

NDN
4574/80

Seminar probes wife battering

By RITA MOIR
News Staff Writer

Although statistics are scarce, a wide cross section of individuals and officials recognize a need to shelter battered women and children in West Kootenay.

Bette Bateman, a Nelson Women's Centre volunteer, has sheltered six battered women in her home in the past six months.

Nelson Community Service Centre counsellor Lisa Aubrey said Monday the centre finds shelter for two to three women per month, often for more than a night. The women and children sometimes need a month or more to escape from a violent situation and reorganize their lives.

SEMINAR HELD

The topic of wife battering drew more than 30 people to a Saturday workshop at Selkirk College. Workshop organizer Lin Helfer of Pass Creek said the weekend was a preliminary step to organizing an area transition house.

"In all the towns in this area, women are trying to get services for women together. This workshop drew women and men from Trail, Nelson, Rossland, Castlegar, the Slocan Valley, South Slocan, and Montrose," said Helfer.

Bateman said that after the weekend, women will meet Wednesday in Castlegar to continue transition house discussions.

Why do men batter women?

Deputy Police Chief Roy Martin of Nelson isn't sure, but he thinks it's due to frustration. He says local statistics are low because there is no support system which encourages women to report battering.

Helfer, who was a battered wife, thinks beatings occur because "women are in a powerless position in this society. Men are safe battering their wives because it's safe for them to do so. The ministry of human resources," she said, "tries to keep the home situation together, and that means keeping women in a violent home situation."

According to a United Way report on violence on the Lower Mainland alone (including non-urban areas), "between 4,000 to 5,000 women are beaten to the point of serious injury each year."

In another study done for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of women in 1980, researcher Linda McLeod said 20 per cent of

husband-wife murders are caused by wife battering.

Using records from transition houses, the council estimates that 15,000 battered women annually stay in Canadian transition houses and women's hostels. That doesn't count the number turned away for lack of space, said Bateman.

Bateman, who has been instrumental in organizing Nelson's rape crisis line, rejects the theory that violence against women is rare in the rural areas.

She expects the rape crisis line, which begins operation Thursday night,

Other side of Mom's day

As part of a provide wide presentation on "the other side of Mother's Day," the Nelson Women's Centre presents a slide-sound show called Reclaiming Ourselves: A Feminist Perspective on Pornography. The presentation is open to men and women Saturday at the Women's Centre at 307 Vernon (boardwalk entrance.) at noon, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Women will also distribute pamphlets Saturday in Nelson on sexual abuse and harassment, child abuse and wife battering.

Organizers say the events are not meant to protest mother's day but to talk about what many women face every day.

Volunteers are needed for Nelson's new crisis line — and training starts this evening.

The volunteer help is needed to staff the 24-hour line, sponsored by the Nelson Community Services Centre, which lacks sufficient personnel to answer evening and night calls.

If enough volunteers offer their services, some could also staff the crisis line during the daytime, said Lisa Aubrey, counsellor at the centre. Currently, the centre workers answer crisis-line day calls in addition to their daily workload.

Users of the line are often suffering from depression, are contemplating suicide or simply need immediate

will field calls throughout the West Kootenay dealing with rape, wife and child battering, and incest.

"Rape happens everywhere," said Bateman. "Women throughout West Kootenay have joined our volunteer group. They have been raped in Robson, Fruitvale, Castlegar, Nelson and Kaslo."

Deputy Chief Martin agrees with Bateman that the profile of the rapist is not that of a psychopath jumping out from behind a bush.

Martin, who has worked as police liaison with the formative rape crisis line for a year, said that rapists cross all cultural lines, and are seldom strangers to the woman they rape.

"It's a matter of taking power over another person," he said.

Martin who considers the rape crisis line workers have been "an excellent group to work with," said counselling for rape victims "needs to go beyond the family, police and hospitals."

Bateman said the line will operate from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Thursday to Monday. The line is currently operating with funds donated by volunteers, the Nelson Eagles, and the Women Auxiliary, Branch 51, of the Nelson Legion.

She said the crisis line has applied for government funding now that the group has organized and gauged its commitment to the project.

The rape crisis and sexual abuse crisis line number is 354-4222.

needs help

attention to their problems. They are offered help and advice on where to receive further help.

"Eventually, we hope that volunteers could keep the centre open on Saturdays as well," Aubrey said.

The centre worker pointed out that volunteer work offers a chance to develop skills in working with people and to get involved with the Nelson community. Volunteers will also have an opportunity to develop programs which they think would benefit the community, she said.

For volunteers six training sessions are involved. Times will be decided at this evening's meeting, to be held at the community centre at 601 Front St. at 7:30 p.m.