



COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence

Commission Meeting

Thursday, January 26, 2023

9:00 – 10:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

Members Attending: Greg Baker (Bellingham Public Schools), Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center), Christina Byrne (Western Washington University), Greg Hansen (City of Ferndale), Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW), Erika Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health & Community Services), Ken Levinson (Nooksack Tribe), Alan Marriner (City of Bellingham), Jason McGill (Northwest Youth Services), Diane Miltenberger (Department of Social & Health Services), Jessyca Murphy (Make.Shift Art Space), Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling), Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court), Adrienne Renz (Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services), Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor’s Office), Chris Roselli (Western Washington University), Garret Shelsta (Stuff You Can Use), Donnell Tanksley (Blaine Police Department), Annie Taylor (Department of Children, Youth & Families), Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court and Probation), Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College)

Members Absent: Bill Elfo (WCSO), Stark Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender), Rebecca Mertzig (Bellingham Police Department), Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center), Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court), Krista Touros (PeaceHealth), Pamela Wheeler (Opportunity Council)

Guests Present: Andria Fountain (Bellingham Police Department), Rodger Funk (WCSO), Amber Icaay-Creelman (DVSAS), Kelly Frost (Clarity Mental Health & Recovery), Jake Weibusch (Whatcom County District Court Probation)

Staff Present: Susan Marks, Nikki D’Onofrio, Brooke Eolande

Purpose of Meeting

- Increase understanding of timely and controversial topic of reproductive justice and how it relates to our work together on prevention and interventions for domestic and sexual violence
- Identify how our agencies/disciplines we can support autonomy for survivors and their children within our own missions

Agenda Item	Discussion
Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Please keep video screens turned on, turn off email notifications and other 	Katie Olvera opened the meeting at 9:02 am.



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<p>screens, and monotask for the hour-long meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductions in chat: name, title/agency, gender pronouns 	
<p>Acknowledgement of Tribal lands</p>	<p>Garret Shelsta introduced himself and acknowledged the commemoration of the Point of Elliott Treaty, signed January 22, 1855. The Land Acknowledgement is not just something to say, it is something that we really think about. Garret shared that he has been reading <i>Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview</i> and asked us to consider how we can create justice and equity for our community. Garret read our Acknowledgment of Tribal Lands as developed by the Lhaq'temish Foundation.</p>
<p>MOTION: Consent agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minutes: November 17, 2022 Commission meeting ▪ 2023 DV Commission operating budget 	<p>Katie asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 2022 meeting. Chris Roselli moved to approve the minutes. Chief Tanksley seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.</p> <p>Katie asked for a motion to approve the 2023 operating budget. Darlene Peterson moved to approve. Rocky Vernola seconded. The operating budget was approved unanimously.</p> <p>Susan Marks gave a couple of updates. We have set the meeting schedule for the year, which will be a mix of virtual and in-person meetings. We will have some one-hour virtual meetings, some meetings will be extended to 1.5 hours virtually to dive deeper, and some meetings will be in person. March Meeting will be 8:30-10 Virtual—Restorative Justice Project update. The May meeting (annual meeting) has always been an extended meeting. This year it will be 2 hours, in person. July will be a virtual one hour meeting, September 1.5 hours in-person, November back to virtual. This schedule will give us opportunities to dive deep, see each other in person, and also offer a balance in schedules.</p> <p>We have set first case review in April. Some Commission members will be on that team. We'll look at an intimate partner homicide case.</p> <p>The Restorative Justice Work Group finished survivor interviews and we're finishing analysis. This will be our topic at the March meeting—what do survivors think about using Restorative Justice to address those harms?</p>



Reproductive Justice

- Definition & connection to movement to end domestic and sexual violence
- Discussion: What is one thing your agency or discipline does or could implement to support survivors related to the 3rd principle of reproductive justice in our work: “right to parent in safe, healthy environments”

Susan introduced today’s topic. We’ve put a lot of thought into this meeting. Reproductive justice can be a controversial issue but also one that has received intense national attention, and it feels important for us to touch base on it related to our work to increase safety, justice, and autonomy for survivors of DV and SA. Reproductive Justice isn’t receiving a lot of attention, though some aspects of it are—access to abortion and birth control.

In this meeting, we’ll define reproductive justice and discuss why is it important. There are 3 principles of reproductive justice and we’re going to focus on the right to parent in a safe and healthy environment, free from violence.

Susan shared a brief slideshow:

Reproductive justice is three principles that say that all people have the right to:

- not have children
- have children
- parent in safe, healthy environments

Why this topic is so important:

Abusers use reproductive coercion frequently as a part of DV; can coerce/force survivors into having children and can coerce/force survivors into not being able to have children.

Homicide is leading cause of death for people who are pregnant or have given birth within a year.

Highest risk are adolescent girls, as well as Black and Indigenous women and girls.

Sexual assault and coercion are often part of intimate partner violence, and can also be perpetrated by friends, acquaintances, and stranger.

Some of these aspects don’t play into our jobs, but we all have this principle as part of our work: supporting the right to parent in a safe, healthy environment (which includes an environment free from domestic violence).



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Susan gave the group a couple of minutes to think about this question: “What is one thing your agency or discipline does, could implement, or would like to explore to support survivors related to the right to parent in a safe, healthy environment?”

Susan invited each participant to share out and asked that when something stood out, to make a note and reach out to that member to follow up, as would have happened naturally in person.

Alan Marriner (City of Bellingham): Our office prosecutes misdemeanors DV and enforces DV no contact orders.

Adrienne Renz (DVSAS): Our agency does 24 hour call line, safety planning and explores cycle of abuse; we go into the schools to do prevention work; rural mobile advocate; safe shelter for singles and families; parenting classes “Parenting After Violence” and support groups for survivors of DV; recently able to have Morning After Pill available; something we could do: many people may not make connection between SA/DV, reproductive coercion – we make it clear that people can call for support around reproductive coercion.

Amber Icaj-Creelman (DVSAS): We also have condoms in our bathrooms that are accessible at all times we’re open; we provide childcare during groups so that’s not a barrier to access groups.

Andria Fountain (BPD): Hopefully our officers can recognize when they respond, what kind of dynamics are happening in the home, focus on safety and dealing with any crimes, trying to make sure that the survivors on the scene are aware of what resources there are, and putting them in touch with available resources.

Annie Taylor(DCYF): Complex topic for our agency; most clients are non-voluntary; intervene in situations where DV is impacting family’s ability to parent in a safe environment; pair families (survivors and kids) with appropriate services—and offenders to treatment services; it’s an area where we can grow.

Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth): It is a complex issue, it’s a complex statement in terms of what’s the depth and breadth, what’s the scope; There are SANE nurses in the emergency department; how much follow up is done after



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that, that's an unknown for me. Reproductive justice are new words/terms for me. What does that really mean? What are all the pieces of that? Somebody would look through it and say "we provide this and not that." I work in the cancer center. [DV & SA] is something the infusion nurses will pick up on, and they'll call myself or another social worker in. It impacts men, too. It's a continuum, we build on trust. They're primarily there to deal with cancer, but to look at their whole life.

Brooke Eolande (S/DV Commission MSW Practicum Student & DVSAS jail advocate): A couple things I wish we were able to provide—resources for people going through the family law system and folks going through CPS; we don't have resources to provide as much support in those areas as we used to.

Chris Kobdish (Unity Care NW): We provide primary care and behavioral health services; providers are trained to identify needs, including abuse and sex trafficking, and minors in a bad situation. We're mandatory reporters; provide access to contraception, counseling, case management that refer to partnering agencies if it's beyond our scope. I'd like us to be able to provide same-day LARC (long-acting reversible contraception). It's difficult to be appropriately staffed. We desperately need counseling improvement.

Chris Roselli (WWU): 15,000 students, most of whom are traditionally-aged college students; not a lot of students have children; do have childcare and student have priority, but the waitlist is long; A lot of our outreach on campus is about resources available to students; Are those services available for faculty and staff as well? I'm going to look into that.

Christina Byrne (WWU Professor in Psychology Dept): Only childcare at WWU for staff is same as for students; when we talk about this issue it instantly becomes politically polarizing, what I like about this piece of it [focus on right to parent in safe, healthy environment], is it's a way to talk about reproductive justice with less polarization. I look forward to thinking about how to bring that into the classroom. Getting students to think about reproductive justice more broadly.

Darlene Peterson (City of Bellingham): Thinking about our DV court, I appreciate that we have a victim advocate and victims have opportunity to



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be heard before sentencing and they have opportunity to be heard when they want a NCO lifted.

Diane Miltenberger (DSHS): We have a 30 hour a week family support specialist; issue support services to clients getting safe, stable housing, other services; individual responsibility plans—activities to become healthy; parenting after violence groups, Darkness to Light, and New Beginnings group here in the office.

Tank (Blaine PD): I don't think we would do anything differently other than ensure our training is up-to-date, warning signs of abuse, why people are in those situations and how to help people to get out; officers know about cultural context of abuse, how DV looks.

Erica Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health & Community Services): A lot of money to put out into community for prevention and intervention programs. We call everyone who is newly diagnosed with STD or reportable condition—opportunity for public health nurses to understand what circumstances are around that; might be first time talking about abusive situation or SA; Support needle exchange--partner with Planned Parenthood to connect injection drug users with LARC (long-acting reversible contraception), injection drug users are especially vulnerable to SA; Nurse-family partnerships, opportunities to support healthy relationships; money from child fund opportunities.

Garret Shelsta (Stuff You Can Use): We do serve adolescents, including parents who are adolescents. We need to train and offer resources from our faith tradition that will help church leaders support parents because they might see that children are in an unhealthy environment.

Greg Baker (Bellingham Public Schools): Education—direct instruction of kids, teaching them what it means to live in a family of a safe and healthy environment; we partner with community partners who know more about these issues; convener for parents and kids and bring those partners who know more.

Greg Hansen (City of Ferndale): This is a really big topic, especially for a city. Making sure police department are well trained and able to recognize subtle cues in the moment and be able to direct people to resources in the moment. The City of Ferndale arranges that the North County DV Advocate



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has an office to work in, Caryl Dunavan serves the other cities, too, but we take the lead on that. We're making sure we're speaking with local, state representatives, we're bringing up topic of DV; good law in place and funding to make sure services are available.

Jake Wiebusch (Whatcom County District Court Probation): Our primary work is with perpetrator/defendant, getting them connected to treatment in community and provide programming in our office. We're involved with DV court for Bellingham and Family Justice Calendar with Judge Anderson in District Court; ensure resources are relevant and up-to-date.

Jason McGill (NW Youth Services): Drop-in services, healing circles; Skagit County primarily serve single moms, work with local entities there to provide resources; for Staff we've done Lunch-and-Learns and we were talking about inviting someone to talk about reproductive justice and survivor education.

Jessyca Murphy (Make.Shift Art Space): Our mission is to serve all ages. We've recently expanded educational opportunities and that's where we see families come through, workshops and open art studio; space where kids can experiment, get creative, experience joy—makes a difference in their healing; We have a drum set, which can help kids get their emotions out.

Katie Olvera (Psychologist in Private Practice): Empower clients to make their own choices in their healing journey; Also teach at WWU, including a course on "Child Rearing"—a lot is about establishing safe and secure relationships.

Kelly Frost (Director at Clarity Mental Health): Adding DVIT, hope to break that cycle of violence and make it safe at home, before it continues into the next generation.

Ken Levinson (Child Support at Nooksack Tribe): Part of what we do is establishing paternity; there are cases where we cannot establish paternity if there's DV or SA, but we could do a better job of asking about that because right now it's just a checkbox on a form; In child welfare there's this tension—there are safety issues for children when they are exposed to violence, we're tasked with keeping children safe. How do we keep children safe and also support survivors who want to parent their children



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	<p>and deserve the right to parent their children and are involved in a complex cycle of domestic violence? Supporting families, keeping children safe, and not punishing survivors by potentially removing children?</p> <p>Rocky Vernola (WCC): This is an area we haven't focused on in education because we roll it into Title IX. We do have early childhood ed programming and criminal justice programming. I want to bring back to my institution—do we address this in those curriculum pieces and if not, how do we infuse that? I've realized there's a lot of work we can do at WCC, not just focused on students and student-issues, but also the broader community. The child tax – maybe this Commission could have a voice in how that's used—safe housing, for example.</p> <p>Rodger Funk (WCSO): Complex and polarizing topic. As law enforcement we need to go into every situation completely neutral. We can show empathy and focus on what happened and not lay blame. We can connect people with those resources.</p> <p>Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor): Our office does some advice on the Prop 5 group on how to distribute the money. My office does not support parents, we usually prosecute parents who are inflicting harm on children. We make sure they have their rights and are provided every opportunity to have a defense. But I see myself as supporting victims. Our victims are usually children.</p> <p>Susann noted that this was an opportunity to learn a lot about each other's missions and services, and also how we can support survivors who are parents, and then invited participants to reach out to one another to learn more and/or to develop partnerships.</p>
Adjourn	Katie thanked everyone for participating. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.



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Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence

Thursday, March 23, 2023

8:30 – 10:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

Members Attending: Greg Baker (Bellingham Public Schools), Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center), Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW), Ken Levinson (Nooksack Tribe), Jason McGill (Northwest Youth Services), Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center), Jessyca Murphy (Make.Shift Art Space), Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling), Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court), Adrienne Renz (Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services), Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor’s Office), Chris Roselli (Western Washington University), Donnell Tanksley (Blaine Police Department), Krista Touros (PeaceHealth), Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College)

Members Absent: Christina Byrne (Western Washington University), Bill Elfo (WCSO), Stark Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender), Greg Hansen (City of Ferndale), Erika Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health & Community Services), Alan Marriner (City of Bellingham), Diane Miltenberger (Department of Social & Health Services), Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court), Garret Shelsta (Stuff You Can Use), Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court and Probation), Pamela Wheeler (Opportunity Council)

Guests Present: Amber Icaay-Creelman (DVSAS), Andria Fountain (Bellingham Police Department) Jake Weibusch (District Court Probation), Jana Finkbonner (Northwest Intertribal Vocational Rehab), Heather Flaherty (Chuckanut Health Foundation)

Staff Present: Susan Marks, Nikki D’Onofrio

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Please keep video screens turned on, turn off email notifications and other screens, and monotask for the hour-long meeting ▪ Introductions in chat: name, title/agency, gender pronouns, question: name a community you’re a part of 	<p>Katie opened the meeting at 8:32am, asked people to stay engaged in the meeting, and asked everyone to introduce themselves in the chat with the prompt: what is a community that you are a part of.</p>



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<p><u>Acknowledgement of Tribal lands</u></p>	<p>Jason McGill noted that Heather Jefferson from the Lummi Tribe was a key part of a recent Northwest Youth Services event, and reflected on his participation in an event with the LIBC, and how they highlighted that they will always stand for the rights of the Lummi people, and also support this community. Jason led a land acknowledgment of the traditional homelands of the Lummi and Nooksack people.</p>
<p>MOTION: Consent agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minutes: January 26, 2023 Commission meeting 	<p>Chris Roselli made a motion to approve the January 26, 2023 minutes and Rocky Vernola seconded. The motion carried.</p>
<p>Survivor input on restorative justice project</p>	<p>Nikki D’Onofrio shared that this is the third meeting we’ve had on restorative justice over the past year, and that we started this work in 2019 with our learning series on restorative justice.</p> <p>We have a work group that is meeting monthly to convene people to think about responding to survivors in a whole new way in this community. Even if people think they may never interact with restorative justice, there is definitely something in this report and the feedback from survivors for everyone to learn. We learned both about what is helpful and what is harmful. We received feedback that is rich, complex, and important in how we respond to survivors.</p> <p>Nikki shared that we recruited survivors through social media, website, word of mouth, and sharing through networks. We promoted and did interviews in English and Spanish. We did 36 interviews and 7 survey responses.</p> <p>Jessyca Murphy, Executive Director of Make.Shift Art Project, talked about how interviews were done with survivors. She shared that we started interviews by talking about the purpose of the interviews, then prepared them to take care of themselves if they felt triggered by talking about their abuse, often referred people to DVSAS for services, and let people know throughout that they could stop or asked permission to move on to the next question (practicing active consent). Interviews highlighted how survivors are individuals with individual needs and responses, which we know but need to be reminded of. We received varied experiences and perspectives and ways of participating. Everyone seemed happy to have the chance to give their input into a project, “nothing about us without us.” Many of the survivors had no interest in speaking with their abuser</p>



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again, but wished in some form that someone else had talked to their abuser to hold them accountable, or to represent their interests as the survivor – these responses spoke to the variety of restorative justice processes that we should have available.

Moonwater, Executive Director of the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center, shared about the thematic analysis process to describe how we made sense of 108 pages of data and individual stories in order to identify themes to inform the next stages of this process. We had multiple perspectives participating in this process to serve as checks and balances to be able to identify and agree on themes. In groups of 3-4 people, we went through each question one by one, familiarizing ourselves individually to identify potential themes and then talking together to come to agreed upon overarching themes for each question. We color-coded those themes to find supporting data, and then reconvened to make sure we had the right themes with the data supporting each theme. This process mindfully captured commonalities among disparate experiences and stories.

The report on survivor feedback was reviewed. The report can be found on the dv commission website at www.dvcommission.org/reports under new and noteworthy.

Nikki shared the identities of survivors who gave input, and page 25 of the report has a detailed list of who gave feedback. We asked survivors an open-ended question about their identities, and this is the feedback they gave. Similarly, we asked an open-ended question about communities. Over a quarter of respondents said they had no community. The responses can be found on page 28 of the report.

Nikki and Susan proceeded to review the 12 themes and recommendations related to restorative justice, which are on pages 6-15 of the report.

Susan noted that on page 5, the report names large societal issues that impact survivors, and pages 15-20 talk about additional recurring themes that crossed questions and categories.

Jason noted that though it wasn't surprising, it's so important to highlight the need for resources and the pathways out of poverty that are needed for survivors after they experience domestic violence and sexual assault.



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He also noted the resource needed for direct financial assistance for victims to get cash so they can access the resources they need. Susan noted that the topic of economic justice would be important for our commission to explore in the future.

Jessyca said it was surprising the amount of people who found that the mental health care they accessed was not helpful. Not all therapists are alike, and we also need to make sure that the mental health care that is accessed by abusers don't enable and perpetuate the abuse.

Chris Roselli noted two things that he hadn't thought of before. One was related to survivors noting that abusers can feel pleasure by understanding the amount of harm that they have caused. The other is the need to get past the idea that restorative justice is only getting two people in a room to talk about it, and that there are multiple ways to explore for a survivor with what works best for them. Moonwater underscored the shift from restorative justice as a program to restorative justice as a philosophy – it is a way of thinking, doing, and being, not a prescribed program. And we need common language to talk about how we could operationalize it into the formality of a program. Understanding the philosophy will help us be able to apply the philosophy in more creative ways.

Katie shared that after working with survivors, sometimes the stories stop surprising us, but also it's always interesting how data closely aligns with the individual and personal stories she hears. It can be empowering to have collective stories align with individual stories. It's exciting to see the parallel to how listening to survivors started getting resources for the movement to end domestic violence, and we can now these new themes as a part of a new movement in our community.

Ken said he was wondering about how to balance the need for agency and autonomy for survivors and viewing them as the experts of their journey towards healing, while also presenting different paths that they could choose – the need to offer options without making decision for people.

Beth noted that the impression of how many entities of services and resources that still don't have the understanding of what someone goes through who have been abused. A lot of times a person may have different intentions, but what they say and the power of their words can hurt a



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person, and the survivor carries that with them. There is still so much that people don't understand or make assumptions about, even in 2023.

Darlene said that she saw in the report that saying you're sorry isn't helpful, and thinking about what is better than saying "I'm sorry." Susan noted that it can be I'm sorry with something else, like a change in behavior or an action. Moonwater noted that an authentic apology and engaging in dialogue and taking responsibility can be incredibly meaningful and transformative; an apology that doesn't feel authentic or is dismissive or surface-level, that wasn't meeting survivors needs.

Amber said that people respond in the ways they know best to respond, and that can potentially be harmful, so making sure the community knows how to respond and what to say for survivors is needed. Sometimes "Thank you for sharing that with me" is a powerful statement. She also noted that the system you represent or the person you are in their life can have in impact. And of course, it's always individualist.

Rocky wondered about if for some survivors, the interviews could be triggering, did we do additional follow up with them. Nikki said that we did connect people with services if they needed, and also asked them if they wanted follow up.

Rocky also noticed that community members might not know that it doesn't have to be a recent incident for them to reach out for help. Nikki said that there are barriers to whether or not people think they can seek help.

Jana said that she knew we were hoping this would be a positive experience for the survivor, but what if we get into it and the survivor decides they don't want to move forward. What would we do then?

Krista shared in the chat that she was surprised how there was more focus on victim healing and less on abuser change. She also noted that it is alarming how there was a lack of support from workplaces.

Nikki shared that at our May DV Commission last year, Moonwater asked, "if our justice system worked, how would we know?" and that Commission members and guests at that meeting shared many of the same things that survivors shared with us – survivors be centered, survivors would be



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	<p>believed, offenders would be connected with resources and change their behavior, services would be accessible for all, healing would be centered instead of punishment, survivors would feel safe and treated with dignity, and service providers would feel support and able to heal from vicarious trauma.</p> <p>Nikki also shared what we talked about in our July DV Commission meeting last year, noting that these concerns had been shared: the offender won't want to participate, offenders could use RJ process as way to further control survivor; worry that it will erode victim's rights—access to services, might focus more on offender than survivor. Nikki expressed hope that these concerns had been addressed in the recommendations based on survivor input.</p> <p>Next steps is that we will use these findings for us to use this report and input to guide our work on restorative justice. We can also put together a presentation on restorative justice or specifically for your group on the feedback we received.</p> <p>Jessyca shared a flyer and talked about a Scene Safety series that she is doing in Sexual Assault Awareness Month, about putting on events (professional or DIY events). It is a 3-part series – one on building accountability in your life by Amanda Hodgins (social worker and DVIT provider with Lummi Behavioral Health), one on supporting survivors for family and friends (by Jessyca, DVSAS, and WWU peer support), and finally a custom workshop on de-escalation (provided by the WDRC). The cost is \$25 for the series or \$10 per workshop, with a sliding fee scale.</p>
Adjourn	Katie reminded everyone that our Annual Meeting is on Thursday, May 25 th at the Mt. Baker Theatre Encore Room from 9-11am, and it will be in person.

Commented [SM1]: Can you fill in this from your notes?



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Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence

Annual Meeting

Thursday, May 25, 2023

9:00 – 11:00 am

Mt. Baker Theatre Encore Room

Members Attending: Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center), Christina Byrne (Western Washington University), Starck Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender), Greg Hansen (City of Ferndale), Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW), Erika Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health & Community Services), Ken Levinson (Nooksack Tribe), Jason McGill (Northwest Youth Services), Diane Miltenberger (Department of Social & Health Services), Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center), Jessyca Murphy (Make.Shift Art Space), Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling), Adrienne Renz (Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services), Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor’s Office), Garret Shelsta (Stuff You Can Use), Donnell Tanksley (Blaine Police Department), Krista Touros (PeaceHealth), Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College)

Members Absent: Greg Baker (Bellingham Public Schools), Bill Elfo (WCSO), Alan Marriner (City of Bellingham), Rebecca Mertzig (Bellingham Police Department), Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court), Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court), Chris Roselli (Western Washington University), Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court and Probation), Pamela Wheeler (Opportunity Council)

Guests Present: Annie Aslan (Northwest Justice Project), Sheryl Cartwright (City of Bellingham Prosecutor’s Office), Brock Crawford (Bellingham Police Department), Deidre Evans (WWU Survivor Advocate), Jana Finkbonner (North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program), Rodger Funk (WCSO), Kaylee Galloway (Whatcom County Council), Doug Hyldahl (Nooksack Tribal Court), Amber Icaey-Creelman (DVSAS), Susie Johnson (PeaceHealth), Raylene King (Blaine Municipal Court), Rachel Kriskey (RK Advising), Kevin Lee (Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence), Terry Lewis (Lynden Municipal Court), Jenn Lockwood (Brigid Collins), Satpal Sidhu (Whatcom County Executive), Annie Taylor (A. Taylor Consulting), Maialisa Vanyo (Whatcom County Public Defender’s Office), Jake Weibusch (District Court Probation)

Staff Present: Susan Marks, Nikki D’Onofrio, Brooke Eolande

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introductions: name, gender pronouns, title/agency, and question: where are you going for your next vacation 	<p>Katie Olvera, current Chair of the S/DV Commission, opened the meeting at 9:04 am. She welcomed members and guests and shared logistical info (parking, restrooms, snacks, coffee).</p> <p>Attendees introduced themselves.</p>



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<p><u>Acknowledgement of Tribal lands</u></p>	<p>Donnell Tanksley read an Acknowledgement of Tribal Lands</p>
<p>MOTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes: March 23, 2023 Commission meeting • Slate of Officers 	<p>Katie asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Satphal Sidhu moved to approve the minutes. Rocky Vernola seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.</p> <p>Katie asked for a motion to approve the slate of officers. Adrienne Renz moved to approve. Moonwater seconded. The slate of officers was approved unanimously.</p>
<p>About the Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence</p>	<p>Director Susan Marks thanked Jason for bringing to her attention today is 3rd anniversary of murder of George Floyd, and reflected on how procedural justice could have prevented this murder.</p> <p>Susan shared a little about the history of the S/DV Commission. It was formed in 1998 jointly by the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County. Task forces and committees focused on collaboration for survivor services identified need for change at the level of systems and institutions and not just at the level of individual survivors. The Mayor and County Executive understood this as well as the need for leaders of our community response to be directly involved in understanding the needs of survivors and identifying and implementing changes to meet those needs. We have made a lot of change due to our community’s commitment and willingness to come together, and we are not done. The S/DV Commission’s goals are to: Connect institutions, stakeholders, and communities to collectively increase understanding of sexual and domestic violence, especially the impacts and effectiveness of community responses for survivors and their children; Transform systems to ensure prevention and interventions for sexual and domestic violence that support justice and healing; and Foster safety, justice, and well-being for survivors and communities.</p> <p>Susan described S/DV Commission membership: certain jobs are always on S/DV Commission and there are some roles that can be appointed. Members are leaders in our community, committed to gathering, learning, and taking action to have a community that is eventually free from sexual and domestic violence. Susan referred attendees to the full roster in our meeting packets.</p>



Institutional analysis activity and reflection

Katie led us in a discussion of procedural justice, a topic central to our mission. Katie shared a story as an example with her experience buying a vacuum. In small groups, we reflected on our own experiences with an institutional process where there was a significant gap between what the institution offered and what we needed. We considered: How did you act in the face of this gap? How did the worker/practitioner act? How did the institution make you the problem? How did your identity influence the creation of the gap?

Katie reflected that telling her story of buying a vacuum is pretty easy, not activating, yet these examples can be parallel to a survivor's experience navigating systems.

Attendees were invited to share their observations:

Rocky Vernola shared that as patients in healthcare and dealing with insurance we understand the frustrations intimately.

Chris Kobdich observed that as a group we're pretty tenacious, but for a lot of people, they don't have the time, they don't know how to navigate the systems, it's so complicated that some people walk away. Katie added that in navigating systems, not everyone has time or energy.

Tank shared that it seems like over the last 3 years customer service has declined, especially for corporate box stores. Katie agreed--we're kind of a stressed nation.

Jenn Lockwood noted that as we're embracing technology and things become automated, there are barriers to common sense and the people in system don't understand the technology themselves.

Rachel Krinsky said that the customer service representatives really wanted to solve a different problem than the problem I was actually having. He couldn't hear me. That's not an unusual experience for our clients.

Annie Taylor shared that the question of how the institution made you the problem struck us. They're putting the issue back on the person who is bringing up the issue. It feels like a protective mechanism that systems have.



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	<p>Jessyca Murphy said that we discussed student loans and saw comparisons between interfacing systems. We hear messaging to “just work in education or non-profits for 10 years and your loans will be cancelled” but the reality is that everything you do is being questioned. There are parallels to “consent is simple” and all these technicalities you have to deal with.</p> <p>Nikki D’Onofrio noted that when we’re dealing with systems it’s personal for us and it’s impersonal for systems and system actors.</p>
<p>What is procedural justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Definition and importance of procedural justice ● Example: domestic violence specialist for small cities ● Example: full faith and credit in DVPOs ● Example: follow up after sexual assault exams 	<p>Susan summarized the themes we heard: the need for strong customer service responses, people needing to understand their own system and other systems, needing to listen to people and understand, navigating complex systems, blaming survivors (self-blame), survivors are questioning themselves and others are questioning them.</p> <p>Susan defined procedural justice—it sounds dry, but it’s actually interesting—it is the core of what we want to achieve as a Commission and what each of our individual professionals and agencies are striving for—details that can make an experience with systems either add to and increase harm after a survivor’s experience of violence, or details that offer support and promote healing.</p> <p>People’s perceptions of encounters with systems depend less on the outcome and more on whether they felt treated in “procedurally just” way. For example, there might be survivor who wants perpetrator to go to prison. They might get that, but if the survivor is treated poorly it won’t be a good experience.</p> <p>There are 4 central features of procedural justice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dignity and respect ● Given voice ● Neutral and transparent decision-maker ● Trustworthy motives conveyed by decision-maker <p>We know that the first response a survivor receives upon disclosing has a huge impact on how they continue to process and heal from their experience. A negative, blaming, minimizing, confusing, invalidating response compounds harm. Because so many survivors may first report to</p>



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one of our agencies, it's key that we do not add to their harm, and that we provide them with an experience that feels just, regardless of outcome.

It's important to note and celebrate successes, of which our community has many. Here are three examples:

Mayor Greg Hansen: Nearly 15 years ago the 5 small cities in Whatcom County (Ferndale, Lynden, Blaine, Sumas & Everson), through the DV Commission, came together to hire a DV Advocate, originally funded by Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. That advocate, Caryl Dunavan, helps survivors through the criminal case in these cities' municipal courts. This advocate is a vital position and is an essential service to our communities. The advocate works with police and courts to ensure victims receive help they need. Ferndale is proud to be the city that manages the advocate role (collects funds from other cities, pays the advocate, provides office space, etc.).

Ken Levinson: It's so fun when we find a gap and we do something about it. Protection Orders (POs) protect one person from another: this person cannot contact someone else. It has to meet specific criteria. There are some problems with protecting people with a piece of paper—these might be inherent, or procedural if the PO is not recognized by other jurisdictions. If that piece of paper is not recognized off the reservation that is a problem. To be effective, POs must be recognized by other jurisdictions—that is "full faith and credit." Getting a PO is not an easy task. It takes courage, going in front of a judge, going to court and telling your story. That takes energy. That takes courage. In Whatcom County we had this problem where people were getting orders in tribal jurisdictions and they weren't being recognized elsewhere. We found it was not an individual's fault, it was a systemic problem. Officers need to know "is that order valid?" The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a federal law that tells us that POs don't mean anything if they're not recognized everywhere. The system we had in Whatcom County was to get a PO in tribal court, then drive to Superior Court and present it at the clerk's office and it would be accepted into the state system, given a state case number and placed into the state system. That *sounds* simple. It's not simple when you don't have a license, don't have the resources to drive from Nooksack or Lummi reservations. It's not simple when you have concerns about



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	<p>being in a courthouse. After you’ve already had the courage to get a PO. We brought everyone together—officers, tribes, court reps. There was tension. Everyone is trying to do what they can to help. We realized the clerks could send POs electronically, so victims didn’t have to bring it themselves. In one meeting we were able to get an agreement that POs would be immediately sent electronically. Now orders are being recognized throughout the county.</p> <p>Amber Icaay-Creelman, DVSAS: In 2017 Bellingham Police Department had been working on a sex-trafficking case at a foot spa. They’d been investigating for a year and when they were ready to intervene, they contacted DVSAS to bring together advocates to be on scene for the trafficking victims. An FBI agent helping with the case shared that in all her time they’d never seen a community come together to support victims like ours had. She noted that here you can tell there is a respect and understanding that roles are different are but that each plays a crucial role.</p> <p>Amber described the ways that DVSAS has implemented recommendations from the 2019 SANDA Report (“The Audit”). Now, survivors can connect with DVSAS virtually; advocates provide follow-up after SA exams, including safety planning, help with reporting to law enforcement, and connecting with services and support groups; DVSAS hired 2 on-call after-hours medical and helpline staff members; finally, DVSAS set protocols connecting survivors with culturally-specific needs with partner agencies, including a warm handoff because DVSAS has those relationship with other agencies.</p> <p>The Audit was a huge undertaking. Survivors’ voices were captured in a way that gives us insider knowledge and feedback. The report provides a roadmap of systems so we can better understand other roles and help survivors navigate these systems. We hope that we never become complacent. We can uplift survivor voices, be open to learning more, and change practices and protocols. The Audit gives us valuable information. When we know better we can do better, and be better for survivors.</p>
<p>Implementation of procedural justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small and large group discussions to identify 	<p>What step can your agency or institution take to increase survivors’ sense of procedural justice by the end of this calendar year? Attendees reviewed</p>



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and commit to an area for achieving procedural justice within your own agency/system

the ideas from “Systems change Ideas for Procedural Justice” handout and wrote their own ideas, using others at their tables as sounding-boards.

Attendees were invited to share their idea from each of the following categories:

Warm Hand-off: Moonwater shared her goal to coordinate with staff what our warm-hand-off procedures are, attend to the procedures, and ensure new staff are connected to ongoing relationships, reasons why these procedures are in place.

Protocol for showing belief and validation: Garret Shelsta shared that he works predominantly writing curriculum for faith communities nationwide. He’s thinking about how we can make a toolkit, building on the faith community toolkit published by the S/DV Commission, nationwide.

Develop process for providing direct financial assistance: Deidre Evans shared that WWU has a big donor day every year. Deidre is going to have a conversation with her director, the Office of Student Life, and the Title IX office to think about creating a survivor fund. Susan added that economic justice IS prevention. Survivors know what they need.

Develop employee policies and procedures: Adrienne Renz shared her goal of reviewing DVSAS’s policy manual to ensure they’re following best practices. Part of the strategic plan is to ensure that a staff member who needs support related to DV/SA has that available. Adrienne will also propose to the non-profit boards she serves on that they review their policies related to employees experiencing DV & SA. Susan added that the S/DV Commission also has [sample policies/procedures for employers](#) and Futures without Violence also has a [National Resource Center](#) for workplaces to respond to DV & SA.

Review agency procedures and processes to identify choice points to increase autonomy and agency: Chris Kodbish shared that UnityCare NW provides primary care behavioral health, whatever the issue might be behavioral health providers can be there. Chris will find out what the process is. Is there a warm-handoff with victim advocates/DVSAS? Do we need to formalize a relationship with other agencies? Chris wants to know what that is and lift that up.



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	<p>Review agency procedures and processes to identify points of contact with survivors: Rocky Vernola shared that it's heavy on her how we're providing services in higher education. How do we improve that experience? How to we share what to expect if you're a complainant? A friend? This information needs to be multi-lingual and available online.</p> <p>Other Idea: Jason McGill wondered how to create a culture at NWYS that does all this other stuff so that when there is turnover you have the right system in place to ensure procedural justice. Procedural justice is all about relationships. You can't have those positive interactions if you don't have the right personalities. It's all called healing-centered engagement. Jason offered to connect with Diedre about the direct cash to survivors. There's a lot of research on this as economic justice.</p> <p>Eric Richey shared that there's a culture of continuances in Whatcom County trials. Everything has been delayed. One solution is to put reasons on the continuance order—it is more information for the judge before they make a decision on whether or not to continue a case.</p> <p>Terry Lewis (Lynden Municipal Court Judge) added that setting trial dates helps to avoid a delay. Most of the time, to resolve the case, you don't need a trial, but you do need a trial date. It gets people together to make decisions. The other thing is to deal with repeat offenders. A relatively small number of offenders commit a lot of offenses.</p> <p>Susan shared that one thing we're doing as the Commission is case reviews. We can learn as much as we can about an individual scenario to learn what we're doing well (and keep doing that) and where there are gaps. We'll do 2 more this year. We'll identify strengths and recommendations. It's a multi-disciplinary process.</p>
Adjourn	<p>Ken Levinson, the S/DV Commission's new vice chair expressed appreciation to everyone for being here and actively engaging. It was such a pleasure to be together in person.</p> <p>Attendees completed evaluations and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:40 am.</p>



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Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence

Thursday, July 27, 2023

9:00 – 10:00 am

via zoom

Members Attending: Greg Baker (Bellingham Public Schools), Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center), Christina Byrne (Western Washington University), Greg Hansen (City of Ferndale), Diane Miltenberger (Department of Social & Health Services), Jessyca Murphy (Make.Shift Art Space), Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling), Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court), Chris Roselli (Western Washington University), Garret Shelsta (Stuff You Can Use), Donnell Tanksley (Blaine Police Department), Krista Touros (PeaceHealth), Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College)

Members Absent: Bill Elfo (WCSO), Starck Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender), Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW), Erika Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health & Community Services), Ken Levinson (Nooksack Tribe), Alan Marriner (City of Bellingham), Jason McGill (Northwest Youth Services), Rebecca Mertzig (Bellingham Police Department), Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center), Adrienne Renz (Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services), Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court), Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor’s Office), Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court and Probation), Pamela Wheeler (Opportunity Council)

Guests Present: Deidre Evans (WWU Survivor Advocacy), Andria Fountain (Bellingham Police Department), Rodger Funk (Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office), Amber Ica-Creelman (Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services), Rachel Krinsky (RK Advising), Annie Taylor (Annie Taylor Consulting), Rosemarie Tom (Lummi Victims of Crime), Asa Washines (Washington State Office of the Attorney General)

Staff Present: Susan Marks, Nikki D’Onofrio

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Welcome Commission members and guests ▪ Introductions: name, gender pronouns, title/agency, and what places are your ancestors from 	<p>Chris Roselli opened the meeting at 9:02 am. Chris introduced himself as the new chair of the S/DV Commission and thanked Katie for her leadership and teamwork. Chris shared our land acknowledgement. Attendees introduced themselves in the chat.</p>
<p>CONSENT AGENDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minutes: May 25, 2023 Commission meeting 	<p>Chris invited a motion to approve the minutes from the May 2023 S/DV Commission meeting. Greg Hanson moved to approve the minutes. Rocky Vernola seconded that motion.</p>



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<p>Framing of next few meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ July: revisiting past work – Sexual Assault Audit & MMIWG2S Spotlight Report ▪ September: AG’s Task Force work with Representative Debra Lekanoff, Annie Forsman-Adams, and Asa Washines ▪ November: prioritization of action steps 	<p>Chris introduced the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S) topic that we’ll cover for this meeting and the following two meetings. One of the activities on the 2022-2024 Work Plan is to “Collaborate with the Washington State Attorney General’s Task Force and the Lummi and Nooksack Tribes to identify and implement recommendations for safety and justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit People.”</p> <p>Over the next several months, we will be learning together about the scope of the problem as well as recommendations and solutions, and prioritizing work within our community institutions to achieve change for safety, justice, and well-being. This can be a challenging topic, which has touched some of our commission members personally, and which requires us to grapple with the historical and present impacts of colonization. Chris encouraged everyone to lean into these conversations, give each other grace when we make missteps with how we talk about something, and correct each other kindly and clearly so that we can avoid such missteps in the future.</p> <p>At our next meeting we’ll be joined by 40th District Representative Debra Lekanoff, and Annie Forsman-Adams and Asa Washines of the Washington State Office of the Attorney General. We will review recommendations and prioritize what we can commit to locally.</p>
<p>The Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women - YouTube</p>	<p>Together we watched the Children of the Setting Sun short film <i>Song for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women</i>.</p>
<p>Sexual Assault Audit findings</p>	<p>Dr. Katie Olvera introduced the Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit. The audit was a specific process team members were trained on to answer a question: How is the Bellingham-Whatcom County criminal legal system organized to meet the justice needs of sexual assault survivors?</p> <p>Katie and Melissa Lacki went to Minnesota to train on that process.</p> <p>Lots of folks on interdisciplinary team—advocacy, higher education, the hospital, and several members of the Commission served on the Audit team. They collected data in an organized way, completing 120 activities: reviewing case reports, conducting interviews and focus groups with survivors, case files, and other observations. They identified themes in our</p>



community. What were we doing well? What were we struggling with? The report makes recommendations for local agencies.

You can see we had a diverse group of perspectives. We came together to uncover the themes and decide how we were going to work on them.

Today's topic relates to the second theme of the report: "Implicit bias and oppression lead to inequitable outcomes in the ways our community institutions serve and partner with marginalized communities, particularly Native communities."

Implicit bias leads us to make assumptions about individuals based on what we believe to be true about their gender, race, or other identity. Decades of research show that no one is immune to implicit bias. We all do it. We're all holding some kind of implicit bias.

Why focus on Native women, girls, and Two-Spirit people? Native women experience violence more frequently. The majority of SA against Native women is committed by non-Native men. Seattle has the highest number of MMIWG in the nation. We cannot ignore Native people when looking at sexual violence and how our community can do better. Originally, we'd focused audit question on Native people.

We acknowledge that it's hard to have your colleagues questioning you. First, I'm going to call out the Commission. While we'd initially intended to focus on Native survivors, we learned that we had not forged the partnerships or trust needed, including working with LVOC and NW Indian College to the degree needed. Even planning the meeting schedule, we failed to include them in initial planning. We failed to designate funds or consider the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) process. Historically non-Native researchers have exploited Native subjects., so the IRB process is lengthy to ensure that doesn't happen.

What we learned:

Implicit bias was clearly present in interviews with professionals in our community. Some shared things like "cultural differences and the 'flat affect' of Native people could be challenging for a jury," "Native courts are 'too focused on healing the community' and services for the offender, and 'they often lose support for the survivor,'" "It is important for Native



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people to ‘get off the reservation,’ get an education, be ‘assimilated,’ and ‘talk like us.’” “Native people ‘see racism everywhere’” even when it’s not really there.” Additionally, a Native woman shared that when she was in the hospital giving birth, a nurse approached her and her husband and said, “It’s so nice to see one of you with an intact relationship.” You can imagine how implicit bias impacts our community and our response.

We also learned that Native survivors often do not feel safe at St. Joseph’s Medical Center because of other negative experiences at the hospital. While hospital protocol states that LVOC should be called for all Native survivors, it is not clear how hospital staff determines whether or not the survivor is Native. In some cases, advocates from only DVSA are called; in other cases, advocates from both agencies are called which is awkward for survivors and a duplication of effort from advocates.

We learned that for law enforcement, there are limitations to protocols, creating barriers for accountability. There are local online message boards that “coach” offenders on how easy it is to rape Native women on reservations and get away with it by taking advantage of the limits on Tribal jurisdiction.

Generally, we’re not meeting the needs of our local Native communities. Native youth reported that they did not disclose sexual assault at school and/or were uncomfortable disclosing because prevention education and advocacy provided at the school are not provided by Native advocacy programs or individuals. In stakeholder interviews, multiple Native women stated that, “every Native woman I know has been sexually assaulted.”

Take-aways for the S/DV Commission: local Native communities are targeted for SA and our systems have many barriers to accessing safety and justice. We have little documentation regarding the unique voices of these survivors locally – and insufficient partnerships to seek and understand their voices.

We do have what we need to know this is a problem. This is a gap that must be explored further and it’s time for our Commission to engage in this important work.

MMIWG2S Spotlight Report

Susan introduced Jessyca Murphy, former S/DV Commission staff member, current S/DV Commission member and ED at Make.Shift Art Space. While



Jessyca worked at the Commission they created a Spotlight Report on Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, & Two-Spirit Persons (MMIWG2S).

Jessyca began by acknowledging that when we talk about the land we reside on, the borders we currently recognize (US/Canada border), were not in place prior to colonization. Borders are arbitrary to how Native communities were moving about. These borders now have an impact on MMIWG2S.

Part of the reason why it's important to focus on this issue is that Native people are a significant part of our community. In 2018 3.4% of Whatcom's population identified as American Indian or Alaska Native. Indigenous people make up around 2% of the national population.

Two-Spirit is an umbrella term that "encompasses a broad range of sexual and gender identities of [Indigenous] peoples across North America. While some use the term to refer specifically to the cultural roles of individuals who embody both female and male spirits, Two-Spirit is also used to describe [Indigenous] people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). Importantly [Indigenous] LGBTQ people name their identities using diverse terminology, including terms in Indigenous languages as well as terms that are prevalent among LGBTQ communities. Two-thirds of the 200 Indigenous languages spoken in North America are said to have contained terms to describe individuals who are neither men nor women." [from "An Introduction to the Health of Two-Spirit People by Sarah Hunt, PhD]

We know that numbers are underreported, but murder is 3rd leading cause of death for Native women. Native women are the second highest population to experience murder, after Black women.

While there's not a lot of explicit data on violence against Two-Spirit people, the data we do have shows that rates of experiencing violence are high in general, data we have on LGBTQ folks. For example, half of all trans people report experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime and half of all trans people also report experiencing domestic/dating violence in their lifetime.



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That tells us that violence is likely highly escalated for Two-Spirit people.

Data shows it is not an issue so much within the community, it is violence coming from outside the community. Interracial violence is more prevalent than intraracial violence. 86% of reported rape cases against Native women were from non-Native perpetrators. This is not just implicit bias, but explicit bias causing violence against Native people.

Violence against Native people is rooted in the history of colonization and rooted in history of our country's systemic violence against Native individuals. This fact "offers strong support for the sovereign right of federally recognized tribes to criminally prosecute non-Indian perpetrators. Until recently, federally recognized tribes did not have this authority, even for crimes committed on tribal lands."

In recent years, hate crimes have gone up significantly. The FBI and the DOJ found that hate crimes had risen and found high rates of human and sex trafficking of American Indian and Alaska Natives.

Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) interviewed 105 Native women who had experienced sex trafficking. 62% saw a connection between sex trafficking and colonization, explaining that "the devaluation of women in [sex trafficking] was identical to the colonizing devaluation of Native people." 69% had family members who had attended boarding schools. Boarding schools forcibly relocated children into boarding schools across the US and Canada until 1973. Children were frequently sexually abused as well as "physically assaulted for practicing their spiritual beliefs or speaking their traditional language."

All of these studies we reference were created in tribal communities, led by indigenous women who had taken this issue and up and determined to create awareness and action against this horrendous problem. This work is still being actively done.

There are several recommendations within this [Spotlight Report](#) and some did come to fruition: communication between law enforcement and Tribal Police, and some of the legislation did in fact pass. There is still much work to be done, but it's great to go back and see the things that did actually happen.



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<p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chatstorm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What was new or surprising information shared by Katie or Jessyca, or what was a good reminder of information you knew? ○ What questions do you still have, that we could answer in the upcoming meetings on this topic? 	<p>Participants shared what surprised them and their questions in the chat.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Chris adjourned the meeting at 10:00 am.</p>



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Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence

Thursday, September 28, 2023

8:30 – 10:00 am

Mt. Baker Theatre Encore Room

Members Attending: Greg Baker (Bellingham Public Schools), Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center), Christina Byrne (Western Washington University), Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW), Erika Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health & Community Services), Ken Levinson (Nooksack Tribe), Jason McGill (Northwest Youth Services), Rebecca Mertzig (Bellingham Police Department), Diane Miltenberger (Department of Social & Health Services), Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center), Jessyca Murphy (Make.Shift Art Space), Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling), Adrienne Renz (Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services)

Members Absent: Bill Elfo (WCSO), Starck Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender), Greg Hansen (City of Ferndale), Alan Marriner (City of Bellingham), Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court), Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court), Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor’s Office), Chris Roselli (Western Washington University), Garret Shelsta (Stuff You Can Use), Donnell Tanksley (Blaine Police Department), Krista Touros (PeaceHealth), Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court and Probation), Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College), Pamela Wheeler (Opportunity Council)

Guests Present: Tammy Cooper Woodrich (North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Stillaguamish Tribe), Deidre Evans (WWU Survivor Services), Rachel Krinsky (RK Advising), Rep. Debra Lekanoff (Washington State House of Representatives), Susannah Sharp (PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center), Annie Taylor (Annie Taylor Consulting), Rosemarie Tom (Lummi Victims of Crime), Asa Washines (Washington State Office of the Attorney General), Jake Wiebusch (District Court Probation)

Staff Present: Susan Marks, Nikki D’Onofrio

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Commission members guests and guest presenters (Representative Debra Lekanoff and Asa Washines, AG’s Office Tribal Liaison) • Acknowledgement of Tribal lands • Introductions: name, gender pronouns, title/agency, and 	<p>Vice Chair Ken Levinson opened the meeting. Participants introduced themselves.</p>



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<p>what is your favorite water-based activity</p>	
<p>CONSENT AGENDA Minutes: July 27, 2023 Commission meeting</p>	<p>Greg Baker moved to approve the minutes. Erika Lautenbach seconded. The motion to approve July’s minutes passed unanimously.</p>
<p>WA State Attorney General’s MMIWP Task Force & Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation by Rep. Lekanoff and Asa Washines • Questions and comments 	<p>Representative Debra Lekanoff introduced herself and shared a little about her life. Her Tlingit name is Xixch’l See. She grew up in Southeast Alaska, where, “when the tide is out, table is set.” She grew up surrounded and supported by aunties and grandmas. Her community didn’t have the kinds of services our Whatcom community has. Aunties and grandmas taught girls what to do if you’re raped or sexually abused. Here, victims look for help from the service providers represented at this meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Lekanoff shared that representation matters. After Rep. John McCoy retired, Lekanoff was the only native member of the Washington State Legislature. McCoy had taken Rep. Lekanoff under his wing. No other members were making decisions from a perspective of the impact on seven generations, or considering the health and wellbeing, the social structure, and the trauma Native Americans have gone through. It’s not seen as a Democrat or Republican issue, it’s a “we” issue. What’s good for Native communities is good for all. The Missing & Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) work was bipartisan. The Attorney General is the only elected leader that took on the MMIP issue. Big thanks to Bob Ferguson.</p> <p>Rep. Lekanoff gave an overview of the MMIP crisis and shared several legislative updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016 statistic: murder is 3rd leading cause of death for Native American girls/women ages 10-24 • This has been a problem for a long time. The first documented MMIW case in what is now Washington State happened in 1855. • Sexual violence is an outcome of historical trauma and is extremely common. Native American women experience higher rates of violence and have the highest murder rate of any group. Native women’s lives are in danger every day. Rep. Lekanoff asked us to imagine the conversations she has with her daughter. For Native women, these conversations are about a matter of when, not if, violence will happen.



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- The Urban Indian Health Institute published [a report](#) on MMIWG report published in 2018 (Urban Indian Health).
- Native victims make up a disproportionate number of unsolved homicides (cold cases).
- One person lost creates a loss of generations of Native American history, generations to come. We're not just losing one person, we're losing generations—generations of language, fishing, history, roles they carried, because of what they could have been, what they could have brought, what they could be.
- A report from British Columbia used the term genocide to describe the murder of indigenous people.
- 2018-2019 Washington State passed several bills related to MMIP:
 - HB 2951: ordered a study to determine how to increase reporting and investigation of missing NA women
 - HB 1713: improves law enforcement response to MMIP
- This is not just a Native American issue. Every Washingtonian has a responsibility.
- We must work on identifying ways to coordinate between jurisdictions. For example, how to coordinate when all are using different data systems? We must address data-sharing barriers and identify barriers to reducing incidence of violence.
- 2021-2022, Washington passed additional bills to address MMIP:
 - HB 1571: Bring Them Home Act—funding and support to bring a loved one home, including bringing a deceased family member home.
 - HB 1725: Missing Indigenous Person's Alert System. This system is already working. Rep. Lekanoff shared that in one instance her own friend recognized a vehicle from the MMP alert system and called law enforcement.
- Little Indian girls are told "don't shame the family, don't tell." Now we're telling.
- The Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force published an [interim report](#) in 2022. One of the findings is that indigenous people are frequently misidentified as another race.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now, in 2023, a Cold Case Unit is being set up to dig deeper into cases. Even when a person is found it doesn't mean the case is closed. It's still a mystery what happened to them. • 2023 report is being introduced to Tribes and will be published later this year.
<p>Activity on improving responses for MMIWP and families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why are we focusing on our local response? • How do we as a community put a blanket around victims and their families? • Wrap up and debrief 	<p>Susan introduced the activity. Every single Native woman on the Commission has said that we need to do the work on MMIWP. Lummi Victims of Crime recently published a local data report, showing that Lummi PD has an average of 42 MMIWP cases reported each year for the last 20 years. Bellingham PD has an average of 133 MMIWP cases reported each year for the last 20 years. This is a chance to do things differently now, to focus forward.</p> <p>Discipline-specific groups (criminal legal system, healthcare & mental health, service providers, and education) gathered to discuss, "How do we as a community put a blanket around victims and their families?" What tools, resources, training, and conversations do we need to have? We will continue these conversations at our November meeting.</p>
<p>Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you to our guests and guest presenters • Adjourn 	<p>Asa Washines, Washington State Attorney General's Office Tribal Liaison, introduced himself. Mr. Washines started in this role 3 years ago. Washington State Patrol already had two tribal liaisons.</p> <p>The Attorney General's Office started the Washington State Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People Task Force.</p> <p>Mr. Washines role is to cover anything related to tribal affairs in the AG's office (not only MMIP). The AG's office is the state's largest law firm, so there are a wide range of things he does on a daily basis. When Mr. Washines started, MMIW was his biggest priority. It's grown since then.</p> <p>The Task Force brought on Annie Forsman-Adams, Suquamish. She did a lot of the work of the first report. There are 10 recommendations in the report. Those were 10 out of about 100 that we received from the task force. Others are there, but on the back burner. That's a lot from an initial report. We made some into law, including the Missing Indigenous Persons Alert system. Washington State Patrol says we've had a 90% success rate.</p>



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In the first month we had 10 positive outcomes. It used to take all day to get one alert out. Now it takes 10 minutes.

The Task Force consists of the Executive Committee, Criminal Justice and Public Safety subcommittee (e.g. public defenders, prosecutors), Data and Research Subcommittee, Community Services Subcommittee (working on an index of every county in WA), Tribes Subcommittee, and Family and Community Subcommittee. The whole task force is grounded in the Family and Community Subcommittee—recommendations go through them. They have a deep understanding of how the process works and how it doesn't work.

The next report will hopefully be finalized before the end of 2023. Next year, 2024, will be our final report. We've teamed up with University of Wyoming. The reports will be thorough.

The issue has always been here, but organizing around it in a formal government setting is very new. It's a challenge to organize within an institution.

The inaugural Task Force summit was held at Puyallup Tribe. The second annual summit will be on November 1st and 2nd in Airway Heights, Washington. It will be hosted by the Colville, Kalispel, Spokane, and Coeur d'Alene tribes.

The AG's office is creating a Cold Case Unit. The office has a criminal division and will hire a Cold Case unit supervisor, up to 4 investigators and a family coordinator.

As we pivot from the initial report, we also have federal recommendations. A lot of Indian Country has a federal trust responsibility. Things need to change on the federal level, even though we're a state task force. The Task Force is coordinating with Senator Cantwell to get a federal missing persons alert system.

There are a number of issues related to MMIP, including human trafficking, fentanyl, Indian Child Welfare, and boarding schools. The AG's office is going to do a boarding school study.



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Nikki D’Onofrio asked about who was committing these crimes against Indigenous people (assault, kidnapping, murder). Mr. Washines shared that it’s both white and Indigenous people committing these crimes. Criminals understand how Tribal governments operate. They target reservations because of how hard it is to coordinate across jurisdictions.

Ken Levinson closed the meeting, reminding participants that LVOC is having their conference October 11th, 12th 13th and Northwest Youth Services has their Healing Centered Engagement Gathering coming up on October 7th. We’ll continue our work in groups at the next meeting: Thursday, November 30th.

The meeting adjourned at 10:04 am



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Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence

Commission Meeting

Thursday, November 30, 2023

8:30 – 10:00 am

Mt. Baker Theatre Encore Room

Members Attending: Greg Baker (Bellingham Public Schools), Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center), Christina Byrne (Western Washington University), Tammy Cooper-Woodrich (North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program), Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW), Erika Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health & Community Services), Ken Levinson (Ken Levinson Law LLC), Rebecca Mertzig (Bellingham Police Department), Diane Miltenberger (Department of Social & Health Services), Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center), Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling), Adrienne Renz (Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services), Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor’s Office), Chris Roselli (Western Washington University), Garret Shelsta (Stuff You Can Use), Krista Touros (PeaceHealth)

Members Absent: Bill Elfo (WCSO), Starck Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender), Greg Hansen (City of Ferndale), Alan Marriner (City of Bellingham), Jason McGill (Northwest Youth Services), Jessyca Murphy (Make.Shift Art Space), Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court), Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court), Donnell Tanksley (Blaine Police Department), Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court and Probation), Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College), Pamela Wheeler (Opportunity Council)

Guests Present: Rodger Funk (WCSO), Michelle Gillig (PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center), Amber Icaay-Creelman (DVSAS), Rep. Debra Lekanoff (Washington State House of Representatives), Annie Taylor (Annie Taylor Consulting), Rosemarie Tom (Lummi Victims of Crime)

Staff Present: Susan Marks, Nikki D’Onofrio

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledgement of Tribal lands (Beth Boyd) ▪ Introductions: name, gender pronouns, title/agency, and question (what is a favorite food shared in your family) ▪ Be present and focused, restrooms, coffee and tea 	<p>Chris Roselli opened the at 8:34 am. He welcomed attendees and acknowledged the end of Native American Heritage Month. Chris gave an overview of the learning we’ve been doing together about the scope of the problem of Missing & Murdered Indigenous People, as well as recommendations and solutions. In July we learned about findings from the Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit the research shared in the S/DV Commission’s 2018 Spotlight Report on MMIWG2S (pages 19-37). In September, Rep. Debra Lekanoff of the 40th Legislative District and Asa Washines of the Washington State Attorney General’s Office shared information on DV, SA, MMIWP on Native communities and the work of Attorney General’s Task Force. Today, we’re working on prevention and response as it relates to MMIWP in our community. This can be a difficult conversation</p>



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	<p>Chris thanked everyone for being here because it means we care and encouraged us to approach this opportunity to learn with grace and humility. He reminded us that we can work toward systemic change regardless of our roles in the community. By being here virtually or in person, we can build relationships, create partnerships, and collaborate to do the work.</p> <p>Chris welcomed Beth Boyd to share the Land Acknowledgement. Beth introduced herself, sharing that she is a Blackfeet/Sioux woman from Montana. She is currently a Medical Social Worker/Care Manager at PeaceHealth St Joseph Cancer Center. She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Commission. Our topic today is vital and exciting that we as a Commission have come to a place to discuss what happens to Native People. Beth sees our Commission as having a very big responsibility in addressing this. It is challenging, it is so real, and vital that we address it. Beth shared our land acknowledgement.</p>
<p>CONSENT AGENDA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minutes: September 28, 2023 Commission meeting minutes 	<p>Ken Levinson moved to approve the minutes. Erika Lautenbach seconded.</p>
<p>Re-grounding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What have we been talking about related to MMIWP? ▪ Why does talking about MMIWP matter? ▪ Rosalie Fish Tedx talk ▪ Review of purpose and work of the MMIWP Task Force 	<p>Susan Marks regrounded us in this work and reminded us that working on ending MMIP is a way to become good neighbors, reflecting on how Beth had shared that reading land acknowledgement can be a way to be a good neighbor. Every native person who has been on the Commission said this is an important issue.</p> <p>Together we watched the Rosalie Fish TEDx Talk.</p> <p>Susan reminded us have a pretty big platform at our agencies and our communities. She noted that in the time since Rosalie Fish gave that talk the AG’s office has created a task force to address MMIP in Washington State. Susan invited Rep. Lekanoff to</p> <p>Rep. Lekanoff shared that the symbol of the red hand across the mouth is for all the sisters whose voices are not heard, silence in media and among law enforcement. Rep. Lekanoff acknowledged that there has been a movement since Native people have been elected at all policy levels. MMIP is no longer being ignored. Rep. Lekanoff thanked to Whatcom County for the love, dedication and support shown to Semiahmoo, Lummi, and</p>



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	<p>Nooksack peoples, acknowledging that we are saying “we want to walk with you.”</p> <p>We want to be able to say “we have done more.” It took no more than 3 minutes AG Bob Ferguson to say yes when Rep. Lekanoff asked “can we do this?” The AG’s office coordinated a Tribal Liaison and built this task force within their office. Leaders in Task Force come from victim’s families, who can share what we can do better, and from local, state, and tribal governments. This 23-member task force has produced 2 reports, including recommendations.</p> <p>One big legislative push Rep. Lekanoff is excited about is the cold case unit. A disproportionate number of unidentified bodies are those of Native women. We can start identifying them. There are 114 Native women, 1600 people total. The fact that we have a backlog of these Washingtonians that haven’t been identified—no forensic, dental testing. It’s going to be a big lift for the state to pay to do that testing. The MMIW people are taking and lifting these issues, but this is also lifting all other Washingtonians who are also still waiting to hear, all families still looking and trying to identify missing family members.</p> <p>Rep. Lekanoff shared that she felt honored to be with this group.</p>
<p>Activity on improving responses for MMIWP and families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can each of us do to move forward towards better responses? 	<p>Attendees worked individually and in small groups to identify steps forward in responses to MMIWP at their own agency and one agency/organization/person you need to connect with (for ideas, resources, more information, understanding of their services or responses, etc).</p>
<p>Reflection, sharing, & questions</p>	<p>Members and guests shared their reflections:</p> <p>Rep Lekanoff: Recommended that the Whatcom S/DV Commission meet with Skagit County DV Commission and Tribal Government DV Staff and report out and build a shared platform on MMIWP. The Whatcom S/DV Commission can ask the Skagit DV Commission to formally request to Rep. Lekanoff to raise local awareness by Lummi, Nooksack, Upper Skagit, Samish, Sauk Suiattle and Swinomish Tribal Government Chairs, Whatcom and Skagit County Council Chairs, City Mayors and Council Chairs, County Sheriffs, City Police Chiefs, Tribal Police Chiefs, and S/DV Commission</p>



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Executive Directors and US Attorney's Office, AG Offices meeting. What can our 40th and 42nd Districts elected officials do to raise awareness, prioritize the crisis, seek best practices, address barriers and challenges, and discuss opportunities to work together on policy, legal and programs?

Krista Touros: I struggle as "just a finance person" in healthcare. There's a recommendation in AG's report #9 for public agencies, which include non-profit healthcare, awareness day coming up in May. We can do something at the PeaceHealth campus.

Katie Olvera: Looking at Native-specific responses, what is research showing for how evidence-based responses work for Native people?

Chris Kobdich: Is there a repository for the resources/experts we should be reaching out to for behavioral health and other healthcare for Native people?

Beth: Law enforcement and legal professionals are so important. Precipitator to a lot of this is institutional racism. When we bring up a subject like this, there are voices saying "why do they need to be singled out?" So it's important to speak up even when you don't have the right language.

Susan: This is so personal, and there's such a deep impact, this is impacting families who are raising children knowing this could happen to them.

Chief Mertzig: I'm reminded to stay on the gas pedal for staffing because we need a dedicated cold case unit. When sex crime detectives are holding 30 cases at a time, how deep can you go?

Rosemarie Tom: Having a point of contact for missing person at each agency. Coordinating consistent responses across jurisdictions. Example of case where someone was trafficked to Virginia and the challenges faced because of differences across jurisdictions.

Eric Richey: The Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office has really high caseloads. There are 170 open felony cases per felony deputy. In comparable counties the number is 70. Sexual assault prosecutor has 150, should have 40 cases. I presented recently to County Council. We are going to get 3 new deputy prosecutors, but that won't bring us to what we need.



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	Susan invited Chris Roselli to close the meeting.
Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none">Meeting evaluations	Next meeting will be January 25, 2024. Chris reminded us to take a deep breath. The holidays can be stressful. The meeting ended at 10:00 am