

Domestic violence prevention is everyone's responsibility, says Maggie's Resource Centre

By Sarah Sobanski

With a guilty verdict following the trial of what's been called one of the worst domestic multi-homicide cases in Canadian history, local communities are asking what they can do better in the future.

Basil Borutski killed Wilno's 36-year-old Anastasia Kuzyk, Foymount's 48-year-old Nathalie Warmerdam and 66-year-old Carol Cullenton of Combermere Sept. 22, 2015, his jury found near the end of November. He had previous relationships with each woman, a history of violence with two of his victims and didn't follow-through with some of the terms and conditions of his probation.

Rhetoric following the case now asks if Borutski was the only one to blame? did the justice system also fail Kuzyk, Warmerdam and Cullenton? Whose responsibility is it to look after the victims of domestic violence?

According to Maggie's Resource Centre executive director Tanya MacKinnon, it's complicated. We should be looking at the responsibilities of the victims, the police, the probation officers and the community.

One of the things that comes to mind for me, is looking at the caseloads and the responsibilities of different service providers, looking at what does a probation officer have to do in a day? are they so overworked that certain things do get missed?? asked MacKinnon.

According to the Ministry of the [Status of Women](#), women are six times more likely to be killed by an ex-spouse than a current legally married spouse. In fact, the period immediately after a separation is the most dangerous for abuse victims? About six in 10 spousal homicides of women have a history of family violence involving the victim and the accused.?

Borutski's rampage happened within a year of his being released from jail. His parole and probation officer testified he was placed on probation, while serving probation set to end January 2015, in January of 2014. The first probation was for threatening Warmerdam's son and their family pet, the second probation was for assaulting Kuzyk.

MacKinnon said multi-offence cases need to be clearly identified as high-risk.

Other service providers, the police, [and] victim services, as well as those associated with the court, need to be educated.

We need to revisit what our laws and the practices are for when there's a case that's been deemed high risk? which obviously his would have been at some point? because of the number of different offences with different women. He doesn't carry a sign around his neck that says, 'Yeah, I abuse woman.' We don't do that to anyone in society, said MacKinnon. She noted there are no easy answers.

Judges, justices of the peace, who are responsible for letting somebody out when there's been a violation and there's been a bail hearing, do they fully understand the intricacies and all of the pieces that connect with domestic violence and the risk??

MacKinnon said it's everyone's responsibility to look out for domestic violence. She said people have a responsibility to report child abuse and be aware of the well-being of a child. She suggested that responsibility shouldn't stop at children.

Women are six times more likely than men to fail to report domestic violence out of fear of their spouse and they are almost twice as likely to say they didn't want anyone to find out, states the ministry. Almost 80 per cent of women who do report [an incident] claim they are dealing with the situation in another way, while 74 per cent do not report because they consider it a personal matter.?

If I'm a neighbour and I know that there's been something going on five houses up the road and I see him there and I go, 'Wait a second, a week ago there was police cars there,' maybe we should be held accountable for that, said MacKinnon. But the flip side is, what sort of alienation are we doing for that women if she knows that she's got to go more underground with her contact with him if she continues to have contact with him? Every case is unique.?

Fifteen per cent of female victims obtain a restraining or protection order; but according to 32 per cent of these women, the terms of the order are breached, states the ministry. Many victims are victimized multiple times before they report to police.?

An abuser typically tries to play those mind games with the woman and make them feel that everything that's ever gone wrong is their fault? not his, said MacKinnon. Whatever smoke he's blowing her way? the woman doesn't report because [she thinks] he wasn't that bad, it wasn't a dire situation.?

She said other reasons victims fail to report their partners could be trying to separate amicably, a sincere plea? from the abuser to see their children or the 'honeymoon phase' where the abuser is remorseful.

I don't think there is any small community that is immune to this? in that when people come together, it's all about making things right for a situation? a lot of money gets raised, a lot of attention gets drawn to whatever the cause may be. But, when you know the couple that live up the road, and you know that there's domestic violence, a lot of people turn a blind eye to it because they don't

want to get involved.?