



**NETWORK TO
ELIMINATE
VIOLENCE IN
RELATIONSHIPS**

www.NEVR.org

**Network to Eliminate Violence in Relationships (NEVR)
16th Annual Conference Proceedings Report**

Theme:

Putting Policy into Practice: A Pathway to Prevention

Dates:

April 9–10, 2026

Location:

Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, BC

Executive Summary

On April 9 & 10, 2026, the 16th Annual NEVR Conference convened 150+ cross-sector professionals, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders to advance coordinated responses to relationship violence across British Columbia.

Under the theme *"Putting Policy into Practice: A Pathway to Prevention,"* the conference focused on translating research, legislation, and lived experience into actionable, prevention-driven strategies.

Key themes from conference presentations:

- The urgent shift from reactive systems to early prevention.
- The need to recognize coercive control as a central form of abuse.
- Persistent system fragmentation across justice, health, and social services.
- The importance of culturally safe, trauma-informed, survivor-centered approaches.
- The growing role of technology in both harm and healing.

The conference concluded with clear calls to action focused on strengthening prevention frameworks, improving system coordination, advancing policy reform, and centering equity and lived experience in all interventions.

1. Introduction

The 16th Annual NEVR Conference brought together 150+ professionals, researchers, policymakers, and community advocates to advance the collective goal of eliminating relationship violence. The conference emphasized translating research, policy, and lived experience into practical, prevention-focused action across systems.

The event reinforced NEVR's mission of cross-sector collaboration, uniting health, justice, education, and community systems to address violence across the lifespan.

2. Conference Overview

The conference featured:

- 3- keynote addresses
- 1- interactive keynote workshop
- 7 -90-minute workshops
- 14- Cross-sector panel discussions
- Interactive collaboration sessions

Key focus areas included:

- Coercive control and legal reform
- Immigrant and newcomer experiences of violence
- Child and family system responses
- Technology and digital advocacy
- Mental health and trauma-informed care
- Community-based prevention models

3. Key Themes and Learnings

3.1 From Reactive Systems to Preventive Action

A central theme across sessions was the urgent need to shift from reactive responses to proactive prevention.

- Newcomer-focused research highlighted that violence often escalates due to unaddressed stressors such as isolation, financial strain, and cultural transitions, reinforcing that prevention must occur before harm begins.
- Prevention requires early education, legal awareness, and culturally accessible information, particularly for marginalized communities.

Key Insight:

Prevention is not an add-on to systems. It must be embedded at the earliest points of contact.

3.2 Understanding Coercive Control as Central to Violence

Multiple sessions emphasized coercive control as a core but under-recognized form of abuse:

- Defined as a pattern of intimidation, isolation, and control that undermines autonomy over time.
- Current Canadian legal frameworks do not fully capture its repetitive and psychological nature, creating gaps in justice responses.

Key challenges identified:

- Low recognition among professionals.
- Difficulty in evidence collection.
- Limited training across systems.

Key Insight:

Effective prevention and intervention require system-wide understanding and recognition of coercive control, not just physical violence.

3.3 System Fragmentation and the Need for Integration

The justice and child protection systems were identified as fragmented and difficult to navigate:

- A single case of violence can involve multiple systems (criminal, family, and child protection) that do not automatically communicate.
- Survivors often face duplicative processes and conflicting requirements.

Similarly, research on family policing systems highlighted:

- Structural inequities and systemic harms.
- Need for family-centered, culturally grounded approaches.

Key Insight:

Integrated, coordinated systems are essential to reduce harm and improve outcomes for survivors and families.

3.4 Centering Survivors and Lived Experience

Across presentations, there was a strong call to center survivor voices in policy and practice:

- Many survivors experience barriers to reporting, including fear, stigma, and systemic inequities.
- Critical “invisible periods” exist before disclosure, where individuals question their experiences without support.

Community research emphasized:

- The importance of safe, women-only spaces.
- The disproportionate impact of violence on Indigenous, racialized, and marginalized populations.

Key Insight:

Prevention must begin where survivors are, often before formal systems are engaged.

3.5 Technology as Both Risk and Opportunity

Technology was identified as a double-edged factor:

- It can facilitate abuse through monitoring and threats.
- It can also provide accessible, trauma-informed, multilingual support tools for survivors globally.

Digital advocacy initiatives demonstrated:

- Early intervention through online engagement.
- Anonymous access to support and information.

Key Insight:

Technology must be intentionally designed to empower survivors while mitigating harm.

3.6 Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Care

Mental health emerged as a critical intersecting issue:

- High prevalence of mental health challenges linked to trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- Significant gaps in access to care, particularly for youth and marginalized communities.

Key Insight:

Violence prevention must be integrated with mental health systems and trauma-informed approaches.

3.7 Children and Collective Responsibility

The conference emphasized that children are not passive witnesses:

- Violence has profound and lasting impacts on children's development and well-being.
- Systems often fail to center children in responses.

Key Insight:

Violence prevention is a collective responsibility requiring early, family-centered interventions.

3.8 Ethical Storytelling and Representation

Sessions on ethical filmmaking and storytelling highlighted:

- The importance of consent, dignity, and trauma-informed representation.
- The role of storytelling in shaping public understanding and policy.

Key Insight:

Narratives must be handled responsibly to avoid harm and support healing.

4. Key Recommendations and Calls to Action

Based on conference discussions, the following ideas emerged:

1. Strengthen Prevention Frameworks

- Embed prevention strategies across all systems.
- Invest in early education and community-based interventions.

2. Advance Recognition of Coercive Control

- Increase training for service providers.
- Advocate for legislative and policy reform.

3. Improve System Coordination

- Enhance collaboration between justice, health, and social systems.
- Develop integrated service pathways for survivors.

4. Center Equity and Inclusion

- Design culturally safe and trauma informed accessible services.
- Address systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities.

5. Leverage Technology Responsibly

- Expand digital tools that support survivors.
- Ensure privacy, safety, and accessibility.

6. Invest in Mental Health Supports

- Integrate mental health into violence prevention strategies.
- Increase access to culturally safe trauma-informed care.

7. Prioritize Children and Families

- Shift systems focus on child and family well-being.
- Address intergenerational impacts of violence.

8. Elevate Survivor Voices

- Include lived experience in policy, research, and program design.

5. Conclusion

The NEVR 2026 Conference reaffirmed that violence prevention is a shared, cross-sector responsibility. The transition from policy to practice requires intentional collaboration, systemic change, and sustained commitment.

The conference concluded with a clear message. Prevention is possible, but only when systems act early, work together, and centre the lived realities of those most affected.

NEVR 2026 Conference Planning Group.



COLLABORATION WALL

The following key themes emerged from the insightful input shared by attendees via sticky notes on the wall.

Professional Development/Aware:

- Coercive control: need for training, support and validation through legislation
- Coercive control training, specifically language to use with police, collaboration with police and more education of police.
- Training for frontline staff to broaden their understanding of red flags in relationships.
- Tech platforms as agents of change in violence elimination and education
- Review NEVR's book, [Making Sense of a Global Pandemic](#) and share with your teams.
- Bridging the right community connections for client support
- Linking GBV approaches to elder abuse approaches (BCCRNS)
- Arrange for staff training on IPV and strangulation responses.

○ Prevention/Early Help/Family:

- Focus more on prevention.
- Prevention campaigns: primary prevention starting pre-conception and continuing across the life span.
- Increase reach of elder abuse and prevention campaign.
- Early prevention education; awareness of resources; links to education
- Increasing early prevention education for vulnerable communities, e.g immigrant families
- Collaboration across systems and organizations
- More service provider knowledge (police & MCFD) around forensic nurse examinations
- Learning about women's app created by VLMFSS

- Utilize NEVR's resources and facilitate more programs in schools about healthy relationships
- More accessible resources, free programs for positive relationships.
- Prevention before crisis. How can we improve prevention services?
- Share information regarding CHAYN/Bloom online resources with victims.
- Awareness of healthy conversations in family around tough situations.
- Curate resources for the community on awareness and prevention and supports on relationship violence for newcomers supports.
- Early intervention in IPV situations.

- **Safe Housing/Transitions/Income Security:**

- More stable housing options for women and kids fleeing abuse
- More supports for women with immigration status issues who are fleeing abuse.
- More flexible job opportunities for women who never had an opportunity to work in their relationships.
- More free childminding supports or daycares for women who need these urgent supports.
- We need more transition houses + second stages.
- The Kaur and Singh movement stood out the most. It is something every woman can relate to.
- Importance of safe spaces for women + queer 2S people.

- **Social & Medical/Mental Health/Counselling supports**

- How to best support victims before they are ready to disclose.
- Implementation of forensic nursing into more hospitals, specifically northern health and more education for nurses.
- Expand current program (counselling) to formally include family violence.
- Consistent and faster access to forensic nursing throughout the province. It is needed for IPV and other forms of violence and is needed in the community rather than hospital based.
- How to best support victims before they are ready to disclose.
- Move forensic nurses into the community for easier (less intimidating) access
- Increased availability of forensic nurse examiners
- Research men's access to medical forensic exams
- Advocating, listening, listening, collaborating, taking initiative, empathy and curiosity.

- **Legal Responsiveness/Legislative Reform/Justice:**

- Police reform and IPV education
- Family re-unification: legal structure
- Criminal courts & RCMP holding men more accountable instead of multiple reports having to be made.
- VAWIR policy oversight.

- Understanding the interactions between MCFD, FLA & criminal justice (+impact on service delivery).
- More legal support for middle class families who are falling between the cracks
- More services in multiple languages or access to interpreters
- Complexities of IPV and rigidity of the system
- The hard work that child protection workers do
- Contemplating how systems can fill in the gaps to support clients when they make reports/call for help
- Contemplating how we can be more preventative while still supporting those in crisis.
- Links, connections and gaps between people, community and the system
- I would like to see better collaboration between child protection, family, + criminal law proceedings + actions
- The amount of human effort it takes to move through the system collaboratively but even with that effort, how effective collaboration is for survivors and outcomes
- Complexity of reporting & assessing coercive control.
- Absence of high-level policy men's support and involvement in this work.
- Advocating for every newcomer client to have access to immigration lawyers.
- More legal education for our clients.

- **Awareness & Public Education:**

- Expanding awareness, tools and resources for my agency to implement
- Focus on research and education related to strangulation in IPV
- Accessible information for new immigrants regarding their rights and laws
- How can Youth Unlimited help Abbotsford Restorative Justice get connections into more schools through existing relationships.
- Importance of online platforms, social media to boost awareness of new resources e.g Bloom
- CCB education advocacy & Interagency collaboration.
- Increased advocacy for northern region FNP
- Creation of educative tools for young adults and adolescents on strangulation & healthy relationships
- Education for families on healthy relationships, before violence happens.
- Healthy relationship education to the middle/high school students
- Intersectionality, advocacy & awareness elderly, need for push of funding
- To provide early education to couples, not individuals as part of settlement program
- Creating a stronger link between IPV resources and supports and those for elder abuse.
- Ethical storytelling ideas.
- Having Restorative Justice healthy relationships facilitated to youth in Surrey.
- Role & support of good communication

- Importance of recognizing warning signs
- Awareness of community services as it seems not everyone knows the local resources.

- **Intervention/Treatment:**

- Culturally sensitive (culturally safe) interventions
- Bridging existing resources rather than creating new ones
- The ongoing need for safety and accountability, and the role of social pressure to maintain silence vs. the strength of a supportive community
- Discussing with leadership & our service provider possibilities to expand and/or improve some of the programs provided to our families.
- Stages of intervention and digital intervention
- Assisting/educating individuals to receive support, forensic testing after IPV/sexual abuse, child abuse, elder abuse
- Promote education on early prevention at places of work interfacing with vulnerable populations
- People feel formal systems aren't working
- Importance of hearing and listening to the voices of victim survivors and acting on what's learned and heard
- We need more clinical counselling and support to children and youth impacted by MCFD involvement and IPV.

- **Cultural Healing & Support: Individual, Family, Community:**

- Internal IPV team in all child protection organizations teach culturally appropriate assessment (is this stereotyping? Should it be a culturally safe approach)
- Cultural safety, justice and advocacy can look so different and the systems designed don't always reflect that.
- Community & cultural approach (existing networks)
- Digital advocacy, help seeking is not linear and micro community of practice
- Cultural bias
- The power of advocacy and providing safety
- Breaking through fears with our clients to support them in remembering their voice.
- Self confidence and moving towards positivity
- Be mindful of immigration/refugee perspective when assessing safety.



NETWORK TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Appendix 2

www.NEVR.org



