair Karen Mirsky, the Toga Party fundraiser for PACE was met with success on Friday, June 3rd.

Held at the Cobalt, the night included a vast array of entertainment including a Gladiator Battle, burlesque performances, sexy photoshoots, contests for best dressed and emceed by Aeden Saint of Queer FM with music by DJs Logik and Spaz. Between the Toga Party and

monthly 50/50 draws at SinCity and Noir Ball nights, over \$2400 has been raised for PACE!

This event follows the success of "Screw Cupid: A Night of Beer, Bands and Burlesque," a fundraiser for PACE held back in February of this year.

PACE would like to thank all of those who have graciously volunteered their time to perform, organize and assist with special events like these; you are so vital to our organization

PACE is always looking for fun and innovative ways to fundraise and engage support, so if you have an idea for an event or know performers who would donate their time for a good cause, please contact board member:

Rory Marck at:
rorymarck@gmail.com

Naked Truth AWARDS

PACE Staffers were delighted to attend the second annual Naked Truth Adult Entertainment Awards on June 9, 2011 at the historic Penthouse in downtown Vancouver. Sheri Kiselbach, Violence Prevention Coordinator was there to accept her award for "Favourite Sex Worker Advocate" for her innovative and effective program.

Sheri first came to PACE Society in 2004 and was promoted to Violence Prevention Coordinator in the spring of 2006. Her 30 years of experience in the sex industry inspires Sheri's work and, as she says, "If I knew then, the skills I teach now, I might not have experienced the violence I did". She is also the courageous individual plaintiff in Pivot Legal Society's Charter Challenge of Canada's prostitution laws.

Way to go, Sheri!





SLUT WALK

When a Toronto police officer lectured earlier this year at York University that women should “avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized,” his comments inadvertently sparked a new dialogue surrounding issues of sexual assault and slut stigma. Stemming from this discussion, a new movement was born: The SlutWalk. Originating in Toronto as a grass-roots response to the police officer’s comments, the movement has spread throughout Europe and North America, signaling its strength as a relevant social issue and the support it has gained from a vast array of people.

Vancouver’s first-ever SlutWalk was held on Sunday, May 15th outside the Vancouver Art Gallery, with over 1,000 participants marching through downtown in less than ideal, rainy conditions. PACE board members and community allies proudly marched at the SlutWalk with signs made during the SlutWalk sign-making workshop held at the PACE space earlier that week. The workshop was a great community-building experience, and along for the ride was Katie Hyslop, writer for The Tyee who interviewed Board Chair Karen Mirsky and presented an interesting and well-balanced article about the SlutWalk movement.

Including speakers from Women Against Violence Against Women, YouthCo, Pivot Legal Society and the BC Civil Liberties Association amongst others, Vancouver’s SlutWalk was an incredible success, and we at PACE are happy to stand in solidarity with those who are helping to shift attitudes of victim-blaming in the realm of sexual assault. These are issues that sex workers face with staggering frequency, and SlutWalk reinforces the notion that everyone has the right to feel safe and protected from sexual assault, reflecting an attitude that has both local and global implications.



Sarah's Story

I was sixteen when I started working on the street. I ran away from home, because my parents were alcoholics, and came to the Carnegie Centre. I met a girl who introduced me to sex work and where to go for tricks. I did it for five years and got into a few bad tricks along the way... I am lucky to be alive.

I was walking around Campbell Ave when Pickton was driving around looking for girls. I’m pretty sure he saw me but I didn’t look desperate enough for him to pick me up. I am alive and to this day I feel sorry for the girls who didn’t make it. My friend told me what it was like to be on the farm. She was lucky to get away. I feel for the women who passed on; I knew two girls who were killed on the pig farm. After I heard about Pickton, I got scared so I stopped working the streets. That’s when I heard about PACE and was introduced to the women and BELLE project.

The BELLE project helped me have confidence in myself. It helped me have self-control and straighten out my life. I got stability and control over my habits. They helped me get a home. I was homeless for a year; my boyfriend passed away and made me feel it was my fault. I wasn’t sure if he left because of my addiction. It was coming between us. I was working the streets for my habit. He would come in after work and get angry if



Sarah's Story cont'd

I didn't have supper or a rock ready for him and would hit me if I didn't. I left him and he killed himself. PACE has helped me through this too.

PACE has helped me a lot. If it wasn't for them I'd still be working the street. I'm still involved in the BELLE project and have the cell phone they gave me. I'm doing BELLE After Care and I love it and love the staff here.

THANK YOU AND FAREWELL TO TWO OF OUR BOARD MEMBERS

It is with well wishes that we say "thank you" and "goodbye" to two of our long time board members, Matthew Taylor and Natasia Wright. Both joined the board in 2006 and have served in various roles including Chair and Vice Chair respectively. As a newbie board member in 2010, I remember looking up to them as a wonder team - pillars of knowledge and strength who worked so well together and who cared so much about PACE. When I thought about how to write about them I thought about the values of PACE and decided that it would be much better to let them speak in their own words.

An Interview With Natasia and Matthew

When did you join PACE & why?

Natasia: A former board member of PACE came as a guest speaker to a class I was taking. She talked about the work PACE does, especially in regard to legal reform and the missing women advocacy efforts. Watching the presentation I felt like the rest of the world cleared away and she had

a spotlight shining down on her. I had recently had an experience in another class where a fellow student said that murder is a job hazard in the sex trade, and the women killed on the Pickton farm got what was coming to them. I already felt out of place at university but this hostility towards sex workers gave me a powerful shame and sense of feeling unsafe. So when this PACE board

member came into the classroom to talk about dignity and the rights of workers, I felt a magnetism that can only be described as certainty. My first board meeting was terrifying. I had no idea what it meant to be a board member. I only knew that it sounded fancy. I remember looking at Matthew across the room (it was his first meeting too) and thinking he looked like he had his shit together so much more than me! I remember thinking Stephanie, the chair at the time, was so beautiful. Everything was good and I didn't know what was going on but I was exhilarated.

Matthew: I started working for PACE in 2006 when I joined the CIHS team (Community Initiative for Health and Safety) as a community worker - helping to create a toolkit (web/print) that would help increase health and safety for neighbourhoods impacted by sex work in Vancouver. It was a LIC project (Living in Community) and at the time, the tagline was every community needs a LIC and a CIHS LOL.



photo by: Andrew & Mitch Budreski



In 2007 I co-founded HUSTLE: Men on the Move as a program of PACE Society. Due to internal restructuring, I ended up moving HUSTLE to PEERS Vancouver where it has remained (and flourished) ever since. I came back to PACE

and joined the board in 2009 (I think) and remember sitting at the table not understanding much of what was being talked about and feeling quite inexperienced. I do remember that Natashia was sitting at the other end of the table and I thought she was reeeally pretty.....still do :) The reasons I started working in social service and with PACE have essentially remained the same throughout. I found my voice at PACE, a place to grow, strong, inspiring and amazing people that helped me to realize that giving back some of which has been given to me along the way is my purpose and my calling :)

What roles have you played during your tenure?

Natasia: Quickly after joining the board I became Treasurer because Kerry felt she needed a second set of eyes understanding the finances and I had an aptitude for numbers. That role was relatively uneventful but familiarized me with the mechanics of the agency. A year or so later when Kerry needed to take an extended leave of absence, she asked me to fill her role as Agency Coordinator. Others on the PACE team who were around during that time may not believe me, but that was one of the happiest times of my life. I loved helping members set up their cell phones, I loved representing PACE to the media, I loved sharing an office with Sheri, I loved doing bank rec even! I felt like I was part of something wonderful and despite PACE's challenges at that time and my own

personal challenges, I was happy doing that work. After Kerry came back I took a little break from PACE. I came back as Treasurer but within a few weeks Graham joined us and he is an accountant so it made more sense for him to be Treasurer. He does an amazing job. With my leadership qualities it made sense for me to be Vice Chair. Matthew was Chair by then and we worked together beautifully. It was like organizational ballet. I stayed in that role until my departure this past spring.

given me the room, opportunity, and support to develop personal capacity. PACE has taught me that it's okay to make mistakes or to overreact, that you can talk about it later and no one will hold it against you. Mostly though, and this is something everyone at PACE has said one time or another, PACE has taught me that the hardships and traumas in my life are tools, not weights.

Matthew: BIG question - What immediately comes to mind is family,



photo by: Andrew & Mitch Budreski

Matthew: Kinda covered it already but I started as a community worker with the CIHS project, then coordinator of the HUSTLE program, member-at-large on the board, temp chair - fulltime chair which is the position I held for the last two years at PACE

What has PACE meant to you personally?

Natasia: PACE has meant so much! I don't even know where to begin. I'll keep this part short and abstract because it's too big to really explain. PACE has

community, a place to belong, an opportunity to grow - and grow I have because of the inspiring staff, board, Kerry and most importantly the members who taught me to embrace resilience as it makes us stronger. I have made lasting friendships with amazing people :)

Do you have any particular highlights of working with PACE?

Natasia: A few years ago we did a small program where we gave members of the BELLE group a \$50 stipend for



a “self improvement” expense of their choice. Most people bought phones or fans (it was hot that summer), but one member wanted to buy a piece of jewellery. This was technically outside the “self improvement” mandate but I didn’t actually care. I walked with her to a pawnshop where she’d been eyeing a ring. It was a Saturday and the neighbourhood felt dusty and slow. She was a few months clean for the first time in a decade and, she told me, she wanted to buy something nice because she felt that she could now be trusted to have it. She knew she would not sell it or trade it for dope, and wearing that ring would be a reminder and a reward to her that things were different now than they had been. If that’s not self-improvement I don’t know what is!

Matthew: I’d have to say that one of the biggest highlights was our last AGM. The turnout in membership, past, present staff, board and the overall positive vibe was amazing. Maggie speaking and reading from Missing Sara was so powerful and the thank yous, applause and feedback was such a testament to the fact that PACE has and continues to be such a vital lifeline to sex workers needing support in their daily lives. It made me feel proud and grateful that I can use my voice and experience today to help others who still struggle :)

What are you doing now?

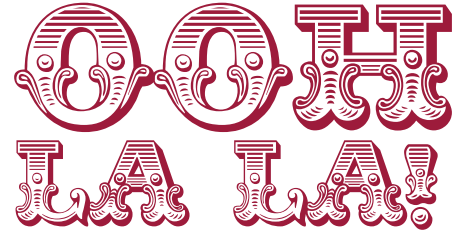
Natasia: As usual I’m wearing many hats. My primary role now is running a small non-profit writing workshop and publishing house, the Downtown Eastside Studio Society. We run

creative writing workshops with people facing social barriers like mental illness, addiction, and homelessness.

We publish their work in to beautiful books and support them in selling the books to offset some of their unmet financial need. It’s so much fun. Our workshop participants are such incredibly gifted storytellers, and I am overwhelmed with gratitude at being a witness to their work. It is no small miracle that this is what I’m doing now, and I credit PACE hugely for supporting my personal and professional development and bringing me here. Believe me, when I say that there are many roads I could have gone down- this is undoubtedly the right one.

Matthew: Due to funding challenges at PEERS, I needed to step away from the PACE board in order to focus on my position as Director of Programs and Services for PEERS at an organizational level. As well, I am still the Program Director for HUSTLE and so my plate is uber full. But I wouldn’t have it any other way and I want to thank PACE for giving me the opportunity to learn, teach, and grow along side a truly inspired group of people membership, staff and board :))

On behalf of the entire board, members and staff, “thank you” Matthew and Natasia for all of your inspiration and hard work. We wish you all the best with your future endeavours. You will be missed!



Endeavour Auction 2011

Endeavour 2011 will be held on Saturday, November 19, 2011 at 6pm at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver. This banquet and auction is guaranteed to be an evening of delightful indulgence, with all proceeds going to charity and PACE as one of the beneficiaries.

PACE is selling tickets for one table to match our donations in the auction. If you’re interested in attending this event, please contact us on how to purchase tickets or a table at:

info@ryanfurber.com

Tickets are \$300 each or \$3000 for a table. If you would like a charitable tax receipt, you can donate funds to PACE and we will buy tickets on your behalf. Please note there will be a limited number of ‘Premier’ tables available for \$7500, \$4500 of which is tax deductible from Endeavour.

Endeavour Auction 2011

**Saturday, Nov 19, 2011 6pm
Fairmont Hotel Vancouver**

Tickets: \$300/\$3000 for a table