



# Conducting Qualitative, Community-Based, and Participatory Action Research

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**BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health**

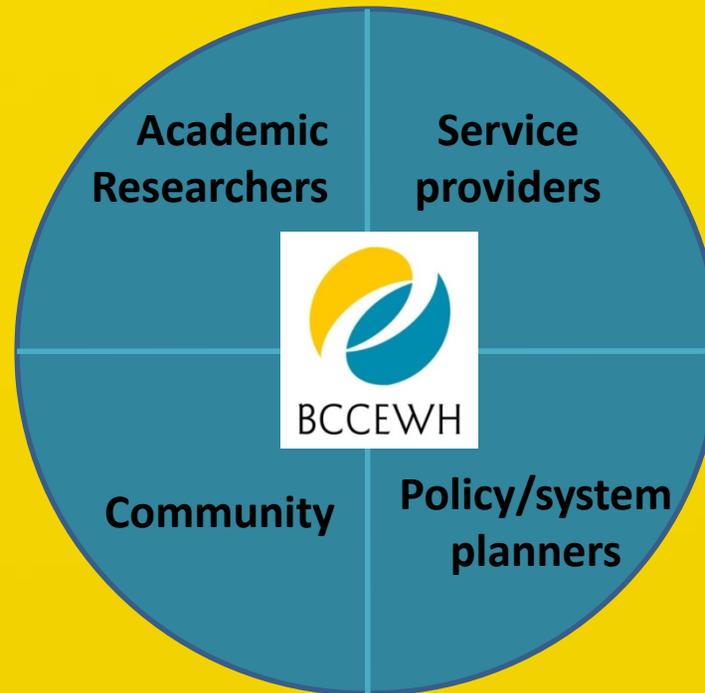
# The BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health



The mission of the BCCEWH is to improve the health of women by fostering collaboration on innovative, multi-disciplinary research endeavors and action-oriented approaches to women's health initiatives, women-centred programs, and health policy.

[www.addictionsresearchtraining.ca](http://www.addictionsresearchtraining.ca)

[www.hcip-bc.org](http://www.hcip-bc.org)



[www.coalescing-vc.org](http://www.coalescing-vc.org)

[www.womenshealthdata.ca](http://www.womenshealthdata.ca)



**Coalescing on Women and Substance Use**  
Linking Research, Practice and Policy

**The Source**  
Women's Health Data Directory



**La Source**  
Répertoire de données sur la santé des femmes

**Women  
Centred  
Research**

Clearly acknowledges the gendered nature of women's lives and health

**Gendered**

Research questions are rooted in women's lives and reflect policy needs

**Relevant**

Women's health research reflects a broad definition of health

**Holistic**

**Transdisciplinary**

Biomedical and social perspectives merge to produce knowledge

Involvement of women, their families and communities in the research process

**Inclusive**

**Multi-Sectoral**

Academics, community, health care providers and women are all equally involved as partners in the research process, and throughout the research process

**Multi-Methods**

Mixed and inclusive research methodologies  
Sex differences and gender influences inform approach to data collection and analysis

**Integrated &  
Change-Oriented**

Research evidence is integrated into policy, programs and practice.

# Aboriginal Adolescent Girls and Smoking: a Qualitative Study Gender Identity, Ethnic Identity and Tobacco Use Among Aboriginal Adolescents

- The research team for 2 intersecting projects is comprised of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers, and representatives of Aboriginal communities.
  - Research Team: Lorraine Greaves, Denise Lecoy, Deborah Schwartz, Annette Browne, Joy Johnson, Karen Devries, Natasha Jategaonkar, Nancy Poole
  - The community based collaborators include: Kermode Friendship Society; Port Alberni Friendship Centre; Sliammon First Nation; Penticton Indian Band; Laichwiltach Family Life Society and Metlakatla First Nation.
- Funding Agencies: CIHR and Vancouver Foundation

# Objectives

- explore the relationship between *cultural identity* (assimilated, integrated, separated, marginalized), acculturative and enculturative stress, and smoking behaviours (smoking status, age of initiation, number of quit attempts);
- explore the relationship between *gender identity* (masculine, feminine, androgynous, undifferentiated), stress resulting from gender role identifications, and smoking behaviours (smoking status, age of initiation, number of quit attempts);
- explore and document any interactive, mediating or moderating effects between *gender identity* and *ethnic identity* in predicting smoking behaviours;
- translate these findings into a meaningful and useful format for the BC Aboriginal community, in collaboration with the Aboriginal community; and
- increase research capacity in Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal researchers, and create links and further existing links between Aboriginal communities and tobacco researchers.

# Iterative research process

Is including:

Qualitative phase

- A comprehensive process of developing relationship with communities – leading to development of memorandum of understandings
- Additional research funding for capacity building for community-based collaborators (CBC) who organize and coordinate activities related to the research on the community level

A second phase

- Development and testing of age and culturally appropriate tools to assess cultural identity and gender identity and preferences for intervention – drawing from Bem Sex Role Inventory, Fisher et al's composite measure of Feminist identity, Moran's Bicultural Identity Questionnaire, Multidimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory

# The VANDU Women Clinic Action Research for Empowerment Study

- Participatory Action Research
- Partners include researchers at BCCEWH & UBC School of Nursing
- Funded by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research
- Focused on women's experiences at community health clinics in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

***“When you don't get health care, you don't get the sense of belonging, you don't get the sense of your importance”***

***~ Sharon***



# VANDU Women's Group

## WHAT

***A weekly support group  
for women who use drugs***

We are a group of women who are current or former users of illicit drugs.

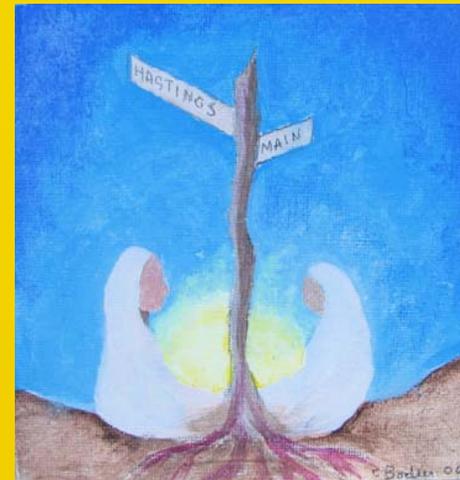
We are here to enrich, empower, embrace, and care for our women and our community.

We are fighting against poverty, abuse, and discrimination for all women.

We do this through user-based peer support, education, and affirming our right to belong.

## WHY

Harm reduction in health care and activism has focused on harms from disease and drugs but the most pressing harms in many DTES women's lives come from violence.



# Women's Group Participation in the PAR Process

***“Us women are trying to uplift the lives of our street sisters out here” ~ Flo***

- Former Women's Group Coordinator initiated a project interviewing women about clinic experiences
- 20 women in 4 focus groups developed interview questions and reviewed interview schedule together with members of research team
- 11 women were trained and paid to work on the study as peer interviewers
- Peers interviewed 50 women using a semi-structured, qualitative interview scheduled containing short answer and open ended questions
- Steering committee of 13 women oversee the project

# Benefits of using a peer-driven, PAR approach in the VANDU Women CARE Study

- We are talking to women who almost nobody else talks to
- Women are compensated for their knowledge and expertise
- Training and skills development for community leaders
- Tangible resources for VANDU: office supplies, computer, staff hours
- High quality in-depth interviews
- Attention on primary health care in the Downtown Eastside

# Why Community Based Research with Women is Important

- *To bring to the higher-ups' attention that professionals and health care workers need to be accountable for their actions.*  
--Jewel
- *I got into this to help these young girls and women. A lot of things I am scared to talk about, to open up myself. But when it comes to other women I will speak, because I lost a lot.*  
--Fern



*It's showing that we're not just  
throw-away people.*

--Jackie

# Moving Forward: Building Women-Centred, Respectful Research Agendas

- Discussions of “risks” and “rights” must address risks of NOT researching health issues that are important to substance-using women, and of excluding them from all aspects of the research process.
- Qualitative and participatory methods can address concerns re: potential “vulnerabilities” and exploitation of substance-using women in research.
- Gathering- and giving back- evidence that includes the perspectives, insights, and priorities of substance-using women is integral to these efforts.