

**Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence**

**DV Commission Meeting**

**Thursday, Jan 24, 2018 from 8:30am-10:00am**

**@Bellingham Police Department**

*The mission of the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence is to provide leadership in the community's effort to reduce and prevent domestic violence.*

**Members Attending:** Alan Artman; Karen Burke; Regina Delahunt; David Doll; Starck Follis; Chris Kobdich; Jon Mutchler; Katie Olvera; Mike Parker; Linda Quinn; Dave Reynolds; Mike Riber; Eric Richey; Peter Ruffatto; Sharon Rutherford; Garret Shelsta; Kevin Turner; Bruce Van Glubt; Michele Zlotek; Moonwater

**Members Absent:** Riannon Bardsley; Beth Boyd; Bill Elfo; Silvia Johnson; Ken Levinson; Darlene Peterson; Mary Welch

**Staff Present:** Susan Marks; Liz Stuart; Elizabeth Montoya; Jessyca Murphy

**Guests:** Mo Whalen; Paul Curd; Rocky Vernola; Erik Sigmar; Stephanie Walhgren; Claudia Murphy; Kevin Mede; Paula Mathysse; Jana Koshinz; Margaret Vlahos; Michelle Langstraat; Melissa Lacki; Melanie Campos; Flo Simon; Jeff Parks; Andria Fountain; Justin Pike; Sheryl Cartwright; Helena Schlegel; Ryan Anderson

**MEETING GOAL**

Provide opportunity for members to understand survivor experiences, become familiar with Audit findings and recommendations, and identify actions to leverage the Audit in their agencies

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions: Name, title, agency</li> <li>• Reminder: Complete your meeting evaluations (in packet)</li> <li>• Announcements               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Glossary of terms</li> <li>○ Big Consent Event</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Kobdich welcomed everyone and asked attendees to introduce themselves along with their title and agency.</li> <li>• Chris reminded attendees to complete their meeting evaluations and announced the inclusion of the Glossary of Terms, included in meeting handouts, the result of previous meeting evaluations.</li> <li>• Chris announced that the Big Consent event – a youth summit for high school teens and their adult mentors – will be March 1<sup>st</sup> at Whatcom Community College. Members can promote the event by checking out <a href="http://BigConsentEvent.com">BigConsentEvent.com</a> and talking to Liz Stuart, Project Manager with the Commission.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MOTION: Consent Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes from November 29, 2018</li> <li>• 2019 DV Commission operational budget</li> </ul>	<p><b>MOTION: Consent Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris announced the consent agenda:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Minutes from November 29, 2018</li> <li>○ 2019 DV Commission operational budget</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive committee at large nomination: Katie Olvera</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive committee at large nomination: Katie Olvera</li> <li>Regina Delahunt motioned in favor and Mike Parker seconded.</li> <li>Motions passed with all in favor.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Context for Audit report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of what's been done</li> <li>Sharing &amp; debriefing survivor voices</li> <li>Overarching societal themes impacting our community response</li> </ul> </li> <li>Presentation of findings, recommendations, &amp; commitments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengths: Elizabeth Montoya</li> <li>Medical: Stephanie Wahlgren</li> <li>Advocacy: Karen Burke</li> <li>Law enforcement: Lt. Claudia Murphy</li> <li>Prosecution: Erik Sigmar</li> </ul> </li> <li>Questions</li> <li>Leveraging Audit findings and recommendations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Katie Olvera introduced the panel of audit team members from the Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit (SANDA). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>She gave a brief overview of the audit process, findings, and recommendations. She thanked the audit team for their time and commitment.</li> <li>She reminded everyone of the audit question: "How is the Bellingham-Whatcom County criminal legal system organized to meet the justice needs of sexual assault survivors?"</li> <li>She directed attendees to turn to page 88 for a list of data collection activities, which included survivor focus groups and interviews, case file reviews, stakeholder interviews, and observations.</li> <li>She described that the audit provides well-informed recommendations that put survivor voices first. She reminded attendees that survivors are also us – survivors are in the room and in all our workplaces. She encouraged everyone to be mindful, respectful, and take care of themselves, as needed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Each member of the audit team read aloud quotes from survivors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Katie asked attendees to take a few minutes and debrief with a neighbor and discuss how hearing survivor voices helps to deepen your understanding of this work.</li> <li>Moonwater commented that she was focused on the need the survivor was expressing. Often it was to be heard, validated, and communicated with. This can feel cumbersome for systems to do consistently, but it feels doable on an individual level as human beings.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Katie explained that audit team members representing the different systems involved (law enforcement, advocacy, medical, and prosecution) will take some time to share recommendations that were specifically relevant to their discipline, and explain how they plan to work on implementing those recommendations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>She added that some of what they are sharing will be relevant to people in the room, their agencies, and work they do. Sometimes when we hear recommendations, we can feel defensive. She encouraged that if anyone feels defensiveness arising, to remember the survivor quotes and find an anchor in their voices.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Katie explained that the audit team found two broad overarching themes that were present in all gaps. They are also present in society and our community as a whole. The first theme surrounds myths and</li> </ul>

misconceptions about sexual assault, such as victim-blaming, doubting a person’s story, and misconceptions about consent. The second theme surrounds implicit bias, such as historical oppression – this was particularly true for Native survivors in our community. The audit team found increased barriers for those survivors due to bias and oppression. The report includes recommendations for how to address those overarching themes.

- Elizabeth Montoya, DV Commission Project Manager, presented the strengths identified in the audit report. She explained that the purpose of an audit is to look at gaps, but we found it really important to also examine what our community is doing well.
  - She instructed attendees to turn to page 28 of the report to review the strengths.
  - She explained **Strength 1: The agencies involved have proactively committed to audit process.** The agencies have gone through several audits in the past, but this was the first to explicitly look at sexual assault responses. She emphasized that it is amazing that so many systems are dedicated to improving the experience of survivors – it is not an easy process to hear from survivors that systems are not meeting their needs, and to have recommendations that add to our workloads. She stressed that it is really powerful that we have all these folks on board, and expressed that she is inspired by the audit team and those who participated in the process.
  - She explained **Strength 2: Our community has multidisciplinary responses and a commitment to collaboration.** Our systems talk to each other and have relationships with each other, for example the Wednesday Special Assault Meeting hosted by prosecutor’s office, the forensic nurse team, the Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT), and the DV Commission. The fact that our systems are talking to each other and want to address these issues is a huge asset as we move forward. She explained that a primary recommendation is the development of a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) – the fact that we have these systems in place will help move that forward.
  - She explained **Strength 3: The response of individual practitioners helps survivors feel believed, empowered, and supported.** There were several examples of people in all of our systems who are going above and beyond for survivors. She highlighted a case review involving a woman who decided to report her sexual assault based solely on fact that she had positive relationship with a law enforcement officer. She didn’t want to move forward to prosecution, but she felt safe and knew she would be believed and validated. The officer referred her to other services. Survivors want to know that they will be believed. We must try to institutionalize those practices, so if that person retires we will have these systems in place.

- Stephanie Wahlgren, from Saint Joseph’s Medical Center, addressed **Gap 1: There are systemic delays in processing sexual assault cases** – detailed on page 34.
  - She described how she is inspired by survivors’ courage to be vulnerable and seek a sexual assault exam, after experiencing trauma. She explained that the audit team found there are delays in waiting for forensic examines of up to 8-10 hours. Advocates shared that survivors have left on their own accord, been asked to leave and come back, or been told to go to another hospital. This was echoed in focus groups. The audit team found that on nights and weekends, there is rarely a forensic nurse on-call – there were three weeks in a row where the hospital had to send survivors to Everett. Page 36 of the report describes how if a survivor chooses not to go through with the exam, an officer, prosecutor, or jury might question their credibility. Additionally, time sensitive evidence is lost. Survivors are not always told how to preserve their evidence properly.
  - The recommendation Stephanie committed to for St. Joseph’s response to sexual assault involves researching better staffing models and scheduling, visiting other communities to see what programs they are using, and finding ways to pool forensic nurses through more recruitment and better compensation.
  
- Karen Burke, from DVSAS, addressed **Gap 2: Sexual assault survivors experience a lack of follow-up, communication, and engagement from responding systems** – detailed on page 43.
  - She reread the quote on this page: “if nothing else were to change, you need to tell victim what’s going on.”
  - She discussed how this is an area DVSAS can improve on as well – DVSAS is great at beginning with crisis stabilization, but there is more the agency can do to address the long-term effects of that trauma. There is a lack of follow-up and engagement across responding systems. DVSAS has been committed to the value of empowerment and advocates have left it up to the victim to determine what they need, seek out services, and call back. The agency is working on facilitating better connection to services, checking in with the victim, saying I’m going to call you back until you tell me not to. Currently the volunteers who are dispatched to forensic exams are not always able to call back the next day – so, follow-up calls will be conducted by staff.
  
- Claudia Murphy addressed **Gap 5: Across systems there is lack of expertise in sexual assault dynamics, trauma-informed care, and effective survivor engagement** – detailed on page 71.
  - She explained that it is going to be very easy for people to internalize what is wrong and want to be defensive. She

talked about the 2.5 day training audit team members underwent, which addressed defensiveness. She explained that these gaps are not from one isolated agency, but rather the whole system. Sexual assault response is one tiny little piece of what law enforcement does, but it is an area in which officers really need to be experts. There could be other areas where these gaps exist. Throughout the audit process, everybody was vulnerable about their agency and this is what made the audit work. She stated the quote which rang true for her was the one which said, “There were so many missed opportunities to offer condolences.” She encouraged all responders to be kind and say, “I’m sorry this happened to you.”

- She discussed how survivors have to tell their story multiple times – BPD is conducting an examination to see how this can be limited. She noted that officers are asking for training on trauma-informed care. She pledged to be the voice to her staff to let them know this is important. She discussed related positive changes such as when the deaf community expressed they did not feel safe with local interpreters who may not keep their information private – now officers have apps on their phones that can connect to a live ASL interpreter.

- Erik Sigmar, from the Whatcom County Prosecutor’s Office, also addressed **Gap 1: There are systemic delays in processing sexual assault cases** – detailed on page 34.

- He explained that there are delays at every step of the process, which results in one year or more before a case can be resolved. It can take months for a victim to hear about their case status. Prosecutors who were anonymously interviewed felt like they did not have time to process cases because of their bloated caseloads. He cited a statistic from the American Bar Association which recommended felony prosecutors handle no more than 70 cases. He stated that prosecutors are far in excess of that, handling 120 or more cases at a time. He stated that he is sitting at 148 and that doesn’t include pending review cases which would be 170. Our prosecutors are handling over double what the American Bar Association recommends. In discussions with defense attorneys, they have indicated that delays are used as deliberate tactic because evidence gets worse over time.
- He discussed the 5-day period between trial confirmation hearings and the actual trial. Often the prosecutor only has the weekend to be prepared for trial and that is not enough – this results in backlog as cases get continued. Survivors then feel like the system doesn’t prioritize their sense of safety and justice, and this prolongs suffering and anxiety, as well as the feeling of not being believed. Survivors healing process is delayed, there are safety concerns, and judgement from the community. Delays result in disengagement from survivors

and a lack of accountability for offenders. Under the new leadership of Eric Richey, the prosecutor's office is committed to implementing procedures which more effectively oppose continuances, conducting more supervisory reviews, implement electronic systems for receiving of information from law enforcement, and push the court to change the 5-day trial confirmation.

- The prosecutor's office is now fully staffed with victim advocates, which will improve communication with survivors. They are also working to resist the continuance of old cases, divert low-level drug and property crimes to district court, and offer alternatives to jail in those cases, along with more treatment options, so that prosecutors can focus on more serious cases. Additionally, they are in conversations with judges to change the unrealistic trial calendar.
- Katie stated that she is feeling very inspired and thanked everyone for their honesty. She asked for any questions or comments from the group.
  - Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College) asked Stephanie if there was any effort being made to reach out to health clinics to receive forensic training. Stephanie said, not right now, that that is something that could be implemented.
  - Mike Parker (Opportunity Council) commented that he did not hear any specific comments about how local tribes were impacted, asking how team members saw the theme surrounding bias being applied to the actions taken by each system.
    - Claudia responded offering survivors advocacy from Lummi Victims of Crime and providing implicit bias training to officers as ways this is being addressed by law enforcement. She added the example of making certain accommodations such as returning blankets that have been taken by officers as evidence.
    - Karen stated that the audit team recognized a month or two months in that there was a lot of work to do before we could expect Native survivors to talk to outside system. Relationships needed to be built and we needed to facilitate a better connection, presence, and partnership with the tribes before we fully could understand the problem and address it.
  - Regina Delahunt asked about the SART team – what it would focus on and what it would look like.
    - Elizabeth responded that the community does not have a place were representatives from different systems are talking specifically about adult sexual assault. There are places where child sexual abuse is being addressed – our society sees this differently and systems respond differently. There is an opportunity for really focused and dedicated collaborative

response to adult sexual assault cases. Many people are familiar with the Wednesday meetings – SART teams are usually smaller than that and consist of individuals on the level of responding to sexual assault cases. The team would work to find ways of reinforcing consistent messaging to survivors, increase collaboration and communication, and address the gaps listed in the report. The team would also be a resource for our community by becoming experts on sexual assault in the community.

- Rocky asked if the reported looked at the family unit as a form of support for victims.
  - Melissa responded that she remembers hearing from survivors that was a real need for education and support for their families and peers.
  - Katie agreed this was something that could have been named. In the focus groups, she remembered survivors saying, “My partner or mom didn’t understand or believe me.” This highlights the theme that there are myths and misconceptions about what it means to heal from sexual assault.
- Mike Riber asked what is being done to address how survivors have to repeatedly share their story to different responders/systems.
  - Erik responded by explaining the difficulties of the different case management systems used by different agencies. He said that the prosecutor’s office hopes to move away from the paper system within a year.
- Linda asked if the maps in the appendix are examples of what is currently happening or what the team would like to see happening.
  - Elizabeth responded that the systems mapping was done early on in the audit process and is a picture of what’s currently happening – it is a general snapshot of what any sexual assault case processing might look like.
- Karen gave comment that sexual assault is one of the only crimes that because of our misconceptions, we meet victims with the assumption that they’re lying. Studies have shown that victims lie about assault at the same rate as other crimes. She stated that these changes are about more than improving system – we have to go against the tide of what our whole society is asking us to believe.
- Katie noted that ours is the first community to look at sexual assault in this way. Bellingham is spearheading this audit process.
- Susan thanked everyone for sharing and asking questions. She asked attendees to complete a handout detailing how they can use this information in the report and implement changes in their agency or sphere of influence. She brought attention to some examples included

	<p>in the meeting packet and added that if anyone would like to have a conversation with the DV Commission staff, we can help facilitate that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sharon Rutherford discussed her role in the hospital and how she can use the process map on page 133 to re-think about how a patient enters the emergency room, how long it takes for them to get to right place and cared for by right individual. There are easy fixes we don't realize until we have an audit like this. We can remove some of the delays and make survivors feel welcomed and cared for.</li> <li>● Susan discussed the next steps for implementing recommendations. She explained that the report has been shared with Commission members and people who are here today. The Office of Violence Against Women will look at the report and then it can be shared more publicly. We will share it with leadership teams, agency leaders, and elected officials. With regards to resource concerns, such as prosecutor caseloads, she encouraged everyone to think about the fixes they can implement without additional resources. She reminded attendees that there is a year and a half of funding to support the Commission in sending people to trainings and site visits, as well as fund a criminal legal advocate at DVSAS. She committed to keeping the membership posted about ongoing progress.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reminders &amp; Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reminder: Turn in your Meeting Evaluations to Jessyca</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reminders &amp; Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chris reminded attendees to turn in Meeting Evaluations to Jessyca.</li> <li>● Adjourn @ 10am</li> <li>● <b>Next meeting:</b> March 28<sup>th</sup> 8:30am-10am at Mount Baker Theater Encore Room</li> </ul>



**Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence**

**DV Commission Meeting**

**Thursday, Sept 27, 2018 from 8:30am-10:00am**

**@ Mount Baker Theatre Encore Room**

*The mission of the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence is to provide leadership in the community's effort to reduce and prevent domestic violence.*

**Members Attending:** Kevin Levinson, Alan Artman, Garret Shelsta, Karen Burke, Beth Boyd, Mike Parker, Michelle Zlotek, Mike Riber, Regina Delahunt, Katie Olvera, Sharon Rutherford, Chris Kobdich

**Members Absent:** Darlene Peterson, Linda Quinn, Dave Reynolds, Eric Richey, Chris Roselli, Peter Ruffatto, Bruce Van Glubt, Mary Welch, Moonwater, Riannon Bardsley, Dave Doll, Stark Follis, Jon Mutchler, Bill Elfo, Kevin Turner

**Guests Attending:** Flo Simon (for David Doll), Kevin Hester (for Bill Elfo), Raquel Vernola, Byron Manering, Paula Matthyse (NWYS)

**Staff Attending:** Susan Marks, Liz Stuart, Elizabeth Montoya, Jessyca Murphy

**Meeting Goals:**

- Provide opportunity for deeper learning and conversation about sexual and domestic violence
- Get input on what information to share with community partners and how to prioritize our efforts

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions: Name, title, agency</li> <li>• Reminder: Complete your meeting evaluations (in packet)</li> <li>• New logo</li> </ul>	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris welcomed everyone and asked members to introduce themselves.</li> <li>• Chris reminded members to fill out the meeting evaluations.</li> <li>• Chris introduced the new Commission logo.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MOTION: Consent Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes from January 24, 2019</li> </ul>	<p><b>MOTION: Consent Agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris introduced the minutes from January and asked for any additions or corrections.</li> <li>• Alan Artman motioned to approve and Mike Riber seconded.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Data Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group data review and discussion</li> <li>• Large group report-out</li> <li>• Follow-up</li> </ul>	<p><b>Data Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susan introduced the small group activity. She asked members to spend time in conversation about the data collected by the Commission.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ She discussed the mission expansion into the area of sexual assault – part of the goal of this expansion was to learn more about where SA and DV overlap and diverge.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- She noted that this activity is an opportunity for membership to engage more deeply with the projects implemented by the Commission.
- She explained that the goal of this activity was to discuss the “why” behind our work – why we focus on marginalized communities, why it is harder for people who are homeless or Native to access services, and why we need to improve our practices and learn more.
- She asked members to use this opportunity to provide staff with further input on their priorities, stating, “this is *your* Commission and we are *your* staff. We want to hear what you think is most important.”
- She discussed how she will be speaking with City and County Councils and would like to share with them the information and recommendations that members prioritize most.
- Susan introduced the different topics at each table:
  - Connections between DV-SA & homelessness-housing instability
  - Connections between youth homelessness & DV-SA
  - Impact of DV-SA on Indigenous women
  - Impact of federal immigration policy on reporting by immigrant survivors
  - Impacts of societal myths and misconceptions of sexual assault
- Susan explained that the Commission puts out a data report every year and the most recent report included spotlight sections that dove deeper into the impacts of housing/homelessness and federal immigration policy on DV-SA survivors.
  - She noted that some of the data is national and the regional data, and the data is mostly qualitative (from a variety of sources such as focus groups with survivors, stakeholders, and providers).
  - She will send out an email to the Commission membership with all reports and sources discussed at today’s meeting.
- Susan explained that each table had a different data set and a designated facilitator. She asked each group to choose a notetaker and a person to share out to the larger group. She asked members to take 5-10 minutes individually reviewing data before discussing with the group.
- Susan went over the instructions/questions listed on the notetaking sheet:
  - Provide a brief description of the data set that your group reviewed.
  - Why is it important to consider this information in our work?
  - What did you find particularly compelling about the data?
  - What questions do you have, and/or what do you want to know more about?
  - What 2 – 3 recommendations would you prioritize for our community?
  - For each person in your group: What will you do next related to this data?

- She suggested that next steps could include reading the full report, sharing it with colleagues, reviewing agency practices, connecting with elected officials, or something else.
- Groups discussed the data sets for 40 minutes.
- The designated person for each group shared out their answers on the notetaking sheet.
- Ken Levinson provided the summary for his group (Impact of DV-SA on Indigenous women):
  - What stood out:
    - The majority of perpetrators against Native women are non-Native men (86%)
    - Existence of active and intentional efforts to groom, encourage, and provide blueprints for choosing victims on tribal land
    - Stakeholders perceptions and harmful stereotypes – “We have to be open to knowing about our implicit biases.”
    - The systemic obstacles in the criminal justice system, such as full faith and credit, and criminal jurisdictions
  - What will we consider in our work:
    - All of our agencies need to ensure that our clients feel like we’re serving them and that they are comfortable seeking services from us. It is important think about what works, give voice to the Native community, and not impose our projects/systems on them, but rather allow for Native communities to come to us with their ideas and discuss how can we work together.
  - Questions from the group:
    - With the vast majority of perpetrators being non-Native, we were curious to learn more about that (this number didn’t jive with those of us who work with children – is that a different story and what does that tell us?)
    - Why do we still have so many difficulties enforcing federal law, such as the recognition of foreign orders? We would like to know if other populations have similar difficulties in getting orders enforced from elsewhere (for example, would someone from Tennessee moving to WA have same difficulty being protected)?
  - Recommendations from the group:
    - Searching out culturally specific advocacy when working with clients
    - Inviting tribal presentations in non-tribal agencies and encouraging participation in tribal events (and not just

the large events, but also engaging with the tribes at less formal events to build trust)

- Prioritize sharing this information with elected officials
- Renew the conversation about cross-deputization
- Recognize the impact of non-Native populations on the Native population and the existence of historical trauma and boarding schools
- Identify and require specific data points from courts, prosecution, and the medical system, so we can evaluate how we are doing

- Rocky Vernola provided the summary for her group (Impact of federal immigration policy on reporting by immigrant survivors):
  - What stood out:
    - National data indicating that federal immigration policy has made it harder for law enforcement to prosecute cases involving immigrant survivors
  - Why is it important?
    - There is a huge gap in reporting and prosecuting
    - We need to need to better understand cultural differences to better connect to immigrant populations
    - Removing border patrol from 911 dispatch was a huge gain
  - What did we find most compelling?
    - Whatcom county is doing amazing job outreaching when it comes to DV & SA
    - It's important to understand the web of different cultures impacted (three largest countries of origin in Whatcom County are Canada, Mexico, and Philippines – group thought Ukraine and Russia would be in top three)
    - It is important to include international students, who may not be traditionally considered immigrants because they are on temporary visas, but they are living here and part of the community
  - What did we want to know more about?
    - Understanding the cultural impacts – gender roles and how rape culture plays out in non-US cultures
    - If there are 14 different South American indigenous languages spoken in Whatcom County – do we have the resources to communicate and provide outreach to those communities?
    - When the statistics say “increase” what is that being compared to (before 2016) and did political messaging make an impact?
  - What recommendations did we have?
    - Increase messaging and reaching out to different languages

- Consider the method of communication when reaching out – some cultures may not watch mainstream media
    - Figure out how to reach migrant workers who are isolated
  - Next steps for group members:
    - Whatcom Community College has been host to the Mexican consulate – leverage this comfortable relationship to include more resources on DV/SA
    - Whatcom Community College could be used as a neutral ground because there is already a large undocumented population and folks feel safer there
- Garret provided the summary for his group (Connections between DV-SA & homelessness-housing instability):
  - Why is it important?
    - How children are impacted – generational impact creates cycles of violence
    - There is an overlap of domestic and sexual violence in this population
    - There is a disparity between the numbers reporting for sexual assault and domestic violence
  - What did we find most compelling?
    - The data made it clear that people experiencing homelessness are more vulnerable
    - People experiencing homelessness are still human beings looking for relationships and this opens them up to predatory practices
    - The stories from the homicide report humanized the data and added nuance
    - The unfortunate choices people have to make (living on street vs with an abuser)
    - How Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can impact future life outcomes
  - What questions did we have?
    - What are the effects of economic empowerment and the lack of childcare – will more resources in those areas reduce the impact of homelessness?
    - How can we collect accurate data given of normalization of sexual violence among the homeless population?
    - How are we defining the word “domestic” – does it only mean four walls and a roof?
    - Where is the data on perpetrators and who is exploiting homeless populations? We might think perpetrators are other homeless people, but we don’t have data sets to prove that – we have to be careful not to reinforce stories or narratives that may not be there.

- What about people and children staying in other unstable housing environments (with friends or strangers)?
    - What recommendations did we have?
      - Being clear about the story we are telling – specifically about who is perpetrating
      - Acknowledging the cross-sections of all these data points – intersectionality is important.
- Mike Parker provided the summary for his group (Impacts of societal myths and misconceptions of sexual assault):
  - What did we find most compelling?
    - The implicit bias with regards to victims
    - The overall blame that is inherent in the system
    - These beliefs we hold as a society are pervasive through all systems
    - Low rates of reporting and prosecution
  - What recommendations did we have?
    - How might we make our processes more trauma-informed?
    - How can law enforcement conversations be more trauma-informed?
    - When you're traumatized, your brain works different – we have to give survivors more time.
    - For jurors, implicit bias is a real issue – prosecutors could educate jurors, which might be difficult, but it is important in the legal process
    - What can we do locally about attitudes – combat national issues with local solutions
    - We need to acknowledge biases and do it well
    - We need to prioritize trauma-informed practices
  - What will we do?
    - In the housing arena, we ask a lot of prying questions to determine if you get housing or not – we need to do that in the most trauma-informed way possible.
- Karen provided the summary for her group (Connections between youth homelessness & DV-SA)
  - Why is it important?
    - We need to be more aware of the long-term effects of trauma
    - When people are on the street, it is often a direct result of DV/SA in home
  - What did we find most compelling?
    - The relationship between DV/SA and youth homelessness – that the younger a person becomes homeless, the more likely they are to experience sexual victimization
  - What questions did we have?
    - How can we strengthen resilience in schools?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How can we intervene when there is the difficulty of mandatory reporting requirements? Teens have certain amount of agency and may not want CPS or LE involved – what are the unintended consequences of mandatory reporting? We don't want to ask kids about sexual violence unless they understand the impact of reporting.</li> <li>○ What recommendations did we have? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increasing community awareness and involvement</li> <li>▪ More funding – until the community recognizes the impact, it is hard to get the buy-in</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reminder: May 23rd Annual Meeting, please note extended meeting time, and send a representative from your agency if you are unable to attend</li> <li>• Reminder: Turn in your Meeting Evaluations to Jessyca</li> </ul>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris thanked everyone for staying later than planned. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ She reminded members that the next meeting is the annual meeting, and there will be an extra 30 minutes.</li> <li>○ She reminded members to turn in their meeting evaluations to Jessyca.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adjourn at 10:15am</li> <li>• Next Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Thursday, May 23, 2019, 8:00 – 10:00 am @ Mt. Baker Theatre Encore Room</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



# COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

## Annual Commission Meeting

Thursday May 23, 2019 8-10am

Mount Baker Theatre Encore Room

**Members Attending:** Alan Artman, Beth Boyd, Karen Burke, Regina Delahunt, Bill Elfo, Chris Kobdich, Ken Levinson, Byron Manering, Jon Mutchler, Katie Olvera, Mike Parker, Linda Quinn, Dave Reynolds, Mike Riber, Eric Richey, Katrice Rodriguez, Peter Ruffatto, Sharon Rutherford, Garret Shelsta, Kevin Turner, Bruce Van Glubt, Mary Welch, Moonwater

**Members Absent:** Riannon Bardsley, David Doll, Starck Follis, Chris Roselli, Darlene Peterson, Raquel Vernola, Michele Zlotek

**Guests Present:** Martina Kartman (Soros Justice Fellow at the Public Defender Association), DeAnn Alcantara-Thompson (Transformative Justice & Prevention Coordinator at the Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence), Emily Machin-Mayes (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center), Jordan Burell (Western Front), Kristin Anderson (Western Washington University), Dani Andreason (LAW Advocates), April Barker (Bellingham City Council), Christina Byrne (Western Washington University), Sheryl Carthwright (City of Bellingham Prosecutors Office), Vicky Colliver (Whatcom County Prosecutors Office), Nikki D'Onofrio (LAW Advocates), Kristy Gallegos (Community member), Katie Grey (Make.Shift Art Space), Elizabeth Hart (DVSAS), Jessica Heck (DVSAS), Jeralyn Heil (Catholic Community Services), Kevin Hester (Whatcom County Sheriff's Office), Melynda Huskey (Western Washington University), Hollie Huthman (The Shakedown/Racket), Betty Jensen (Pioneer Human Services), Melissa Lacki (Whatcom County Prosecutors Office), Kelen Laine (Community Member), Anya Milton (Community Member), North Moench (Ferndale School District), Trula Nichols (Western Washington University), Vanessa Osage (Love and Truth Rising), Calhan Ring (Community member), Jessica Rodriguez (Whatcom Community College), Amy Rydel (Whatcom County Health Department), Flo Simon (Bellingham Police Department), Michael Sledge (Western Washington University), Trista Truemper (Bellingham Technical College), Maialisa Vanyo (Whatcom County Public Defender's Office), Christina Vega (SeaMar Community Health Center), Stephanie Wahlgren (St. Joseph's Hospital), Jake Wiebusch (Whatcom County District Court), Tammy Woodrich (Stillaguamish Tribes)

**Staff Present:** Susan Marks, Liz Stuart, Elizabeth Montoya, Jessyca Murphy

### Meeting Goals:

- Engage members in Commission's initiative to explore restorative justice as a way to address sexual and domestic violence
- Increase understanding of Commission members, staff, and community partners of framework of restorative justice
- Provide background information on why and how restorative justice is being used to address the harms of sexual and domestic violence





# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of tribal lands</li> <li>• Content and self-care</li> <li>• Logistical announcements</li> <li>• Reminder: Complete your meeting evaluations (<i>on tables</i>)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Kobdich welcomed everyone and introduced herself.</li> <li>• She acknowledged that we gathered on the land of Coast Salish people and asked that attendees give respect to Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe.</li> <li>• She encouraged everyone to engage in self-care and pointed out the location of gender-neutral bathrooms.</li> <li>• She gave logistical announcements:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Attendees should sign-in on the sheets available at each table</li> <li>○ Attendees should write their names on the tent cards provided (pronoun stickers available at each table to be placed on the tent cards)</li> <li>○ Commission members should have picked up packets when they arrived</li> <li>○ Meeting evaluations should be turned in at the end</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Commission Business:</b></p> <p><b>MOTION: Consent agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes from January 24, 2019</li> <li>• Minutes from March 28, 2019</li> <li>• Proposed updates to By-Laws</li> </ul>	<p><b>Commission Business:</b></p> <p><b>MOTION: Consent agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes from Jan 24, 2019 and March 28, 2019, as well as the proposed updates to the by-laws.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Karen Burke motioned, and Alan Artman seconded.</li> <li>○ The consent agenda was passed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>MOTION: Slate of Officers</b></p>	<p><b>MOTION: Slate of Officers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mike Riber spoke to the slate of officers for the upcoming year and asked for a motion to approve.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ken Levinson motioned, and Alan Artman seconded.</li> <li>○ The slate of officers was passed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Learning about restorative justice as a way to address sexual and/or domestic violence in Whatcom County:</b></p>	<p><b>Learning about restorative justice as a way to address sexual and/or domestic violence in Whatcom County:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susan Marks discussed why we are talking about restorative justice (RJ):</li> </ul>



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

<p><b>Background</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process for questions</li> <li>• Why are we talking about restorative justice related to domestic and sexual violence?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Survivors in the community have expressed a need for more options around healing and accountability outside of the criminal legal system – RJ is not intended to remove what is currently in place, but to add more options.</li> <li>○ RJ can be another way to create deep accountability and change for those who cause harm.</li> <li>○ There is a national movement exploring how RJ can be used as a framework for accountability in DV and SA situations. Partially, to address how the domestic violence movement has been a part of the high rates of incarceration in this country. Many survivors choose not to report because they don't want to be a part of the criminal legal system and this process of mass incarceration; this is especially true for queer survivors and survivors of color. RJ can be another option for people who do not want incarceration as the end result for the person who harmed them.</li> <li>○ For lots of people in the room, RJ may be new, but it is not a new practice. It has been used by Indigenous communities for generations and is currently in place in many tribal communities. We are learning from work that has already be done.</li> <li>○ She turned the floor over to Moonwater from the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center (WDRC). She explained that the WDRC has been a partner in this learning series.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Experience of restorative dialogue</b></p>	<p><b>Experience of restorative dialogue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moonwater shared a story about restorative dialogue as a way to reach healing and empowerment after interpersonal harm. She requested that the details of the story stay with those who were in the room.</li> <li>• She thanked everyone for coming and being open to learning more. She introduced Emily Machin-Mayes, the Youth Program Manager at WDRC, who would be giving an overview of RJ foundations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overview of restorative justice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition, framework, philosophy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Overview of restorative justice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emily reflected that the helped ground us in the foundations of RJ, which will continue to be outlined throughout this learning series. She noted that the story reminded us of the importance of centering the needs of people who were affected by harm, and how people who are responsible can meet those needs.</li> </ul>



- Emily began by recognizing that we are not starting from zero. Many people in this room have been doing this work and their knowledge will add richness to this learning experience.
- She introduced the handout in the meeting packet, and pointed out quote at the top. She emphasized that RJ processes start by believing victims/survivors.
- She discussed the language that we use when talking about DV and SA situations, and how we want to represent those involved. She asked attendees to take a moment, read, and sit with those core concepts listed on the handout.
- She described how establishing safety and prioritizing healing frequently comes up in the philosophy of RJ. She noted that many people have been asking for a definition to RJ, but she pointed out that there is no definition provided on the handout. The reason behind this is that RJ is not a single program, but rather a framework for addressing and preventing harm. RJ helps to design pathways for repair and healing, and addressing harms, needs, and obligations.
- She discussed the importance of bringing attention and appreciation to the fact that RJ is not new – it has roots in the wisdom tradition of Indigenous communities, and it is still practiced today. We should honor those roots and ongoing practices.
- She discussed guiding questions to focus on in RJ practices. Rather than thinking of RJ as the opposite or a mirror to traditional forms of justice, she encouraged focusing on changing the questions we ask. RJ focuses on the following questions:
  - What are the harms that have been done?
  - How do we identify the needs of those who have been harmed?
- She described how the criminal justice system focuses on who committed the crime and what laws have been broken. RJ allows for a broadening of the questions we center.
- She discussed some of the goals of RJ:
  - Empowering and putting key decisions in the hands of those effected by harm
  - More healing and transformation
  - Opportunities for accountability



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creating a fair and equitable process</li> <li>● She discussed the differences in language used in RJ practices. She pointed out that in the meeting packets, the terms used are “victim” and “offender,” but she invited attendees to do their best to use “person-first language.” She asked attendees to look at the Venn diagram in their packets and notice if there were opportunities to change some of the language.</li> <li>● She discussed that there are different types of RJ practices, some that are more centered on the survivor, and some that are more centered on learning and support for the person who caused harm. Some focus on the communities of care for both parties. She pointed out that creating a fully restorative practice requires input from all three core parties.</li> <li>● She encouraged attendees to think about what it means to have harms, obligations, and needs at the core driving center of all that we explore together in this learning series, today and in the future.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activity: centering voices of survivors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Small group discussion</li> <li>● Large group report-out</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activity: centering voices of survivors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Susan thanked Emily and pointed out that on each table there was a large flipchart paper and small slips of paper with quotes from people who have survived harm.</li> <li>● Susan reiterated how the goal of RJ is to focus on what survivors say they need. She described how the quotes on the tables were from people in our own community who are survivors of the harms of domestic and sexual violence. The activity is to talk about how survivor needs for justice and healing can be addressed through the core parties in RJ practices. She asked each group to read the quotes and determine where they belong on the Venn diagram circles, which represent the impacted parties that Emily discussed (person harmed, person responsible, community of care). She asked the groups to determine what the survivor is saying they need – is the need for the survivor themselves, for or from the person who caused harm, for or from their community, or overlap?</li> <li>● Susan encouraged everyone at the table to introduce themselves. After 10 minutes, groups will be asked to report out one quote and where they placed it.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susan acknowledged that some of these quotes may be things felt by people in the room, as people who have been harmed, caused harm, or are part of a community of care.</li> <li>• She turned the floor over to the guest presenters, who have been leading this work in King County. She explained that they will share what they know about the values and practices we should be considering. She acknowledged that many people here today have been waiting to hear about how RJ has worked in other communities. She thanked everyone for being here.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Restorative justice in the aftermath of sexual and/or domestic violence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practices, underlying values, and key questions</li> <li>• Examples and research</li> <li>• Questions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Restorative justice in the aftermath of sexual and/or domestic violence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DeAnn Alcantara-Thompson began by returning to the land acknowledgement at the beginning of the meeting.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ She stated that she would like to recognize that we're on occupied land of the Coast Salish, Lummi, and Nooksack. She read a quote from the Lummi Tribe's website and discussed how there is so much more that is needed to address genocide and land theft. She expressed wanting to acknowledge that in a significant way and appreciate what was said earlier.</li> <li>○ She discussed how she had been taught to recognize Indigenous people in the room and express appreciation and honor for them and their ancestors. She acknowledged the difficulty and pain of having one's land stolen.</li> <li>○ She expressed appreciation for the particular contribution by Indigenous people, and especially the Lummi Tribe, to the anti-violence movement.</li> <li>○ She introduced the practice of inviting people to take a minute of reflection on their own role as a settler or indigenous person. She stated that people are also allowed to stew in annoyance during this time. She set a timer and asked everyone to reflect, write, or think to ground themselves more. She stated that this practice is not enough, but it is a place to start.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• DeAnn introduced herself and thanked Susan for inviting her and Martina.</li> </ul>



- She discussed how at the University of Washington she worked at the Women’s Center as an advocate, then at the NW Network. She stopped to have a baby and didn’t do work like that for a while. Then she came back to work in her position at the Coalition to End Gender-Based Violence. She discussed being in a teaching position now and engaging people across different sectors.
- She discussed noticing a different level of power that came along with her position at the Coalition, and how it can sometimes be stressful to try and push people in a certain direction. She acknowledged that it has been great to work with Martina who has been “on the ground” doing RJ work. She discussed how she has done RJ work among friends.
- Since having her son, she has been trying to “walk the talk.” She discussed how having him has given her so much hope that he can live in a world where he can have a full range of emotions and be in healthy equitable relationships.
- Martina Kartman introduced herself and encouraged attendees to treat the presentation as a conversation. She stated that it was okay to raise their hands and ask questions along the way. She also reminded everyone about the sheets for questions that they would address at the end.
  - Martina described how DeAnn and her work closely together. Martina graduated from law school two years ago and came back to Seattle to bring the RJ practices she learned and cared deeply about. She acknowledged that the Coalition has been a huge resource for her work.
  - She explained that her organization, the Public Defender Association, is not actually a public defender agency. She discussed how their mission is to work within the areas of public health, addiction, and issues related to people who are unhoused and people who have caused serious harm. She discussed how they look at what it means to create new systems, they work mostly in coalitions, partnering with organizations such as API CHAYA, the Black Prisoners Caucus, the Well on Beacon, the Trans Prisoners Coalition, and other local people of color (POC) healing spaces.



- She discussed her current project at the Association, which involved creating a curriculum and leading accountability circles in prisons. She explained that they were asked to create this project by the Black Prisoners Caucus. They learned from other projects in the Bay Area and New York and brought back curriculums to create a new one that worked for WA state. They graduated 32 people who have sat in circle. She pointed out their pictures on the PowerPoint slide.
  - She discussed how they also created a survivor advisory board and supported those survivors through their healing by piloting a circle that mirrored the one in the prison. She explained that they were nervous about bringing everyone together, there were ups and downs, but everything went better than they imagined.
  - She discussed how a big piece of this work was about providing support and building capacity for people to do this work themselves. They were transparent about the tools they were using. They also worked with people who have experienced harm to change public policy.
  - She discussed how what we hear from folks on the ground is often different than what we hear in the media – especially the narratives around who is experiencing harm. She stressed that these narratives are not incorrect, but they are incomplete.
- Referencing Howard Zehr’s *Little Book on Restorative Justice*, she discussed how RJ moves away from centering the relationship between individuals and the state. RJ shifts the focus onto people’s relationships with other people.
  - She explained that there is a ripple effect of violence, providing an example of a mother who lost her son to gun violence. Her son’s best friend died of suicide after this event – he was impacted, but his story was not seen or heard by the criminal justice system. RJ asks who is responsible and who is harmed, and expands that circle of who might be responsible or harmed to bring in all folks who have a stake.



- She discussed accountability and the rigorous question about what that means.
  - Accountability is different for different people, although there are some pieces that may remain the same. Accountability has been sold to us as punishment, but that's not necessary what it means.
  - She discussed having talked with people who were in prison for many years but had no framework for understanding the harm that they caused. She gave the example of a man who violently sexually assaulted his wife but did not think it could be rape because they were married. She tried to work with him on why possession was at the core of his definition of marriage. By the end, he was able to grapple with this, but she could not say for sure that he was fully accountable.
  - We may always be in question about what accountability really looks like. She noted that the NW Network has done incredible work on accountability using RJ frameworks.
- Martina transitioned to discuss what RJ is not, again referencing Zehr's book:
  - It is not new.
  - It is not about forgiveness or reconciliation.
    - Forgiveness might be a possibility, but it is not a prerequisite or the goal.
  - It is not the same as mediation.
    - RJ is a container for accountability and healing, which is not the same thing as resolving a conflict and meeting in the middle.
    - RJ is often sold as a way to reduce recidivism, but that is not its primary purpose. That is often the result, but not the primary goal. The goal is to center the person who has been harmed and have their needs met.
  - It is not intended for major harms.
    - Although this may feel safer, we know that RJ has a more profound impact the more serious the harm.
    - This is not to say it cannot be used for lesser harms but is not necessarily the best starting point.





- People feel worried and scared that they might cause more harm, but data has shown that there is a higher level of satisfaction of RJ for those who have been impacted by serious harms.
- It is not a panacea.
  - Harm involves so many other things that need to be addressed.
  - There is not a program blueprint or a step-by-step manual – if you see that, be cautious. RJ is a set of values and skills that can be flexible.
  - RJ is a compass not a map.
- Martina discussed the values of RJ. She explained that accountability centers healing – somebody’s healing can be a necessary step towards accountability.
  - She explained that they work with people who start out resistant, but most people who have caused harm have experienced harm. It is required that facilitators center that person as a survivor. She named that this is a hard thing, yet it works every time. She shared a few stories that highlighted this concept.
- An audience member, Kelen Laine, raised her hand to ask a question around how to best keep the survivor centered when both people are survivors.
  - Martina explained that in these cases they were centering survivorship in the service of accountability.
  - Martina pointed out that something happened in the anti-violence movement where a particular kind of survivorship has been prioritized – where the survivor must be innocent and deserving (as well as middle class, white, and not promiscuous). This usually does not center those who are experiencing the most violence.
  - DeAnn added that this question could open up a discussion around survivor use of violence – something we haven’t given a lot of space to talk about in this movement. She discussed how survivors might need to and want to be accountable in order to heal and receive help.



- Martina explained that in the work she does, they can't work with the direct survivors of the prisoners due to Department of Justice (DOJ) policy. Instead what they do is bring in a surrogate panel of people who have experienced similar harms.
  - They do a lot to make sure folks are well-resourced and feel safe. The survivors attend a retreat where there are body workers and they facilitate with the groups for nine months. It is also optional for people to participate on the panel – they can go through the process and opt out at the end with no consequences. They can also just be in the space and witness – there was always a choice. Lots of people changed their minds in the moment – people who wanted to observe ended up speaking and vice versa.
  - She went on to explain this program is safety-driven and tries to envision a world without violence – they ask, “Five generations down, what would it look like to have a world without violence?” She explained that this means they might be working with people who don't look like innocent victims – people who are addicted or undocumented. She discussed how so many responses to violence lead to more violence – they lead to shame, racial inequity, and an inability to meet one's financial needs. This program asks, “What would it look like to move resources towards the prevention of future violence?”
- An audience member asked if the program has a follow-up plan for participants.
  - Martina explained that there is a program evaluation where they ask participants if they want to stay involved. They collect contact information and train people to be facilitators inside prison. They stay in contact with those people and support them to be effective peer facilitators.
- DeAnn read off questions from the scraps of paper.
  - *What programs are there for practitioners to learn and build RJ skills?*
    - DeAnn mentioned Sujatha Baliga with Impact Justice. She is a leader within the movement and



travels often to teach about RJ practices. She also mentioned Sonya Shah and Miriame Kaba.

- Martina encouraged contacting Lummi Nation as a resource and looking at the Eastern Mennonite University webinar series.
- *How can RJ be used to address historical and intergenerational trauma, especially when it is ongoing and there are many victims?*
  - DeAnn discussed how this is a real question many people have right now. She mentioned that Fania Davis has created an RJ tool for addressing racial and structural violence. Davis is the executive director of Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth – she is an attorney who said she was tired of fighting and wanted to build something. She studied truth and reconciliation practices in South Africa, Rwanda, and Cambodia.
- *Is RJ better for violence that has occurred one-time in the past or harm that is current and ongoing?*
  - Martina explained that there are some things to consider when the violence is ongoing and the harm is still happening right now. She mentioned that they sometimes get calls from people surviving current DV or neighborhood violence, but RJ isn't always what people need in the moment. People need to be able to choose what they want and need. She noted that she has not done a process where the violence is active and ongoing, but she would imagine the values and skills would look quite similar.
- Katie Gray asked for a list of resources.
  - Susan committed to sending out a list to attendees.
  - DeAnn provided the resource [www.stopviolenceeveryday.org](http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org) as a place to access stories about restorative and transformative justice. She also offered the work of Mimi Kim as another resource.



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Martina also mentioned Mia Mingus as another resource – she worked in the Bay Area with people exposed to childhood sexual abuse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please turn in your meeting evaluations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris thanked everyone for attending and asked everyone to turn in their meeting evaluations.</li> <li>• Adjourned at 10am.</li> <li>• Next Commission meeting: Thursday July 18th, 8:30-10am at Brigid Collins Family Support Center</li> </ul>



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

### DV Commission Meeting

Thursday July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 8:30-10am

Brigid Collins Family Service Center

**Members Attending:** Chris Kobdich, Beth Boyd, Katie Olvera, Peter Ruffatto, Kevin Hester, Kevin Turner, Ken Levinson, Jon Mutchler, Michael Parker, Katrice Rodriguez, Rocky Vernola, Michele Zlotek, Mike Riber, Chris Roselli, Regina Delahunt, Byron Mannering, Alan Artman, Bruce Van Glubt, Mary Welch, Garrett Sheltsa

**Members Absent:** Riannon Bardsley, Karen Burke, David Doll, Bill Elfo, Starck Follis, Darlene Peterson, Linda Quinn, Dave Reynolds, Eric Richey, Sharon Rutherford

**Guests Present:** Erik Sigmar, Amber Icaay-Creelman, Andria Fountain, Danette Beckley

**Staff Present:** Elizabeth Montoya, Susan Marks, Jessyca Murphy

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of tribal lands</li> <li>• Content and self-care</li> <li>• Reminder: Complete your meeting evaluations</li> <li>• Introductions with question: What is one thing you do in your free time to relax and recover from work?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Kobdich welcomed everyone and acknowledged that we are meeting today on the ancestral territory of the Coast Salish people.</li> <li>• She asked everyone to introduce themselves and say one thing they do to relax and recover from work in their free time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MOTION: Consent agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes from May 23, 2019</li> </ul>	<p><b>MOTION: Consent agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris introduced the consent agenda and asked for a motion to approve the minutes from May 23, 2019.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Peter Ruffatto motioned.</li> <li>○ Garret Shelta seconded.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Overview of Commission learning &amp; member roles</b></p>	<p><b>Overview of Commission learning &amp; member roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beth Boyd provided an overview of the role of Commission members:</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ She began with an inspirational quote from Maya Angelou.</li> <li>○ She discussed how each member has a powerful voice and are here for the positions they hold. Members may be from different organizations, but they each have something to say.</li> <li>○ She encouraged participation at meetings. She stressed that if members have something to share, but don't want to say it in front of the whole group, they can bring their thoughts to her, Susan Marks, or Chris Kobdich.</li> <li>○ She discussed how the most powerful piece of being a Commission member is being able to take the lessons back to our co-workers and communities. She encouraged everyone to look at domestic and sexual violence through the lens of how it impacts our neighbors, workplace, and the people we serve.</li> <li>○ She noted that everyone is making a significant commitment by coming to bi-monthly meetings. She asked everyone to reflect on their level of investment. She thanked everyone for their time and for continuing to attend Commission meetings like this one.</li> <li>● Beth introduced today's presenter, Dr. Katie Olvera.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Understanding Trauma: Recognizing Impact, Confronting Myths, and Applying Trauma-Informed Practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What happens during trauma?</li> <li>● What is the potential impact of trauma?</li> <li>● How do myths about interpersonal violence impact people?</li> <li>● How can I apply this knowledge?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Understanding Trauma: Recognizing Impact, Confronting Myths, and Applying Trauma-Informed Practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Katie discussed how she would be talking about the effects of trauma, something she is passionate about. She discussed how her presentation will cover:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The impact of trauma on the individual and the community</li> <li>○ How we talk about domestic violence and sexual assault</li> <li>○ How myths effect our conversations about sexual and domestic violence</li> </ul> </li> <li>● She discussed how the purpose of her presentation is to provide applications for real life situations. She noted how diverse this group is. She stated that it is everyone's job to fill in how this information applies to their prospective positions.</li> </ul>



- She introduced that she is a licensed psychologist with a private practice where she works with people who have a history of trauma, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and childhood sexual abuse. She noted that trauma can be long lasting and complex. She explained that she is also a professor in the psychology department at Western Washington University (WWU).
- Katie gave an overview of the content of her presentation, which will detail:
  - What happens during trauma?
    - A brief overview of the neurobiology of trauma.
  - The longer impact of trauma
    - She noted that many people in the room may be working with individuals that are activated because of their trauma – this portion will cover how to reframe our actions to provide more support.
  - How do myths about interpersonal violence impact people with or without trauma?
    - This portion will cover how to respond to disclosures, specific guidance on how to be supportive, and things to avoid when talking to survivors.
  - How to apply this knowledge professionally and personally?
    - She discussed how this is a time in our culture when there has been a lot of media coverage around sexual assault, and many people may be triggered by these conversations, so it is important for us to talk about these things sensitively.
    - She noted that the last portion of this presentation will help participants move forward through reflection.
- *The Physiology of Trauma:*
  - Katie explained that the stress response is universal. We’ve all experienced it and been triggered when our bodies sense danger, either real or perceived.
  - Many people refer to it is the “fight or flight response.” It is adaptive and survival-based because the purpose is to keep us alive.



- Sometimes it is very helpful, like when our foot brakes to avoid a car accident before we are even aware. It is unhelpful when we are in no real danger, for example when public speaking.
- The stress response is the same one that gets triggered when someone experiences trauma. We can't always fight or fly away – in fact, data shows this is rare, especially for sexual assault survivors. More often we freeze up (this is called tonic immobility) where our bodies go slack and we play dead, waiting for the threat to pass.
- Our inability to respond by fighting or fleeing leads to the long-term impacts of trauma. Whenever a person is reminded of the experience, it can trigger a stress response and the body acts as if it is in danger, even though there is no danger present.
- Stress is highly connected to our brain. It starts in the limbic system – in times of stress, this part of the brain is highly activated. The limbic system is sensitive to danger and threat. At the same time, the prefrontal cortex goes down (she noted that much of this research comes from Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk and his book, *The Body Keeps the Score*).
- The limbic system is the emotional part of brain – it is highly emotional in many ways, not just when we are scared. When we feel like our survival is threatened, the limbic system becomes very activated.
- Our thalamus is bringing in stimulus to our amygdala, which is the sensory relay station. The amygdala is like a smoke detector, when it gets a sense of danger, it sounds the alarm and our stress response is triggered. The amygdala sends information to our hypothalamus and the flight or fight response happens.
- This all happens very quickly and unconsciously. It is impervious to logic and language. We can apply logic later, but the limbic system does not respond well to logic.
- The hippocampus packs up memory to be stored, but it is very sensitive to stress hormones. In times of trauma, memory can be fragmented because the hippocampus is





not working properly. There will be gaps or we will only remember certain senses, like smell or a certain song that was playing in the background.

- When the prefrontal cortex starts to go offline we have a lack of activation in that region of the brain. Blood is flowing towards the limbic system. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for higher level functions – it gives us our personality and thoughts about ourselves and others. It is also responsible for judgment. Sometimes survivors make decisions that don't make sense to us – this is because the prefrontal cortex is offline. When we understand this, it makes total sense that someone wouldn't make decisions that we might believe are beneficial to them.
- The prefrontal cortex also puts memories in order. When a survivor is interviewed, the story can easily become jumbled and non-linear. This can seem like a credibility issue, like they are making it up, but it is a biological response.
- Additionally, this part of our brain doesn't fully develop until we are in our early to mid-twenties. That's why our decisions at 18 are usually not all that wise, in retrospect – our brains are not fully developed. We need to acknowledge this when working with kids and teens – we are asking them to make big decisions, but that is not fair because they cannot rely on this part of their brain.
- During trauma, memory can be compromised because survival is prioritized. We remember central (vs. peripheral) details. The central details help us survive the threat. Peripheral details are anything that doesn't help the person survive. Survivors don't get to pick or chose what they remember.
- Consolidation of memory is compromised by stress, which causes memory to fragment and become disorganized. In a therapeutic setting, we try to help survivors organize their memory.
- In her research, Dr. Judith Herman talks about how our responses lose utility, but they persist in altered and exaggerated states long after the initial trauma has



occurred. Trauma is like no other experience, so the brain doesn't know what to do with the information or how to store it. This is what leads to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

- *Long-Term Impact of Trauma:*

- After the traumatic event and the prolonging alarm reaction, trauma is stored in the body. It is as if we have sunglasses on that make us see everything as a threat. We are always looking for a threat because we are trying to keep ourselves safe – we may call this “hypersensitivity.”
- When there is trauma, our window of tolerance gets smaller. Some survivors may experience hyperarousal where they feel a sense of panic or intense anxiety. We can also see *hypo*-arousal in survivors – where they shut down. For survivors of longer complex trauma, the window of tolerance gets smaller and smaller. We can see quick irritability or checking out. What happens is we're left with footprints of trauma on our brains – the body is also impacted. Many misunderstood behaviors include checking out, being flaky, being hard to get to know, and having overreactions such as anger issues, forgetfulness, or being self-destructive.

- *Reflection exercise:*

- Katie asked members to apply a trauma-informed lens by talking to someone nearby and discuss three behaviors. Then, talk about how these can be described in a more trauma-informed way.
- Members talked amongst themselves and then Katie asked for individuals to share their thoughts.
  - Beth Boyd discussed how she works at the Cancer Center. There was a patient who had gynecological cancer and part of her radiation treatment was site specific. During treatment she was aloof with her radiation therapist. The patient was eventually able to share with her nurses that her treatment triggered memories of being sexually abused. She had never dealt with this, but sharing about the



experience helped her begin her healing process. Medical staff were judging her mood and affect, but it was all due to the trauma she experienced.

- Alan Artman discussed how he came from an uninformed position. He reflected on how being “too opinionated” seemed obvious, but he had never considered how being “too passive” could be the result of trauma. Katie discussed how we can think of someone as too opinionated when they are trying to assert boundaries, but there is also something called “learned helplessness” where repeated traumas over time can change the way we start to respond to ourselves and others. A survivor may feel like they are not able to assert their needs, that it’s not worth it to set boundaries or to advocate for themselves.
- Raquel Vernola asked if it is common for survivors to see others as victims and overstep boundaries by telling them what they need to do. Katie responded that this could happen and is likely a way that the survivor is trying to heal.
- Chris Roselli discussed knowing someone whose spouse passed away. They seemed unable to complete basic tasks that they used to be able to do. Their co-workers have to be knowing and understanding. Katie discussed how knowing someone has gone through trauma can be helpful, although people should not be required to share what they have gone through. There is nothing wrong with them, but their pre-frontal cortex has gone off-line.
- Andria Fountain reflected on how confusion around central and peripheral details can make it challenging to construct timelines. This can come across as memory issues.

- *Application:*

- Katie discussed ways to respond when someone discloses:



- Empathy – some folks will get tied up in needing to fix everything, but all the survivor really needs is validation
- “I believe you” – it is worth acknowledging this because there are so many negative cultural messages about survivors
- “You are not alone” – you do not need to take on their trauma for them, but you can walk along with them on their journey
- “You didn’t do anything to cause this”
- “I’m sure it took a lot to share this”
- “I’m here for you” – we get a lot of cultural messages that say survivors should just get over it
- It is important for you (the listener) to take care of yourself (there may be topics or subjects that trigger you – you have the right to set your own boundaries and seek support when needed)
- Things to avoid when someone discloses:
  - Interrogating – if someone is sharing their experience with you, it is not your job to figure out exactly what happened. (She noted that for some people in the room it is their job, but outside of that context, interrogating is not necessary.)
  - Telling them what to do – it is unhelpful to tell them to report or go to hospital. Instead ask questions, like “what do you need?”
  - Asking “why didn’t you tell me sooner?” – lots of young people who tell their parents hear this. It’s good to remember that it’s not about you.
  - Asking “are you sure it wasn’t a misunderstanding?” – the survivor may not have the language to define assault in those terms, but it is unhelpful to imply that it was a misunderstanding.
  - Saying “they’d never do that” – many people say this when the perpetrator is a mutual friend.
  - Don’t minimize – but there is value in saying “you’re going to get through this” with genuine empathy.



That is different than saying “you’ll be fine” or “this is no big deal.”

- Katie discussed how some members are in roles where disclosures happen all the time and some are not, but this is still important information to know.
- She discussed how survivors often feel burdened navigating systems – this is something we know because our community performed an audit where we asked survivors about what it’s like to navigate our systems. It can be overwhelming to access law enforcement and advocacy services. It is best practice to be empathetic and balance empowerment with support. We can open doors and make it easier for survivors. More active support looks like offering to make a call with them or walking down to an office together. You can offer to follow up with law enforcement for them – having one less thing on their plate is really helpful for survivors.
- She asked everyone to reflect on what this might look like for them and to think about what it is they can offer survivors.
- *Conversations beyond disclosures:*
  - Katie described how this portion of the presentation will address times when we’re discussing what’s happening in the media. She discussed how we live in a rape culture that gives certain messages to children and adults about gender, sex, and consent. Some of those messages include “survivors are at fault or lying,” or “rape only happens to bad people.”
  - We can talk about these things sensitively and accurately. We can undo all those myths that we were raised with. Violence thrives in silence and misunderstanding.
  - Dr. Herman talks about “perpetrators’ lines of defense” and how they perfectly line up with rape culture. Perpetrators ask us:
    - To do nothing (which is easier for some folks)
    - And to take the path of least resistance
  - Perpetrators use two methods to keep survivors silent:



- Making threats and telling them, “it didn’t happen like that.”
- If the survivor starts talking, they try to discredit them, by saying “you’re crazy, nobody is going to believe you.”
- Katie discussed how these are the same messages we hear in society.
- She asked members to list out common myths about survivors:
  - Michele Zoltek discussed the myth that victims did something to promote or ask for it.
  - Jon Mutchler discussed the myth that if it happened, they would have reported right away.
  - Ken Levison discussed the myth that it only happens between strangers.
  - Chris Roselli discussed the myth that it is only male perpetrators to female survivors.
  - Chris Kobdish discussed the myth that survivors make it up to gain something.
  - Elizabeth Montoya discussed the myth that a victim is going to scream and fight to get away.
  - Erik Sigmar discussed the myth that there would be injury or physical trauma associated with sexual assault.
  - Susan Marks discussed the myth that survivors are lying to get out of trouble, like getting caught cheating on a partner or out past curfew.
- Katie agreed that all of these were common myths and unpacked them further:
  - “Stranger rape” – the myth that we could spot a rapist from a mile away. Rape is often perpetrated by someone the survivor knows, a friend, family member, acquaintance, or mentor. It is often someone we would think of as trustworthy. There are also grooming behaviors that result in sexual assault.



- “They were asking for it” – the idea that survivors did something to provoke their assault or that they implied they were up for sex. Consent is ongoing and can be revoked. Someone can make out with another person and go into a bedroom, but they still have the right to revoke consent at any time.
  - Raquel discussed some situations with international students where cultural differences have come up. Katie noted that these myths exist in our culture, too, but consent needs to be enthusiastic and active.
- “Their memory should be intact” – as previously discussed, we should expect survivors’ memories to be fragmented.
- “False reporting” – the myth that survivors have something to gain by reporting. False reporting is very rare. Statistics show that about 2-7% of reports are false, which is the same rate as for other crimes. There is nothing to gain from reporting sexual assault – in fact, many survivors say the reporting process itself is more traumatizing than the assault.
- “It’s easy to leave” – this is a myth about domestic violence. There are lots of reasons people stay. In cases of child abuse, there are lots of reasons the survivor would feel protective of their parent/abuser. Trauma bonding keeps people emotionally entangled – it can feel very scary to leave. There are also financial and child custody issues that keep people in abusive relationships.
- “It only happens to girls and women” – all genders experience abuse and all genders perpetrate abuse. Some groups experience abuse and assault at higher rates – women and non-binary folks, for example.
- “There are good and bad victims” – we see a “good victim” as someone who can tell their story in a cohesive way. Things still don’t move forward for survivors who have met that criteria. We see a “bad



victim” as someone who is less engaged, yet this is partially because of what happens in the brains of survivors. Survivors who are homeless, mentally ill, or have substance dependence are often labelled as “bad victims” and/or seen as less credible.

- “Justice aligns with the legal system” or “they should have reported it” – justice looks different for everyone. Even people who get the best conclusion in the legal system (conviction), report that it didn’t feel like justice because it was retraumatizing and did not provide healing. In the audit process, survivors were asked to describe what justice looked like for them – justice was always aligned with healing.
- *Supporting Survivors through Conversation:*
  - Katie discussed how to support survivors in conversations with other people. For example, when discussing a high-profile case in the news.
  - Things you can say in support of survivors:
    - “I believe them.”
    - “It’s not their fault.”
    - “It can be empowering for people to share their stories.”
    - “This shouldn’t happen to anyone.”
  - Katie noted that our culture has a long way to go, but we can start changing the conversation as members of the Commission.
- *Reflection and Action:*
  - Katie asked members to take a moment of reflection and critically think about how to apply this knowledge personally and professionally. She asked that everyone share with someone next to them, and then with the group at large.
  - Mike Parker discussed how as a social worker, he often thinks about how he might interact with one person/client, but it’s also important to think about how we act in community conversations. He





# COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

emphasized that sometimes we need to put boundaries on things, state our values, and correct a myth when engaged in community discourse.

- Regina Delahunt discussed how we don't always know who the survivors are, so it's important to always be supportive. We need to realize people have complicated lives and be more tolerant of people who might act in ways that are not optimal for you – it may be trauma causing that.
- Michele Zlotek discussed how it is good to have concrete things to say when someone does come forward.
- Peter Ruffatto discussed how someone in his life recently shared an experience of IPV. He noted that he did some things right, but now wants to go back and follow-up based on what he learned today.
- Chris Roselli expressed that he is excited to share this information with people at WWU.
- Garret Shelsta discussed how he has a group of volunteers that meet with people and often they have difficult conversations. He explained that he trains the leaders in those groups and a lot of this information will be helpful for when people disclose experiences of trauma.
- Alan Artman expressed his appreciation for cues and words to use, noting that he is sometimes afraid to say anything for fear of saying the wrong thing.
- Katie thanked everyone for sharing and attending the presentation today.

### Adjourn

### Adjourn

- Chris thanked everyone for attending and reminded everyone to turn in their meeting evaluations.
- She reminded members that those who still need the Open Government Training should staff after for a video presentation.
  - Susan will provide those certificates.
- Adjourned at 10am.



# COMMISSION

ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence*

- **Next meeting:**

- September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 8:30-10am at Mount Baker Theatre



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

### DV Commission Meeting

September 26, 2019 8:30am-10am

Mount Baker Theatre Encore Room

**Members Attending:** Chris Kobdich, Garret Shelsta, Karen Burke, Sharon Rutherford, Linda Quinn, Ken Levinson, Michelle Zoltek, Chris Roselli, Beth Boyd, Mike Parker, Regina Delahunt, Dave Doll, Riannon Bardsley, Rocky Vernola, Moonwater, Kevin Mede, Katie Plewa-Olvera, John Mutchler, Alan Artman, Dave Reynolds

**Members Absent:** Bill Elfo, Stark Follis, Darlene Peterson, Dave Reynolds, Mike Riber, Eric Richey, Peter Ruffatto, Bruce Van Glubt, Byron Mannering, Mary Welch

**Guests Present:** Tammy Axlund

**Staff Present:** Susan Marks, Liz Stuart, Elizabeth Montoya, Jessyca Murphy

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of Tribal lands</li> <li>• Reminder: Complete your meeting evaluations (review plus and delta meanings)</li> <li>• Note: Glossary of terms in your packets for reference</li> <li>• Introductions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Kobdich welcomed everyone and provided an acknowledgment that this gathering was taking place on Coast Salish lands, the ancestral territory of the Lummi and Nooksack people.</li> <li>• Chris gave reminders about the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All attendees should sign their name on the sign-in sheet;</li> <li>○ Meeting packets include a glossary of commonly used terms;</li> <li>○ Meeting packets also include meeting evaluations – feedback is appreciated.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Chris asked all attendees to introduce themselves.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MOTION: Consent agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes from July 25, 2019</li> </ul>	<p><b>MOTION: Consent agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris introduced the consent agenda and asked for a motion to approve the minutes from May 23, 2019.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Karen Burke motioned.</li> <li>○ Ken Levinson seconded.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## Implicit Bias and Domestic & Sexual Violence

## Implicit Bias and Domestic & Sexual Violence

- Chris Kobdich introduced Chris Roselli who provided an introduction for Judge Raquel Montya-Lewis' presentation.
- Chris introduced himself as the Director of Community Relations at Western Washington University (WWU). His role is to improve WWU's visibility and community access. He currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Commission. He expressed gratitude for Susan and Commission members who have welcomed him with open arms. He explained that he is not an expert or practitioner, nor is he a service provider or victim.
- Chris introduced today's presentation as an opportunity to continue the conversation about implicit bias. He discussed how he likes to revisit topics in order to view them from a different perspective.
- Chris discussed his experiences learning about implicit bias – at first, he felt defensive because he knew he was a nice guy with positive intentions. Then, he went to a website called "Implicit Social Cognition," took a deep breath, and learned about what it was. Because he is a good person, striving to be better, he wanted to be aware of his biases.
- He explained the definition of "implicit bias" – an attitude or stereotype that affects our decisions in an unconscious manner throughout our lifetimes, starting at a very young age. He provided a story about his uncle as an example. His uncle owned a furniture store and did not provide customer service to a young couple because he assumed that they did not have money. When the couple made a large purchase, Chris' uncle said, "I guess you never know."
- He explained that there is a connection between implicit bias and addressing domestic violence and sexual assault. He pointed out that all attendees are working with people with diverse identities. Learning about how implicit bias impacts our reactions can make us provide better services and responses. He encouraged everyone to pay attention to and question the messages they hear in society. He reiterated his uncle's phrase, "you never know."
- He explained how implicit bias impacts the way we talk about victims or perpetrators. He discussed how biases within systems



	<p>create barriers for people – he gave the example of strong language access plans as a way to decrease barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He discussed how everyone is a product of their environment and we must work hard to be better every day. He reminded the group that Judge Raquel Montoya-Lewis spoke at a Commission meeting 18 months ago. He stated that she projects realness and warmth and provides a unique perspective. He discussed her experience as a Whatcom County Superior Court judge, her time working in Lummi and Nooksack Tribal Courts, and her time teaching at WWU. He stated that we are fortunate to have her as a member of the community.</li></ul>
<p><b>Seeing the Unseen: Implicit Bias</b></p>	<p><b>Seeing the Unseen: Implicit Bias</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Judge Raquel Montoya-Lewis thanked Chris for his introduction.</li><li>• She expressed appreciation that members shared their gender pronouns in their introductions. She discussed how this is a societal shift and becoming more commonplace. She explained that she has a trans-identified child and has witnessed an extraordinary shift in his generation. She stated that change often happens when young people show us where our biases are. There has been a conversation in her family about the difficulty of switching pronouns with their child. She noted that this was not the practice 5 years ago, nor did it happen in the Commission meeting she presented at just 18 months ago.</li><li>• She explained that today is an opportunity to go a little bit deeper and talk about what it means to interrogate bias. She encouraged starting with the question, “what is my reaction?” She noted Chris’ statement that he felt defensive when he first heard about implicit bias. She asked attendees to describe that feeling.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Chris Kobdich stated that it feels like someone is telling you that you are “a bad person.”</li><li>○ Mike Parker stated that he has a physical response.</li><li>○ Sharon Rutherford stated that she is reminded of her childhood when she got in trouble but didn’t know what she did wrong.</li></ul></li><li>• Judge Montoya-Lewis agreed and described how it can feel embarrassing or uncomfortable. Because it is unconscious, it is hard</li></ul>



for us to know what our biases are. She discussed how important it is to start conversations about what makes us uncomfortable. It can be hard for us to acknowledge something when it is painful or to sit with that feeling of discomfort. She explained that for most people who are not people of color (POC), gender non-conforming (GNC), or who do not have a disability, this feeling of discomfort is transient (meaning you can choose whether or not to think about it). She stated that over the last several years, the gulf between people who can walk away from this feeling of discomfort and those who cannot has become more apparent.

- She shared a personal experience about going to the mall with her family. Her child was afraid he would be attacked in the “men’s” restroom, but also afraid that he would not be accepted in the “women’s” restroom. She discussed how her child has to negotiate his rights at school while trying to get an education. This is an example of how people who are the subject of bias cannot walk away from it.
- She shared another story about her best friend who is a white man with deep and good intentions. She discussed how there are things he simply doesn’t need to think about. But for her or her family members, these are daily experiences. She encouraged attendees who feel discomfort to consider how it might feel for that to be a daily experience.
- She discussed a recent article about her trainings in the Bellingham Herald. She had several conversations with the reporter about why she does these trainings. He asked if she could give an example of where bias happens. At first, she drew a blank because it is so constant that it can be hard to isolate an example. When he followed up, she had several specific examples that had occurred between the few days since they last spoke. She gave examples of being followed while shopping at Target. When buying a purse at the self-checkout, an employee came over and took all the paper out of the purse as if to accuse her of stealing.
- She explained that her presentation today will include three pieces:
  - Equality vs. equity
  - Culture and race
  - Why bias matters



- She discussed the difference between **equity and equality**, emphasizing that the distinction is important.
  - As a lawyer she was taught about the importance of equality and how the law applies to all of us “equally,” regardless of status. The idea that “justice is blind” is a foundational belief of the court system. She stated that equality is a great goal, but the problem is that equality is presented as the truth, not a goal.
  - She discussed the difference between inclusion and diversity. In order to address differences between groups, we have to recognize that there are differences, in terms of access and opportunity. She stated that the goal should be to remove those differences – this is where the willingness to be uncomfortable becomes critical.
  - She explained that if the goal is to remedy inequities, we have to recognize the part we play in maintaining those inequities. She showed an illustration of kids watching a baseball game in four different depictions. She stated that the last frame is most important, but this image is often circulated without it.
    - In the first frame, the kids are standing on the ground behind a fence – only the tallest child can see the baseball game.
    - In the second frame, each child stands on a box – they have all been given the same box, but smallest child still cannot see.
    - In the third frame, the tallest child has no box, the middle child has one box, and the smallest child has two boxes – now, all children can see.
    - In the fourth frame, the fence is gone, and all of the children can see while standing on the ground.
  - She discussed how in the second frame they have all been provided with the same access, but one doesn’t need it – this is an example of inequity.
  - She discussed how schools often state that they provide the same access to all students in order to serve them “equally.” In the case of her child, he needs specific services to address



a specific issue. She discussed her struggles with encouraging her child's school to comply with federal mandates. Because of her access as a judge, she was able to consult with a friend whose job involved taking legal action against schools on behalf of children with disabilities. Based on that guidance, she was able to connect with the right people and the school acted, but only once the threat of legal action was discussed. She explained that people without the same connections, knowledge, and privilege would not be able to respond this way. She was able to make changes happen for her own child but saw little to no structural change that would benefit other children in similar situations.

- She brought attention again to the last image where the structural obstacle (the fence) has been removed. In this image, the focus is not about addressing individual shortcomings. She stated that if we only address individual problems, we will never address the full problem. She expressed hope that schools are thinking about bigger structural changes behind the scenes.
- She discussed the differences between **culture** and **identity**.
  - She defined race as a construct, but critically meaningful.
  - She discussed how culture is often talked about as if it were the same thing as race. She defined culture as the attitudes, beliefs, traditions, and ways of life of a particular group. It is the shared features of a community. Examples include humor, religion, food, values, gestures, language, social etiquette, and music.
  - She asked attendees to provide examples of what defines the genre "country music." Answers included:
    - Steel guitar
    - Twang
    - Trucks
    - Break-ups
    - Horses
    - Storytelling
    - Sad stories





- Rednecks
  - Cowboys
  - Whiskey
  - Boots
  - Cheating
  - Line dancing
  - Johnny Cash
  - The South
  - Conservative values
  - Guns
  - Confederate flag
  - Revenge
- She added that there's also usually a dog in country songs and was surprised nobody brought that one up. She asked attendees how they know these things are associated with country music. Answers included:
    - Because we are exposed to it through pop culture;
    - Because we learn it growing up;
    - Because our friends listened to country music; and
    - Through the news – when somebody famous wins awards or says something newsworthy.
  - She discussed doing this exercise with students. She will ask them who fits into this category. The answers will often be Garth Brooks or Toby Keith (she noted that it was interesting that nobody said patriotism today). Current examples include Rascal Flats, Florida Georgia Line, or Taylor Swift. Her students often get in arguments about whether or not some of these latter examples count as country music.
  - She played a video of an Indigenous singing group. She asked if attendees could understand any of the words. Some attendees stated they could hear the words "Disneyland" and "Mickey Mouse." She discussed how many people cannot understand the lyrics nor do they find the humor in the song because they do not have a lot of exposure to pow wow music.



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

- She discussed how humor is related to culture and gave the example of her husband, who is not Native, working for the Nooksack Tribe. She warned him that he would have to get used to being teased (which he does not like) because that's part of their culture – and that it wasn't a choice for him.
- She invited attendees to share examples of things that define their own cultures of origin.
  - Chris Kobdich shared that she grew up in Texas. She discussed how she grew up around people who were “loud and crass,” which makes Bellingham seem “very reserved.” She observed that many of her friends tend to be from places other than the Pacific Northwest because she gravitates towards people who are also loud.
  - Riannon shared that her family is defined by their sarcasm.
  - Michelle shared that she grew up in the Midwest where most people eat meat and potatoes.
  - Judge Montoya-Lewis discussed “cultural twitters,” such as Native Twitter and Black Twitter. She described a meme that depicted pictures of food from the Midwest with the caption, “are white people okay?”
  - She told a story about a customer next to her at Fred Meyer in the frozen section who was buying tubs of Cool Whip. The customer looked at her and said, “I ran out of Cool Whip. I have nothing for salad.” At first, Judge Montya-Lewis was confused because she didn't associate Cool Whip with salad, until she realized she was talking about kinds of food (like ambrosia) which are specific to white cultures.
  - She stated that there are many cultural traditions around food. She asked for a raise of hands for how many attendees' families said grace while they were growing up. She shared that the first time she went to a professional meeting where there was no prayer, she was confused and found it jarring.



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

- Chris Roselli shared that his family is Italian, and he kisses his brothers and dad on the lips. He grew up with people noticing and asking about it.
- Garret shared that he is half Filipino and his wife is British. He grew up eating the thighs of chickens and she grew up eating the breasts – he asked her why she would want to eat something that “doesn’t taste like anything.” He also shared that his family points with their lips instead of their hands.
- Judge Montoya-Lewis shared that pointing is also rude in her culture. When she became a judge, she had to adjust to lawyers gesturing. She said that some lawyers have learned not to point in her courtroom. She shared a story about how her husband could not understand her father because he only pointed with his chin.
- Rocky shared that she grew up in California where terms like “dude” and “guys” were considered gender neutral. She stated that she is in a position to be more mindful about that now. She also added that people always know she’s not from here when she calls I-5 “the 5 freeway.”
- Judge Montoya-Lewis discussed how cultural differences in language can impact someone’s basic access to systems. She asked attendees to think about how someone who doesn’t speak English might access their system.
- She discussed how many agencies believe they are accessible, but in reality, they are not. She stated that they often have good intentions but may not think about what access looks like in practice.
- She shared a story about an older white man who complained about the images in her courtroom. He expressed that the artwork depicting people of color made him feel uncomfortable. She stated that it was clear he had not been in many places where he was made to feel uncomfortable. She stated that she is rarely in places where she feels comfortable, except in Indian Country.



- She discussed the concept of classrooms as “safe spaces.” She explained that the term did not make sense to her at first because she never understood the classroom to be a safe place to begin with. She had previously understood education as something important and also dangerous, with serious consequences to your personal identity. She acknowledged that there was merit to both sides of the “safe spaces” argument. She stated that this conversation is very vibrant among people who are experiencing oppression, but people who are not experiencing oppression often do not talk about it.
- She provided a definition for **bias** from the National Equity Project: “the process of associating attitudes and stereotypes without conscious awareness.”
  - She discussed how we all make connections and the way our brains try to make meaning of separate things is often unconscious. She gave the example of the viral image of [the blue and black/white and gold dress](#). She asked how many people saw which version of the dress – the room was split. She stated that some people could see both colors. She stated that this unconscious process is similar to what happens with culture. We associate two things until we run into something that interprets that narrative.
  - She explained that “explicit bias” (as opposed to “implicit bias”) is conscious and clear. She gave the example of when she first took the bench for her own tribe. There was an older man in the courtroom who told her she should not be sitting there. He lectured her about how women should not be judges and she, especially, was too young. He told her that she was a shame on her grandfather. She explained that the men in her community did not think she should be there. She dealt with that by letting them say what they wanted then moving forward with the court proceedings.
  - She discussed how bias is often discussed in terms of the individual, but there is also **institutional bias**. This is where bias is built into the systems we represent. She discussed how when going to school she was initially interested in



studying institutions. She was asking questions like “why do people stop at stoplights?” The answer was often “because they don’t want to get in trouble.” This led her to study the law. She explained that there are all kinds of institutions besides the law, such as medical systems, non-profits, etc. She has become very interested in how individual biases become operationalized.

- She discussed how it wasn’t until seven years ago that there was a woman on the superior court bench – now there are three. She discussed how there is a difference in how lawyers interact with female judges – their tone and language is different. The attorneys explain the law more often to female judges than to male judges.
- She shared a story about a case where a black immigrant man was charged with delivery of a controlled substance. It was a serious charge that could impact every aspect of his life. It could result in a long prison sentence and deportation.
  - A juror on the trial asked if the lawyers would be talking about bias – the jury was all white. Judge Montoya-Lewis stated that as a judge, she has a responsibility to make sure those things are addressed. The defense lawyer was glad that bias was addressed but didn’t take full advantage of the opportunity. He said, in the end “it doesn’t matter.”
  - In this case, the defense was arguing that the stop was unlawful. The officer saw a car on the side of the road with people who were speaking Spanish. He followed them to a workplace and stopped them again. The defense attorney asked why the officer followed them. The officer responded, “they didn’t fit in.” This stop did not stand scrutiny under the law because there are only certain reasons an officer can continue an interaction with a vehicle. She explained that the officer’s beliefs about whether or not a person fits in – his bias – represents an institution.



She stated that she has hundreds of stories like this one.

- She discussed the school to prison pipeline, where kids of color are responded to differently and this results in them being overcharged and having more contact with the police. This has an impact on their equity and life outcomes. She explained that many people want to say, “I can’t fix things people did back in the 1800s.” She encouraged everyone to think less about their personal responsibility for the past and more about the impact their actions have today.
- She shared an image of an Indian boarding school. She explained that children were taken from reservations and placed in these schools against their will. She discussed the [Carlisle Boarding School](#) and encouraged attendees to Google their digitized archives. There is a huge grave site at the school and tribes have spent years trying to repatriate the bodies from unmarked graves. The children died from exposure to disease, as well as being unable to survive the experience of being removed.
  - She shared images of her family, including her great-grandmother, Mary Perry (Pueblo Laguna, Pueblo Isleta), who was taken to Carlisle.
  - She explained that the school took before-and-after-photos of the children and their motto was: “Kill the Indian, Save the Man.” She explained that the clothing in the “before” pictures have a lot of meaning to her, but to Carlisle they were seen as “savage.”
  - She explained that children in the schools were beaten for speaking their tribal languages. Carlisle was a military school, so it taught boys to be soldiers, while girls were taught home economics.
  - She discussed how hair has a great deal of cultural meaning for many Indigenous people. In the “after” photos, the children’s hair had been cut short.
    - She shared a story about how when she was interviewing for the position of Superior Court Judge she was evaluated by lawyers and the bar association. She was told by someone she



considered a champion of liberal causes that she should cut her hair. In her tribe, hair is traditionally worn out and not put back. It felt like a racist comment, but she knew this person would be offended if she told her that. This conversation got in her head and she ended up putting her hair back for the interview but was reminded of what these children had to go through at the boarding schools.

- She added that during her interview, a lawyer from the Whatcom County Bar Association said, “you seem very qualified, but I just don’t see it” (referring to her being a Superior Court Judge). She stated that she almost didn’t apply because she couldn’t “see it” either. None of the pictures of other judges looked like her. She discussed how she looks at these pictures of her family and sees through-lines to her own experiences.
  - She discussed how the history of her family is complicated – her grandparents and parents were big believers in the importance of education and learning English.
  - She explained that her grandfather felt a lot of shame around speaking his Native language, Tewa. When her father was in Catholic school, he was hit with rulers for speaking Tewa. She was taught very limited Tewa. She was taught both about the importance of language transfer and the potential negative consequences of speaking one’s language outside of the Native community.
  - She added that people often tell her that the Native community is “lucky to have her as a representation.” But she stated that she is also representative of a tremendous cultural loss.
- She apologized that her presentation was running over time and offered to stay and answer any questions.
    - Rocky asked for Judge Montoya-Lewis’ thoughts around a practice initiated at Whatcom Community College to



address bias on campus. The protocol is intended for high-level explicit incidents but is being used in situations where implicit bias is at play. She expressed fear that this new practice was creating a hostile, as opposed to a growth-centered, environment.

- Judge Montoya-Lewis responded by sharing a story about being mistaken for her assistant, who is also Native, but looks very different and has short hair. She explained that people are not trying to be mean, but there is a tension there about how to address these biases on an institutional level. She stated that if there is not a context to talk about these things, then nothing will ever change.
- She suggested taking complaints in an anonymous way and having regular conversations about the topics addressed. She suggested having individuals from the outside (who are skilled in facilitation) come and talk to students and staff that are being reported. She encouraged for these issues be address as a community-wide conversation. She stated that people should see they made a mistake and recognize its impact on others.
- She discussed how these interactions often end with “I didn’t know.” When that is the case, the offending party doesn’t learn anything – they don’t get to hear about the other person’s experience.
- She stated that she does not like to explain to people why what they are doing is offensive. She shared a story about a colleague who asked her to tell them if they ever did anything racist. She said that he had handed her the responsibility for his racism, instead of taking ownership of his own growth.
- She stressed the importance of allowing for anonymous reports because there could be negative outcomes for the person who reported.
- Rocky clarified that staff will share with the person the contents of the report over coffee. She thanked Judge





# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

	<p>Montoya-Lewis for her insight and said that she will continue this conversation about bias with her colleagues.</p>
<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please turn in your meeting evaluations</li> <li>• Please note: our next Commission meeting is on Thurs, November 21st (the 3rd Thursday in November)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Kobdich provided Judge Montoya-Lewis with a thank you card and thanked her for presenting today.</li> <li>• She reminded attendees about evaluations and noted that the next Commission meeting will be on third Thursday of November due to the holiday.</li> <li>• Adjourn at 10:05am</li> <li>• <b>Next meeting:</b> November 21<sup>st</sup> at 8:30am</li> </ul>



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

### DV Commission Meeting

Thursday Nov 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 8:30am-10am

Mount Baker Theatre Encore Room

**Members Attending:** Riannon Bardsley, Katie Olvera, Sharon Rutherford, Chris Roselli, Garret Shelsta, Ken Levinson, Mike Riber, Beth Boyd, Katrice Rodriguez, Byron Mannering, Mary Welch, Karen Burke, Peter Ruffatto, Dave Doll, Darlene Peterson, Moonwater, Eric Richey, Chris Kobdich

**Members Absent:** Linda Quinn, Bruce Van Glubt, Dave Reynolds, Regina Delahunt, Bill Elfo, Stark Follis, Mike Parker, Alan Artman, Raquel Vernola

**Guests Present:** Christina Byrne (WWU), Scott Huso (WCSO), Jamila Taylor (Northwest Justice Project)

**Staff Present:** Susan Marks, Elizabeth Montoya, Jessyca Murphy

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of Tribal lands</li> <li>• Reminder: Please complete your meeting evaluations</li> <li>• Note: Glossary of terms in your packets for reference</li> <li>• Introductions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Kobdich welcomed everyone.</li> <li>• Chris acknowledged that this meeting is taking place on tribal lands, the unceded ancestral territory of the Lummi and Nooksack Tribes.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ She noted that Thanksgiving is coming up and that November is National Native American Heritage Month.</li> <li>○ She explained that land acknowledgment is the first step in showing gratitude and respect for the resiliency and resistance of Native peoples. It is an invitation for non-Natives to learn the true history of the land and build alliances and relationships within Native communities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• She reminded everyone about the sign-in sheet, evaluations, and glossary of terms included in the meeting packets.</li> <li>• She asked that everyone go around the room, introduce themselves, their pronouns, and their agencies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MOTION: Consent agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes September 26, 2019</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris introduced the consent agenda and asked for a motion to approve the minutes from Sept 26, 2019.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Karen Burke motioned.</li> <li>○ Sharon Rutherford seconded.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## Updates on DV Commission Projects

- Review of 2019 Commission meetings
- Annual data report
- Sexual assault audit
- Survivor input policy and operational guidelines

## Updates on DV Commission Projects

- Susan explained that today's meeting will be a review of Commission projects from 2019.
- Susan also took a moment to acknowledge the loss of Chief Knapp. She noted the importance of his work both professionally and personally, his intolerance of domestic violence, and his significance as a community partner. She provided the opportunity for attendees to donate to his family's memorial fund.
- Susan discussed how in 2019 the Commission expanded its mission to include sexual assault. In response, the Commission rolled out a new mission statement and interlocal agreement, which clarified the Commission's functions. Those functions are:
  - To collect and disseminate data;
  - Receive input from survivors;
  - Research and promote best practices;
  - Promote healing and accountability;
  - Provide training to providers;
  - Increase dialogue across disciplines; and
  - Advise government bodies and agencies
- In 2019 the Commission added new membership positions:
  - Chris Roselli (WWU) and Rocky Vernola (WCC) representing institutions of higher education; and
  - Katrice Rodriguez (Nooksack) representing tribal government. There is also a position for Lummi tribal government representation, which is currently open.
- Commission staff also updated the logo and website.
- Susan introduced the meeting topics. She discussed how it is important for all Commission members to be aware of all the different projects – the Commission operates as a learning body for best practices.
- Susan highlighted the DV Commission meeting topics of the year:
  - In the first half of the year, the Commission meetings focused on current projects. January: Sexual Assault Audit Report. March: Data Report. May: Restorative Justice Learning Series.



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

- For July and September, the Commission focused on learning together, with presentations on understanding trauma and implicit bias. This learning helps us maintain awareness of current best practices and make decisions to guide the work of the Commission.
- The Commission also worked on creating a meeting culture of learning and engagement. She gave some examples:
  - The Glossary of Terms included in the meeting packets – this list was created in response to feedback on meeting evaluations;
  - Listing meeting goals on each evaluation in order to better assess if we are meeting our goals; and
  - Including simple introductory questions in meetings in order to build a welcoming environment for everyone and to get to know each other better.
- The Commission brought in a consultant to assess accessibility. She gave examples of ways the Commission is working to improve accessibility:
  - Using a microphone for meetings with 15 people or more;
  - Increasing the size of text on documents;
  - Auditing of the website and documents to improve access for people with visual impairments;
  - Thinking about the grade level for written documents;
  - Making event spaces more physical accessible; and
  - Listing specific accommodations for venues and event spaces.
- She noted that meetings are open to the public and we would not want accessibility to be a reason someone could not attend.
- She discussed how the Commission is working on cultural relevancy; examples include:
  - Including gender pronouns in introductions – this is a good way to practice understanding other people’s perspectives and experiences; and



# COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

- Tribal land acknowledgements – this came out of feedback the Commission received during the Audit process. The Commission wanted to learn more about the impact of sexual violence on Native women but did not have strong enough partnerships. Land acknowledgements are a gesture towards acknowledging the history of colonization in our community. They are one way to build partnerships and overcome that history.
- Chris Roselli asked where we send out information about public meetings.
  - Susan answered that staff sends out a press release and the schedule is listed on the Commission’s website.

- Riannon provided an overview of **the annual data report**. She noted that the copies given at the meeting are not yet meant for distribution.
- She discussed how a key strategy of the education committee is to conduct research and share data. This report supports that call to action from the strategic plan.
- She provided a brief history of the Commission’s data reports:
  - The Commission has been collecting data from local agencies since 2002 to feed into an annual benchmark report. This report serves as a snapshot of what’s happening right now, similar to the Homeless Point in Time Count conducted by the Opportunity Council.
  - Some data points have included advocacy services, calls to law enforcement, prosecution rates, protection orders, probation rates, and jail bookings.
  - In 2017, the Commission received a grant from the Department of Justice that funded the DVHRT and LAP programs – it required information to be gathered about how our system is responding to high risk victims who identify as LGBTQ. The Commission spent time looking at that data and taking action to educate ourselves through trainings and conversations. She explained that this was the



beginning of the Education Committee taking a deeper dive into data versus just collecting numbers.

- She discussed how focusing on those who are the most marginalized will make our systems safer, more accessible, and more effective for everyone. The Education Committee has committed to this practice in learning about community responses and making recommendations.
- The last report, which focused on data from 2017, included two spotlight sections: immigration and homelessness. The next report will focus on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit persons (MMIWG2S). This is an area where community partners have asked for more information and clearer local data.
- The next report will also provide updates on the focus areas of the previous report.
- Dave Doll commented that Sumas was the only agency left that needed to switch their interpretation services away from border patrol. Their agency switched over last week; now there are no jurisdictions in Whatcom County using border patrol for language services. Riannon agreed that was a success.
- Riannon presented some key data points from the new report:
  - Petitions for protection orders continue to be lower than years previous. There is still not a clear explanation for why this is the case.
  - Reports of rape went down, but victim services and exams continue to increase. The Commission plans to look into this further.
  - The number of high-risk victims connected to an advocate has also decreased. The purpose of the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) is to connect high-risk survivors with an advocate immediately, so the Commission would also like to look further into this data.
- She discussed how the Education Committee decided to focus on only one spotlight area going forward. This year, they decided to focus on MMIWG2S. She gave highlights from that part of the report:



- The data we do have is not accurate – sources report only 5 cases in Whatcom County since 1900.
- She noted that the data we do have is gut-wrenching:
  - Native women are targeted for sexual and domestic violence at a rate 2.5 times higher than all other racial groups;
  - Two-Spirit women are more likely to be sexually and physically assaulted than heterosexual Native women and white lesbian women;
  - The Urban Indian Health Institute conducted a study in Seattle where they interviewed 148 women living in the city. Of those Native women, 94% had been raped or sexually coerced at some point in their lives;
  - The Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) closely studied 506 cases of MMIWG in the United States:
    - 71 cases were from Washington state;
    - WA state ranked second highest for the most cases just after New Mexico;
    - Seattle was the highest-ranking city with 45 cases; and
  - 86% of recorded rape cases of Native women involve non-Native perpetrators. She added that we need to figure out what’s going on because it is unacceptable.
- She discussed recent WA State legislation on the issue of MMIWG2S. The bill ordered a study to increase reporting and improve law enforcement response.
- Beth thanked Riannon for presenting and asked if the Commission cooperated with WA State tribes for this report.
  - Jessyca responded that local tribal members agreed to be interviewed for the report and there have been discussions about the report with Lummi Victim’s of Crime. There has not been a formal partnership with Tribal leadership regarding this report, but the Commission is working with Nooksack to assist in the development of an DV advocacy



program. There is also tribal representation on the Education Committee.

- Beth also asked about the impact of the Canadian border and the unique immigration status for Tribal members.
  - Jessyca responded that there was not information about that in the current version of the report, but a section could be added. Canada has been doing significant work on this issue as well.
  
- Katie Olvera presented updates on **the implementation efforts of the Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit (SANDA)**.
- She discussed the history of the audit process. She noted that sexual assault is complex issue, so the Audit Team tried to honor that complexity in the way they collected data.
  - The data collection process began in July 2017 and ended in October 2018. The Audit team was tasked with a lot of different things in order to capture what’s going on in community.
  - The Audit Team conducted interviews and focus groups. They interviewed survivors and people within systems. They spoke with law enforcement officers and their supervisors – they spoke to people on all levels. They asked about their efforts, what was going well, and what challenges they were experiencing.
  - The Audit Team also observed court proceedings and looked at other systems such as the hospital and DVSAS.
  - The Audit Team took a lot of time and effort to understand the overarching themes within the data. They looked for what was standing out and what they were consistently hearing from survivors and people working in systems. They heard about many strengths and positive powerful experiences, which was highlighted in the report.
- She discussed how the Commission began a more formal effort to implement the Audit recommendations in January 2019. Before the Audit process was done, agencies were making changes and showing a real commitment to do better. The goal of the formalized process is to fill in the gaps.





- She presented the system-based strengths identified in the Audit report:
  - Commitment to change;
  - Proactive participation;
  - Collaboration and transparency;
  - Commitment to seeking justice for survivors;
  - Honesty about challenges;
  - Commitment to increasing community safety;
  - Prioritizing multi-disciplinary collaboration; and
  - Trauma-informed individuals committed to best practice.
- She discussed how it was hard to be vulnerable, but everyone involved had the same goals. There was evidence of survivors feeling that when interacting with systems.
- She discussed how the Audit process sought to prioritize survivor voices. All of the quotes featured in presentations and the report came from local survivors. She noted that it was wonderful to hear about survivors who had good rapport with law enforcement officers. When survivors have more engaged interactions, they are more likely to stay involved in the tedious process of seeking justice. She remarked on how simple it is to believe the person in front of you and to acknowledge that person has been hurt.
- She discussed some of the gaps identified by the Audit:
  - Delays in processing SA cases;
  - Lack of communication and follow-up – there was a big question mark about what happens after someone reports and not knowing where to go or who to contact to get that information (she noted that it can be challenging if a survivor has had no previous exposure to the criminal justice system);
  - Perceived lack of credibility influencing law enforcement’s response;
  - Bias and myths about SA;
  - The exclusion of investigating the suspect’s credibility;
  - Lack of criminal accountability for offenders – with the result of enabling repeat offenders;
  - Lack of trauma-informed expertise across systems (despite the presence of some individuals with expertise);



- Lack of training and understanding of sexual assault dynamics; and
  - Lack of expertise for effectively engaging survivors.
- She shared quotes from survivors and discussed actions being taken by members of the Audit Team:
  - The Commission has:
    - Hosted a training for prosecutors;
    - Implemented a new survivor input policy;
    - Provided more opportunities for learning;
    - Highlighted MMIWG2S in recent data report;
    - Deepened relationships with Tribal partners; and
    - Begun work to find sustainable funding for the Lummi Victims of Crime conference.
  - DVSAS has:
    - Allocated funding for a Sexual Assault Criminal Legal Advocate; and
    - Developed a new protocol for following up after forensic exams – they are making sure survivors receive a follow-up call;
  - PeaceHealth has:
    - Addressed gaps in coverage; and
    - Pursued funding for a forensic nursing department.
  - BPD and WCSO have received trauma-informed training.
    - Dave commented that they received good feedback on the training.
  - The prosecutor’s office has also received trauma-informed training.
- She discussed continued efforts and challenges in the Audit implementation process. The systems involved are:
  - Making changes to policy – instead of relying on one person, working towards long-term and sustainable policies; and
  - Clarifying misunderstandings about the Audit report – some folks feel called out and they are working to maintain deep engagement.
- She stressed that it can be difficult to meet the needs of survivors, but until we meet the needs of those on the margins, we cannot do what is safe for all survivors.



- Susan introduced Sharon who presented on **the Commission’s new survivor input policy**.
- Sharon discussed how at meetings there has been more talk about equity, inclusion, diversity, and accessibility. The Commission does a good job at brining multiple strong voices to the table and representing different parts of the community. She stressed that the Commission has committed to elevating marginalized voices.
- She acknowledged that policy discussion can be dry, but policies are what drives the work forward.
- She explained that the current policy references one that was developed in 2004.
- She gave a few minutes for attendees to read through the guidelines, then asked for questions:
  - Peter stated that the second, third, and fourth bullet points could be worded with more clarity. He suggested making the statements more broad.
- Sharon discussed how survivor input has the opportunity to inform the Commission’s work.
  - Moonwater commented that Sharon’s statement is reflected in the first sentence of the policy – the Commission centers survivor voices in order to do our work better.
- Sharon asked for a motion based on the knowledge that some language may be edited for clarity and brevity.
  - Peter motioned and Chris seconded.
- Sharon shared the operational guidelines for receiving survivor input. She asked attendees to fill out the question sheet provided in the meeting packet and turn it in with their evaluations. She noted that each person represents a different entity in the community and encouraged them to think about how they might be able to broaden their reach to the marginalized people who engage with their systems.
- Sharon gave attendees time to look over the guidelines and then asked for feedback.
  - Dave asked at what point in the process survivors should be encouraged to give input.



# COMMISSION

## ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sharon discussed how the hospital has solicited surveys by putting posters in bathrooms, allowing patients to interact on their own timeline. She noted that people have been very willing to have their voice heard in order to improve outcomes for others. She added that it's important to recognize and honor their voices.</li> <li>● Susan introduced Christina Byrne, who will be working with the Commission to analyze data. She is on the board at DVSAS and works at WWU. She is on a research sabbatical and will be working with the community looking at sexual assault and domestic violence.</li> <li>● Christina introduced herself and explained that her research over the next year will take a community-based participatory approach. The goal is to share her expertise and skills in way that supports the work the community is already doing. This partnership will bring a more academic lens to the existing projects.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adjourn</b></p>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chris reminded everyone to turn in their meeting evaluations and wished everyone happy holidays.</li> <li>● Meeting adjourned at 10am</li> <li>● <b>Next Meeting:</b> Thursday January 23, 2020 at 8:30am-10am (location TBD)</li> </ul>